

"THE ZOO PLANE"

by Garry Trudeau

First Draft
March 31, 1980

On December 29, 1977, President Jimmy Carter set out with 183 reporters, cameramen and television technicians on a nine-day, 18,500 mile, diplomatic mission to seven countries.

Nothing happened.

This is that story.

FADE IN

1 INT. - ROOM 450 - OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - WASH, D.C. 1

A Senior American Official is sitting on the edge of a long, polished mahogany desk, passively surveying the faces of a dozen or so reporters who have been assembled for a briefing. The OFFICIAL is one of the Carter administration's chief pedants, and he regards his position on the National Security Council as a vindication of 30 years of backbiting and overstriving in a number of leading departments of political science. He is 50ish, somewhat severe looking, and wears the calm, insouciant air of a man who is about to knowingly patronize.

The groundrules for the briefing are being set by a deferential White House assistant press secretary, ELLIOT BRANDON. Brandon is 28, boarding school foppish, and waves his cigarette around as he nervously toes the plush blue carpet with a tassled loafer.

The reporters in front of him are slouched in their chairs in varying states of ennui. As Elliot reads them their rights, he is ignored by, among others, ALAN FARLEY, 38, the talented, cynical star of "The New York Times." Farley is a study in dishevelment, the sort of physical chaos that is the prerogative of undisputed authority. Also present but ~~and~~ elsewhere is the political correspondent for "The Nashville Tennessean", WILKIE TURNER, 35, a magnolia-mouthed Alabamian with a full mustache and clad in Hawaiian shirt and Boston Red Sox baseball cap. He is a glib, gifted writer, but suffers from long, debilitating spells of inertia. He is sitting in front of WALTER DEITZ, 30, the alert, quizzical looking foreign affairs writer for "The Wall Street Journal". Deitz has an annoying habit of asking perfectly sane questions that haven't a prayer of being answered with civility or good will. He appears to be the only one in the room listening to ELLIOT's recitation.

ELLIOT

Ladies and gentleman. Let me have your attention for a word or two about ground rules. First of all, this briefing will be on background. It is for attribution to Administration Officials. Otherwise it will be under regular White House briefing rules. That means it is not available for broadcast and there will be no filing until the briefing is over..

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

1

ALAN

Elliot, is that Senior Administration officials,
plural?

ELLIOT

Yes, it is the preference of this..

DEITZ

(from back of room)

Question?

ELLIOT

The question had to do with attribution..

ALAN

(impatiently)

Let me explain why I ask the question.
It is our perception that only one
senior member of this Administration
is now sitting on the edge of that
desk...

(gestures towards OFFICIAL)

WILKIE

Lookin' good, we should add.

ALAN

Until such time as he is joined by another
Administration official of comparable stature
or carriage, the New York Times will take the
position that it is only being briefed at by
one official.

WILKIE

The Nashville Tennessean takes a similar
position, only without the snotty tone of
voice.

ELLIOT looks nervously over at the OFFICIAL, who is gazing
over the tops of his bifocals at ALAN.

ELLIOT

Very well.

A big move; making any decision at all is an act of sheer
bravado.

The official is pressed for time, so I think
he'd be willing to waive the customary con-
frontation over this matter..

(smiles weakly)

Attention shifts to the OFFICIAL, who surveys the room
with the kind of pompous, protracted silence he has spent
a lifetime confusing with suspense.

CONTINUED 2

1

OFFICIAL

What I have been trying to do for you these past few mornings is essentially relate President Carter's trip to a broader view of international affairs as we perceive it. As I have mentioned before, the need for such a perspective was dramatically foreshadowed in the President's recent speech to the graduating class at Notre Dame. You will recall that he warned the departing seniors that the bipolar strategic confrontation and the post-World War II international system were no longer adequate in dealing with the changes in the political conditions of the world..

All around the room, eyes are glazing over. ALAN is flipping lazily through his briefing book. WILKIE has unwrapped a piece of bubble gum and is reading his fortune.

OFFICIAL (cont.)

The first of these changes is the collapse of Western colonialism. Many of you are too young to remember it, but on the eve of World War II, about 80% of the land mass of the world, and 75% of the world's population was under the control of the Western powers. Just reflect on..

ALAN

(Raising hand)

Mr. Official, are any of these old chestnuts in today's reading?

(a beat)

OFFICIAL

Mr. Farley, was that question purely gratuitous, or do you need to be excused for some reason?

ALAN

No, I'm serious. I don't see in our list of explanations of why the President is going to Poland, Iran, India, etc. much of a difference between his reasons and those given us by Messieurs Ford and Nixon when they visited the same countries..

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

1

DEITZ

Question?

ALAN

(raising his voice)

The question is, is there a shift in policy, specifically in this President's actions as opposed to President Nixon's?

OFFICIAL

Well, I have been trying to explain the significance of this trip for three days now, Mr. Farley, and..

ALAN

I know, and three crazy, wonderful days it's been, sir, but that's not the question..

OFFICIAL

Mr. Farley, I can't explain what President Nixon's views were. I can only explain what ours are. If this didn't come across to you, I have failed. Perhaps it is my failure, perhaps it is yours.

WILKIE

Let me just follow that up, since we are not sure just who failed here. Henry Kissinger used to tell us just before the Nixon and Ford trips to these countries that..

At the invocation of the name of his predecessor, the SAO's face undergoes a terrible, icy transformation. His voice is barely controlled as he cuts Wilkie off.

OFFICIAL

I'm sure Kissinger used to tell you a great many things. The tragedy was how many of you believed them. I'm afraid I cannot improve on what I have tried to do now for three days. I am sorry. I will just have to leave you unsatisfied.

Abruptly turning his back on the reporters, the OFFICIAL gathers together his briefing papers. The reporters exchange puzzled glances.

WILKIE

(turning around in seat, dropping his voice)
I've ruined it for all of you, haven't I?

REPORTER #1

You were only doing your job. Rather poorly, I might add.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

1

REPORTER #2

What the hell, fuckin' background always reads like foreground anyway.

WILKIE

I am one sorry asshole.

ALAN

Hey, stop taking all the credit.

The OFFICIAL has walked quickly to the rear of the briefing room, his anxious White House flack in tow. He takes one last look over his shoulder at WILKIE and ALAN and then turns towards the door.

OFFICIALS

Put Farley and Turner on the Zoo.

ELLIOT

Yes, sir.

2 EXT. - ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE - DAWN

2

Air Force One, a magnificent silver and powder-blue Boeing 707 is being prepared for Jimmy Carter's first major foreign tour, a nine-day airborne odyssey that will take him to Poland, Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, and France. It is two days before New Year's, 1978, and as the first rays of the cold, December dawn break the sky, the ground crew is seen applying a final coat of Glass Wax to the wings of the plane. A half dozen Air Force military police toting automatic weapons are ringing the aircraft, and two Secret Service agents stand to one side of the tarmac, blowing into their hands, and nervously eyeing the preparations. As the fuel hoses are disengaged, the CREDITS roll: THE ZOO PLANE.

3 EXT. - ANDREWS AFB - MAIN PASSENGER TERMINAL - DAWN

3

CREDITS continue to roll, as we see taxis and station wagons pulling up in front of the covered sidewalk outside of the main terminal at Andrews. Sleepy reporters are checking in with White House Transportation Office personnel, who have set up a number of card tables from which to dispense photo press tags and plastic laminated luggage tags. There is a certain cachet to these credentials and the reporters cherish them, but they try to inspect them with non-chalance as they thread them on their neck chains.

Behind the card tables is a small mountain of luggage, battered valises with tags from previous campaigns, hard, black equipment

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

3

cases emblazoned with network logos, beat-up army duffles held together with adhesive tape, and plastic mesh film bags.

The passenger check-in is being overseen by White House Transportation Chief Matty McGraw, 45. McGraw is a tall, open-faced former All-American quarterback from Lubbock, whose chief virtue now, as then, is a kind of casual command presence. He is in charge of the transportation, hotel and customs requirements for the 165 reporters, television correspondents, video technicians and photographers who routinely cover the President when he travels abroad. McGraw's cheerful, unhurried, manner belies the tremendous logistical problems that are the province of the Transportation Office, an office that is, at least, mercifully apolitical.

Among those checking in are a somnambulating DEITZ and supporting him, his wife ROBIN, a small, pretty woman wearing a sheepskin coat over a flannel nightgown.

MATTY

'Morning, Robin, honey. Appreciate your drivin' all the way out. Got something for me?

ROBIN

Tag him and he's yours.

MATTY

(putting press pass around Deitz's neck)
We'll take real good care of him, babe.
One bag or two?

ROBIN

Two. I'm expecting silks from the Orient.

MATTY

(checking clipboard)
TWA, young fellah. First mini-bus to your left. Remember to pay your respects to the heat. You drive careful on that ice, now, darlin'.

ROBIN

(to Deitz)
I love you.

DEITZ

Did you pack my blue tie?

4 EXT. - ANDREWS PARKING LOT

4

A bleak-looking ALAN is sitting in the passenger seat of an idling station wagon. Next to him is his wife, TORY FARLEY, a pleasant-looking school teacher in her mid-thirties. She is trying to remove dog hairs from his rumpled blue rain coat while he stares out the window.

ALAN

I didn't even know he played hockey.

TORY

Well, he never started before. That's why he wanted you there.

ALAN

Does he fight?

TORY

He's nine, Alan. They don't let them fight.

ALAN

He's a good kid, Tory. You're doing a tremendous job.

(reaching for the door handle)

As soon as things get better, I'll send for you.

TORY laughs and grabs him before he can get out the door.

TORY

Better? How are things going to get better, ace? You're flying the zoo.

ALAN

What?

TORY

Wilkie called last night. You both got bumped to TWA. The press office brought on more people.

ALAN

That's bullshit.

TORY

Take it up with Matty, sweetheart.

(she turns to let herself out of the car)

I can't really see as it makes much difference. The other wives will talk, of course, there'll be speculation, much of it vicious, about your standing in New York. But it won't be the first time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

4

TORY has let the tailgate down and is tugging at a large, leather suitcase.

TORY (cont.)

At least you've got Harvard, Alan.
Nobody can ever take that away
from you.

ALAN has gotten out of the car. As he opens the back seat door to get his typewriter, he notices a taxi pulling up in front of the terminal.

5 EXT. - ANDREWS TERMINAL ARRIVAL AREA

The cabbie is being paid by LIZ TOLAND, 30, a White House regular and back-up correspondent for CBS News. Her long, curly blonde hair is a mantle of disarray, but it frames an impossibly lovely face. She is wearing a long, wool sweater-coat, and carrying a plastic dress bag. As the cab pulls away from the curb, she looks up to see ALAN staring at her. She quickly turns away; it is clear they know each other.

6 EXT. - ANDREWS PARKING LOT

6

TORY

See something you like?

ALAN

I'm looking for Wilkie..
(pulls up collar)
Christ, it's cold.

TORY walks around the car, lugging ALAN's bag. She drops it at his feet and reaches up to adjust his scarf.

TORY

Call Michael tonight, okay?
The game should be over by
nine.

ALAN

I don't want to go, Tory. This
doesn't make any sense anymore.

TORY

What is this? You have to sit with
the grunts and suddenly you want out?

She pulls a carton of Marlboros out of her overcoat pocket and hands it to ALAN.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

6

ALAN

It's a goddamn long trip, Tory.

TORY

So take up scrimshaw.

TORY kisses him gently on the cheek and walks back to the car.

ALAN

I'll miss you.

TORY

(smiling)

Me, too. Nine o'clock, okay?

TORY starts the car and begins to back out.

ALAN

(shouting)

Look, I mean it. When I get to Poland, I'm sending for you and the child. Okay?

TORY

Call.

With a wave from her window, TORY guns the car out of the parking lot, swerving to miss a camera crew making its way across the icy macadam. ALAN watches her until she is out of sight. As he leans down to stuff the cigarettes in his flight bag, he is accosted by HARRY PRESTON, 40, a famously abrasive correspondent for ABC News. As always, HARRY is the picture of combat-readiness, his flak jacket ablaze with epaulets and expired press credentials. He is wearing a wool Irish walking cap and is carrying an L.L. Bean shoulder bag. A large walkie-talkie protrudes from one of several side pockets. He is attended by MURPH O'BRIAN, 30, his obese, unshaven mini-cam jockey, and HOOTCH, 25, a wirey Vietnamese sound technician whose life MURPH saved during the fall of DaNang.

HARRY

Hail, hail, fellow asshole. The Peanut Patrol flies again.

ALAN

Perfectly dressed for Lebanon, I see, Harry.

HARRY

The clarion call of newsgathering. By God, I love the chase, Farley.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

6

ALAN

You won't find it in Poland, Harry.

They start walking towards the terminal.

HARRY

Poland? Hear that, my good fellows,
we're going to Poland.

HOOTCH

What's in Poland?

MURPH

Russians.

ALAN

It's all in the briefing book, Harry.
Let me know if you need any help with
the big picture.

HARRY

Can't use it, my good man. Only
interested in the little picture.
God, yes. What would I do without
television?

ALAN

You'd go door to door, Harry.

As they arrive at the curb, HARRY spies HILDY MEYERSON,
the frumpish White House Press Corps shopping bag lady.
HILDY purportedly represents a New England newsletter,
but as a charter member of the beloved White House press
"zanies", her accreditation has never been challenged.
She is busy going through a Kleenix-impacted handbag in
a frantic attempt to find her identification.

MATTY

That's okay, Hildy, honey, I know
who you are..

HILDY

You do not. I have my pass here
somewhere.

HARRY

(swooping down on her)
Hildy! My darling!

HILDY

My god. It's him.

HARRY

Darling. It's been ages. Where
can we go to make love?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

6

HILDY

(snapping her purse shut)

Harry, I don't have time for this.
I have to write my getaway.

HARRY

My darling, you rebuff me yet again.
Why will you not let me add my rich,
mellifluous baritone to the chorus
of voices chanting for your favors?

ALAN

Because you're brain damaged, Harry.
(to Matty)
Farley, "Times".

MATTY

(looking up)

Alan, you old cowboy..

ALAN

Yeah, I know, I'm on the zoo. What the
fuck's going on?

MATTY

What can I tell you, hotdog? Even the
old gray lady's gotta ride coach
sometimes. It happens, son.

ALAN

Did Jody tell you to bump me?

MATTY

Nobody told me anything, babe. I got
the manifest as is. Where your bags,
Harry?

HARRY

My bags? Matty, you larcenous son of
a bitch, I checked them at EOB yester-
day.

MATTY ..

Then I'm sure they'll turn up. Farley
here's on TWA with you this time, Har.
Make sure he's had the right shots.
Y'all have a super flight.

7 EXT. - ANDREWS AFB TARMAC - DAWN

7

WILKIE, his baseball cap backwards and wearing the same
clothes as at the previous day's briefing, is huddled

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

7

under an Ole Miss football blanket with ELLIE, 21, a somewhat dizzy Pan Am flight attendant. She is giggling as they watch ALAN check in. WILKIE is holding a can of Budweiser.

ELLIE
Is that him?

WILKIE
Yup.

ELLIE
He's cute.

WILKIE
(swigging beer)
He's married.

ELLIE
So are you.

WILKIE
(a bit defensively)
Yeah, but I don't flaunt it.

They wave as ALAN approaches.

WILKIE
Mr. Mason.

ALAN
Mr. Dixon. We meet again.

WILKIE
You know Ellie..

ALAN
No, but I know her kind -- very pretty.

ELLIE
(catches her breath).
Oh.

WILKIE
Now look what you've done.

HARRY
(joining group)
By God, Wilkie, will you look at yourself? You're a disgrace to your byline and the entire Red Sox organization.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

7

WILKIE

(to Alan)

It finally happened. They're starting to recruit for these things.

HARRY

Ah, gentle Wilkie, we are all of us recruits in the service of the press lords. Our individual names and faces are unimportant. Our salaries are another matter.

A shrill, beeping sound is suddenly heard emitting from HARRY's flak jacket.

HARRY (cont.)

Excuse me, my children.

HARRY fishes the walkie-talkie out of his side pocket. It is attached to his jacket with an elastic safety cord.

HARRY (cont.)

Good morning, this is Star Quality. You beeped?

FIELD PRODUCER (v.o.)

Harry, Tina's doing the getaway. You're clear until the evening Warsaw feed. Ninety seconds,,signature close, no toss to anyone.

HARRY

What about Barbara?

FIELD PRODUCER (v.o.)

She's not going.

HARRY

Not going?

WILKIE

(to Alan)

15,000 Polish chauffeurs out of work.

HARRY

What time's the feed?

FIELD PRODUCER (v.o.)

2300 on the white line. Got it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

7

HARRY

That's a big ten-four, Authority Figure.
Ta ta.

A contingent of Pan Am stewardesses has arrived and is
being admitted through the Secret Service check point.

ELLIE

Hey, there're the girls. Gotta go.

WILKIE

(proudly)

Ellie flies with the regulars.

ALAN

So would we if you hadn't taken a leak
on Brandon's briefing yesterday.

ELLIE

(kisses him)

See you in Warsaw, Wilkie. Thanks for
everything. The lift, I mean.

ALAN

The lift, she means.

ELLIE runs after the other stewardesses, who are boarding
the flight crew's minibus parked near the terminal.

WILKIE

(to Alan)

Hey. Stop being an asshole.

ALAN

Sorry.

(a beat)

She's nice.

WILKIE

Damn straight she's nice. And I'll
tell you something else. It wasn't
just me who rattled Elliot's cage
yesterday. So don't lay this thing
at my..

ALAN

For Christ's sake, Wilkie, I said I..

HARRY

Boys, boys. What is this, duelling
mid-life crises? Times's wasting.
There are planes to catch, deadlines
to miss.

CONTINUED 4

7

WILKIE

Harry?

HARRY

Wilkie?

WILKIE

What are you like in real life?

8 EXT. - ANDREWS AFB TARMAC

8

Reporters are crowding onto the two blue mini-buses waiting to take them out to the planes, both 707's parked some distance from the terminal. ANNIE CONGDON, 45, an old hand from the White House Press Advance Office, is checking people on the TWA bus.

ANNIE

Micky? Micky Ryder?

RYDER

Yo.

ANNIE

You're on the Air Force One pool, sir.
Got the departure speech?

RYDER

No.

ANNIE hands him an advance text of the remarks that Carter is expected to deliver on departure.

ANNIE

Embargoed until 8:15. You're on with
Billingsly, Morehead and the AP.

ALAN (to Annie)

Farley, "New York Times".

ANNIE

(checking his name off on her list)
Gotcha.

WILKIE

Turner, "Good Housekeeping."

ANNIE (amused)

Twenty-one ways to serve beer?

WILKIE

Lookin' good, Annie.

9 INT. - MINIBUS

9

As ALAN and WILKIE board the bus, they find DEITZ sound asleep in the first row.

ALAN

Deitz! Wake up! We're in Warsaw!

DEITZ

(shooting up)

What?

CURTIS

Too late. You'll have to file blind.

The two reporters make their way towards the rear of the bus. Wilkie spies two empty seats and sits down after stashing his blanket and gear in the overhead rack. ALAN is about to take the seat next to him when he notices LIZ by herself in the last row.

ALAN

(sitting down)

Hi.

LIZ

(looking out the window)

Seat's taken.

ALAN

Let's start again. Hi.

LIZ

Your wife left yet?

ALAN

Well, I don't know. I better check.

He reaches down into his shoulder bag and withdraws a very serious-looking pair of binoculars.

LIZ

Christmas present?

ALAN

Uh-huh. Like 'em?

(holds them out)

They're waterproof.

LIZ

Waterproof.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

9

ALAN

My other ones weren't working out.
I kept spilling beer on 'em during
Redskins games.

LIZ

How come you're riding with the second
string, Alan?

ALAN

Because you are.

LIZ looks at him.

And maybe also because I got caught
ferreting out the truth during social
studies yesterday.

LIZ

You never learn, do you?

ALAN

Well, the whole trip's a jerk-off, Liz.
It's not even Carter's show,
it's the National Security Council.
After twelve months of playing with
his maps down in the War Room, Zbiggy's
got a flying hard-on for any country
with a letterhead..

LIZ

Alan..

ALAN

My god, you should have been at those
briefings, Liz. Global pluralism,
creeping modernity, North-
South dialogue..

LIZ

Alan, we're not just picking up where
we left off.

ALAN

(gently)

You're right, Liz. We're starting all
over again.

WILKIE

Hey, Farley! How's this for a lead?
"Mum was the watchword at the
White House today.."

10 INT. - ZOO PLANE - DAY

10

The unfortunates who are assigned to the Zoo Plane include certain elements of the travelling White House press corps who are at best uninfluential and at worst unsavory. They comprise a rather heterogeneous group, consisting of second-string television correspondents, radio spot reporters, writers for small or obscure journals, news-weekly and wire service photographers, correspondents for foreign newspapers, cameramen, sound technicians, Secret Service agents, and members of the White House Press Advance Office. It is probably not the disgrace ALAN thinks it is to ride with this sideshow, but it is true that the general noise level and sanitary conditions aboard the zoo are simply unacceptable to the average "regular", who is often forced to write on deadline during a flight.

The reporters and teckies are being welcomed on board by three TWA flight attendants as they file past the forward galley. CRICKET DAWSON, 20, the sunniest of the three, is holding a tray of champagne, Bloody Marys and Screwdrivers. At the forward door is MATTY, who is trying to direct traffic.

MATTY

Let's get a move on, ladies and gentlemen. We're lookin' at wheels up in ten minutes.

HARRY

Preston, Harry. I have a reservation. What are the seating arrangements, my good man?

MATTY

It's all according to pecking order, Harry. Look for your name on the seat. Who you got behind you?

HARRY

(turning to present them)
My technical staff, of course. "Mini-cam" Murph O'Brian, and on microphone, his small but faithful Oriental companion, Hootch. I can vouch for them.

(to Murph and Hootch)

Now, then, is there anything you have to do before we go?

MURPH

Fuck off, Harry.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

10

HARRY
 (to Matty)
 My men love me. In the animal kingdom,
 breaking wind is a sign of respect.

HARRY suddenly notices that the lavatory door behind MATTY is slightly ajar. A very alarmed HILDY is peeking out.

HARRY
 My darling! You found someplace we can
 be alone!

In utter terror, HILDY yanks the door shut with a bang.

HILDY
 (screaming)
 Get away from me, Harry!

HARRY
 (pounding on door)
 90 seconds! That's all I ask!

WILKIE
 (passing him)
 You ol' sweet talker, Harry.

ALAN
 Let her file in peace, Harry.

CRICKET
 (offering drink to Wilkie)
 Good morning, sir. Breakfast?

WILKIE
 (drinking two bloody marys)
 Thank you.

CRICKET
 (smiling)
 I'm Cricket.

WILKIE
 I'm game, too.

ALAN
 I'm Dan Rather. Take off your clothes.

MATTY
 (shouting)
 C'mon, c'mon! Move it along!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

10

As WILKIE and ALAN survey the main cabin, their expressions convey a mixture of wonder and contempt. The Zoo Plane has already taken on its special character. Technicians have blocked the aisles with piles of expensive television and sound equipment, and the overhead racks are stuffed with their duffle bags, slickers and camera cases. A Dolly Parton cassette has been put on the aircraft sound system. Four Holiday Inn keys, the first of many, have already been taped to the forward partition, and in the aft cabin, two TV technicians are affixing to the wall a novelty poster of Jimmy Carter in a Jesus hairdo. A Secret Service agent is glowering at them menacingly from behind a pair of Treasury Department-issued sun glasses.

A few beer cans and plastic cups have already hit the floor. As the trip progresses, the empties proliferate a good deal faster than the stewardesses can dispose of them, making travel up and down the aisle genuinely hazardous. Occasionally, when the plane encounters turbulence during a descent, the cans and bottles are all set in motion simultaneously, in which case the cockpit is suddenly awash in a wave of clattering tin and glass.

HOOTCH and MURPH are stowing their equipment near the rear, where a gaggle of foreign correspondents are heatedly arguing over seat assignments in the languages of their respective nationalities.

MURPH

(to the New Delhi Times reporter
blocking his way)

Hey, willya move your ass, Mohammed?

(to Hootch)

Jesus, why can't these goddamn people
learn to speak the language?

HOOTCH

Why should they?

MURPH

As a fuckin' courtesy. Look at you,
you learned.

HOOTCH

Had no choice. Even the Viet Cong
spoke English.

MURPH

Next thing you know they'll be bringing
their fuckin' goats with 'em..

MURPH rips the pop-top off a Budweiser. Suds spray over everyone within twenty feet.

11 INT. - FORWARD CABIN, ZOO PLANE

11

WILKIE has just found his seat. As he tosses his football blanket into the overhead rack, he looks down to meet the expectant gaze of his seatmate, one SHELLY FEINER, 22, an earnest, fuzzyhaired intern reporter for the Columbia Journalism Review. WILKIE winces and reaches for his portable typewriter.

SHELLY

Hi.

WILKIE

(letting down tray table)

'Lo.

WILKIE's mind is racing to invent feasible ways to avoid the conversation ahead.

SHELLY

My name's Shelly Feiner. I'm with the Columbia Journalism Review. I'm doing a piece on the press.

WILKIE

(feeding paper into his typewriter)

Look, honey, I'm kinda under the gun..

SHELLY

Hey, give me a break. Who said I was going to hit on you?

WILKIE

(typing)

Not taking any chances. Shouldn't you be in school studying Watergate?

SHELLY

Term break. Besides, I saw the movie, and I've concluded that that story could have happened to anyone. You, me, any of us. As Carl Bernstein's ex-wife said, "If I'd known the little fucker was going to overthrow the government, I never would have divorced him." That's the real lesson of Watergate as far as I'm concerned. It gets down to luck and who blows the assignment editor..

WILKIE has stopped typing and is staring at her.

Remember when Tad Szulc was sent to Czechoslovakia for the Times in '68? A real backwater, right? The shmuck arrives in Prague an hour before a quarter million Soviet troops.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

11

SHELLY (cont.)

The man's on page one for three weeks.
 So what can you do, right? This might
 be the trip the President gets popped.
 You guys'll be riding the story of the
 decade, and I'll be right behind you.
 On the other hand, I may only walk away
 with two 500 word sidebars and John
 Chancellor's autograph. Either way, don't
 give me a second thought. My god, what
 is that?

She has just noticed ALAN, who has been standing in the
 aisle holding two large tumblers.

ALAN

(handing one to Wilkie)
 Beer and orange juice. Mixed media.
 You have a very baroque mind, young
 lady.

SHELLY

(reaches over to shake his hand)
 Shelly Feiner, CJR. You're required
 reading over in our corner of the world,
 Mr. Farley. The best short-order analy-
 sis in town.

ALAN (modestly)

It's all in the rewrite.

SHELLY

Listen, I'm doing a piece on the traveling
 press. Might even be a book in it later
 down the line. I'd like to talk to you
 sometime if I may, Alan.

ALAN

Please, call me Alan.
 (to Wilkie)
 I like your taste in enfants terribles.
 (to Shelly)
 I'll get back to you, miss.

WILKIE

Don't leave me here.

A beer can sails by ALAN's head.

ALAN

Enjoy the flight.

12 INT. - ZOO PLANE

12

ALAN is looking for his seat tag. As he makes his way down the aisle, HARRY waves to him from the back of the plane.

HARRY

Farley! Your seat's back here,
old boy!

ALAN

Be right there, old man.

ALAN ducks down into the vacant seat next to LIZ, who has a large, red vinyl White House briefing book open on her lap. She is sipping from a glass of orange juice while she makes notes.

LIZ

(without looking up)
I don't believe that's your seat,
Alan.

ALAN

(buckling in)
This is an emergency. It's either
you or Harry.

LIZ

I'm flattered.

ALAN turns around and removes name tag from the headrest.

ALAN

"Kazuyoski Hishiki, Kyodo News
Service."

(crumpling up tag)
Hell, I'm probably doing you a favor.

LIZ

Figures.

ALAN

(looking over at briefing book)
Waist-deep in White House factoids,
I see.

LIZ ignores him.

ALAN

(reading over her shoulder)
"Edward Giersek. First Secretary of
the Polish United Workers' Party

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

12

ALAN (cont.)
since December of 1970. Previously
served as First Secretary of the
Katowice PZPR Committee. Also a
member of Politburo since 1957,
elected to the Council of State
in 1976.. " Yes, yes, but what's
his earned run average? Jesus, Liz,
isn't it a little early in the trip
for general anesthesia?

LIZ
Alan, do you mind?

ALAN
C'mon, Liz, you've been here before.
Carter's scheduled to spend about a
half hour with Gierek. After you take
away the time for translation, that's
less than most people spend on a wrong
phone number..

LIZ
Alan, don't you have anything better
to do than..

ALAN
(draining his drink)
I know, I know. UPI has already moved
16,000 words this morning, and I'm
still having breakfast.

ANNIE is stro' - up the aisle with a stack of Press
Office handou ..

ANNIE
Pool list, pool list, bible to follow.
You folks need one?

LIZ
(taking one)
Thanks, Annie.

ALAN
Don't tell me. I'm on the motorcade.

ANNIE
(looking at schedule)
Good guess, hon. Someone mad at you?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

12

ALAN
(smiling)
Something like that. What sort of facilities do we have at Okacie, Annie?

ANNIE
I think you're about to find out, hon.

13 INT. - ZOO PLANE

13

MATTY is standing at the front of the plane. He is holding a cup of coffee in one hand and the P.A. system microphone in the other.

MATTY
Ladies and gentlemen, if I may just have your attention for a moment, we'll be able to get under way. I want to welcome y'all aboard TWA luxury liner flight 302, your home and ours for the next ten days. I'm sure y'all are acquainted with the dandy safety features of this aircraft. Oxygen masks will drop in your laps if needed, and life preservers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Emergency exits are located on both sides of the aircraft, although as a courtesy to our host countries, they've all been welded shut..

All of this received with much merriment. A maraschino cherry zips into MATTY's ear.

MATTY (cont.)
Our ETA Warsaw is 11:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. EST, so there's plenty of time to set up for the evening feeds. There will be 10 LD's and 2 Multis available at Okacie International Airport to serve your electronic needs. If y'all have any other requirements, see Annie or Carolyn as soon as your schedules permit. Remember, folks, your White House Press Advance staff is here to serve you. But they can't help you if you won't let them. Enjoy the flight.

Howls of laughter and jeers, as MATTY is buried under dozens of breakfast rolls.

CONTINUED

13

ALAN

(to Liz)

How did Matty ever pass the audition?

ALAN feels a hand on his shoulder. He looks up to see a grinning ELLIOT.

ELLIOT

Hey, sport. Worked out your feeding schedule with the help yet?

ALAN

Jesus Christ. Look what the cat dragged in.

ELLIOT

Democracy in action, what, Farley? Hip, hip for the Great Unwashed, regardless of race, color, or standing on the evolutionary scale.

ALAN

(mimicking him)

Brandon, is Long Island Lockjaw a family trait, or do they make you take it in boarding school?

ELLIOT

(enjoying this)

Now, now, Alan, let's not get personal. I don't make the travel decisions, I'm only paid to..

ALAN

(getting up)

Paid. I knew it. Another world-class asshole turns pro.

ELLIOT laughs as ALLAN makes good his escape. He ducks into the forward galley and grabs two bottles of beer from the cooler. Across the aisle, MATTY and CRICKET are trying to coax HILDY out of the lavatory.

CRICKET

Mrs. Meyerson? Mrs. Meyerson?

MATTY

C'mon, Hildy, honey, we can't take off until you're in your seat.

CONTINUED

HILDY

No! I'm not going back there!
That man's an animal! He's a
sex maniac!

CRICKET

Harry wouldn't hurt you, Mrs.
Meyerson..

MATTY

Hildy? Hildy, listen, darlin',
you gotta come out. The President
would want you to come out of
that lavatory..

HILDY

The President?

MATTY

That's right, Hildy. The President's
dependin' on you to get to your seat
so we can take off on time.

The latch slides open. Hildy peers out.

HILDY

The President?

MATTY

That's right, darlin'.
(to Cricket)
Show Hildy her seat, okay, babe?

HILDY

(to Cricket)
The President's depending on me.

ALAN

Nobody likes a name dropper, Hildy.

ALAN moves on towards the cockpit. He passes a Secret
Service agent hunched on the jump seat near the forward
hatch. He is listening to a Motorola Handi Talker.

AGENT #1 (v.o.)

All cars and stations, Signal, five
and nine Charlie! All cars and sta-
tions, Signal, five and nine Charlie!

AGENT #2

This is Acrobat, Signal. Do you have
a depart on Nighthawk?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

13

AGENT #1 (v.o.)
Affirmative, Acrobat. You may proceed.

AGENT #2
Roger.

The AGENT sticks his head into the cockpit, where the crew is making last minute checks.

AGENT #2
We have a departure, Captain. Let's roll.

PILOT
You got it. Start three.

The co-pilot depresses the start switch for the number three engine.

CO-PILOT
Rotation.

ALAN drops down into the observer's seat and takes out a pair of sunglasses.

ALAN
(to Navigator)
'Morning, Charlie.

NAVIGATOR
(glancing over his shoulder)
Hey, Alan. Good to see ya, buddy.
Thought you'd be on Pan Am.

ALAN
Why does everyone keep saying that?

NAVIGATOR
(returning to check list)
You fellahs know Alan Farley.

PILOT
(without looking back)
Hey, Farley, been a while.

ALAN
China. With Ford.

PILOT
Right. Start four.

CO-PILOT
Rotation on four.

CONTINUED

PILOT glances at the window at the ground crew chief, who gives him an all-clear signal.

PILOT

Let's go for four. Give me one and two.

CO-PILOT

You have rotation on one and two.

PILOT

How do you know? There're on my side.

CO-PILOT

Figured if they weren't on you'd say something.

ALAN

You guys fly together often?

PILOT

(into headset)

Good morning, Control. This is eighty-seven-ninety Heavy taxiing for takeoff.

TOWER (v.o.)

Roger, eighty-seven-ninety Heavy.
Cleared for takeoff runway 8-F.
Contact Departure Control one--
nineteen-seven when airborne.

PILOT

Roger, Control.
(to Navigator)
Rudder pump.

NAVIGATOR

Check.

PILOT

Altimeters. Emergency brake pressure.

NAVIGATOR.

Check, check.

PILOT

Max power. Tallyho.

As the PILOT nears the limit of the thrust lever, he releases the brakes. The plane begins gathering speed.

14 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

14

WILKIE looks out his window and then turns quickly in his seat.

WILKIE

Deitz! 45 seconds to V-R!

DEITZ

(glancing at his watch)

40 seconds. Five bucks.

WILKIE

You're crazy, man, we're heavy.

DEITZ

40 seconds.

WILKIE drops back into his seat and stares intently out the window at the ground rushing by.

15 INT. - ZOO PLANE - COCKPIT

15

The PILOT is gently rocking the yoke. ALAN is watching the takeoff over his shoulder.

PILOT

Flaps.

CO-PILOT

(glancing upward)

Okay.

PILOT

What's the payload, Charlie?

NAVIGATOR

We're going heavy. But it's cold.

(a beat)

PILOT

Shit. Where's our V-1?

16 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

16

WILKIE is watching the second hand of his watch.

WILKIE

40...41...42... Outclassed again, Deitz.

With a big grin, WILKIE turns around to look at DEITZ. DEITZ and everyone else on the plane are looking nervously out the windows. The aircraft is still not airborne.

WILKIE

Holy shit.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

16

HARRY
(shouting)
Rotation, goddammit!

17 INT. - ZOO PLANE - COCKPIT

17

As he watches the end of the runway rush towards them,
ALAN grows alarmed.

ALAN
What's the matter?

NAVIGATOR
We've got V-1.

PILOT
No abort.

CO-PILOT
3,000 feet.

ALAN closes his eyes.

CO-PILOT
1,500 feet.
(a beat)
We've got rotation...and liftoff.

18 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

18

Pandemonium. Cheers and applause shake the cabin.

WILKIE
(shouting hysterically)
Fif... x fucking seconds! A
godda... record!

19 INT. - ZOO PLANE - COCKPIT

19

ALAN is slumped in his seat, still limp with fear. Nobody
speaks as the plane moves through its early ascent. Finally,
the PILOT removes his headset and flips off the "no smoking"
switch.

PILOT
Charlie?

NAVIGATOR
Sir?

PILOT
Go get me some toilet paper.

20 EXT. - ZOO PLANE

20

TWA flight 302 is cruising smoothly at 39,000 feet.

21 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN - TWO HOURS LATER

21

Socializing is in full swing. Reporters and teckies are standing in the aisles, hanging onto the overhead racks like commuters, drinking and exchanging stories. The mid-section of the plane has been converted into a make-shift press office, where stacks of handouts, boxes of mimeograph paper, typewriter cases, etc., have been piled haphazardly. In the center of all the confusion, a card game is in progress. WILKIE, DEITZ, HARRY and MATTY are playing "switch", a kind of round robin blackjack, while SHELLY looks on. Everyone but MATTY and SHELLY has been drinking heavily.

WILKIE

It was on the '71 Warsaw trip,
right, Harry? You on the Warsaw
trip, Deitz? With Nixon?

HARRY

(to Wilkie)

You're dating yourself, Yastrzemski.
In 1971, Walter was a mere wisp of
a bursary boy, working his way
through Vassar.

WILKIE

(to Deitz)

Vassar? No shit?

DEITZ

I was a legacy. My mother went.

MATTY

(dealing)

Are you in, Wilkie?

WILKIE

(throwing in a five)

Yeah..shit, where was I?

SHELLY

The Nixon trip.

WILKIE

Right. I was on the Air Force One
pool out of Andrews, see. About
ten minutes before we land in
Warsaw, that little prick Chapin
calls us forward and hits us with

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

21

WILKIE (cont.)

a fuckin' Polish joke embargo. You know, we're guests in their country, so don't be assholes and all that shit.

(to Matty)

Hit me. So anyway. we all promise to put a lid on the ethnic slurs, right, but then we land and look out the window, and damn if the Polish tarmac jockeys aren't rollin' the fuckin' stairway up to the wrong side of the plane. And then they get it over on the right side and the goddamn thing's two feet too short..

DEITZ

(convulsed with laughter)

No!

HARRY

It's true! It's true!

WILKIE

And Tricky's standin' there wavin', actin' like nothin's wrong, and fuckin' Chapin's turnin' blue trying not to laugh and we're all on the floor wetting our goddamn pants!

By the end of the story, everyone but SHELLY is doubled over with laughter.

SHELLY

(scribbling in her notebook)

I never read anything about that story. Was it reported?

HARRY

(looking up)

Who is this chick?

22

INT. - ZOO PLANE

22

ALAN is nursing a cup of bourbon while LIZ sews a button on her coat. A soliloquy is in progress.

ALAN

(stubbing out a cigarette)

You know what my editor said to me before I left? "We're going to be looking for some solid sidebars out of you, Alan." Can you feature that? I'm the new color man, like Joe

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

22

ALAN (cont.)

Garagiola. And I'm not alone. We've got stringers at every stop. I handle the pomp, they cover the ceremony. For this, I'm missing my kid's big hockey game. Ordinarily, that would be forgivable, but I didn't even know he played hockey. What does that tell you, Liz?

LIZ

(without looking up)

That tells me you're never home. What it doesn't tell me is why you're so damn proud of it.

ALAN

Liz, I'm not proud of anything. I..

LIZ

Alan, is there some mystique that's escaped me all this time? Is there something exotic about the casual affair, the long-suffering spouse, the unsigned report cards? I mean, I'm a reporter, too. Why don't I find these things appealing?

ALAN

You knew my life was a mess when we met.

LIZ

Yes, Alan, but what I didn't know was that you preferred it that way. Alan, you love being a son of a bitch. You think it goes with the territory, that not knowing how to care makes you a goddamn genius.

ALAN

That's not real fair, Liz..

LIZ

What's fair, Alan? Was falling in love in Fort Worth during a Gerry Ford campaign speech fair?

ALAN

It was unusual.

LIZ

That's what I mean, Alan. Only you would fall in love to avoid being bored.

23 EXT. - OKACIE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

23

TWA flight 302 lands and taxis up to the arrival area of Warsaw Airport. Because it carries the technical personnel and the broadcast equipment, the Zoo Plane is always the first to arrive. It is followed some 15 minutes later by its sister press plane, carrying the regulars, and then, an hour later, by Air Force One.

A large reception area has been flood-lit and cordoned off for the arrival ceremonies. A red carpet leads from the edge of the tarmac to the welcome platform, in front of which a full honor guard has already been assembled. The sides of the arrival terminals are festooned with flags and long white banners bearing strangely-worded admonitions like "Long Live Lasting and Victorious Peace" and "Cordially Welcome to Poland President Jimmy Carter". Off to one corner, Polish officials wrapped in thick, gray overcoats are stamping their feet to keep warm. In back of them, burly security agents keep watch over the small, well-behaved crowd which has gathered for the President's arrival.

24 INT. - ZOO PLANE - NIGHT

24

Passengers are stretching and putting on their coats as MATTY's voice comes over the PA system.

MATTY

Ladies and gentlemen, if I may just have your attention, please. We had a heckuva little headwind comin' over the cap tonight, so we're running a little late. We'd appreciate it if you'd disembark as quickly as possible so we can get this bird out of the way. Please take all your personal belongings with you, as the ground crew will be hosin' down the cabin after you leave. Have a real good time and we'll be seein' y'all in a couple days.

The general noise level throughout the cabin would indicate that nobody has been paying much attention to MATTY's send-off. Camera crews are pulling their equipment out of the racks, and reporters are pulling on their coats, patting their pockets for notebooks and pens. Although everyone on the plane has been through dozens of arrival ceremonies, there is nonetheless an air of expectancy.

HARRY

(looking around)

Staff? Staff? Where are my little people?

CONTINUED

24

MURPH
(belching)
Right behind you, asshole.

HARRY
My god, O'Brien, put on a tie.
This is Poland. Hootch, I want
an echo on the audio tonight.
Remember, we're overseas.

While everyone pushes towards the exit, WILKIE alone remains immobile. He has his football blanket wrapped around him and his cap pulled down over his eyes.

SHELLY
Wilkie? Wilkie? We're here.

WILKIE
(sniffling)
I heard.

SHELLY
You okay?

HARRY claps WILKIE on the shoulder.

HARRY
Ah, proud Wilkie. Malingering again?

WILKIE sneezes violently.

HARRY
(to Shelly)
I'm afraid he gets like this whenever he's sober.
(to his crew)
We'll just have to leave him behind, poor bastard. God, I hate to think what those stewardesses will do to him. Well, c'est la guerre. Let's go, men!

Buckles and epaulets flapping, Harry bounds down the aisle.

25 EXT. - ARRIVAL AREA - WARSAW AIRPORT - ONE HOUR LATER

25

Most of the broadcasting equipment has been unpacked and assembled on the two large reviewing stands situated to one side of the arrival area. Engineers are hunkered over their consoles, testing outgoing lines and adjusting their audio levels. The print journalists are milling around in front of the stands eyeballing the Polish security agents, large, beefy men with wide, unsmiling faces. Over to the far left of the

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

25

stand, presumably where the arriving Presidential plane will make a suitable backdrop, the television correspondents are rehearsing their stand-ups, some of which will be transmitted live to the evening news programs in New York.

Perched on the bottom tier of the press stand and still wrapped in his blanket, a miserable-looking WILKIE is watching the correspondents block out their routines. Next to him a network radio engineer is carrying on a patter into his headset.

ENGINEER

We've got two CBS on-sceners on deck. As soon as they dump the wire, we can feed 'em. There might be some actuality of Carter on the second one. We should know for sure by 5:45 EST..

Directly in front of the press stand, HARRY is trying to elicit a comment from an uncomprehending ten year old Polish girl dressed in traditional folk costume and carrying a bouquet of flowers. The official attending her is glowering at HARRY.

HARRY

(to official)

Is this the kid who gives the President the flowers?

(to girl)

What's your name, honey? What do you think of detente?

MURPH is crouching to one side with his mini-cam.

MURPH

You're blocking the shot, Harry.

HARRY

For God's sake, man, don't shoot up on me. You'll get all my chins.

WILKIE grimaces and slides down off the press stand. He strolls over to join ALAN, who is watching LIZ run through her stand-up.

LIZ

(checking her stopwatch)

Although the Administration officially denies any such motive, there is little question that Poland was chosen in part because it provides Mr. Carter with a

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

25

LIZ (cont.)

Communist forum for reaffirming his stand on human rights. Certainly Rosalynn Carter's visit tomorrow with Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski will be widely viewed as..Damn, Ralph, this is going to be about eight or nine over..

PRODUCER

That's alright, Liz, we've got a little room. I don't think the walk-by is going to make it in.

The PRODUCER confers with her over a clipboard.

WILKIE

(to Alan)

The chick's okay, isn't she?

ALAN

Yeah. But take away her good looks, her voice and her brains and she's nothing.

WILKIE

Did you talk?

ALAN

Sort of. She critiqued, I listened. It seems she's not attracted by shabbiness.

WILKIE

Now she tells you.

(a beat)

Look, I'm going into the hotel. I'm coming down with something. You wanna come?

ALAN

Nah, you go ahead. I'll stay here and keep an eye on the herd.

WILKIE

Catch you later.

WILKIE pulls up his collar and walks off in the direction of the arrival terminal. As he lets himself through the security gate, he is spied by SHELLY, who is sitting on the end of the press bleachers scribbling in her notebook. SHELLY runs to catch up with him.

CONTINUED

SHELLY

Hey, Wilkie! Where you going?

WILKIE

(quickenig his pace)
To the hotel.

SHELLY

What for?

WILKIE

To file.

SHELLY

But the President hasn't landed yet.

WILKIE

That's my lead.

SHELLY

(struggling to keep up)
Mind if I come along?

WILKIE

Suit yourself.

They are approaching the parking lot. WILKIE stops and looks around.

SHELLY

How are we going to get in? The
mini-bus won't be leaving until
after the ceremonies.

WILKIE

(nodding)
There we go.

CONTINUED 4

25

A long, grey limousine is parked near the curb. A small sign with the NBC logo has been taped inside the front window. The CHAUFFEUR is leaning against the hood smoking a cigarette. As WILKIE catches his eye, the CHAUFFEUR snaps to attention.

CHAUFFEUR
(in heavy Polish accent)
Mr. Chancellor?

Without missing a beat, WILKIE nods and reaches for the door.

WILKIE
That's right. The Intercontinental
Hotel, my good man.

The CHAUFFEUR tosses them a crisp salute and jumps into the front seat. As the big car glides away from the curb, we hear the deafening scream of jet engines as Air Force One makes its final approach.

26 INT. - LIMOUSINE

26

SHELLY is looking around apprehensively as WILKIE investigates the built-in bar and console.

SHELLY
Mr. Chancellor? Jesus, do you know
what you're doing?

WILKIE
We had no choice. I'm not a well
man. Hello, what's this?

WILKIE has found a miniature television in the console. He turns it on and starts twirling the channel selector. All the channels feature one program; the arrival of Air Force One. WILKIE leans back in his seat and cracks open a beer.

WILKIE
There you go. We're not missin' a
thing.

27 INT. LIMOUSINE, TEN MINUTES LATER

27

WILKIE and SHELLY are staring intently at the arrival ceremonies. WILKIE is munching on a sandwich he has found in the portable refrigerator. SHELLY is busy taking notes, even though the v.o. is in Polish. One gets the sense she is writing for her diary more than any publication.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

27

WILKIE

(pointing to the t.v.)

There he is. There's my commander-in-chief.

CHAUFFEUR

(over his shoulder)

Have you been to Warsaw before, Mr. Chancellor?

WILKIE

(looking out the window)

Uh..no. But I hear it's a beautiful city.

(to Shelly)

Jesus, it looks like it was built by the Army Corps of Engineers.

SHELLY

Wouldn't you love to have the gray paint franchise in this town?

CHAUFFEUR

Warsaw was mostly destroyed during the war. Many people died. I lost my whole family. My mother, my father, both my sisters.

SHELLY and WILKIE exchange embarrassed glances.

SHELLY

Your English is very good.

28 EXT. - INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - WARSAW - NIGHT

28

The limousine pulls up in front of the hotel. As a smartly dressed doorman tips his hat in welcome, the CHAUFFEUR jumps out and opens the passenger door.

CHAUFFEUR

My name is Kazimierz Adamski, Mr. Chancellor. If you have any further need of the car in Warsaw, I am at your service.

The CHAUFFEUR hands WILKIE a card. WILKIE glances at it, smiles and slips it into his shirt pocket.

WILKIE

Thank you, Mr. Adamski. I'll certainly do that.

WILKIE, followed by SHELLY, enters the hotel with an aplomb fully worthy of his assumed identity.

29 INT. - INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY

29

WILKIE and SHELLY are registering at a long table covered with press credentials, hotel keys and mounds of propaganda from the Polish Ministry of Information. The functionaries receiving them speak only rudimentary English. WILKIE is pointing to his name on his White House I.D.

WILKIE

Turner. Turner. T-u-r-n-e-r.
Wilkie Turner, Nashville
Tennessean.

The woman OFFICIAL trying to help him is obviously distracted by WILKIE's appearance. Somehow, a sneezing, mustachioed first baseman wrapped in an Ole Miss football blanket was not quite what she expected. She finally locates his packet and presents it to him with a proud grin.

POLISH OFFICIAL

Welcome cordially to Poland. Lasting
victory between our two peoples.

WILKIE

(lifting beer can in salute)
Right. Thank you.
(aside, to Shelly)
As an old NATO man, I don't like the
sound of that.

SHELLY

(to Official)
Feiner. Shelly Feiner.

WILKIE points to the door behind the OFFICIAL.

WILKIE

Press room? Is that the press room?

The OFFICIAL nods vigorously.

POLISH OFFICIAL

Yes, Yes. For press.

WILKIE picks up his typewriter and briefing book, and without waiting for SHELLY, makes a beeline for the press room.

The press facilities for visiting members of the White House press corps do not vary much from country to country, largely because all of the arrangements are routinely handled by the White House Press Advance Office. The press room is generally a converted banquet room with around thirty long, narrow tables covered with white tableclothes and pro-

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

29

ective sheets of clear plastic. Ashtrays are everywhere and about twenty typewriters stand at the ready, although these are generally ignored in favor of the reporters' own tinny portable Olivettis.

A small briefing podium has been set up in the front of the room. It is flanked by two standing flags and a pair of brass urns filled with plastic flowers. Behind it, a dark blue curtain serves as television backdrop. Off to the right, a screened-off door leads to the White House Press Office operation. Partitions have been moved in to form makeshift offices for the respective Press Secretaries of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. A few low-level flacks and secretaries are already at work typing up schedules and pool lists for the next day's activities.

WILKIE is perusing the hand-out table when he notices a small group of Polish journalists gathered around a large television monitor which has been set up in the rear of the room. They are watching Carter give his arrival speech, and for no discernible reason, they are giggling uncontrollably. Curiosity aroused, WILKIE wanders over to join them.

WILKIE

Hi, there. Anyone here speak English?

POLISH JOURNALIST

Yes, I do. May I be of service?

Out of courtesy, the JOURNALIST is trying hard to hold back a smile.

WILKIE

Uh... May I ask why everyone's laughing?

JOURNALIST

It is Mr. Carter's translator. His Polish is very..inventive.

All the journalists laugh again. They do not wish to offend the American reporter, but they are not used to hearing their language so badly garbled. WILKIE smiles and slowly removes his notepad from his pocket.

WILKIE

(gesturing to T.V.)

Oh, yeah? What's he saying?

JOURNALIST

Well, your President just said he left Washington this morning. The

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

29

JOURNALIST (cont'd)
translation was that he "abandonned
Washington for good."

WILKIE
Well, he's been under a lot of
pressure lately.

The translator mangles another phrase. This time the
journalists howl with laughter.

WILKIE
What now? What'd he say?

JOURNALIST
Carter just alluded to our "hopes
for the future". The translator
changed it to our "future sexual
desires".

WILKIE
(delighted)
I'll be back, okay? Don't go away.

WILKIE races back to the Press Office hand-out table. ANNIE
looks up from her typewriter as WILKIE frantically rummages
through the stacks of schedules.

ANNIE
Can I help you, Wilkie, honey?

WILKIE
Where's the arrival remarks?
You got a text?

ANNIE
Sorry, hon, they were working on
that speech on Air Force One coming
over tonight. We won't have it for
another fifteen minutes or so.

WILKIE
What do you know about the translator?

ANNIE
Not much. He's State Department, I
imagine. Why?

WILKIE
Keep him away from the SALT negotiations.

30 INT. - PRESS ROOM -30 MINUTES LATER

30

SHELLY and WILKIE are seated at a table on the far side of the room. WILKIE is pounding away furiously at his typewriter when the doors to the press room burst open. The rest of the traveling press has just arrived, and there is now a great flurry of activity as the print reporters rush to file before their papers close. Over on one side of the room, teletype operators from Western Union, ITT World Communications, and RCA stand ready to receive copy for immediate transmission back to the United States.

As usual, HARRY is leading the herd, with ALAN not far behind.

HARRY
(seeing WILKIE)
Hey, what the hell is this? Dammit,
Wilkie, you're supposed to be on
your deathbed.

ALAN
Or at least in the bar.

HARRY
Why is that man typing? I want an
explanation.

ALAN
It's that dumb, cracker paper he
works for. When you only got one
college graduate, you gotta play
him hurt.

WILKIE ignores them. HARRY strips off his trenchcoat, revealing a khaki safari leisure suit. A Swiss Army knife dangles from his breast pocket.

ALAN
Harry, do you have epaulets on your
underwear, too?

HARRY
I don't wear underwear, my good man.
At least not when I'm on a mission.

ALAN has taken his binoculars out and is focusing on the copy in WILKIE's typewriter.

ALAN
I wonder what our boy's on to..
(a pause)
Shit. No.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

30

ALAN walks over to WILKIE and peers over his shoulder.

ALAN
whatcha got here, ace?

SHELLY
The only story in town. No
filching.

WILKIE
(still typing)
Our leader had a bad night. His
speech was just translated over
national television into impeccable,
100-year-old illiterate Polish.

SHELLY
Except for the parts that were in
Russian.

ALAN
(reading)
"Even far from home, the spectre of
lust continues to stalk the American
Presidency. Citing Poland's 'sexual
desires for the future..'"
(taking out notebook)
This is great. May I help myself?

WILKIE
Might as well. The wires picked it
up at the airport.

ALAN
This is truly great. Got any reaction?

WILKIE
No. Can't fit it in anyway. I'm going
to have to do a follow-up for the
next cycle.

ALAN
Look, I think the Poles are giving
some sort of reception over at the
Ministry of Mind Control. Why don't
we hit that?

WILKIE
I can't, man. I'm sicker than a dog.
And I got pool in the morning.

WILKIE rips the sheet of copy out of his typewriter.

Western!

The Western Union representative rushes over to WILKIE's

CONTINUED 2

30

WILKIE (cont'd)
Nashville Tennessean. Tell them I'm
topping the story I filed earlier.

WESTERN UNION REP
You got it. I'll leave your copy at
the desk.

WILKIE
(zipping up his typewriter case)
Jesus, what a day. Whatever I've got,
I hope it likes valium.

31 INT. - MINISTRY OF INFORMATION - RECEPTION HALL

31

A noisy cocktail party is in progress. It is being hosted by the Polish Ministry of Public Information, whose smiling, ubiquitous officers seem to be laboring under the delusion that they are in the same business as their guests. The American reporters, of course, are having none of it. They are there only for the free booze; most of them have long since shed any pretense of acting as de facto good will ambassadors. Standing next to a long table covered with trays of small vodka glasses, MURPH and HOOTCH are munching hors d'oeuvres while an earnest, bespeckled bureaucrat asks polite questions about their craft.

BUREAUCRAT
How long have you and Mr. Hootch
been working together, Mr. O'Brien?

MURPH fills his mouth with a deviled egg before replying.

MURPH
Since 'Nam in '75, back when the ARVN
regs were first getting their asses
whipped up in the Highlands. The Bureau
wanted some film, and they used to pay
double scale for combat time, triple
if it was on a weekend, so I volun-
teered. I needed a teckie who knew
the area, and Hootch here was the only
friendly with enough balls to fly up
there with me. So the next day, we took
a Huey gunship up north with a cav unit.
Fuckin' baptism of fire, man. If Charlie
hadn't run out of ammo, we'd have been
a sorry pair of greased mothafucks,
right, Hootch?

The BUREAUCRAT is staring at MURPH blankly. He is trying
to wrap his brain around what he has just heard.

BUREAUCRAT
So is this your first visit to Poland?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

31

Over in another part of the room, ALAN and DEITZ are talking with the Polish Minister of Information through an interpreter.

DEITZ

Mr. Walchinsky, do you think the Polish people might have been offended by the unfortunate use of Russian syntax in the translation of Mr. Carter's speech?

The INTERPRETER translates the question into Polish. The Minister nods his head gravely and replies.

INTERPRETER

Mr. Walchinsky says, no, why would they be offended? Our Russian friends are much beloved by the Polish people.

DEITZ

(smiling)

Well, ask him if he personally was amused. Especially by the reference to "sexual desires".

The Interpreter poses the question. The Minister does not smile as he replies.

INTERPRETER

Mr. Walchinsky begs your indulgence if he does not find the reference particularly amusing.

With a curt nod the Minister turns away.

DEITZ

(to Alan)

What'd I say?

ALAN

For Christ's sake, Deitz. The last people to express any carnal interest in Poland stayed for six years.

32 INT. - HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL - ALAN'S ROOM - HOURS LATER

32

It is now 4 a.m. Warsaw time. The party has moved to ALAN's hotel room. DEITZ and HARRY and several other reporters are sitting on the floor drinking out of plastic cups, while ALAN tries to reach room service on the phone. DEITZ's customary reserve has been severely compromised by the local vodka.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

32.

DEITZ

I'm telling you, it was incredible. You couldn't talk about the fuckin' weather without the Holocaust coming up.

HARRY

My God, Deitz, where is your fabled humanity? How would you feel if 87% of Greenwich, Connecticut, had been burned to the ground? Have you no sense of proportion?

(philosophically)

It is funny the things people remember, though.

ALAN

(on the phone)

Yeah, this is room 1362. I ordered four steaks about an hour ago. 1362.. Yes, this is the third time I've called. Yes, 1362. Steaks. And four beers. On their way. Right. Thank you.

ALAN hangs up in disgust.

ALAN (cont'd)

I don't believe this country.

HARRY

Brief encounters with the third world.

DEITZ

Alan, didn't you file an insert on the mad interpreter?

ALAN

Yeah, I lead my story with it. Why?

DEITZ

It's not in, man. I saw your piece on the incoming telex on my way up. If it's in the story, it's been buried.

A pained expression slowly crosses ALAN's face.

ALAN

Shit. That's great. That's just fucking magnificent.

CONTINUED

HARRY

I'm sure there's a good explanation, old man. You probably beat the wires. Without corroboration, your editors wisely concluded you made it all up.

ALAN

(getting up)

That's it. I quit.

DEITZ

Here we go again.

ALAN

I mean it. I've had it with this crap. I'm quitting.

HARRY

Over what? A common rewrite? It's not even worth the paperwork. Good Lord, man, if you must fall on your sword, at least let it be over something important. A war, a woman, a salary dispute.

ALAN slams his open hand against the wall.

ALAN

Shit.

33 INT. - ALAN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

33

The first light of morning reveals the debris of the previous night's undoing. ALAN is lying asleep on his bed, still fully dressed.

Someone is knocking insistently on the door.

ALAN

(calling out)

Yeah?

There is no reply. The knocking continues. ALAN painfully drags himself out of bed.

ALAN

I'm coming, I'm coming.

He opens the door. A smiling waiter stands next to four rolling tables bearing a total of 16 steaks.

WAITER

Room service.

34 INT. - HOTEL HALLWAY - 15 MINUTES LATER

34

ALAN is wearing a blue and white jogging suit with a small nylon backpack. He is trotting down a hotel hallway, glancing at the cardboard name cards taped on each door as he passes. Seeing LIZ's name, he stops at her room and knocks. There is no answer. He walks on.

35 INT. - HOTEL ELEVATOR

35

ALAN is standing in front of the hotel elevator. The door opens to reveal a carload of reporters, technicians, and their equipment. HARRY is standing with his arm around an extremely uncomfortable elevator girl. ALAN gets on.

HARRY

Third floor. Lingerie.

(seeing Alan)

Ah, proud Farley! Back on the payroll, I see.

(gesturing to girl)

You know Sasha, of course. What's with the sportswear?

ALAN

Thought I'd see a little of the city. But only because I'm disgusted by the other options. You ought to try it.

HARRY

Jogging? I thought you had to be a lawyer.

ALAN

Well, you do, but they never check.

(as the elevator door opens)

Hope you get good camera today, Harry. See you later.

36 EXT. - HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL - DAY

36

ALAN is running in place outside the hotel, surveying the avenue. Spotting an opening, he dodges through traffic and takes off for the park.

There is a slow, grey drizzle falling on the city as ALAN picks his way through the puddles. Here and there he passes a dirty, melting snowbank lying in the shadow of a tree. ALAN scoops up a few snowballs, which he hurls at street lights as he runs along. A lone gendarme on patrol watches with disapproval. With a glance at his watch, ALAN picks up his pace.

35 EXT. - VICTORY SQUARE - WARSAW

35

At a slow jog, ALAN is reading a pocket map of the city. He looks up occasionally to get his bearings, but seems to have no real sense of where he's going. Circling a large, ornate fountain at the end of the park, he suddenly pulls up short. Two large Polish riot policemen are blocking his path.

About fifty yards beyond them, ALAN can see Victory Square and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Martial music fills the air as a crowd of about 500 cheering Poles greet a small figure stepping from a limousine. President Carter's wreath-laying ceremonies are in progress.

ALAN unzips his jacket and pulls out his necklace of press passes. The two policemen inspect them carefully. Satisfied with his credentials but not his presence, they nod to ALAN but do not step aside. Realizing that he's not likely to get any closer, ALAN unclips his backpack and withdraws his binoculars and notebook. Under the suspicious gaze of the policemen, he watches the proceedings for a few moments and makes some notes. He then stuffs the glasses back in his pack, smiles at the police, and jogs off.

36 EXT. - HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL

36

ALAN arrives back at the hotel just as a sleek, gray limousine glides up to the curb. The chauffeur jumps out to open the door. With a great rustle from his wind-breaker, a smiling WILKIE emerges.

WILKIE

Thanks, Kaz. That's all for today.

CHAUFFEUR

(saluting)

Yes, sir, Mr. Chancellor.

WILKIE

(seeing Alan)

Alan. Missed you at the laying on of wreaths, buddy.

ALAN

Well, good morning. To what combination of chemicals do we owe the honor?

WILKIE

I forget. I'd be in bed right now if it weren't for the public's right to know.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

36

WILKIE and ALAN cross the lobby enroute to the press room. The hotel is once again bustling with activity as newsmen return from the front. Near the door of the press room, ELLIOT is talking to a small group of reporters.

WILKIE
(passing him)
Elliot. Tell me something I don't
already know.

ELLIOT
Carter's having a press conference
in five minutes.

WILKIE
(to Alan, incredulously)
I'll be damned. I didn't know that.

ALAN
I'd get a second source if I were
you.

WILKIE
Where are you going?

ALAN
To the showers.

WILKIE
Wait a minute. You're not going
to the conference?

ALAN
Pass. But I'm counting on you to
ask the tough questions.

WILKIE
Hey, Farley.

ALAN
What?

WILKIE
If you don't want your job anymore,
can I have it?

ALAN
Catch you later.

ALAN walks off towards the elevators.

37 INT. - ALAN'S HOTEL ROOM

37

ALAN lets himself into his hotel room. He slips out of his jogging suit and goes into the bathroom to turn on the shower. As steam billows out the bathroom door, ALAN returns to the bedroom and flicks on the television. He slips a cassette into the tape recorder sitting on the bureau and adjusts the mike. Turning the volume up high on the T.V., ALAN flops down on the bed and listens as Jimmy Carter opens his first press conference of the trip. We fade on the President's flickering image.

38 INT. - THE ZOO PLANE - THE NEXT MORNING

38

Reporters are boarding the Zoo Plane. ALAN is already in his seat, lost in a typing frenzy. The seat next to him is empty. Across the aisle, ANNIE is busy mimeographing the day's schedule. ALAN finishes a page and looks up.

ALAN

Annie, who's on the Air Force
One pool?

ANNIE

(checking clipboard)
Let's see...Burns, Gallagher,
AP, Jake Thomas and Liz Toland.

ALAN

Thanks.

ANNIE

Sorry, hon. It was her turn.

ALAN

(usually)
It's Deitz I'm worried about.
He's down two hundred bucks in
the game.
(a beat)
She didn't ask to be put on,
did she, Annie?

ANNIE smiles.

39 INT. - THE ZOO PLANE - THREE HOURS LATER

39

We see Robert Redford standing in a poorly lit underground garage. He is engaged in silent conversation with a man whose face is obscured in the shadows. Redford looks confused and anxious. A beer can bounces off his face.

WILKIE

Follow the money! Follow the money,
goddamnit!

CONTINUED

39

The reporters are watching an in-flight movie, "All the President's Men". Since they are all wearing earphones, we do not hear the soundtrack. In front of the plane, the regular "switch" players have stopped playing cards long enough to watch the critical Deep Throat scene.

HARRY

For God's sake, Woodward!
It's staring you in the face!

ALAN

(shuffling the cards)
Let him do it his way, Harry.
Besides, where were you in '72?

HARRY

On the White House lawn, where
I belonged. These new kids, they
don't understand that somebody
has to stay behind and clean up.
Do you have any idea how many
denials there were to report?

MATTY

You in, Harry?

HARRY

It's all in my upcoming book.
I spare no one.

Part of the screen suddenly goes dark. A chorus of boos greets the NAVIGATOR, who has inadvertently blocked the movie projector.

NAVIGATOR

(ducking down)

Matty. See you a minute?

MATTY

(getting up)

Sure, buddy. Save my place.

MATTY crouches low, and he and the NAVIGATOR creep up the aisle. They pass WILKIE and SHELLY, who are both engrossed in the movie.

SHELLY

Where's the love interest? I
thought there was a love interest.

WILKIE

(filling mouth with popcorn)
What are you talking about? It's
a detective story, for Chrissake.

CONTINUED

SHELLY

I think a love interest would heighten audience involvement. There's no way for the viewer to empathize, unless, of course, he subscribes to the Post.

WILKIE

Empathize? Jesus, Feiner, we're talking about a two year national kidney stone. Where the hell were you?

SHELLY

In the hot grip of adolescence. By the time I got interested in Watergate, it had already passed into folklore. That's why these lest-we-forget films are so important.

WILKIE

(checking earphone)

Hey...where'd the sound go?

The movie soundtrack has been pre-empted by MATTY, who is addressing the passengers over the plane's PA system.

MATTY

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry to interrupt our in-flight entertainment, but I have a brief announcement to make. As you know, we're scheduled to land in Teheran in about an hour. Unfortunately, in a routine equipment check, our flight crew has come across an itty-bitty landin' gear light that doesn't seem to want to come on. Now, Captain McLaughlin assures me this is no cause for concern, but as a standard safety procedure, we're going to be goin' into a holdin' pattern for a few more hours so we can burn up our extra fuel. In the meantime, drinks are on us and now back to the movie.

ALAN

(throwing down hand)

What is this? The Flying Dutchman?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

39

HARRY

Incredible. Where is the law
of averages when you really
need it?

DEITZ

Anyone object to raising the
stakes?

All the players look at each other nervously.

40 EXT. - ZOO PLANE - AN HOUR LATER

40

The Zoo Plane is circling Teheran Airport at 4,000 feet.
The landing gear is down.

41 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

41

MATTY walks up the aisle toward the card game. The movie
is over. Only ALAN and DEITZ are still playing. They are
both quite drunk. HARRY is scribbling furiously on a
yellow legal pad.

MATTY

We've got a visual confirmation
from the tower. The landing gear
is down. We just don't know if
it's locked.

ALAN is biting down on a small Phi Beta Kappa key.

ALAN

I dunno, Deitz. How do I know
it's not just gold-plated? I'm
not sure I can accept this..

DEITZ

(turning over discards)
My God, you're cheating. How long
have you been cheating?

ALAN shrugs and throws the key in the pot.

ALAN

For years. We all have. Don't pretend
you didn't know, Walter.

HARRY

(reading)
"They are cool men, a breed apart,
the battle-hardened cream of
American journalism.."

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

41

DEITZ
(to Alan)
Battle-hardened cream?

ALAN
Eloquence under pressure.

HARRY
"And yet as TWA flight 302 traverses
the skies of sun-dappled Teheran, the
mood aboard is one of controlled
hysteria.."

MATTY
Harry, what are you doing?

HARRY
Writing my last stand-up, ol' saddle-
mate. Gonna do it right here in the
aisle. One day, after the FAA has
sifted through the debris, people
will see this tape and say to one
another, "So that's the way it was."

ALAN
The posthumous Emmy will just be
gravy.

MATTY
Hey, c'mon, gents, it's not like
the engines are on fire. It's
probably nothin' more than a
burned out bulb.

ALAN throws down his cards and rises unsteadily to his feet.

ALAN
You're right. This is no time
for the big mope. That crew up
there needs our support.
(to Matty)
Which way to the flight deck?

MATTY
Alan, I think they've got their
hands full, buddy.

ALAN
I'm just gonna stick my head in.
See if they need anything.

MATTY
Alan..

ALAN
It's no trouble. Really.

CONTINUED 2

41

ALAN staggers up the aisle, nearly knocking CRICKET over as she's backing out of the galley with the bar cart. ALAN raps on the door of the cockpit and enters.

ALAN
Hi, fellahs.

Nobody answers. There is real tension in the cockpit. Oblivious to that fact, ALAN sits down uninvited in the observer's seat.

ALAN
So where's that little lightbulb we've all been hearing so much about, Charlie?

The NAVIGATOR points to a panel in front of him.

ALAN
I see. Little fucker just went dead on you, huh? Well, nothing like a little equipment failure to make you earn your wings.

CO-PILOT
Control, this is eighty-seven ninety Heavy. We're still carrying 30 minutes of fuel. Shall we hold in current pattern?

TOWER (v.o.)
Roger, eight-seven ninety Heavy.

PILOT
You finish your check, Charlie?

NAVIGATOR
Almost, skipper.

ALAN leans forward between the two pilots.

ALAN
You know, fellahs, this reminds me of a story that Cronkite used to tell about Alan Shepherd, you know, the astronaut. It seems that after the big Mercury flight, Cronkite does this interview with him, see, and he says, "Alan, I want to know. Was there ever a moment when you felt real fear?" And Shepherd looks at Walter and says, "Just

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

41

ALAN (con't)
 once. About two minutes before
 lift-off, I was strapped in and
 looking at all the dials and
 buttons around me and suddenly
 I thought to myself, 'Holy shit.
 All this stuff was built by the
 lowest bidder.'"

Both pilots do a slow take on ALAN.

42 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

42

SHELLY is looking out the window. She is fidgeting
 nervously with a cocktail stirrer. WILKIE, by contrast,
 is in something of a stupor, his baseball cap pulled
 down over his eyes.

SHELLY
 You scared?

WILKIE
 What's that?

SHELLY
 You scared? About the landing.

WILKIE
 Nah. These guys know what they're
 doing.

SHELLY
 I hate planes. I always have.
 Somebody's gotta be on the ones
 that go down, and I'm always sure
 it's going to be me. I thought
 this would be the safest plane in
 the world, you know? With all you
 guys aboard, they'd have to check
 out every nut and bolt, right?
 This just isn't fair. This is my
 first time out of the country. It's
 my first big gig as a journalist.
 I haven't had a chance to do a
 damn thing with my life yet.

(a beat)
 Listen, Wilkie, I was going to ask
 you this later, maybe over Paris
 or something, but things are differ-
 ent now and I like you and I admire
 you and I want to know if you'd like
 to make it in the lavatory.

WILKIE slowly opens his eyes.

43 INT. - ZOO PLANE - PASSENGER CABIN

43

CRICKET is trying to comfort HILDY, who has become very distraught as the plane's holding action drags on.

HILDY

Young lady, why aren't we down yet? What is the matter with that pilot? Why isn't he taking us down?

CRICKET

(trying to buckle her seat belt)
It'll only be a little longer, Mrs. Meyerson.

HILDY

I knew I should have stayed home and finished my book. I promised my agent. I'd finish my book. The publisher is waiting for it. You must tell the pilot, young lady. It's a very important book.

CRICKET

Mrs. Meyerson..

HARRY is striding down the aisle towards HILDY and CRICKET.

HARRY

Hildy, my darling! I go to my last stand-up. Permit me to carry your colors onto the air.

HILDY

I have no time for your sick games, Harry. I'm very upset.

HARRY

All I ask for is a token, my darling. A handkerchief, an old sock, your blouse.

HILDY shrieks as HARRY leans forward.

HILDY

Get away from me, Harry! So help me, I'm warning you!

She starts swinging wildly with her purse. HARRY backs off as CRICKET tries to subdue her.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

43

HARRY

My god, look at those eyes!
They're full of fire and spunk
and piss and vinegar! By Hades,
this is a woman!

CRICKET

Please, Mr. Preston, you're
really upsetting her.

HARRY

Yes, yes, well, I'm running late
anyway.

(to Hildy)

Goodby for now, my little she-
devil. I'll be back.

HILDY takes another swing at HARRY, but he ducks and heads
off down the aisle, looking for his camera crew.

HARRY

Hootch! Murph! Where are my idiots?

HARRY finds HOOTCH in the aft galley. He is sitting on the
counter eating leftover desserts. Propped up against the
adjacent exit door is MURPH. HARRY looks down at his im-
mobile cameraman with disgust and then turns to HOOTCH.

HARRY

Hootch. Get up to the flight deck
and have the captain release all the
oxygen masks. We need picture.
O'Brien, you've got two minutes
to get your butt up out of there
and.. O'Brien? O'Brien, do you
hear me?

HOOTCH

Not a chance, Harry. Murph long
gone.

A pained expression crosses HARRY's face.

HARRY

Oh, Christ, not now, O'Brien. We're
ten minutes away from some truly
great television and you check out
on me. Hootch! Get him out of his
jacket. I'll get some cold water.

HARRY grabs an ice bucket from the galley and rushes
to the lavatory. It's locked.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

43

HARRY
 (pounding on door)
 This is Harry Preston of ABC
 News. This is an emergency.
 I need this facility.
 (no response)
 Hello? Is there anyone in
 there?

Still no answer. HARRY shakes the door knob. HOOTCH joins him.

HOOTCH
 Stuck, boss?

HARRY
 Work on it, will you? I'm going to
 try to get some coffee down him.

HOOTCH nods and starts back up the aisle. HARRY returns to the galley to look for coffee cups.

HARRY
 By Jesus, O'Brien, if we ever get
 out of this alive, I'm busting you
 to local so fast it'll make your
 teeth curl.

We suddenly hear a piercing, blood-curdling cry. HOOTCH is streaking down the aisle in a martial arts charge on the lavatory door. He sails over MURPH and lands with a hard drop kick low on the door. With a great crack of splintering wood, the door bursts open, and a very surprised and half-naked WILKIE and SHELLY tumble out into the galley. HARRY's eyes pop out of his head before he collapses in hysterics.

Alarmed by the crash, the other passengers have turned in their seats to see what has happened. Two Secret Service agents are crouched in the aisle, guns drawn. As WILKIE and SHELLY struggle to their feet, the passengers burst into applause.

44 INT. - TEHERAN INT. AIRPORT - LOBBY - DAY

44

Reporters from the lead press plane are milling about nervously. Some of them are gazing out the large plate glass windows, searching the horizon for the Zoo Plane. LIZ sits by herself smoking a cigarette. The atmosphere is tense but subdued.

Suddenly ELLIOT, flanked by two other aides, bursts into the lobby through a side door.

CONTINUED

44

ELLIOT
(without breaking stride)
They're coming in.

The reporters scurry for the doors and spill out onto the tarmac in front of the terminal. Off in the distance, the Zoo Plane is making its final approach. Fire trucks and emergency vehicles are already converging on the outermost runway. Iranian security police restrain the reporters from running onto the airstrip.

The Zoo Plane touches down in a perfect three point landing. The landing gear holds. A great cheer goes up from the reporters as the aircraft taxis to the arrival area in front of the terminal. The mobile stairway is quickly wheeled up to the forward hatchway, and the door swings open, releasing a cascade of empty beer cans which had been stacked against it. WILKIE is the first off the plane. He is leading the reporters in a rousing rendition of the Ol' Miss fight song. Immediately behind him are DEITZ, HARRY and HOOTCH.

HARRY
(looking around)
A fine madness, eh, boys? Better
than Airport '77. Or are we '78?

HOOTCH
Not yet, boss. Still six hours
to New Year's.

HARRY
None too soon, I daresay. I hope
the Shah's springing for noisemakers.

ELLIOT is watching the reporters stumble from the plane with an expression of undisguised contempt.

HARRY
Elliot! Don't look so disappointed,
my boy.

ELLIOT
I see none of you was prepared to
die with any dignity.

HARRY
You'd like that, wouldn't you,
old man? Well, it so happens that
this group faced an uncertain
future with remarkable composure.
And if you must know, the stain
on Wilkie's trousers is only coffee.
So shove off.

WILKIE is looking about at the extraordinary security
arrangements.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

WILKIE

Do we have to hail our own Savak agent or have we already been assigned?

ELLIOT

There's been a bomb scare..

DEITZ

(alarmed)

A bomb scare?

WILKIE

Right after a near airplane crash?
What is this, prime time television?

ELLIOT

The press has been targetted by some radical group. You'll get the details at the briefing tonight.
See you there.

ELLIOT turns and walks back towards the terminal.

HOOTCH

(looking around)

Shouldn't we be fanning out or something, Harry?

HARRY

Of course not, gentle minion. This is only one more occasion to which to arise with aplomb.

HOOTCH

I don't like incoming, Harry.

HARRY

(putting his arm around Hootch)

Then you're in the wrong business, lad. In the words of Harry Truman, if you can't take the heat, then get the hell out of Nagasaki.

As HARRY and HOOTCH start to walk off towards the bus, DEITZ nudges WILKIE.

DEITZ

Hey, Wilk.

WILKIE follows his gaze. Off to one side of the strip, LIZ and ALAN are lost in an embrace.

WILKIE

(smiling)

There you go

45 INT. - TEHERAN HILTON BALLROOM - NIGHT

45

A huge, mirror-panelled hotel ballroom is the setting for an extravagant New Year's Eve party being thrown by the Shah for the American press corps. Two sides of the room are lined with long banquet tables displaying a sumptuous buffet of elaborately prepared dishes. Whole sides of glistening beef turn on spits, and hundreds of lobster tails are laid out on beds of ferns and crushed ice. Everywhere, there are foot-high mounds of caviar, served up like mashed potatoes by chefs with long silver spoons. Immaculately liveried waiters circulate with trays of champagne.

In a conspicuous display of security, several dozen Savak agents and uniformed guards have been positioned behind the tables. Most of the Americans are oblivious, lost in a feeding frenzy, abandoning themselves to the excesses of the occasion. Several couples are on the dance floor, trying to move to the determinedly unrhythmic beat of a poorly amplified Iranian rock band.

The lead singer of the band is a special wonder. In honor of his guests, he has memorized a whole repertoire of American popular songs. However, not understanding a word of what he is singing, he occasionally drops a lyric, with ludicrous results. Finding himself at the end of a musical phrase, but minus a word, he ingeniously pushes all the lyrics up one beat. Thus we hear, for example:

SINGER

To Kansas City Kansas,
City here I come going,
To Kansas City Kansas,
... ity here I come I got, etc.

(or)

Take your love away from me don't,
Leave my heart in misery 'cause,
You know that I'll be blue breaking,
Up is hard to do.

The effect is startling, but most of the guests are too drunk to notice.

Although it is nearly midnight, LIZ and ALAN have just arrived at the party. LIZ is fixing a plate of food while ALAN stares at the band singer in amazement.

ALAN

How does he do that?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

45

LIZ

My God, this is food to die for. I need an authority figure to tell me it's okay to eat myself into a coma.

ALAN

My pleasure. Go wild.

As LIZ and ALAN reach the end of the buffet, a waiter grabs their plates, and before they can protest, whisks them over to a nearby table. Already seated are DEITZ, HARRY and SHELLY. They are trying out their noisemakers as LIZ and ALAN approach.

ALAN

'Evening, folks. Can anyone sit here or do you have to play an instrument?

DEITZ

Hi, Alan. Hi, Liz. Where've you guys been?

HARRY

For Chrissake, Walter, show a little tact. It's none of your damn business who was on top.

DEITZ

Harry..

LIZ

(sitting down)

The bellboy was, Harry.

ALAN

Film at eleven.

HARRY

(throwing down horn)

Dammit, Deitz, I told you there was a better party upstairs. But, oh, no, you had to have smoked sturgeon..

DEITZ

(to ALAN, trying to change subject)

The Shah does set a nice table, doesn't he?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

45

HARRY

We've got a lot of scores to settle,
you and I, Deitz. It's a lucky thing
for you my date just arrived.

Everyone looks around. HILDY has just wandered into the ballroom. She is all trussed up in a bright red brocaded evening gown that accomodates Hildy's frumpish figure only under extreme protest. Moreover, such stylishness as HILDY does affect is somewhat offset by the large brown Korvette's shopping bag she is carrying.

HILDY's first stop is the banquet table. She carefully inspects a tray of dinner rolls, and having made her selections, drops them one by one into her bag. She then moves on to the cheese board and starts sampling the offerings.

HARRY

(getting up, waving)
Hildy! My darling!
(to others)
I can't let her dine alone
like this.

Straightening his tie, HARRY heads off to intercept HILDY, who having spotted him, is making for the nearest exit.

ALAN

There's a kind of crazy chemistry
between those two, isn't there?

SHELLY

I think it's cruel.

LIZ

So do I. What's his problem?

ALAN

Well, I have a theory. Hildy
is the only person in the world
who takes Harry at face value.

HILDY has taken refuge behind a curtain and is pelting HARRY with dinner rolls.

ALAN

You have to admit she's perfect.
The first time Harry laid eyes
on her, he wrote her into the act.

Across the ballroom, WILKIE is standing near the press room door. He is waving to ALAN to get his attention.

CONTINUED

ALAN
(to Liz)
Be right back.

He walks over to WILKIE, who quickly draws him aside.

ALAN
What's up, sport?

WILKIE
Something's coming down. Vance
is having a backgrounder in
fifteen minutes. You, me, AP
and the Post are in.

ALAN
I thought the lid was on for
the night.

WILKIE
Carter's comment on the West
Bank didn't sit well with the
Egyptians. My guess is we're
going to Aswan.

ALAN
My guess is we're being jerked
around. The French wouldn't put
up with a change in the schedule.

WILKIE
Maybe not, pal, but you can't
afford to be wrong. If you don't
start getting your leads straight,
you're going to be writing side-
bars in steerage.

ALAN
I already am.

WILKIE
Suit yourself.

A beat.

ALAN
Where's the briefing?

WILKIE
Room 405.

ALAN
(nodding)
Okay.

CONTINUED 4

45

ALAN walks back to the table. DEITZ and SHELLY have gone off to dance, leaving LIZ alone.

LIZ
(looking up)
Aswan?

ALAN
What makes you so smart?

LIZ
I've had enough of smart. I want to be beautiful. Then you wouldn't leave me to go write your story on Aswan.

ALAN
Then you must be beautiful, because I have no intention of leaving you. I didn't come all the way to Teheran to spend New Year's Eve with Cyrus Vance.

LIZ
I think your brush with death has made you reckless.

ALAN
Being with you is not reckless, Liz.

A beat. LIZ waits for him to finish.

ALAN
It's wrong, of course, but it's not reckless.

LIZ laughs and reaches out for ALAN.

LIZ
Okay, I gave you your chance. Enough of this. I came to boogie.

LIZ and ALAN get up and go to join the others on the dance floor. By now, the scene in front of the bandstand is just short of mayhem. Since the only women present are a handful of female journalists and a half dozen stewardesses, the celebrants are dancing more as a group than in couples. As the countdown towards midnight begins, the crowd spontaneously forms a wide circle, and clasp arms, starts kickstepping with the beat.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 5

45

At this point, HARRY has finally cornered HILDY and literally dragged her onto the dance floor. To his delight --and to her horror -- they find themselves in the middle of the ring. HILDY looks around like a trapped animal, her eyes wide with terror, clutching her shopping bag, while HARRY prances about her like a crazed Zulu. As the partygoers start shouting out the countdown, HILDY closes her eyes tightly in the apparent belief that she has become the victim of some bizarre ritual in which she is to be ravaged in a matter of seconds.

At the stroke of midnight, a great cheer goes up, and as the band strikes up a faintly recognizable rendition of "Auld Lang Syne", the reporters fall all over each other in a mad scramble to kiss the stewardesses. HILDY, genuinely amazed that she is still alive, opens her eyes just in time to see a maniacal, puckering HARRY swooping down on her. She lets out a shriek and swings her shopping bag around, catching HARRY squarely in the chest and spilling dinner rolls all over the dance floor.

Closer to the stage, ALAN is watching the band SINGER with continued fascination. The SINGER is whooping hysterically and jumping up and down in time with the music, a portrait in idiocy. ALAN winks at LIZ and pushing his way forward to the front of the stage, waves to get the SINGER's attention.

ALAN
(chanting)
Down with the Shah! Down
with the Shah!

As ALAN smiles and claps his hands in time, the SINGER's face lights up: a new song, he thinks. After a few false starts, he takes up the chant.

SINGER
(into the microphone)
Down wit Dashaw! Down wit Dashaw!

The revelers look at each other in disbelief, and then merrily join in the chant. The drummer picks up the beat, and as the SINGER belts out what he clearly thinks is some sort of New Year's Eve greeting, SAVAK agents start closing in on the stage.

46 INT. - ALAN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

46

A telephone is ringing on a bedside table. The travel clock beside it reads 6:00. On the third ring, we hear a groan and see a hand groping for the phone. Pull back to reveal ALAN and LIZ in bed.

ALAN

Yeah?...Yeah, this is Farley.
What..?

He listens expressionless for a long time.

ALAN

Aswan. Yeah, I heard you, Sidney..
I said I heard you...Look, Sid,
what can I tell you? Score one
for the wires. I'm sorry I didn't
have it...Sid..

There is a loud knock at the door.

ALAN

(calling out)
Just a minute.

The pounding continues. LIZ is now awake. She peers out from under the sheets.

ALAN

Sid, it was a judgment call,
for Chrissake. I'm in the field..

More pound

ALAN

(calling out)
I'm coming!
(into the phone)
Sidney, hold the line, okay?
Just hold the line.

ALAN grabs his trousers off the chair, and pulling them on, hops over to the door. It is WILKIE, drawn and unshaven. He has a six-pack slung over his shoulder.

WILKIE

'Morning, asshole.

ALAN shuts the door in his face and goes back to the phone.

ALAN

Sydney?...Sidney?...Operator?
Operator! Shit.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

46

ALAN slams down the receiver. He gets up and goes over to open the door again. WILKIE is still standing there.

ALAN

Give me a beer.

WILKIE hands him one. ALAN tries to close the door again, but this time, WILKIE has his foot in. ALAN stomps into the bathroom with WILKIE in pursuit. LIZ watches all this impassively from the bed.

ALAN

Don't start on me, Turner.
I already got my wake-up
call from New York.

WILKIE

(shouting)

I don't believe you, you
know that? I don't fuckin'
believe you!

ALAN turns on the shower, drops his trousers and climbs into the tub, taking his beer with him. WILKIE dumps the six-pack into the sink and sits down on the toilet.

WILKIE

You know what you did?

ALAN

I missed a story. It happens.

WILKIE

Missed a story? Man, you've
been beating stories away with
a stick all week. The Secretary
of State is sitting upstairs
waiting in his jockstrap, and
you're a goddamn no-show!

There is a click and a whooshing sound as ALAN opens his beer in the shower.

ALAN

You're an ignorant cracker, you
know that, Wilkie? The AP was at
that briefing. And the night
editors are so chickenshit, they're
not going to run with a story like
that until the wires move it anyway.
So why give up my weight in caviar
to spend the night chasing down
some pennyass change in the flight
plan?

CONTINUED 2

46

WILKIE stares at the shower curtain for a moment, and then abruptly gets up and walks back into the bedroom. LIZ is still lying in bed. She stares as WILKIE quizzically as he sits down next to her.

WILKIE

Liz?

LIZ

Yes, Wilkie?

WILKIE

Liz, I want you to listen to me very carefully. Honey, I know you care about Alan, I mean, anyone can see that, so I think there's something you ought to know. Alan's career is going down the toilet.

LIZ

Thank you, Wilkie.

WILKIE

No charge, babe.

WILKIE goes back into the bathroom, retrieves his beer, re-emerges and leaves. A few moments pass and then we hear the shower being turned off. ALAN sticks his head out the door.

ALAN

Is he gone?

LIZ is staring out the window.

LIZ

Yes.

ALAN

I thought he'd never leave.

Draped only in a towel, ALAN darts across the room, jumps in bed and disappears under the sheets.

LIZ

What are you doing?

ALAN

Jumping your bones.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

46

LIZ

(looking at her watch)
Ten minutes before baggage call
and you're jumping my bones?

LIZ suddenly lets out a little shriek and bolts upright.

LIZ

My God! You're dripping wet!

ALAN

(singing)
"Goin' to Kansas City, Kansas
City here I come.."

ALAN grabs LIZ and pulls her back down into the sheets.

LIZ

(laughing)
Jesus! It's like being in
bed with a wet Irish setter.

Sheets and pillows are flying in every direction. LIZ
is laughing uncontrollably.

ALAN

(still singing)
"They've got some crazy little
women there, and I'm gonna.."

LIZ

If you thinks this qualifies as
foreplay, you're crazy!

ALAN abruptly calls off the attack. He pokes his head
out from under the sheets.

ALAN

Foreplay is old hat. What really
counts today are the special effects.

LIZ

How do you do it?

ALAN

Mirrors, mostly. What did Wilkie
say to you?

LIZ

He said your career is going down
the toilet.

CONTINUED 4

46

ALAN

He's right. How do you feel
about that?

LIZ

I wasn't aware I was entitled
to feel anything about it.

ALAN

(ducking the issue)
I feel another special effect
coming on. Where do you want it?

LIZ

Uh..

ALAN

Too late. It'll have to be a
surprise.

ALAN disappears under the covers again just as a sharp
knock on the door is heard.

MATTY

(v.o.)

Last call for baggage!

ALAN

(from under sheets)

Holy Jesus.

LIZ

(sitting up)

My God, I haven't even packed
yet!

Scrambling out from under the covers, both ALAN and LIZ
leap from bed.

47 INT. - ZOO PLANE - AN HOUR LATER

47

By now, the cabin interior is only barely recognizable
as that of an airliner. The sides and partitions have
been transformed into virtual bulletin boards, plastered
with press hand-outs, posters, and network logo stickers.
Taped to the overhead racks are dozens of new hotel keys
that jangle together as people brush by.

The passengers are milling about randomly as LIZ and ALAN
stumble through the hatchway. They are disheveled, out of

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

47

breath and clutching suitcases that have obviously been packed in haste. At the sight of the two of them, a great cheer goes up.

HARRY

They made it! Thank god for the buddy system!

MATTY comes up behind ALAN and LIZ.

MATTY

Party of two, folks?

ALAN

Sorry, Matty. Didn't get a wake-up.

MATTY

Don't worry about it, son. We'll make it up in the jet stream. 'Course, you gotta sit with the wildlife.

Behind them, the cabin attendants pull the door closed with a thump. The engines start to whine as LIZ and ALAN make their way through the equipment cases to the back of the plane. As they settle into their seats, ANNIE appears with a telex for ALAN.

ANNIE

This came in as we broke camp, handsome.

ALAN

Thanks, Annie..
(remembering something)
Oh, Annie..

ANNIE

Yeah, hon?

ALAN

Is there a photo truck for the Delhi motorcade?

ANNIE

Sure is.

ALAN

(to Liz)
Like to ride the photo truck?

CONTINUED

LIZ
Is this a date?

ALAN
(to Annie)
Can you book us space?

ANNIE
(puzzled)
On the photo truck?

ALAN
You know me, Annie -- I love
a parade.

ANNIE
(shrugging)
I'll get you some tags.

ALAN turns his attention to the telex.

ALAN
It's from Flowers.

LIZ
Who?

ALAN
Henry P. Flowers, III. Our
Delhi bureau chief. "Will
drop by hotel to hoist a
... after motorcade. Marcia
... I expect you for dinner.
... er evening file. Best per-
sonal regards." Good ol' Henry.
New York must have told him
I'm on the skids.

LIZ
Is good ol' Henry ambitious?

ALAN
You mean, would he grab my
story? Hardly. Henry's idea
of an opportunity is coming
down with cholera so he doesn't
have to write at all. That's why
he likes India. The only story
in India is squallor, and that's
never been news. The foreign

CONTINUED 3

47

ALAN

(cont'd)

desk would just as soon not hear from him at all, but Henry has his pride. Every six weeks, he sits down at the telex and wires home a long Sunday piece called "Tackling Hunger in the Kashmire" or "Kim: Portrait of a Leper".

LIZ

(shaking her head)

Now, that's depressing. What does he do to keep his sanity?

ALAN

He plays polo.

48 EXT. - NEW DELHI - DAY

48

President Cater's motorcade is proceeding along the five mile route linking the Delhi Airport to the center of the city. The motorcade is made up of about a dozen black limousines, tiny American flags rippling from their fenders, preceded by a police motorcycle escort and a small flatbed truck. In the back of the truck, nearly 40 foreign and local photographers and cameramen precariously jockey for positions from which to film the President as he waves through the roof of his limousine. This is known in the business as a "photo opportunity" and the traveling press is making the most of it.

Perched on the tin roof, above the photographers, ALAN, LIZ and WILKIE are watching the cheering throngs which line the streets on both sides. The air is thick with confetti. Beneath the long garlands of marigolds strung from the lamp posts, thousands of smiling school children are waving small paper flags.

ALAN is watching the scene through his field glasses, while WILKIE periodically scribbles in his note book.

LIZ

I never know whether I should wave back. It seems arrogant not to.

WILKIE

Don't get involved, Liz. They'll only turn on you in the end.

(looking down at notebook)

I wish I could think of another word for "teeming".

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

48

ALAN is still looking through his binoculars.

ALAN

It's certainly an improvement
over the reception in Teheran.

WILKIE

Where the crowds were one-deep
and in uniform.

LIZ

Where do all these people come
from? Are they marched in at gun-
point?

WILKIE

Of course not. This is a democracy.
They're paid.

On the flatbed below them, a photographer shouts up
at WILKIE.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Wilkie!

WILKIE

Yo.

PHOTOGRAPHER

See my courier? In front of the
post office?

WILKIE turns and surveys the crowd. About 50 yards down
the street, he spots a man holding a hand-drawn sign
with the words "UPI Photo" on it.

WILKIE

Yeah, comin' up.

The PHOTOGRAPHER quickly stuffs a couple of film cannisters
into a small canvas sack.

PHOTOGRAPHER

They're both 400. Tell him to
push the grain. The arch in the
background is India Gate. India
Gate, got it?

The PHOTOGRAPHER tosses the sack up to WILKIE.

WILKIE

I got it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

49

As the truck approaches the courier, WILKIE waves to catch his attention.

WILKIE

UPI! UPI!

The COURIER spots him, drops his sign and holds up a large butterfly net. WILKIE tosses him the bag, which the COURIER neatly scoops out of the air. The people around him cheer.

WILKIE

(shouting)

Both 400! Hump the grain!
The background is India Gate.

COURIER

Okay!

WILKIE

Who won the Cotton Bowl?

COURIER

What?

WILKIE

The Cotton Bowl! Who won?

COURIER

Aggies, 44-20.

The COURIER pockets the film, hops on a motorcycle, and tears off down a side street. WILKIE slumps to the floor of the truck.

LIZ

(smiling)

Courage, Wilkie.

WILKIE

(glumly)

I'm getting tired of putting my
bookie's kid through college.

ALAN

Heads up. Here come the Bolsheviks.

Just ahead, a small group of about thirty demonstrators with anti-American placards are chanting and yelling at the passing motorcade. As the photo truck moves past them, ALAN smiles cheerfully and waves to the demonstrators.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

49

ALAN

(shouting)

You're quite right, fellahs! We
have no business being here!

The demonstrators pelt him with orange peels. ALAN dives
for cover.

50 INT. - DELHI HOTEL - AN HOUR LATER

50

As LIZ and ALAN walk through the elegant lobby to check
in, a man sipping tea in the adjacent lounge looks up
from his newspaper. He is HENRY FLOWERS, 40ish, the tall,
athletic-looking Delhi Bureau chief for the "Times". He
has long since yielded to the allure of colonial India,
so looks perfectly at ease in full polo dress and regalia.
Setting down his tea cup, HENRY hails his colleague.

HENRY

Alan! Alan! Over here!

ALAN drops his bag and rushes over to greet his old friend.
They embrace each other with genuine affection.

ALAN

(looking him over)

Henry, you astound me. You
always manage to rise above
your assignment.

HENRY

All God's children need R&R,
Alan. Life was tough in Vietnam,
too, but try to get a tennis
court in Saigon on a Sunday.

LIZ has joined them.

LIZ

Hi.

ALAN

Henry, this is Liz Toland. Liz,
meet Henry P. Flowers, III,
journalist, family man, and
starting right wing for the
Bengal Lancers.

HENRY

A pleasure, Miss Toland. Welcome
to Delhi.

CONTINUED

50

LIZ
Thank you, Mr. Flowers.
(to Alan)
I'm going to check in. I'll
see you later.

LIZ walks back to the front desk.

HENRY
Very nice, Alan. Is she with you?

ALAN
She's with NBC.

HENRY
(frowning)
If I may just follow up with a
two-part question: are you crazy
and how's your wife?

ALAN
Tory's fine except she's still
depressed she didn't marry you.

HENRY
It's her own fault. I offered
her Calcutta. She wanted northern
Virginia. You'll come to dinner,
of course.

ALAN
Can I bring Liz?

HENRY
Okay. But only for purposes of
symmetry. Marcia isn't going to
understand. Here's our address.

HENRY fishes a card out of his wallet and gives it to
ALAN.

ALAN
How is Marcia?

HENRY
Still bucking for sainthood.
Puts in ten hours a day spurning
the caste system. Don't be sur-
prised if we have some untouchables
over for drinks tonight. Is eight
okay?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

50

ALAN

Couldn't be better.

HENRY

You look good, Alan. Dereliction becomes you.

51 INT. - THE FLOWERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

51

LIZ, ALAN and HENRY are seated around a dining room table with MARCIA, 35, HENRY's wife and mother of NICKY, 8. There are several bottles of wine on the table, and all are in fine spirits.

HENRY

(mid-story)

So we get here about three weeks after Mrs. Gandhi's been thrown out, and I figure before I do anything else I have to file a "Man in the News" on Desai, right? So I dig around, and I find out that the most arresting thing about the man is his fascination with, get this, auto-urine therapy..

MARCIA

(laughing)

Henry, honestly, not at the table.

HENRY

Why not? That's where he does it. Well, the Prime Minister of India sips a cup of his own urine every day. Swears by it.

NICKY

Even he won't drink the water.

HENRY cracks up, so MARCIA carries on the story.

MARCIA

So Henry ends up doing this long piece for the Sunday magazine on the virtues of urine-consumption. The "Times" kills the piece and cables back, "We decided it wasn't our cup of tea."

ALAN and LIZ roar with laughter as HENRY dances around the table refilling glasses.

CONTINUED

HENRY

I honestly don't know how the old guy keeps going. Desai's diet is so meagre that once at a formal dinner in London, the person seated next to him ate his dinner, thinking it was a plate of hors d'oeuvres.

ALAN

I would have to. A triumph of common sense over nuts and berries.

(to Liz)

Are you doing anything on him?

LIZ

I think John's got him for an interview. I'm strictly color this leg.

HENRY

Ah, yes, color. Plenty of that in Asia. Any ideas, family?

NICKY

(to Liz)

Do you like snakes?

HENRY

There you go, Liz. Snakes. About once a month, they call off classes at Nicky's school because too many black snakes have been sighted in the playground.

MARCIA

Darling, how about the entertainer's colony? Wouldn't that make a good story?

LIZ

Entertainer's colony?

ALAN

Sounds like Malibu.

HENRY

It's an encampment of street performers. They're starting to organize outside the city. Might be worth a look.

CONTINUED 2

51

NICKY

I like snakes better. I like
to chop off their heads and
feed them to my mongoose.

MARCIA smiles sweetly at her son and sighs.

MARCIA

He's turning into a savage,
Henry.

(to Liz and Alan)

What's a mother to do?

52 EXT. - SQUATTERS' CAMP - SHADIPUR DEPOT BRIDGE - DAY 52

An exquisitely painted puppet is dancing across an expanse of brightly colored silk. The laughter of small children mixes with the tinkling of brass bells and the rhythmic pounding of drums. We pull back to see that we are in the midst of a small city of tents -- home for nearly 2,000 Indian street entertainers.

Spanning the squatters' village is the Shadipur Depot Bridge, over which heavy trucks rumble on their way to the heart of the city. The dust and smoke from the highway traffic billow down into the encampment, but despite the filth, the village is uncommonly charming. Small children sit at the feet of their fathers to watch the carving of puppet heads or the glazing of pots. Other family members diligently practice juggling oranges or playing instruments.

Standing among the children gathered around the puppeteer are LIZ, ALAN and HENRY. Off to one side, her camera crew is setting up. HENRY is talking to LIZ, who is taking notes.

HENRY

There are nearly 2,000 street performers here, but they live a rather perilous existence. The city fathers take a somewhat dim view of squatters, so every few years they send in the bulldozers. Now the performers are trying to go legit. They've formed an entertainers' co-operative, which functions as a sort of agency to help them find work. The hope is that with regular employment will come respectability and they'll be permitted to stay.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

52

LIZ

Are they all puppeteers?

HENRY

No, no, only a few. The rest are magicians, jugglers, balladeers and the like. If you want to take the crew around, I'm sure you'll find them very accomodating. Show people are the same everywhere.

LIZ

How'd you hear about them, Henry?

HENRY

Marcia. She's helping set up the co-operative.

LIZ

(shaking her head)

Marcia certainly gets involved, doesn't she?

HENRY

Marcia's right up there with Mother Theresa. You have a look about. We'll meet you back here in a half hour.

(to Alan)

Like an ice cream?

ALAN

An ice cream?

HENRY

(clapping him on the back)

Of course, you would.

HENRY and ALAN set off down the street toward a small ice cream concession.

HENRY

Alan, I've been getting dreary little calls from the powers that be..

ALAN

Imagine my surprise.

HENRY

They don't seem to think you're doing your..your best work. This

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

52

HENRY

(cont'd)

depresses me, Alan, because I have no desire to fill the breach. Alan, why won't you do your best work?

(to the vendor)

Two, please.

ALAN

I can't. I've been getting the freeze. From Jody on down.

HENRY

Rubbish. You work for the "Times".

HENRY and ALAN start walking up a small grass knoll. When they reach a vantage overlooking the village, they sit down in the grass and unwrap their ice creams.

ALAN

Okay, maybe it's because I don't turn up at feeding time anymore.

HENRY

How brave of you. What are you doing for stories?

ALAN

Stories? You think this madcap lurch around the world has something to do with actual, grown-up stories? It's a parade, Henry. All you have to do is count the balloons, that is, when they're not being counted for you. Ever seen the daily hand-outs? Hell, without even leaving the plane, I can tell you exactly when and where the President's going to take his next three leaks. A good stenographer could do what I do, Henry, or rather, what they want me to do.

HENRY

What do you want to do, Alan?

ALAN

I don't know, Henry. Sometimes I'm overcome with a need to look deeper, but there's no

CONTINUED

ALAN

(cont'd)

percentage in it. Nine times out of ten, you scratch the surface and you hit rock bottom. And the one time you don't, nobody's interested. You try to hold the facts up to the light, try to order them, find the interplay, some combination that reveals, and suddenly you're no longer writing for a newspaper of record.

HENRY

Of course not. It's called opinion.

ALAN

Dammit, Henry, what facts aren't? When was the last time you saw a factual crowd count? How do you measure reaction to a speech? If Carter grins at the Shah, who's to say whether it's calculated or genuine? What they're after is consensus. As long as we all agree, as long as my reports say what the wires say, only with tonier language, then all is well and the night editor won't be bothered with any nasty little judgment calls.

HENRY sighs and takes out a pack of cigarettes. The two men stare out over the village.

HENRY

You know, Alan, here in India, there's no reporting tradition at all. None. It's all communique and transcripts and reports of functions. The Indian press doesn't respond to even the idea of inquiry. People here look inward. They consult themselves. It is simply the Indian way. It appeals to me enormously.

ALAN

Then how do you write about lepers and monsoons?

HENRY

The same way I live with the idea of houseboys and polo ponies -- I

CONTINUED 4

52

HENRY
(cont'd)

look at it through Indian eyes.
To report with dispassion is my
dharma, my duty. To regard India
any other way is to be overwhelmed
with despair. Do you know that
Marcia wakes up screaming almost
every night?

There is a long pause as ALAN draws deeply on his
cigarette.

ALAN
I think Marcia's got the right
idea.

53 EXT. - SQUATTERS' CAMP - AN HOUR LATER

53

LIZ is doing her final stand-up as HENRY and ALAN
approach the puppeteer's house. Behind her, two
craftsmen are hard at work painting puppet heads,
a good backdrop for her report. LIZ looks up from
her notes into the camera.

LIZ
What the performers are seeking
is a class exemption from the
vagrancy laws. Without it, this
community of itinerant entertainants..
damn!

The cameraman looks impatiently over his viewfinder. This
is obviously not LIZ's first mistake of the day. She com-
poses herself for another take.

LIZ
What the performers are seeking
is a class exemption from the
vagrancy law. Without it, this
community of itinerant entertainment..
goddammit, Toland!

She throws down her notes and turns her back. The crafts-
men stare at her curiously. HENRY and ALAN exchange
amused glances. LIZ mutters something to herself and then
faces the camera once more.

LIZ
What the performers are seeking
is a class exemption from the
vagrancy law. Without it, this

CONTINUED

53

LIZ

(cont'd)

community of itinerant entertainers can only look forward to renewed uncertainty. This is Liz Toland at the Squatter's Village in New Delhi.

LIZ remains expressionless while the cameraman tapes a few extra feet. She then breaks into a little two-step.

LIZ

(singing)

"There's no business like show business.."

HENRY and ALAN laugh as the cameraman lowers his minicam with a sigh of relief.

54 INT.- PRESS ROOM, DELHI HOTEL - LATER THAT DAY

54

ALAN is hunched over his typewriter, cigarette dangling from his lips. He is staring intently at a large television screen set up in the front of the press room. A dozen newsmen are pounding away at their Olivettis, taking direct dictation from the television. On the screen, Jimmy Carter is giving a speech to the Indian Parliament.

CARTER V.O.

Human needs are inseparable from human rights -- that while civil liberties are good in themselves, they are much more useful and much more meaningful in the lives of people to whom physical survival is not a matter of daily anxiety..

ALAN leans back in his chair and shouts over his shoulder to WILKIE.

ALAN

Who wrote this?

WILKIE

Fallows, I think.

ALAN

It's damn good.

On television, the Members of Parliament interrupt Carter's speech with desk-thumping applause.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

54

WILKIE

No one's gonna notice.
The open mike remark is
going to take the headlines.

ALAN turns in his chair.

ALAN

What open mike report?

WILKIE

(smiling)

You haven't seen Hildy's
pool report?

WILKIE picks up a piece of paper lying next to his typewriter.

WILKIE

(reading)

"After the President's meeting
with Desai on the nuclear issue,
this reporter overheard Mr.
Carter telling Secretary Vance
that he would have to send Desai
a 'cold and blunt' letter."
Hildy, bless her heart, picked
it up on her tape recorder.

ALAN

Let me see.

WILKIE

(sliding him the report)

Isn't it marvelous? So far the
touchstones of the new Carter
foreign policy are "cold",
"blunt", and "carnal".

ALAN

Okay, so it's an unfortunate
ad-lib. But the speech to Parlia-
ment is a major statement of
policy, and for a change, it's
actually eloquent. When was the
last time you saw Jimmy interrupted
by applause?

WILKIE

(shaking his head)

Hey, we're all happy for him, man.
But it's not the lead.

ALAN turns back to his typewriter.

CONTINUED 2

54

ALAN
It damn well is.

ALAN stubs out his cigarette and begins typing. Another round of applause is heard from the television. ALAN turns around in his seat again.

ALAN
And if it's not, I'm not certainly not going to worry about it.

WILKIE
(with a grin)
Right. On to your next fuck-up.

55 INT. - PRESS ROOM, DELHI HOTEL - NIGHT

55

The large press room is empty and quiet, except for four reporters, ALAN, WILKIE, HARRY and SHELLY, sitting in one corner drinking beer and eating sandwiches. The television is off and only one telex machine can be heard clattering away in the background. It is late at night and the reporters are winding down. It is the sixth day of the trip and the pace is beginning to take its toll. Even HARRY looks subdued. ALAN is flipping lazily through an Indian newspaper.

ALAN
Has it ever occurred to any of you that we are totally superfluous? That the White House Press Corps is beside the point?

HARRY, who has been paring his nails with his Swiss Army knife, looks up indignantly.

HARRY
Never. And I resent the implication. A attack on the great game of journalism is an attack on me.

ALAN
Well, I wasn't trying to get personal, Harry, but since you volunteered..

WILKIE
Holy Jesus.

BEITZ is walking slowly across the press room. He is in a huddle. His trousers are torn in three places, his tie

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

55

is askew, and he's covered with mud from head to toe. He is clutching a small rolled-up carpet.

WILKIE

Jesus, Deitz, what happened to you?

ALAN

Are you okay, Walter?

DEITZ is in a complete daze. He stares at ALAN vacantly.

DEITZ

I bought an Oriental rug.

HARRY

As an investment, Walter, or at knife-point?

DEITZ

It's for my wife.

ALAN and WILKIE exchange puzzled glances.

WILKIE

Are you sure you're okay, Walter?

DEITZ

(very slowly, as if recalling a dream)
I bought it at a rug shop in the Old City. It was a very good buy and it only took me an hour of haggling. But as I was leaving the shop, this kid stops me and points at my shoe. It's covered with fresh blue paint. The kid tells me that for \$3.00, he'd be happy to clean it off.

ALAN

(nodding his head knowingly)
Ah, the fresh blue paint scam. It's in all the guidebooks.

DEITZ

I remained calm, of course. While the blue paint dried on my shoe,

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

55

DEITZ
(cont'd)

I worked him down to \$1.00.
I then removed my shoe, and as
I stood there in the mud
on one foot waiting for him to
clean it, I was immediately
set upon by every peddler,
beggar and pickpocket in the
entire market. Among other
things, I bargained for my life.

DEITZ sits down and sighs with ineffable sadness. He
looks down at his tattered clothes.

DEITZ
I can't be sure, of course,
but I think this must be how
we got involved in Vietnam.

Everyone howls with laughter. HARRY gets up and slaps
DEITZ on the back.

HARRY

Poor Deitz. Nothing he ever
learned at Vassar prepared him
for moments like this.

DEITZ says nothing and starts to cradle his rug. Suddenly
the door to the press room opens and the Western Union
telex operator sticks his head in.

OPERATOR
Farley. You got incoming from
New York.

ALAN
(getting up)
Finally. I'll see you
all on the plane tomorrow.
Get some sleep, Walter.

ALAN follows the OPERATOR into the adjoining room. There
are five telex keyboards lined up against the wall. As
the OPERATOR sits down at one of them, paper copy is
spewing out the top. The OPERATOR tears it off and hands
it to ALAN, who starts to read through it.

ALAN
Wait a minute. This isn't my
story.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

55

OPERATOR

It's got to be yours. It's a Times transmission and Flowers didn't file today.

ALAN's eyes narrow as he skims the copy.

ALAN

Son of a bitch.

He rereads it.

ALAN

Son of a bitch!

ALAN throws the copy on the floor. He points to the teletype.

ALAN

You open to New York?

OPERATOR

Of course.

ALAN

Okay. To Sidney Friedman, Foreign Desk, Times.

The OPERATOR starts typing on the teletype keyboard.

ALAN

Best reason for rewrite on
liament story period. My
best judgment is cold comma
blunt statement not relevant to
Carter policy as perceived by
Indian leadership period. Farley.

ALAN lights a cigarette and starts pacing the room. After a few moments, the teletype starts punching out a reply.

OPERATOR

(reading copy as it
appears)

"Both wires lead with cold,
blunt remark, suggesting differ-
ent judgement on impact of
statement. Sidney."

ALAN looks disbelievingly at the OPERATOR and then explodes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

55

ALAN

So use the fucking wires! I sure as hell don't want my byline on a goddamn rewrite by some schmuck who spent the day second-guessing me with wire copy! What the fuck did they send me over here for?

OPERATOR

(looking up)

Is that your answer?

ALAN

You're goddamn right that's my answer!

OPERATOR

(typing)

"So use the fucking wires. I don't want.."

ALAN buries his head in his arms.

56 INT. - PRESS ROOM, DELHI HOTEL - AN HOUR LATER

56

ALAN is alone in the press room. In front of him is a half-empty bottle of bourbon and four or five paper cups. He is slumped in his chair staring at the ceiling. Suddenly he leans forward and picks up the phone.

ALAN

Overseas operator, please..

A beat.

I want to call the
ed States. MacLean, Virginia.
Area code 703 787-5693. How long
will that take?...I see..Okay,
I'll be in my room..303. Farley.
Thank you.

He hangs up.

57 INT. - ALAN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

ALAN is letting himself into his hotel suite. He tosses his coat on a chair and walks quietly to the bedroom door. LIZ is asleep in bed. He looks at her for a moment and then closes the door.

ALAN picks up the telephone from the desk and walks out onto the balcony. He sits down in a deck chair and closes his eyes. A moment passes and then the phone rings. ALAN awakes

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

57

with a start and reaches quickly for the phone.

ALAN

Yes? Yes, this is him. Thank you.

Off in the distance, the sun is beginning to break through the trees. ALAN fumbles for a cigarette.

ALAN

Tory?..Tory?..It's me, Alan.
Alan. Hi, babe. I'm fine.
I'm in Delhi..

Behind ALAN, the bedroom door silently opens. In the dim morning light, we see LIZ standing in the doorway. She is holding a sheet around her.

ALAN

Delhi. India. What?..He did?..
That's great. No, no, don't
get him. I said, don't get him,
Tory..Because I need to talk to
you. I need to hear your voice..

The bedroom door closes.

Tears start to well up in ALAN's eyes. For a long time he can say nothing.

ALAN

Tory, listen..it looks like
I'm going to lose my job, is
that okay with you? I quit.
It was over a principle. No,
it wasn't. It was over nothing.
I couldn't find a principle,
so I quit over nothing.

LIZ slips from the bedroom. She is dressed.

What?..I don't know, Tory. I
don't know what I'm going to
do..I just have to get home.
I'll see you soon, okay? I
will..I will..I love you, too.
Goodby.

We hear the hotel door close softly. ALAN hangs up the phone and looks around.

58 INT. - LOBBY OF DELHI HOTEL - TWO HOURS LATER - DAY 58

The lobby is piled high with luggage and broadcast equipment. MATTY is near the door, checking in luggage. About twenty reporters are waiting in line to pay their bills at the cashier's window.

An elevator door opens and ALAN emerges carrying his suitcase. He is unshaven and wearing the same clothes he had on the night before. He looks tired and hung over.

As ALAN looks around the lobby, he notices HILDY sitting by herself, surrounded by her shopping bags. She is digging through her purse. ALAN watches her for a moment and then walks over to her.

ALAN

Hildy?

HILDY

Don't bother me. I've lost something very important.

ALAN

Hildy, your pool report caused quite a sensation. Carter's remark grabbed all the leads.

HILDY looks up suspiciously.

ALAN

You did good, Hildy.

He means it. HILDY becomes flustered.

HILDY

(looking down)

I only did my job. You people don't think I can do anything right. You think I'm a foolish old lady.

ALAN smiles gently and shakes his head.

ALAN

No, we don't, Hildy.

At just this moment, HARRY steps out of the elevator. He is clad in a bright blue safari suit. At the sight of HILDY, his eyes light up and he charges across the lobby.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

58

HARRY
(bellowing)
Hildy, my darling! I have
something cold and blunt
to show you!

It is too much for ALAN. In one motion, he drops his bag, wheels around and throws a bone-crushing punch directly into HARRY's oncoming, smiling face. As HILDY screams, HARRY staggers backwards and crashes into a table. ALAN is on him at once. HARRY throws his hands up to protect his face.

HARRY
Jesus Christ, my face, man!
Don't hit my face!

Pulling her umbrella out of a shopping bag, HILDY comes to HARRY's rescue.

HILDY
Stop it! Stop it, you animal!
Get off him!

As ALAN looks up in surprise, HILDY whips her umbrella around and catches him square on the forehead. Dazed, ALAN backs off and is caught on the fall by WILKIE. As a crowd gathers around, HILDY falls to her knees and starts to loosen HARRY's tie.

HILDY
My poor baby. What has he done
to you?

Totally confused, ALAN looks up at WILKIE.

ALAN
I don't get it. I don't
understand.

WILKIE looks at ALAN and shakes his head. He is amazed that ALAN is so stupid.

WILKIE
He pays attention to her, Alan.

59 INT. - THE ZOO PLANE - TWO HOURS LATER - DAY

59

ALAN is sitting on the jump seat of the galley while CRICKET attends to a nasty cut just above his eyebrow. His shirt, already wrinkled from several days use, is now torn as well. There are a few blood specks on his collar.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

59

CRICKET

(dabbing his forehead)

This is going to hurt, darlin'.

ALAN

Why should you be any different?

(wincing)

Ow! That's not how I like it.

The galley curtain is suddenly ripped aside. HARRY strides in and glares at ALAN. He is sporting a magnificent shiner.

HARRY

There you are, you son of a bitch.

ALAN

Take a number, Harry. You'll just have to wait your turn.

HARRY

Listen, you bastard, you want to tell me how I'm supposed to go on the air with one eye swollen shut?

ALAN

You knew the job was dangerous when you took it, Harry.

HARRY

What the hell did you think you were doing, anyway? Since when have you become so concerned with the feelings of Hildy Meyerson?

CRICKET finishes bandaging ALAN's forehead.

ALAN

Thanks, babe.

(standing up)

Harry, let me put it this way. You're a schmuck, Harry. It was just my way of telling you to kiss off. Words failed me so I decided to disfigure you.

ALAN brushes past HARRY.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

59

HARRY

Listen, Farley, if I lose one minute of air time because of this, I'm going to sue your ass from here to hell and back. Do you hear me?

60 EXT. - ASWAN AIRPORT - MID-DAY

60

It is a cold, bright day as the Zoo Plane touches down on Egyptian soil. The Aswan Airport is situated some distance from the famous Russian-built dam, so the immediate landscape is nothing but sand dunes and brush. The security benefits are easily appreciated, but as the reporters emerge blinking into the harsh sunlight, there is a lot of head-shaking over the desolation of the spot chosen for the historic Carter-Sadat summit meeting. A small group of Egyptian press officials waits to escort the reporters to the terminal.

MURPH

(heaving his mini-cam
to his shoulder)

I hate the Mid-East. Nothin'
but fuckin' sand and rag-heads.

HARRY

Ah, the cameraman's lot is not an easy one, is it, O'Brian? Pa as you are a paltry hundred g to film three minutes a da it's a marvel you show up for work at all. You, too, Hootch. You're a credit to boat people everywhere.

HOOTCH

Thank you, Harry.

MURPH

Up yours, hair spray.

SHELLY and WILKIE stop at the foot of the landing ramp and look around.

SHELLY

Good lord. Imagine going to war over real estate like this.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

60

WILKIE

Now, now, Feiner. With a little money and imagination, this place could look like Albuquerque. In fact, I have a theory. We're on a sound stage right now. We've spent the last ten days flying around inside a huge hanger in Burbank, California.

(pointing to the terminal)

I mean, if they're not from Central Casting, I don't know who is.

Directly in front of the terminal, an Egyptian honor guard is standing more or less at attention. Behind them, a small military band is playing ceremonial marches. Since each band member seems to have picked his own tempo at random, the music is just short of cacophonous. The amused reporters stop to watch this proud but comical welcoming committee. The soldiers return their gazes nervously. One of them drops his rifle.

HARRY

Something less than crack, I daresay.

WILKIE

Haven't seen a bunch this racist-assed since the Ford trip to Indonesia. And those guys were drunk.

An officer barks out a command. To the astonishment of the reporters, the soldiers suddenly bend over and lay their weapons on the ground. The musicians likewise set down their instruments. Another command, and within seconds, the entire squadron is prostrate on the ground. It is time for mid-day prayers.

As the soldiers begin to chant and bow in their direction, the reporters try to suppress their smiles.

HARRY

I can't help but take this personally.

WILKIE

They must have spotted Cronkite.

CONTINUED 2

60

SHELLY

Do you suppose they do that in the middle of battle, too?

WILKIE

It would certainly go a long way towards explaining their 0 and 4 record against the Jews.

ALAN

Excuse me, please. Coming through. Press. Coming through. Thank you.

ALAN brushes by WILKIE and SHELLY and walks briskly out onto the tarmac towards the soldiers. He is carrying his typewriter, a flight bag and a large umbrella. WILKIE and SHELLY look at each other.

WILKIE

What the hell's he up to?

ALAN strolls right through the honor guard. As he passes the genuflecting soldiers, he raises his arms like a politician and acknowledges the pieties intended for Allah.

ALAN

God morning, gentlemen. Good to see you. God is great. Infidels wear combat boots.

The reporters watch ALAN with growing alarm. Finally WILKIE hands SHELLY his typewriter and runs across the tarmac after him. When ALAN sees him, he turns his back and starts to walk away.

WILKIE

(catching up)

Jesus, Alan, what kind of stunt was that? Where are you going?

ALAN

Mecca. Apparently, it's this way. No talking, please.

WILKIE

What?

ALAN

Some honor guard, huh? At least they've got the chain of command straight.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

60

The soldiers finish praying, stand up and fall back into formation.

ALAN

Funny thing about honor guards.
Ever wonder why most of them
look the same? Same formation?
Same number of soldiers?

ALAN's voice is momentarily drowned out by the scream of the engines of Air Force One, now approaching the runway.

WILKIE

(struggling to
keep up)

What?

ALAN reaches into his flight bag and pulls out a miniature bottle of scotch. He unscrews the top and pours the contents into a paper cup.

ALAN

Well, I used to wonder, too.
So I looked into it, and it
turns out that during the nine-
teenth century, all the European
powers kept trying to outdo each
other at official greetings
ceremonies. At one point, entire
armies were being conscripted
just to welcome visiting heads
of state. It got so that peace
became more expensive than war.

WILKIE

Alan, where the hell are you
going? We've got about ten
minutes to..

ALAN

(downing the scotch)

Anyway, Louis-Philippe finally
called a halt to it, and got
all the crowned heads of the
civilized world to agree to a
single set of protocol stan-
dards for honor guards. I
forget how many battalions
it is, but it's the same every-
where.

CONTINUED 4

60

They have reached the end of the tarmac. ALAN walks over to a huge earthmover parked in the sand nearby. WILKIE looks back nervously at the terminal, where Air Force One is starting to taxi into place.

WILKIE

Okay, man, enough's enough...

Off in the distance, we hear the booming retorts of howitzers. Puffs of white smoke appear above the dunes behind the terminal. ALAN climbs up into the driver's seat of the bulldozer and sets his typewriter down on the control panel.

ALAN

Ah, the 21-gun salute. An old Egyptian custom. As a sign of respect, they shell nearby Israeli settlements.

ALAN opens his flight bag and withdraws his field glasses, a couple of sandwiches and some more miniature scotch bottles.

WILKIE

Alan, what are you doing?

ALAN

Having lunch. I'm sorry, I only brought enough for one.

WILKIE

Alan, I'm trying to understand this. The President of the United States is about to have a head to head summit with the President of Egypt. Some might call it important, even historic. And yet, the political correspondent for the Times charged with covering that event is a half mile away having a picnic on a bulldozer.

ALAN

On the face of it, it's a little curious, yes.

WILKIE

So?

ALAN

So in the first place, I'm trying

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 5

60

ALAN
(cont'd)

to spare my readers unnecessary history. I think it was G.K. Chesterton who said that journalism largely consists of saying "Lord Jones Dead" to people who never knew Lord Jones was alive. Secondly, experience have shown me that reporters don't decide what's historic, editors do. As Adlai Stevenson once told me, newspaper editors are men who separate the wheat from the chaff, and then print the chaff.

WILKIE
(exasperated)

Alan..

ALAN
Of course, look where insights like that got him.

ALAN puts a piece of paper in his typewriter.

ALAN
You better be getting back, Wilkie. You've got a paper to get out.

WILKIE looks at Alan and shakes his head. He starts to walk away.

ALAN
I'm hanging it up, Wilkie, packing it in. My kid's just gonna have to make the pros a little sooner than we'd planned.

WILKIE stops and looks back.

WILKIE
You quit?

ALAN
Wilkie, my friend, it came to me when we were circling Tehran with the defective landing gear. We didn't have any of the heavies on board, of course, but still,

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 6

60

ALAN
(cont'd)

you had to wonder: what would happen if the entire second string of American political journalism was wiped out in a single instant?

WILKIE eyes ALAN for a moment and then grins.

WILKIE
Well, for one thing, it would put one hell of a lot of pressure on the third string.

ALAN
That's what I mean. It wouldn't matter.

61 EXT. - ASWAN AIRPORT - AN HOUR LATER - DAY

61

The meeting is over and Carter and Sadt have just made a joint statement to the press. As the President and his entourage move off in the direction of Air Force One, the reporters start running for their typewriters. In the absence of any press room facilities, reporters leans against the tiers of the press grandstand and set up their typewriters on equipment cases. Several simply sit down and type on their laps. The three network correspondents, each vying for a shot with Air Force One in the background, begin their stand-ups, as we pan from one to the next.

CBS REPORTER
The mood was ebullient when the two leaders emerged smiling from their 45-minute meeting. A delighted President Sadat told reporters that, quote, we have agreed on certain steps to keep..

LIZ
Stating that he and President Carter had agreed on certain steps to keep the momentum in the peace process, President Sadat seemed restrained in his enthusiasm for the new Carter initiative..

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

61

We finally get to HARRY. He is wearing mirrored sunglasses and is facing the camera with an odd three-quarter profile.

HARRY

Obviously shaken by the misunderstandings of recent weeks, the two leaders tried to cut through the mood of gloom and mutual suspicion with a grim appeal for new steps to keep the momentum in the peace process..

Underneath the press bleachers, WILKIE and DEITZ are composing their own varied versions of events, pounding their typewriters with manic fury. An Egyptian motorcycle courier in a leather jumpsuit stands waiting a short distance away.

WILKIE

What would you call that statement?

DEITZ

Elliot says the White House is calling it "constructive ambiguity".

WILKIE

(ripping paper from his typewriter)

I'm calling it a day. You got anything for the Cairo wire?

DEITZ

No, I'm filing from Paris. This is a think piece. I get another four hours.

WILKIE stuffs his copy into a manila envelope and flips it to the courier.

WILKIE

Cairo. Immediate transmission.

The courier salutes and runs for his motorcycle.

62 EXT. - ASWAN AIRPORT - DAY

62

ALAN is still sitting on the bulldozer. He is shaded by the umbrella which he has propped up on the hood. He has finished his lunch and is now diligently typing away, occasionally lifting his field glasses to peer at the proceedings in front of the terminal.

ALAN

(softly, to himself)

"From this reporter's perspective,
both President Jimmy Carter and
President Anwar Sadat appeared.."

He looks through his binoculars again.

ALAN

"...tiny. Clearly a meeting
of some place had taken place,
but whether the two leaders
had discussed the future of
the Sinai or had just shot a
little pool was not readily
apparent.."

ALAN looks down at his copy with satisfaction. He cracks open another bottled cocktail.

63 INT. - ZOO PLANE - 15 MINUTES LATER - DAY

63

The reporters and technicians are back on board finding their seats. CRICKET is passing out mixed drinks, as MATTY checks people on board. ANNIE is distributing schedules to the reporters from her makeshift office in the forward cabin of the plane.

ANNIE

Paris bibles. Paris bibles.

HARRY

(looking it over)

Any good parties, Annie?

ANNIE

Well, hon, there's a formal
reception at Versailles tomor-
row night. I think it's even
black tie.

WILKIE

Did you say black eye?

HARRY

God damn it, Wilkie, that's not

CONTINUED

63

HARRY

(cont'd)

funny. I've got contract negotiations coming up. Do you know what a permanent scar would look like on my record.

WILKIE

Your number had to come up sooner or later, Harry. As they say in T.V. land, there are only two kinds of performers -- those who have been dropped and those who are going to be dropped.

Behind them, the cabin door is pulled closed with a thud. We hear the whine of the jet engines starting up.

MATTY

(over intercom)

Folks, if y'all could find your seats, please, we'd appreciate it. We're runnin' a tad behind schedule.

WILKIE takes a bloody mary and sits down next to SHELLY, who is reading the schedule for Paris. He drains his drink.

WILKIE

What a day. Let's unwind.

WILKIE reaches over and puts both hands on SHELLY's breasts. She doesn't look up.

SHELLY

I'm going to come.

WILKIE sighs.

SHELLY

Did you know we have a formal reception at Versailles tomorrow night?

WILKIE looks out the window.

WILKIE

Yeah, I.. Holy shit!

SHELLY

(looking up)

What?

CONTINUED 2

63

WILKIE

Alan! It's Alan! That crazy bastard's
still out there!

SHELLY looks out the window. A smiling ALAN is waving
from the bulldozer.

WILKIE

I gotta stop the plane!

As WILKIE stands up, the plane begins its takeoff with a
lurch. Thrown off balance, WILKIE tumbles head over heels
down the aisle, followed by a cascade of rolling beer cans.

64 EXT. - ASWAN AIRPORT - DAY

64

As the Zoo Plane roars down the runway, we see ALAN still
perched on the bulldozer, waving lazily after it. He follows
the plane for a while with his binoculars. When it finally
disappears, he throws the glasses back into his flight bag
and pulls out another bottle of scotch.

Suddenly a shrill whistle pierces the air, and ALAN looks
back at the terminal. The runway is filled with Egyptian
security police, shouting and running in his direction.

ALAN props up his feet and opens the bottle.

65 INT. - ZOO PLANE - A FEW HOURS LATER - DAY

65

WILKIE is in the galley, watching LIZ make herself a cup
of coffee.

WILKIE

May I ask you a question, Liz?

LIZ

No, I don't know why he went
over the wall, Wilkie. He's
your friend, you figure it out.

WILKIE

Did you have some sort of fight
with him?

LIZ

More like a rude awakening. But
I'm not sure he noticed. He's had
a lot on his mind lately.

WILKIE

I'm sorry, Liz.

CONTINUED

65

LIZ

It's my own fault. I never know
I'm having a low-rent affair
until after it's over. Wilkie,
tell me, is Alan sane?

WILKIE

He got off the Zoo, didn't he?

The PILOT suddenly appears around the corner. He is wearing
an Arab headdress.

PILOT

You seen my beret, Cricket
honey?

He starts pulling out the overhead storage bins. CRICKET
comes to his assistance.

CRICKET

I think it's up here, Capatin.

She finds it.

PILOT

(to Wilkie and Liz
with a wink)

Can't land in Paris without
my beret.

He unwraps his headdress and gives it to CRICKET, who
folds it neatly and puts it away. The PILOT adjusts his
beret.

PILOT

Like it? The customs guys go
bananas when they see my hats.

CRICKET

You look very dashing, Captain.

The PILOT looks at his watch.

PILOT

Well, gotta be going. We're
about to take 'er in.

Suddenly there is a great shudder, as the plane drops down
onto the runway. No one is more surprised than the PILOT.
Behind him, the reporters break into applause.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

65

PILOT

Damn hotdogger. He's not
supposed to do that without
me.

Regaining his composure, the PILOT steps out into the aisle
and acknowledges the applause.

PILOT

Welcome to France, boys.

66 EXT. - THE PALACE AT VERSAILLES - NIGHT

66

Four chartered buses are parked in front of the flood-lit
Plaza D'Armes. Nearly a hundred cold and irritated reporters
are milling around. DEITZ is leaning against the gate
watching WILKIE toss a red, white and blue football back
and forth with MURPH. All the reporters are attired in dark
suits or formal wear, although they still wear their press
tags. It is quite cold, and a number of the reporters are
waiting in the buses to keep warm.

DEITZ

(looking at his watch)

The damn thing's going to be
over before we get in.

WILKIE

If we get in.

MURPH

W... kin' better, man. I
d... t get all dressed up to
freeze my butt off out on the
sidewalk.

MURPH is wearing an Hawaiian shirt with a bow tie.

WILKIE

You know, this has all the
earmarks of one of Elliot's
fuck-ups.

As if on cue, a limousine pulls up to the curb. ELLIOT
and MATTY step out, the latter with a small box of
envelopes.

WILKIE returns the ball to MURPH.

WILKIE

What'd I tell you?

CONTINUED

66

ELLIOT

Okay, listen up, people.
These are your invitations.
Sorry they weren't at your
hotel, but for some reason,
the Minister of Protocol was
only given the names of the
people riding Pan-Am.

A chorus of boos. MATTY begins distributing the invitation.

WILKIE

For some reason, Elliot?
Jesus, man, what else do you
have to do besides running
out to get cigarettes for
Jedy?

ELLIOT doesn't look at WILKIE, but motions to his aides to
head up towards the palace.

ELLIOT

There was a mix-up, Turner.
It wasn't at our end.

WILKIE

Why wasn't there at least a
master list with security at
the door?

ELLIOT quickens his pace. WILKIE stays with him.

ELLIOT

W. provided one. I told you,
it wasn't at our end.

WILKIE

Elliot, we don't even have a
pool reporter in there.

ELLIOT

Get off my case, Turner. Jesus,
you people are so goddamn helpless.

They reach the security checkpoint at the door of the
Pavillon Dufour. ELLIOT strides right through, his access
unquestioned by virtue of his Secret Service lapel pin.
While WILKIE fumbles for his invitation, ELLIOT makes
good his escape.

67 INT. - VERSAILLES PALACE - GALLERY DES GLACES - NIGHT

67

We open on a huge, glittering reception being held to honor the President of the United States. Literally thousands of prominent politicians and leading lights from French society have been invited, filling almost all of the palace's 140 salons. It is a dazzling affair; few of the contingent of American reporters fail to be awed by the sumptuous splendor of both the occasion and its magnificent rococo setting. The reporters stand around the galleries in small clusters, intimidated and self-conscious in their wrinkled suits, staring up at the tapestries and painted ceilings -- all in vivid contrast to the French guests, who are stylishly attired and utterly unimpressed by their surroundings. The locals eye the reporters indulgently, occasionally snickering at their appearance and wide-eyed demeanor.

Standing near the door of gallery, HARRY, MATTY and HOOTCH are sipping champagne from long-stemmed glasses. HOOTCH looks around disbelievingly at the opulence of the room.

HARRY

Ever seen anything like this before, Matty?

MATTY

Pretty near. There's a whole bunch of houses in Dallas decorated just like this.

HARRY

Of course. From the Sun King Collection at Neiman Marcus, no doubt.

HOOTCH has taken out a pocket Instamatic and is snapping pictures of a table of hors d'oeuvres. HARRY looks at him disapprovingly.

HARRY

Hootch!

HOOTCH

Harry?

HARRY

Where do you think you are, Disneyland?

HOOTCH pockets his camera and smiles sheepishly.

HOOTCH

Sorry, boss. I just wanted a few shots of the shrimp.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

67

HARRY

What is it with you third worlders? You're obsessed with food.

At a nearby table, MURPH is picking his way through an elaborate buffet spread, while a waiter looks on with ill-concealed contempt. MURPH is still carrying his football.

MURPH

(poking his finger
into a chafing dish)

What is that stuff? Is it
beef? I want some beef.

WAITER

No, monsieur, that is the
Chicken Lyonnaise. If monsieur
will permit me..

The WAITER starts to spoon the chicken onto MURPH's plate. MURPH pulls his plate out of the way and the chicken splatters all over the floor.

MURPH

I don't want any chicken,
man. How about French fries?
You got any French fries?

WAITER

I'm sorry, monsieur..

MURPH

Are you shitting me? This
is France and you don't even
have any French fries? Christ!

MURPH drops his plate onto the table with disgust. He stuffs some rolls into his pocket and stalks off.

HARRY

Hootch.

HOOTCH

Harry?

HARRY

Keep an eye on him. There's
nothing more irresponsible
than a teckie on a feeding spree.

HOOTCH

CONTINUED 3

67

HOOTCH disappears into the crowd.

HARRY

Actually, O'Brian's only trying to take care of himself. You know the old saying -- starve a cold, feed the clap.

MATTY

The clap? I thought you ran a clean camera unit, Harry?

HARRY

Lord knows I try, but the price of penicillin being what it is today..

Across the room, near the staircase, ELLIOT is talking with an aide when he is approached by WILKIE, DEITZ and SHELLY. The aide is writing discretely in a small notebook.

WILKIE

Elliot, I gotta hand it to you, it was worth the wait. Listen, I want you to meet someone.

ELLIOT

(turning away)
Later, Turner. I'm busy.

WILKIE

(spinning him around)
Elliot, this is Shelly Feiner, from the Columbia Journalism Review. She's doing a little piece on the press and she'd sure like a quote from you. Since you'll probably be all tied up with the press advance for Normandy tomorrow, I thought that now would be a dandy time to..

ELLIOT

(to Shelly)
You want to know about the White House Press Corps, Miss Feiner? Well, let me give you the list; as people, they're self-indulgent, cynical, irresponsible, childish and over-rated. As reporters, they're much worse.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

67

WILKIE
(to Shelly)
You getting all this?

ELLIOT
They write before they think,
and when they do think, they
all think alike. Reporters
are sheep, Miss Feiner. If
one goes with the story, they
all go with it, regardless of
whether they've checked it
out or thought it through.
Sheep, Miss Feiner. If you can
only quote one word, that's
the one to go with.

WILKIE
(to Deitz)
I suppose it's better than
swine.

68 INT. - VERSAILLES PALACE - NIGHT

68

MURPH and HOOTCH have wandered into a connecting gallery.
MURPH is carrying a champagne bottle and weaving dangerously,
but since there is no bar in the room, he and HOOTCH have
the 200-foot long salon virtually to themselves. MURPH is
inspecting a large canvas depicting a gathering of cherubs
and nymphs.

MURPH
Jesus, look at the tits on
this one, Hootch.

HOOTCH is at the other end of the room taking pictures of
bas-reliefs with his Instamatic.

HOOTCH
What's that, Murph?

MURPH
Nothin'..

MURPH looks down at the football he's still clutching in one
arm. His eyes light up.

MURPH
Hootch!

HOOTCH
Yeah, Murph?

CONTINUED

68

MURPH

Go deep!

HOOTCH looks up to see MURPH fading back to pass.

HOOTCH

Murph! No!

Undeterred, MURPH lets fly with the football. The pass sails the length of the gallery, through the connecting portico, and down into the ballroom one level below. HOOTCH watches the ball's flight with horror.

HOOTCH

Harry!

HARRY

(looking up)

Yo?

HOOTCH

Incoming!

Too late. The football catches HARRY right in the eye and sends him sprawling, along with several other guests and a waiter bearing a tray of champagne. As glass smashes all over the floor, screams are heard and people start pushing for the exits.

ELLIOT's eyes narrow and he shoots an evil look at WILKIE. It's clear he holds him personally responsible.

ELLIOT

Je Christ. Don't you people
have any shame?

WILKIE sighs deeply.

WILKIE

You're right. He should have
had it.

69 EXT. - BUS EN ROUTE TO NORMANY BEACH - DAY

69

A small tour bus is bouncing down a narrow country road in Normandy. About thirty reporters and several tons of equipment are crammed inside. Hung over and exhausted, the reporters have never looked worse. The only sign of life is in the front row of seats, where WILKIE, seated next to DEITZ, is engaged in a one-way conversation with HARRY, who is slumped in the seat behind them. HARRY's chin is on his chest, his white tennis hat pulled down over his eyes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

69

WILKIE

You know, you really let us down, Harry. There you were, representing our country, the cream of French society looking on, and you drop a perfectly thrown forty yard spiral. I mean, he just floated it right to you, Harry. A five-year-old schoolboy could have picked it off.

HARRY finally looks up. He now has two black eyes.

HARRY

Go sit on a boom mike, will you, Turner?

WILKIE

Yeah, you really let us down, didn't he, Deitz?

DEITZ

Well, they did close the bar.

WILKIE

That's right, and they were serving first-class champagne. French, wasn't it?

The bus slows down. Up ahead, a large flock of sheep is starting to cross the highway.

DEITZ

A... er delay.

(looking at watch)

And we're already twenty minutes late.

WILKIE opens a window and looks out.

WILKIE

What is it?

DEITZ

Flock of sheep crossing the road.

WILKIE looks at DEITZ. A sly smile starts to cross his face.

WILKIE

Sheep?

70 EXT. - BAYEUX TOWN SQUARE - DAY

70

In the town square of the small Normandy village of Bayeux, several hundred townspeople have gathered to welcome President Carter following his participation in wreath-laying ceremonies at Omaha Beach. A small brass band is playing patriotic songs on the steps of the church. Off to one side, a bank of microphones has been erected, as has a scaffolding to accomodate both the foreign and domestic television crews. Adjacent to the church is a small hotel, the first floor of which has been converted into a press office.

In front of the hotel, ELLIOT is pacing nervously while ANNIE provides passing reporters with hand-outs. One of the network television producers approaches ELLIOT.

PRODUCER

Elliot, where the hell are they? If I don't get my set-up in the next five minutes, I'm going to have to take my feed from French television.

ELLIOT

Look, I don't know where they are. They were the last bus to leave. The problem's not on this end.

PRODUCER

It damn well is on this end. The President's due in less than..

ELLIOT

Hey! There they are!

The tour bus has appeared on the other side of the square. Honking his horn to get through the crowd, the driver pulls the bus up in front of the hotel and opens the doors. To the astonishment of onlookers, several dozen frightened, bleating sheep pour out of the bus. All of them are wearing press tags.

PRODUCER

What the fuck?

Bedlam breaks out. Everyone starts chasing the sheep, who run helter-skelter in every direction, knocking over lights, tripping over cables, disrupting traffic, all to the vast amusement of the townspeople, who cheer them on. All of this is caught on live television by French cameramen. As ELLIOT is knocked flat by a rampaging sheep, we cut to:

71 INT. - A BISTRO NEAR BAYEUX - DAY

71

The same scene as seen on a black and white television set above the bar. As we pull back, we see HARRY, WILKIE, LIZ and the other reporters roaring at the televised mayhem. The wine is flowing, and the owner of the bistro is bustling about filling glasses.

WILKIE

Press! Press! Let 'em through!

HARRY

(pointing at screen)
Hey, those are my tags! That's
my sheep!

The sheep in question stops abruptly and stares at the camera. He has big black rings around his eyes.

DEITZ

Good God, he's got his
father's eyes!

72 INT. - PARIS - HOTEL RITZ LOBBY - NIGHT

72

It is six hours later as LIZ, DEITZ, WILKIE et al. stagger into the lobby of the Hotel Ritz. They have their arms around each other and are singing the Whiffenpoof Song at the top of their lungs.

REPORTERS

"We're poor little lambs who
have gone astray..bah, bah,
bah.."

WILKIE

(stopping short)

Whoa!

Smiling from a couch facing the door is ALAN. WILKIE steadies himself and then lets out a whoop.

WILKIE

Alan!

DEITZ

How do you like that!
He's back!

WILKIE rushes over and gives him a drunken bear hug.
LIZ turns and walks away towards the elevator.

WILKIE

How the hell did you get

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

72

WILKIE

(cont'd)

out of Egypt? You left your
passport on the plane.

ALAN

The embassy fixed me up.
The hard part was getting a
cab in from Orly.

WILKIE sits down with ALAN.

WILKIE

You back on board?

ALAN

For the ride, yes. With
the paper, no. It's
official.

ALAN takes a cable out of his pocket and hands it to WILKIE.

ALAN

My dispatch from Aswan contained
a short story, two sonnets and
a limerick. They suggested I
try the New Yorker.

WILKIE reads the cable, smiles and gives it back to ALAN.

ALAN

Want to get a drink?

WILKIE

Can't. I gotta do my piece.

An awkward pause.

WILKIE

(getting up)

Well. So you'll be going
back with us..

ALAN

It's either that or get
deported.

WILKIE

See you tomorrow, then.

ALAN

Right. See you tomorrow.

73 INT. - ZOO PLANE - NIGHT

73

The reporters have settled in for the long flight home. The mood is subdued; a few typewriters are clattering away, but most of the reporters are either sleeping or quietly having drinks in their seats. In the rear of the plane, an informal briefing is taking place. WILKIE, DEITZ, and three or four other reporters are listening and taking notes while ELLIOT holds forth. ALAN is watching from across the aisle.

ELLIOT

Quite frankly, the President admits that the trip was largely symbolic. What he has tried to do is put forward the image of a nation that is strong and secure and self-confident, but which doesn't have to prove its strength by taking advantage of other nations that are not as strong or secure.

DEITZ

Where does the President feel he was most successful?

ELLIOT

Well, of course, there were different purposes for visiting each country. It's difficult to compare. He did, however, say that the day he spent with Giscard was one of the best days of his life.

WILKIE

I believe the phrase he used was "one of the best years of his life."

ELLIOT

His intent was clear.

ALAN

As was the irony of the slip. Elliot. I mean, wouldn't you agree that the unevenness of Carter's performance this trip has a great deal to do with the insane pace of his madcap schedule?

ELLIOT looks up over his glasses at ALAN.

CONTINUED

73

ELLIOT

Is your interest purely personal,
Alan, or are you freelancing now?

ELLIOT's taunt hangs in the air. The other reporters look away awkwardly. For the first time, it dawns on ALAN that he is alone now, that he has forfeited his standing on the plane.

ALAN

Forget it.

He walks back up the aisle.

74 INT. - ZOO PLANE COCKPIT - NIGHT

74

ALAN is sitting in the observer's seat staring out the window into the blackness. His thoughts are interrupted by the NAVIGATOR, who has just returned from the galley with a round of coffee. He hands a cup to the PILOT, who is now wearing a cowboy hat.

PILOT

Thanks, Charlie.

NAVIGATOR

Man. We've got a real bunch
of zombies back there. I'm
talkin' wasted.

(to Alan)

What's it you people do on
the trips? You look like
you've just taken Guadalcanal.

ALAN

That's the idea, Charlie.
We've got a lot of people
meeting us who think we do
something important. We
don't want to let them down.

NAVIGATOR

(smiling)

Seriously.

ALAN

That's as serious as I get,
Charlie.

75 INT. - ZOO PLANE - SEVERAL HOURS LATER - NIGHT

75

The flight is nearly over. The cabin lights are off and nearly everyone is asleep. In the forward cabin, the last hold-outs are drinking beer and singing country songs. WILKIE is strumming a small ukulele, while LIZ, SHELLY and HARRY sing in those slaphappy harmonies of people too tired to care what they sound like. They keep changing songs every three bars, as no one seems to be able to remember the lyrics. As we open, LIZ is trying to lead HARRY, HARRY and SHELLY through the lyrics of "Dream, Dream, Dream."

LIZ
(singing)
"When I want you and all
your charms..al I have to
do is.."

HARRY and
SHELLY
"When I want you and all
your charms..all I have.."

They all come together on the chorus.

ALL
"Dream, dream, dream.."

WILKIE gets stuck on a chord change.

WILKIE
Sorry. I used to know
that.

LIZ
Yo. guys know "Cryin'
Time Again"?

SHELLY
How's that go?

WILKIE
Wait a minute: I know
that.

(singing)
"It's cryin' time again.."

As he struggles with the chords, LIZ starts to sing. She gets two bars into the song when WILKIE gives up.

WILKIE
Oh, hell. Do it without me.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

75

She does. It is obviously a tune that LIZ has listened to a thousand times, and as she sings the ballad in a clear, sad voice, an ineffable melancholy settles over the other reporters.

LIZ

(singing)

"It's cryin' time again, you're gonna leave me.. I can see that faraway look in your eyes.."

Exhausted and vulnerable, the reporters are filled with emotion as they listen. With the reading light above her casting a pool of light on her blonde hair, LIZ has never looked more beautiful.

Or so it seems to ALAN, who watches silently from the darkness of the galley.

76 INT. - ZOO PLANE - NIGHT

76

The reporters are preparing to disembark. As they struggle with their coats and flight bags, MATTY's drawl is heard over the P.A.

MATTY

(v.o.)

..And on behalf of TWA and the entire White House Transportation Office, we certainly want to thank y'all for your co-operation and wish a very pleasant reunion to those of you who are still married.

77 EXT. - ANDREWS AFB - NIGHT

77

The reporters are walking across the tarmac towards the terminal. Bedraggled beyond recognition, they resemble nothing so much as the return of the Grand Arme'e from Russia.

WILKIE

Tory meeting you?

ALAN

That was the plan. You need a ride?

WILKIE

No, thanks. I gotta get a plane to Nashville tonight.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

77

ALAN

Show-off.

WILKIE

Stay in touch.

ALAN

Sure.

Waiting at the gate is TORY and a small boy with a hockey stick. ALAN drops his bag and takes his wife in his arms. As we pull back on the reunion scene, we notice LIZ walking off by herself into the parking lot.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★