

FLY GALS

by

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EXT. FLYING - DAY

OPENING IMAGE: POV from atop a polished chrome wing flying over green pastures.

INT. WASHINGTON POST NEWSROOM - DAY

JOURNALISTS scurry across the newsroom. Monitors overhead loop the catastrophic results of the 2010 Haitian earthquake.

INT. MARCUS' OFFICE - DAY

ELLEN THOMAS, a short haired, tom-boyish, T-shirt and slacks kind of journalist, stands impatiently, next to-

SERGE, a tall, well-dressed handsome Haitian man.

Serge and Ellen face their boss, MARCUS BRANTLEY, a tall handsome black man with a stern face. He's solemn.

MARCUS

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Port Au Prince last night. Nearly every structure has been compromised, a million are homeless, thousands presumed dead. Why you two are clamoring to witness--

ELLEN

The deadline is in two weeks, Sir.

Serge looks at her and shakes his head.

MARCUS

The Pulitzer? Again?

SERGE

Now that's just wrong. How can you think about that at a time like this?

Ellen ROLLS her eyes at him.

ELLEN

Right, because I'm sure it's the Haitian people you're worried about.

SERGE

I AM HAITIAN!

MARCUS

Enough! I had already decided that Serge should go.

(to Serge)

Make your arrangements, you leave today.

SERGE
YES! Thank you, Sir!

Serge backs out and runs down the hall. Ellen is STEAMING.

ELLEN
It's because I'm a girl isn't it?

MARCUS
No, its because Serge is Haitian and can speak French.

ELLEN
I speak Spanish?!

MARCUS
And if the quake had happened in the D.R. we'd be having a different discussion.

Marcus grabs a press release and hands it to Ellen.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Ellen, I do need you to cover this. Two hundred surviving WASPS will be receiving the Congressional Gold Medal in two months. I want a full exposé.

ELLEN
You want an exposé on old rich women?

MARCUS
Women Air Force Service Pilots. WASPs.

Ellen shakes her head, not understanding.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Female World War two pilots, Ellen!

ELLEN
Women flew planes in Word War II?

MARCUS
Yes! And I want you to tell their story.

ELLEN
But I've never heard of it--

MARCUS
Right. Neither has anyone else.

Ellen glances from the press release back up to her boss.

EXT. FIELDS, 1938 - DAY

FRANCES "FRANKIE" COOPER, (16), rides her white horse DAISY with confidence. Her custom leather riding gear is well worn. Her inner tom-boy shines through. They RACE a nose behind-

ROBERT COOPER, a strapping and handsome young man, not a thread out of place. He jockeys his black horse, DUKE, with skill and keeps just a length ahead of Frankie.

Behind them, in the distance, a SILVER PLANE BUZZES toward them. Frankie looks over her shoulder, excited.

FRANKIE

It's her! Hurry! I want to be there when she wins!

ROBERT

I'm going as fast as I can, Frances!

FRANKIE

(she sneers)

Call me Frances again and I'll-

Robert corrects himself for the thousandth time.

ROBERT

Frankie! Frankie! Jesus!

FRANKIE

Come on! THE QUEEN OF SPEED is gonna' win and I want her autograph!

Robert LAUGHS mockingly.

ROBERT

Mother'll kill us if we're late again!

FRANKIE

Not if she can't catch us!

She digs in her heels.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

HIYA!

Daisy TAKES OFF moving ahead of Robert and Duke. Robert digs his heels in Duke's sides and CHASES after her.

ROBERT

Damn it, Frankie! Come on Duke, HIYA!

EXT. JACKIE COCHRAN'S PLANE - DAY

JACKIE COCHRAN, mid 30's, angular and attractive ZOOMS above the fields in the open cockpit of her Silver Seversky plane. "13" and "Silver Sky" embellish the gleaming chrome.

Curly blonde hair FLUTTERS at the edge of her aviator helmet. Jackie takes out her "Jacqueline Cochran Perk-Up Cylinder." She powders her face and applies lipstick. SMACK.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER, NATIONAL AIR RACES 1938 - DAY

A MOUSTACHED ANNOUNCER projects through the intercom system.

MUSTACHED ANNOUNCER
Come in by LAND or by SEA! It's the new
FLEETWING SEA BIRD!

EXT. NATIONAL AIR RACES, CLEVELAND, OH, 1938 - DAY

A FLEETWING SEABIRD lands on the MAIN RUNWAY. Its silver body and elevated central propeller make a dramatic entrance. THE CROWD APPLAUDS the amphibious plane's landing.

MOUSTACHED ANNOUNCER (O.S. SPEAKERS)
*No matter where you're going this baby
will get you there! Designed for the
Sports Man! Built of STEEL to save
weight!*

EXT. FLEETWING SEABIRD, MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

The plane's cockpit doors open and the pilots emerge.

NANCY LOVE, 24, athletic, pretty, descends the stairs and waves while keeping her dress from blowing. She's followed by-

CORNELIA FORT, 19, Tall, fair with curly hair. All Done up.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER - DAY

MOUSTACHED ANNOUNCER
*And so easy to land? Even a woman can do
it!*

EXT. FLEETWING SEABIRD, MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

Nancy, and Cornelia, looking more like models than pilots clench FAKE SMILES and WAVE to the CHEERING Crowd.

MOUSTACHED ANNOUNCER (O.S. SPEAKERS)
*"Sea Bird! There's no place these
 Beauties Can't Land!"*

CORNELIA
 Way to stick that landing!

NANCY
 The smoother the landing the more planes
 we sell.

CORNELIA
 I'll keep playing dress up as long as
 they keep paying me to fly planes.

NANCY
 Just keep your eyes peeled for Tunner so
 we can make this dog and pony show worth
 our while.

CORNELIA
 Head of the plane ferrying division?

NANCY
 Yes and with any luck he'll listen to my
 proposal so we don't have to play dress
 up anymore.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Still RACING Jackie Cochran's plane ROARS over them. Robert
 looks back as the plane's wheels nearly clip Frankie.

ROBERT
 Frankie, LOOKOUT!

Robert COLLIDES Duke into Daisy to get Frankie out of the way
 of the low flying plane's landing gear. Daisy WHINNIES. Duke
 BUCKS and TAKES OFF TOSSING Robert to the ground.

Jackie's engine WHIRPS past them. Robert WINCES, clutching his
 side, the wind knocked out of him.

FRANKIE
 Whoa, Daisy! Robert?!

ROBERT
 I'm fine! GO AFTER DUKE!

Understanding, Frankie GALLOPS off after the spooked Duke.

EXT. FLEETWING SEABIRD, MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

The speakers CRACKLE to life as Jackie's plane can be seen descending behind the amphibious Fleetwing Seabird.

MOUSTACHED ANNOUNCER (O.S. SPEAKERS)
Ladies and Gentleman, the first plane to
complete the 1938 Bendix race, arriving
all the way California is--

EXT. FIELD. - DAY

Frankie and Daisy CHASE Duke as he CAREENS out of control. Ahead the field opens into a giant clearing where thousands of people make up THE CROWD assembled for the Air Races.

FRANKIE
HIYA!

She tucks low. FASTER. Duke continues to edge them out.

EXT. NATIONAL AIR RACES, CLEVELAND, OH, 1938, VARIOUS - DAY

Hundreds of Model T car's SPARKLE in the sun. OVERHEAD the BUCKEYE BARNSTORMER TRIO can be seen barrel rolling around each other, DELIGHTING The Crowd below.

Food vendors, carnival games and cotton candy. A CHUBBY CHILD, sits on a bench close to his MOTHER and BABY SISTER. Duke STAMPEDES directly towards them! Noticing.

CHUBBY CHILD
Mommy! LOOK!

CLOSE IN on Duke. Frankie gains with mere yards between them and the Chubby Child and his Mother.

The Crowd begins to PANIC and FLEE from the horse's path. SCREAMS trigger a HAILSTORM of cotton candy, and carnival ball games as Duke narrowly misses cars, stands and people.

EXT. FLEETWING SEABIRD, MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

Nancy and Cornelia continue to wave as Jackie's plane BUZZES directly over them to a SMOOTH landing. The Mustached Announcer's voice BLARES with unbridled excitement!

MUSTACHED ANNOUNCER (O.S. SPEAKERS)
 Why it's THE QUEEN OF SPEED herself! From
 Burbank, California to Cleveland, Ohio in
 8 hours and 10 minutes, wife of
 billionaire Floyd Odlum and Cosmetics
 magnate, LADYBIRD! JACQUELINE! COCHRAN!

The Crowd EXPLODES with cheer!

EXT. NATIONAL AIR RACES, CLEVELAND, OH, 1938, VARIOUS - DAY

FRANKIE
 C'MON DAISY, HIYA!!

Perching atop her saddle she LEAPS onto Dukes's back while
 holding Daisy's reins. Yanking his reins he bucks and comes to
 a halt inches from the Chubby Child. She consoles him.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 Okay, Duke, its okay. Shhh.

EXT. FLEETWING SEABIRD, MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

Nancy's smile FADES as she watches Jackie's plane land.

NANCY
 Perfect timing.

CORNELIA
 Would'ya get a load of that plane?

NANCY
 I guess money *can* buy happiness.

Nancy points to a man in uniform passing through The Crowd

NANCY (CONT'D)
 Look, there's Tunner! Quick, follow him.

They finish descending from the plane to the runway.

CORNELIA
 Five bucks says he's headed to see "The
 Queen" in all her glory.

They push through The Crowd. Frankie has hitched her horses
 and also pushed her way through the Crowd. She stands close to
 the award podium behind a LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL.

EXT. JACKIE COCHRAN'S PLANE - DAY

RACE OFFICIALS, First Lady, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT and Four Star General HAP ARNOLD, older and wise, dressed in full uniform, congratulate Jackie with her trophy as cameras FLASH.

REPORTER

Mrs. Cochran! What fuels your ambition?
They've dubbed you the "Queen of Speed!"

JACKIE

Determination! I may have been born in a hovel but I'm determined to travel with the wind and the stars!

A barrage of camera FLASHES and QUESTIONS bombard Jackie and the First Lady as they are escorted through by Hap Arnold.

The Little Girl With a Doll aims for Jackie's attention but is hidden by the taller people around her. Noticing, Frankie picks her up so she is eye level with Jackie as she passes.

LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL

Ms. Cochran, may I have your autograph?

The Little Girl holds up a small piece of paper. Jackie makes eye contact with Frankie, then the little girl.

JACKIE

Well isn't that a pretty doll? I had one just like her when I was your age. What's her name?

LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL

Bessie.

Jackie glares back with a strange glint in her eye. Deadpan.

JACKIE

Well isn't that's a pretty name?

She signs the autograph.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Who do you want to be when you grow up?

LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL

A famous pilot!

JACKIE

Well you work hard and someday I'm sure you will be!

Frankie puts the Little Girl down who SMILES in gratitude. Jackie, Eleanor, and the General are escorted by SECRET SERVICE and move quickly despite the reporters questions.

FRANKIE

Wait! Mrs. Cochran!

Frankie pushes her way through The Crowd trying to keep up with them. The camera pushes back and we CLOSE IN on:

GENERAL TUNNER followed closely by Nancy and Cornelia also pushing their way through The Crowd.

NANCY

General Tunner! Wait!

General Tunner, hearing his name, turns to see Nancy.

EXT. NATIONAL AIR RACES - VARIOUS - DAY

CLOSE IN on Jackie, Eleanor, and the General.

HAP ARNOLD

Well Jackie, you seem to have become quite the popular Aviatrix!

JACKIE

Yes, well, to be honest? All this racing is seeming a bit trite with a war brewing.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Looking to spread your wings, Jackie?

JACKIE

The lack of experienced flyers is a national emergency, Eleanor. Germany has thousands of pilots, already trained! We can't compete!

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. THE CROWD - DAY

Nancy and General Tunner's identical conversation.

NANCY

I'm sure you're aware, General, every able bodied male pilot will be needed for war. How exactly do you propose to ferry planes from factory to base?

GENERAL TUNNER

What did you have in mind?

CLOSE IN on Nancy.

NANCY

We have 650 licensed women pilots in this country. Many would be of little use today, but with the proper training?

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. NATIONAL AIR RACES, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S CAR - DAY

CLOSE IN on Jackie while Frankie listens intently nearby.

JACKIE

With a patriotic objective, women could be useful for all sorts of back of the lines work, transport, ambulatory care? Molly Pitchers of the skies!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

What exactly are you suggesting? An Air brigade of women pilots?

HAP ARNOLD

The Royal Air Force is doing something similar. Matter of fact, I'm due to have a conversation with Chamberlain tomorrow about delivering some of our bombers to Europe. Maybe you could fly one over?

JACKIE

Across the Atlantic?

HAP ARNOLD

Why not? Give you some publicity? Besides I need every male pilot I can get my hands on.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Not only could you be the first woman to do it, but while you're there you can observe their program?

She pauses, thoughtful.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

If we do go to war we'll need to fight with every weapon possible.

Frankie's eyes WIDEN as she listens to their conversation.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT (O.S. (CONT'D)
In this case, women pilots are a weapon
waiting to be used!

Eleanor ducks into her vehicle.

HAP ARNOLD
I'll call Chamberlain myself. Pack your
bags. You'll leave on Monday.

Jackie looks at her watch.

JACKIE
Thank you, General. Now, if you'll excuse
me I must hurry so I can continue on to
New York and beat the transcontinental
record! Why settle for one world record
when I can have two?

Hap smiles and gets into the car behind the First Lady.

Jackie pulls out her "Jacqueline Cochran" lipstick and
liberally applies it. Pursing her lips, SMACK. She hurries off
passing right by Nancy, Cornelia and General Tunner.

EXT. THE CROWD - DAY

CLOSE IN on General Tunner as Jackie walks right past them.

GENERAL TUNNER
Have a proposal on my desk on Mond--

Nancy pulls out a BOUND DOCUMENT, handing it to him, we see:

WOMEN'S AUXILIARY FERRYING SQUADRON

NANCY
Step ahead of you, General.

The General manages a wry smile.

INT. WASHINGTON POST NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Ellen stares at her laptop, cell phone to her ear. Marcus
walks up as Ellen mocks the recorded message.

ELLEN
We're sorry but the number you have
dialed is no longer in service--

She SLAMS down the phone and looks up at her boss.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
I've called like a thousand of these
women and they're all dead-

She picks up the phone and begins to dial another number.
Cradling the phone she looks back to her boss.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Or damn near close.

Marcus sits down next to her desk and SIGHS.

MARCUS
Ellen, did you know that these women flew
more planes in World War II than their
male counterparts? Thirty eight of them
died!

Ellen looks to her boss.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
You know, Ellen, I was once like you.
Hungry. Naive. Always seeking the next
best thing. But a good reporter revels in
the journey, not the destination--

Ellen swats at her boss as France's VOICE comes on the line.

ELLEN
I think I got a live one!

Back to the phone.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Yes is this Frances Cooper?

INT. FRANCES'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

FRANCES COOPER GARRETT is 88 years old. She SPATS into the
phone rather disagreeably.

FRANCES
I haven't been Frances Cooper in sixty
five years!

INTERCUT WITH WASHINGTON POST NEWSROOM OFFICE

FRANCES (V.O. THROUGH PHONE)
Who is this?

ELLEN (INTO PHONE)
The Frances Cooper who flew planes in
World War II?

Silence. Ellen looks to Marcus.

ELLEN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
My name is Ellen from The Washington Post
and I'm doing a story about --

FRANCES (INTO PHONE)
Not interested!

Frances HANGS UP the phone and looks at the letter on the kitchen counter. Her fingers trace the textured Presidential Seal. And we see the words at the top of the page:

"CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY"

Frances brings the letter closer to her, covering the lower half of her face. We focus on her eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE HIGH OVER MILTON ACADEMY - DAY

Frankie's eyes as she pilots a candy apple red WACO BIPLANE. Robert flies behind her in a blue version of the same plane. Colorful foliage spreads below as they RACE.

Robert takes lead over Frankie. She pulls up, nearly clipping him. Edging each other out, wings nearly touching. Then Frankie notices their school below and points downward.

FRANKIE
Let's give 'em a scare!

Pulling back on the stick she DIVES toward Milton Academy's Quad. Robert reluctantly follows.

ROBERT
Frankie! Your airspeed! You're gonna'
make her stall!

She attempts to pull up but her plane STALLS and begins a TAILSPIN. The plane SPIRALS towards the Quad, people SCATTER.

She breathes deep, pushes in on the stick and jams the rudder to counteract the spin. The engine SPUTTERS to life. She PULLS UP but is headed straight for the CHURCH STEEPLE!

ROBERT (CONT'D)
LOOK OUT!

Robert pulls to the left of the steeple as Frankie's turns sideways to the right. She misses the steeple but SMASHES a few of the slate tiles off the roof. She looks back and LAUGHS.

INT. HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - MILTON ACADEMY - DAY

Frankie and Robert sit at the Headmaster's desk, a NEBBISHY DEAN stands timidly behind the RED-FACED HEADMASTER. Frankie's attitude is copped. Robert is STEAMING.

RED-FACED HEADMASTER

You know our policy about women driving on campus. It's strictly forbidden!

NEBBISHY DEAN

Actually, Sir, that policy is for automobiles, we don't currently have a policy in place for airplanes--

RED-FACED HEADMASTER

And I don't care how much money your father has donated to Milton! Someone could've been killed!

FRANKIE

No one was hurt!

RED-FACED HEADMASTER

I'm recommending EXPULSION!

FRANKIE

Don't you think that's a bit harsh?

ROBERT

Might teach her a lesson.

Frankie gives him a GLARE.

RED-FACED HEADMASTER

And you? Just because you're leaving--

Robert eyes WIDEN and he gives a quick shake of the head. The Headmaster, taking the hint, pulls back, exasperated.

RED-FACED HEADMASTER (CONT'D)

Girls have no business flying planes!

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE HEADMASTERS OFFICE, LOCKERS - DAY

Robert opens his wooden locker and throws a book inside.

FRANKIE

What was that about you leaving? He must think you're a senior, he's really losing his marbles!

ROBERT

You could've killed someone or yourself!

FRANKIE
I knew what I was doing!

ROBERT
You're careless, Frankie, and one day
it's going to catch up with you!

Frankie opens her own wooden locker a few down from Robert's.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I AM leaving. They're forming a pilot's
brigade. I've joined the Air Force.

FRANKIE
But your degree? This is absurd?

ROBERT
Frankie, wake up! We're going to war!
It's only a matter of time! They need all
able bodied pilots at the ready.

FRANKIE
Well, then I'm going with you.

Robert LAUGHS.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
What? Afraid I'm a better pilot than you?

Robert SLAMS his locker closed.

ROBERT!
Frankie, you're a girl! Girls can't fly
planes for real!

Robert turns and walks away. He doesn't look back. Frankie
SLAMS her own locker and leans back against it. Determined.

FRANKIE
Watch me.

INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM, COOPER ESTATE - DAY

Frankie peeks out her window at Robert, in uniform, army sack
slung over his shoulder as he hugs their parents goodbye.

Robert looks up to her window and tips his cap. Drawing the
curtains, she wipes the tear that has welled up in her eye.

MRS. COOPER (O.S.)
She'll come around. You just take care of
yourself, dear.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHN RODGERS AIRPORT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 3 YEARS LATER

Cornelia Fort, now 22, leans into the cockpit of her INTERSTATE CADET plane, making notes on a clipboard.

Closing the cockpit door she's startled to reveal Robert Cooper, a year younger than she, standing behind it.

CORNELIA

Jesus, you scared me.

Robert takes off his cap.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, I was too enamored with your beauty to speak.

CORNELIA

You're gonna have to do better than that!

ROBERT

Have dinner with me tonight?

CORNELIA

I can't! I have to finish checking these PT's if they're going to be ready for flight lessons tomorrow.

ROBERT

Please?

Robert looks from side to side and lowers his tone.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I have to leave for a while and I just want to see you before I do.

CORNELIA

What are you talking about? Where are you going?

ROBERT

I have a mission. Its top secret. All I can say is, I won't be here-

CORNELIA

(back to her list)

Well, when will you be back?

ROBERT

I don't know? A week maybe?

Cornelia looks side to side too and mocks his hushed voice.

CORNELIA

Okay, Mr. Important, I'll go to dinner.
But that's it. Right after I have to
finish this up.

Robert smiles and kisses her lightly on the lips.

EXT. AIR BASE - NIGHT

Robert and TWELVE YOUNG MEN in uniform stand at attention in front of several brand new army green B-17 BOMBERS. HAP ARNOLD, adorned with stars, digs in his heels and PACES.

HAP ARNOLD

You have been chosen because of your
skill and proven flight record. The
mission you are about to embark upon is
top secret.

The Men ZIP up their flight gear in succession. We see the propellers, engines and sheer size of the bombers.

HAP ARNOLD (V.O.)

These B-17's were completed and delivered
yesterday. They come carrying 5,000
pounds of bombs and equipped with five
machine guns.

Robert checks to see that the bombs on his plane are secure.
Another YOUNG MAN inspects a machine gun in the nose.

HAP ARNOLD (V.O.)

Capable of speeds up to 250 miles per
hour. They are the most sophisticated
pieces of machinery Boeing has made to
date.

Suited, ready they stand beside their planes. Hap PACES on.

HAP ARNOLD

You will fly under the cover of night and
rendezvous at Clark Field on the island
of Luzon in the Philippines before
continuing on to the Japanese targets.

Hap turns on a heel and paces back.

HAP ARNOLD (CONT'D)

You are to destroy those targets.

Hap faces the Young Men and SALUTES them. They SALUTE back.

EXT. AIR BASE - NIGHT - LATER

The planes TAKE OFF, disappearing into the night.

HAP ARNOLD
God speed, gentlemen.

EXT. PEARL HARBOR, HONOLULU, HI - EARLY MORNING

Cornelia and her student, SUMALA, SOAR above Pearl Harbor. The sky is clear except for a few other instructors nearby.

CORNELIA
You're doing very well, Sumala! I'd say
you're as ready as you're going to be for
that solo. Let's loop around for one more
landing and see if we can get you back
out today.

He smiles and begins turning to align with the runway. As they turn we see they're on course for a head-on COLLISION with a JAPANESE MILITARY FIGHTER PLANE.

Cornelia GRABS the stick, barely escaping the incoming plane. We see TWO RED SUNS emblazoned on its wings. Next an EXPLOSION and a single billow of smoke rises from the harbor.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
What on Earth?

She stares at the smoke as Sumala looks in the direction of where the plane came from. His jaw drops.

SUMALA
Miss Fort?

Cornelia turns and we see HUNDREDS OF INCOMING PLANES. Some headed directly for them. She JUMPS into action.

CORNELIA
HOLD ON!

She DIVES the plane hard and fast. Bullets WHIZZ past them.

A Japanese fighter plane dives directly in front of her while A second plane has sandwiched them from behind.

She tries some quick maneuvers to lose the tail and confuse the lead. More bullets PING their plane's metal body. EXPLOSIONS are happening all around them.

Through Cornelia's window we can see ANOTHER INSTRUCTOR'S PLANE as it's RIDDLED with bullets and begins its descent.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

NO!

Cornelia watches as the Instructor's plane, engulfed in flames, CRASHES into the water. The ocean HICCUPS smoke.

Destroyer ships EXPLODE. We see a TORPEDO as its dropped into the ocean and we follow it as it travels just below the surface of the water and TEARS into an AIRCRAFT CARRIER.

Cornelia dives in for a landing amidst a HAILSTORM of bullets which RIP apart the wings and PELT off their propellers.

EXT. JOHN RODGERS AIRPORT - DAY

They land hard and spin one hundred eighty degrees.

CORNELIA

SUMALA! RUN!

LEAPING from the plane they run toward the hangar. Moments later the plane EXPLODES under the intense fire.

Idle planes EXPLODE as American pilots run for cover. BOB TYCE, the airport manager is SHOT to death as he holds the hangar door open for Cornelia and Sumala, saving them.

Dozens of American planes go up in a billow of smoke and progressive EXPLOSIONS.

SMASH CUT

EXT. CLARK'S FIELD, PHILIPPINES - DECEMBER 8, 1941 - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: CLARK'S FIELD, PHILIPPINES - DECEMBER 8, 1941

Robert boards his plane as Japanese bombers begin to bomb the base. He jumps from the plane, BLACK SMOKE everywhere.

EXT. COOPER ESTATE, 1941 - DAY

A SOMBER BIKE MESSENGER walks to the front door, takes his cap off and knocks. Frankie answers.

The Messenger hands the telegram, bows his head, and turns back to his bicycle. Frankie stares at the telegram, clutches at her chest and begins to cry but stops herself.

She CRUMPLES the telegram in anger and then notices THE DAILY NEWS on the front step.

CLOSE IN on the front page as Frankie scoops up the paper. The photo of Nancy Love and General Tunner with the headline:

"SHE WILL DIRECT THE WOMEN FERRY PILOTS"

Frankie retreats inside, SLAMMING the door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HAP ARNOLD'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

The THE DAILY NEWS SLAMS down in front of Hap Arnold.

An enraged but impeccably dressed Jackie stands fuming with her hands on her hips in front of the Four Star General. The General eyeballs the article and looks up at Jackie.

HAP ARNOLD

Welcome home, Jackie.

JACKIE

You promised this position to me! What have I been doing in England for the last five months? So this? Right from under me?

HAP ARNOLD

The Ferrying Division got permission through Olveta Culp Hobby and the WAAC. They aren't under my direct command!

Jackie paces.

JACKIE

With all due respect General, we're out of time and out of men. Let Miss Love and her bunch of society dames peddle my damn cosmetics! I'm offering you a brigade of women's pilots!

HAP ARNOLD

Anyone ever tell you you're insane?

JACKIE

Yes. My husband right before he proposed.

Hap Arnold picks up his phone.

HAP ARNOLD (INTO PHONE)

Get me Tunner!

He SLAMS down the phone.

HAP ARNOLD (CONT'D)
I'll handle Tunner. You'll oversee the program and let Ms. Love manage the ferrying squadron. She can report to you. And you?

The General smiles.

HAP ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Will report to me.

Jackie scowls.

JACKIE
The problem is, General, Miss Love has already been awarded the publicity of the role. Shifting gears now would send the wrong message to the public!

The General, turns and slightly smiles.

HAP ARNOLD
Looks like the two of you will have to learn how to get along then, won't you?

CLOSE IN on Jackie's displeasure. She smiles.

JACKIE
I've already sent telegrams to every licensed woman pilot in the country. They'll soon know who's in charge.

Jackie storms out.

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE - 1940'S

Footage of Olveta Culp Hobby and her miserable face.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER
In Washington, the Commander of the newly formed Women's Auxiliary Corps, Olveta Culp Hobby, a house wife and mother, will direct an army of two hundred and fifty thousand women. Women who will work behind the lines, relieving more men for combat duty in the field.

Footage changes to black and white footage of Jacqueline Cochran painting the number thirteen on her plane.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Taking up the fight, 'Queen of Speed' and cosmetics magnate Jacqueline Cochran, back from her British tour has been reunited with billionaire husband Floyd Odlum.

Footage of Jackie and Floyd together. The footage then changes to the bomber plane she flew across the Atlantic.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
After being the first woman to fly a twin-engine bomber across the Atlantic.

Jackie stands with Mrs. Roosevelt holding a Harmon trophy.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
The multi-Bendix race winner studied women pilots in England in their efforts to support the war effort.

Footage changes to Jackie with woman pilots in London.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Ladybird Cochran wants to do the same here in America. But Ms. Love may have beat her to the punch!

Footage changes to July's cover of Newsweek Magazine, with the picture of both women. The headline reads:

"Miss Cochran and Mrs. Love. Which one bosses the women flyers?"

Footage changes to women pilots boarding military planes.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Having been granted her own Auxiliary Squadron for women. Women flying planes? What's next?

EXT. FRANCES COOPER GARRET'S FRONT DOOR, TX 2010 - DAY

Ellen knocks on Frances' front door and Frances quickly opens it. She wears a vintage navy blue suit with a name tag. Her silver wings are pinned to her lapel.

ELLEN
Frances? I mean Ms. Cooper?

FRANCES
And you are?

ELLEN

Ellen Thomas. Washington Post.

Ellen extends her hand which Frances ignores. Ellen slowly retreats her hand back to her side.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

We spoke briefly yesterday but I think we accidentally were disconnected.

Frances shuts her door behind her and walks right by Ellen.

FRANCES

We were not disconnected I hung up on you. I told you I'm not interested.

Turning back to Ellen.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you came all the way from Washington--

ELLEN

Please, Ma'am? If I could just take a few minutes of your time.

Frances motions towards the approaching GROAN of a city bus.

FRANCES

I don't have a few minutes, that's my bus. I have to get to work.

Frances walks away and Ellen follows close behind.

ELLEN

Work?

FRANCES

You sound surprised? What? You think I'm just going to just sit in my house and wait to die?

ELLEN

No. Sorry. That's not what I meant. I have a car? I could drive you and we can talk on the way?

FRANCES

No, thanks. I don't get into cars with strangers. I'll take my usual route.

The bus pulls up. And Frances steps up. JIM THE BUS DRIVER tips his hat cordially to Frances.

JIM THE BUS DRIVER
 'Morning, Frances. How are we today?

FRANCES
 Just fine, Jim. Just fine.

INT. BUS. SWEETWATER, TX 2010 - MORNING

The bus has started driving as Ellen fumbles for change while scanning headlines on her phone. Jim is annoyed.

ELLEN
 Do you take cards?

Ellen finally manages the fare and boards behind Frances.

FRANCES
 And now you're going to follow me? What are you some kind of paparazzi?

Frances sits down. Ellen sits across the aisle from her.

ELLEN
 No Ma'am. I'm a reporter. I just need a few minutes of your time.

FRANCES
 You're not going to quit are you?

ELLEN
 Not likely. No.

FRANCES
 Fine. A few minutes. But that's it. I suppose you're only here because of that damn medal.

ELLEN
 Yes! Congratulations! You must be very excited!

Ellen grabs her phone and presses a button.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Do you mind if I record this?

FRANCES
 Get that thing out of my face. And you can take that medal and shove it.

Ellen grimaces and reluctantly puts the phone away.

ELLEN

The Congressional Gold Medal? Its kind of a big deal?

FRANCES

Why? It doesn't mean anything. The government ignored us all these years, but now?

Frances turns to the window and lowers her voice to a MUMBLE.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Now that we're all dying they need to clear their conscience. Make a big deal out of us? They can keep the damn thing, just another thing to lie around and collect dust.

Ellen leans forward. Frances SIGHS.

ELLEN

Won't you tell me your story?

Frances merely snorts and continues looking out the window.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Ok, fine. You know what? The truth is that I was hoping to be in Haiti right now covering the earthquake. I'm a reporter! I want NEWS! Its called news because its NEW! But my editor thought I was better equipped to handle YOU.

She points towards Frances.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I called about a hundred people and you were the only live one I got. So I got on a plane. And here I am. On a bus. In Texas. Talking to YOU.

FRANCES

Well. Now we're getting somewhere.

JIM THE BUS DRIVER

Your stop, Ms. Frances.

ELLEN

So does that mean you'll help me?

FRANCES

We're here.

ELLEN

Where's here?

EXT. AVENGER FIELD, SWEETWATER, TX - DAY

Ellen and Frances exit the bus and are standing at the front gates of Avenger Field. Frances points to a painted wooden sign with the "Fifanella" mascot on top:

**"AVENGER FIELD, SWEETWATER
HOME OF THE WASPS 1942-1944
BUILT 1929 ELEV 2378"**

FRANCES
Avenger Field, can't you read? I'm a docent in the museum.

A pause. Ellen looks confused.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
The museum dedicated to the WASP program?
Didn't do much research did you?

INT. WASP MUSEUM, AVENGER FIELD, TX - DAY

The lights of the hangar FLICKER on in progression to reveal:

Planes, cars, photos and artifacts of the women's program. Long tapestries adorn the opposite end of the hangar. The left a portrait of Nancy Love, the right Jackie Cochran.

Ellen discreetly hits a button on her phone and a RED LIGHT BLINKS. She's RECORDING. She tucks it in her breast pocket.

ELLEN
Who were they?

FRANCES
Nancy Love and Jackie Cochran. I thought the Post was a reputable newspaper?

ELLEN
No, wait. Yes. Nancy Love's husband worked for the ferrying division or something, right? So he helped her start one for women? And Jackie was-

FRANCES
Fastest pilot of her time! Male or female! She set more speed and distance records than her friend Amelia Earhart!

ELLEN
Really? Why haven't I heard of her?

FRANCES
 She lived, dear. Death gets you much more
 notoriety.

Frances sighs.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
 December 8th, 1941--

ELLEN
 --Pearl Harbor. The day that will live in
 infamy.

FRANCES
 That was the day before. Please don't
 misquote me, people will think I'm
 senile. If I'm going to tell this story
 the benefit is that you will be
 listening, not speaking.

ELLEN
 Right. Sorry.

FRANCES
 December 8th, was the day they told me my
 brother had died.

EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY

FRANCES (V.O.) (PRELAP)
 So like everyone else, I didn't waste a
 moment! I left home and didn't look back!

CLOSE IN on Frankie's thumb outstretched. Dressed in a frumpy
 dress. Her bulbous hat hides her frazzled hair. Incognito.

She stands by the side of a paved road and holds uncomfortable
 dress shoes in her hand, boots on her feet.

We hear the WHIRRING of a two seater biplane and realize she
 is HITCHHIKING on an airstrip.

The biplane pulls beside her and she climbs up, throwing her
 bag in the back seat and then she climbs in herself.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
 Remember, you never saw me.

INT. CATHOLIC SCHOOL MUSIC CLASSROOM - DAY

MARY CATHERINE, a pretty, Catholic music teacher is leading a
 group of uniformly dressed school children in a SING-A-LONG.

The class bell RINGS. As children get up to leave, a messenger arrives with a telegram, it reads:

"The Army Air Force is recruiting women pilots, please report to Sweetwater, TX for an interview."

INT. FACTORY - DAY

SHIRLEY SLADE, pretty, blonde and thin in a full mechanic's jumpsuit is using a wrench on an airplane's propeller.

RUTH DIGREGORIO, a big boned, loud Italian girl ROLLS out from underneath the engine of a BEECHCRAFT C-45 covered in grease.

RUTH

Hey Shirl! Throw me a rag or somethin'

She hands her a newspaper and notices Nancy Love's article. Ruth grabs the paper, and wipes her face, just as Shirley's mouth drops open, and drops the wrench right on Ruth's head.

RUTH (CONT'D)

SON OF A!---

INT. LIEB'S DEPARTMENT STORE, ELEVATOR - DAY - 2ND FLOOR

HAZEL YING LEE, Chinese American, in a male elevator operator uniform stands quietly as two heavy, well dressed women enter.

MARGARET

Well, look, Alice, they've gotten a nice little Oriental boy to work this elevator, isn't that nice?

To Hazel, condescendingly and smiling sweetly.

ALICE

Hello there, young man, what's your name?

HAZEL

Hazel.

MARGARET

My dear boy, Hazel's a girl's name?

ALICE

Shh, maybe its an Oriental thing?

The two women abruptly shift their gaze and pretend to no longer notice Hazel. Hazel rolls her eyes and closes the gate.

HAZEL

Going down!

INT. LIEB'S DEPARTMENT STORE - 1ST FLOOR

HAZEL

Here you are, Madams, the Women's department. You'll find the extra large sizes directly to your right.

The women exchange a look of horror as they exit.

MARGARET (O.S.)

Well, I never!

Hazel bites her bottom lip, takes off her uniform cap revealing her long dark hair, and throws it on the floor.

As the women exit, a FINELY DRESSED GENTLEMAN boards, he is reading the Daily News. He doesn't look at Hazel.

FINELY DRESSED GENTLEMAN

Going up.

Hazel sees the story revealing the call for Women Pilots.

HAZEL

Going up!

Hazel GRABS the newspaper from the man's hands and runs off.

EXT. STATE FAIR, ANYWHERE - DAY

Hundreds of spectators watch as TERESA JAMES' canvas bi-plane spirals straight down. FAST.

INT. TERESA'S COCKPIT - DAY

CLOSE IN on Teresa, LAUGHING THROUGH HER SCREAMS. SPINNING. She pulls out at the last second. A SPECTATOR yells, amazed:

SPECTATOR

Twenty-Six spins! A new record!

EXT. STATE FAIR, ANYWHERE - DAY LATER

Teresa's has landed and is signing autographs.

A MESSENGER hands her the TELEGRAM which she nearly signs.

EXT. BLUE BONNET HOTEL - SWEETWATER, TX

Frankie climbs out the back of a truck dressed the same but dirtier. A GROUP OF WOMEN, dressed impeccably, stand near the hotel entrance. Hazel Ying is the only one dressed sensibly.

Cornelia Fort is checking names off a list as is-

PAUL GARRETT, mid twenties, uniformed, stoic and devilishly handsome. He LIMPS toward Frankie holding a clipboard. A TOOTHPICK bobbles out the side of his mouth as he talks.

PAUL

State your name, Miss?

Frankie drops her bag and stands tall. She begins to smile but then awkwardly opts for a more conservative expression.

FRANKIE

Frank-, I mean, Frances--

She stammers and looks at the hotel sign.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Frances Blue.

She lies. The Toothpick bobs in Paul's mouth as he flips rapidly through the pages attached to his clipboard.

PAUL

What's the matter? Get lost? The last train arrived yesterday?

FRANKIE

Oh, I didn't come by train. I-

Paul stops flipping and pauses.

PAUL

Blue? What kind of name is that.

FRANKIE

Um its, y'know French, like the cheese?

PAUL

I ain't got no Blues.

FRANKIE

I'm from Cleveland. I'm a pilot--I just want to help?

The Toothpick stops bobbling. And Paul looks up at her for the first time. He smiles. And tips his cap.

PAUL
Well isn't that special? You want to help
do ya, Blue?

He CHUCKLES as Frankie blushes.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Listen, Miss-, Miss Blue, I hate to
ground you but we're only accepting
pilots with at least 200 hours. And--

The Toothpick reboots and he looks her up and down as if its
the last chance his eyes will have to do so. He tips his cap.

PAUL (CONT'D)
--there's an application process.

He walks away.

FRANKIE
I have over a thousand hours!

Paul stops in his tracks and turns back as Frankie fishes her
LOGBOOK out of her suitcase and hands it to him.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
I'm good. I'm damn good!

Paul glances up, smirking a little, he grabs the logbook.

PAUL
I'll be the judge of that. I can tell
when logs have been padded.

We hear the RUMBLING GROAN of the CATTLE WAGON, an old cattle
truck converted to a transport, its torn, dirty stretches of
canvas FLAP loudly in the dusty Texas wind.

CORNELIA
Ladies, pile in! Next stop Avenger Field!

The Group of Women GASP in disgust at the filthy truck they
are about to board. Paul smiles at their expressions.

PAUL
Ha! They always overdress!

Looking back at Frankie, he WINKS.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Good thing you didn't.

Frankie blushes as Paul walks away with her logbook.

EXT. AVENGER FIELD, SWEETWATER, TX - DAY

Milling about with their bags from other wagons are DOZENS OF OTHER WOMEN, among them we see:

Mary Catherine, clutching her cross necklace, prudish,

Shirley, tilting her sunglasses to see the new imports,

Ruth who seems to always have a natural look of disdain,

Teresa James, looking cocky,

IRENE, a plump, actively unattractive woman who is continually CHEWING and TWISTING her knotted hair. A virgin to makeup.

The Cattle Wagon pulls up and Frankie and Cornelia get off followed by the rest of the Women. Hazel is the last to get off. She surveys the crowd with caution. Overwhelmed.

Cornelia and Paul immediately join Nancy Love and,

PENNY PIQUELLE, (30's) A muscular female drill instructor.

Ruth notices Hazel getting off the Cattle Wagon. Her natural look of disdain turns to actual disdain.

RUTH

Hey, is this a joke? What'd they do?
Bring in the enemy for target practice?

Surrounding women LAUGH at the joke. Hazel gets in her face.

HAZEL

I'm Chinese, not Japanese. Looks like
you're as dumb as you are fat!

As Hazel walks away, everyone OOOH'S as if to spur a fight.

RUTH

Hey, hey you get back here!

MARY CATHERINE

Lord, she isn't here two minutes before
stirring up trouble!

SHIRLEY

Eh, let 'em go. Less competition for that
beautiful man up there.

Shirley SMILES and WINKS at Paul, who doesn't notice her.

NANCY

Ladies, please gather 'round.

The CHATTER of over a hundred girls almost silence Nancy.

NANCY (CONT'D)

May I have your attention, please?

No one is listening. Penny GROWLS like a caveman.

PENNY

PIPE DOWN!

Instant SILENCE. Paul steps up, clutching his toothpick.

PAUL

If you think you're hot pilots, I'd advise you forget it. You're here to learn the way the Army flies!

PENNY

This ain't no boarding school, ladies! You're in Texas now!

She pauses. Self-important. She's rehearsed this.

PENNY (CONT'D)

This is the scorpion and rattlesnake infested bible belt of this damn country and if you remember anything? Remember this little piece of advice:

She surveys them with a menacing glare.

PENNY (CONT'D)

If the army can dish it out, I can take it! You remember that and you'll be bigger and better women!

Penny is REAL proud of herself.

SHIRLEY

I never want to be that big!

Everyone nearby GIGGLES. Frankie gives Shirley a GLARE.

PAUL

Look to each side of you.

Everyone looks to the people on either side. Giggling.

PAUL (CONT'D)

One of every three of you will graduate.

GASPS and MURMURS begin to SWELL.

PENNY

QUIET!

NANCY

Thank you, Penny. To the class of 1943
Welcome to Avenger Field! You have all
been chosen as part of an experiment.

POV Nancy as she surveys the NEW CLASS.

NANCY (CONT'D)

As the first group of women engaged in a
war effort, doing a man's job, in the
history of America!

The New Class CHEERS!

NANCY (CONT'D)

My name is Nancy Love and I'll be heading
up this program--

JACKIE COCHRAN'S SHINY NEW BEECHCRAFT can be heard ROARING and
SKIDDING in for a landing on the runway behind the girls.
Painted on the tail are the words: "Wings of Beauty."

Everyone turns to see Jackie Cochran jump out wearing a full
mink coat. She makes her way through the group to meet Nancy.

HUSHED WHISPERS take over the girls: "Look its Jacqueline
Cochran," "Oh my goodness, its Jackie! The Queen of Speed!"

SHIRLEY

Wings of Beauty?

FRANKIE

That's a weird name.

Jackie looks at Frankie offended, the ears of a jungle cat.

JACKIE

What's wrong with that name?

FRANKIE

I don't know, just seems strange?

JACKIE

It's the slogan for my cosmetics company.
I happen to like it a lot. Why don't you
meet me later today in my office?

Jackie smiles and heads to the front where Nancy, Cornelia and
Paul are standing. Nancy is taken by surprise.

NANCY

I actually wasn't expecting you until
later in the week?

JACKIE

And miss their first day? Nonsense!

Jackie turns to address the Class.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

As I'm sure Mrs. Love has told you, my name is Jackie Cochran and I am head of the WASP program.

NANCY

Don't you mean WAFS? W-A-F-S?

JACKIE

No dear, WASPS, W-A-S-P. Your name didn't quite have that certain ring to it.

Jackie smiles and addresses the group.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Women Airforce Service Pilots! Though some of you will be ferrying planes...

She pauses to throw Nancy a look of contempt.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

We will be training for all sorts of adventures in flight.

Jackie RIPS off her mink coat. Fanning her face.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

My it's warm in Texas!

She tosses it at Nancy as if she were a coat rack!

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Take this, dear. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go freshen up.

Jackie heads into the building leaving the rest of the group speechless and Nancy fumbling with a bulky fur coat.

SHIRLEY

Now that's how you make an entrance!

CORNELIA

She certainly knows how to upstage you!

Nancy clutches the coat tightly and CLENCHES A SMILE. Paul walks towards Frankie carrying her logbook.

PAUL

Here, you're gonna' need this.

Handing it back and pointing in Jackie's direction.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Looks like you got yourself an in at the top. Good luck, Blue.

INT. JACQUELINE COCHRAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Jackie is sitting across her desk from JANET HARMON BRAGG, an attractive young black woman. She's empathetic.

JACKIE
You're an excellent pilot and I hold no prejudices whatsoever. That being said I'm fighting a thousand daggers of prejudice myself. Women? Flying planes?

JANET
But I can fly! I even have my own plane?

JACKIE
If I admit you, they'll shut us down.

Janet looks DEFEATED. Jackie sits on the desk facing her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Let's get this program off the ground first and then? Maybe.

Janet nods. There's a KNOCK at the door.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Come in.

Frankie enters as Janet gets up to leave.

FRANKIE
You wanted to see me?

JACKIE
Right. The one who scoffed at my plane!

Jackie turns her back and takes a flask out of the drawer.

FRANKIE
I didn't mean-

JACKIE
Sit. Drink?

FRANKIE
No thank you, I don't drink.

JACKIE
Sweetwater's a dry county, so you'd
better drink up while you can.

Jackie screws open a flask and starts making the drink.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Yep. Twelve churches in this town and
nary a saloon. But for \$2 old Mrs.
Mayweather at the hair salon will fill up
your flask.

She takes a swig and reads a piece of paper on her desk.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Now, Miss Blue, is that your name? I
just had to tell that sweet, over-
qualified woman she couldn't fly planes
for me because of the color of her skin.
The American people can't even stomach a
woman flying planes! Surely they would
shut me down for good. Personally, I
don't care if you're White, Yellow, Black
or Blue, I just need pilots! Exceptional
ones at that!

FRANKIE
I can do this.

Jackie takes Frankie's logbook and peruses it.

JACKIE
You may have the hours, but do you have
the fortitude?

Jackie tests. Rapid firing questions.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Ever had an engine fail? Lose a prop?
Come out of a downward spiral? Hmm?

FRANKIE
Doesn't scare me.

Frankie quickly looks away.

JACKIE
There. You looked away from me. You
aren't a very confident liar. There's
fear in your eyes.

Jackie puts both hands on her desk and LOOMS over Frankie.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

A word of advice: If you are going to lie you had best believe the lie *before* you speak it.

FRANKIE

I was taught never to tell a lie.

JACKIE

Whoever taught you that was lying through their teeth! Everyone lies.

FRANKIE

I'm sure my Mother will enjoy hearing that in our next correspondence.

JACKIE

Does your mother even know you're here?

FRANKIE

I was being facetious.

JACKIE

Facetious?

FRANKIE

Yeah. You know? Sarcastic?

Jackie grabs a paper and pen.

JACKIE

How do you spell that?

FRANKIE

F-A-C-E- I don't know, does it matter?

JACKIE

Words interest me! I didn't grow up with a fancy education. Self taught!

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I worked very hard to get where I am and if you're serious about this program then you'd better start acting the part!

FRANKIE

Look lady, I just spent four days getting here! Half of it in the back of a pickup truck. I taught myself how to fly. I have a thousand hours logged. I can do this!

JACKIE

A thousand hours and still you're afraid?

Frankie stares Jackie dead in the eye.

FRANKIE
I'm not afraid of anything.

JACKIE
Now there's a lie you actually believe!
Jackie sits back and goes back to paper work.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
You can stay for now, Miss Blue. But I'll
be watching you closely. You screw up?
You wash out. Quite simple.

EXT. AVENGER FIELD - DAY

Frankie and Cornelia walk carrying pillows. They pass the
WISHING WELL. Women dressed in fly gear everywhere.

FRANKIE
Is it true Jackie's a billionaire?

CORNELIA
Well, her husband is. But, she's made
quite a few bucks herself with her
cosmetics line. Especially since she came
from nothing.

FRANKIE
So that wasn't an exaggeration?

CORNELIA
Foster child. Unwanted. Wearing potato
sacks in the deep south, when I say
nothing I mean nothing!

Cornelia smiles.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
But now she leads a life that's quite
glamorous. In fact I think you'll find
that most of the women around here have
grown up quite privileged. Not easy to
fly without means, you know?

Cornelia waves to CATHERINE SLOCUM, 20's, tall and blonde.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
That's Catherine Slocum, formerly Luden,
heiress to the Luden's cough drop
fortune?

She points in the opposite direction to Betty Gillies.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

And there? That's Betty Gillies. Her husband bought her her own Grommen's amphibian plane! At five foot one she can't even reach the pedals! Had to have custom ones made!

Cornelia notices EVELYN SHARPE.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

That's Evelyn Sharpe. Keep her on your side. Over three thousand flying hours! Quite talented.

Cornelia laughs.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

Everyone here is! Its remarkable! And as you can see, its quite the operation.

Cornelia points to the flags.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

See the flags? The green one means you dress in fly gear. If its red wear your uniform, mostly only on Sundays. Over there is the mess hall. The food isn't as terrible as you'd think.

Cornelia looks over her shoulder.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

Those are the main practice runways. There are several more that the cattle wagon takes you to. Just fields really.

Frankie and Cornelia pass a marching TROUPE OF MALE CADETS. The men make CAT CALLS, WHISTLE and SHOUT at them.

MALE CADETS

Welcome to Avenger! Wanna take me for a ride? Ain't she a Pistol Packin' Mama?

Frankie BLUSHES. Cornelia looks at her.

CORNELIA

You don't strike me as the bashful type? Must have a hundred boys on your tail back home?

FRANKIE

No, I um, I don't. What about you? What's your story?

Cornelia LAUGHS and embellishes her slight Southern accent.

CORNELIA

Little ol' me? Grew up on a plantation,
just outside of Nashville, Typical
Southern debutante here I guess!

More serious.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

Dad started National Life Insurance, did
pretty well. He died three years ago.

Kicking a rock.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

I guess after that happened, well, all I
could think about was flying away! I
needed to feel in control of something.
So I joined the Civilian flyers and ended
up in Hawaii teaching students to fly.

FRANKIE

How is it that your don't have a million
boys on your tail?

CORNELIA

Not a million. Just one.

A beat.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

But he's missing, presumed dead.

FRANKIE

I know how you feel, I lost my brother at
Pearl Harbor.

CORNELIA

I was nearly killed there myself!

Cornelia is thoughtful as they approach the barracks door.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

And here we are, number thirteen. Jackie
would be proud, that's her number.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Cornelia opens the door to the rudimentary barracks allowing
Frankie to pass. Hazel is already inside. Frankie perks up.

FRANKIE

Hi! I'm Frances Blue, but you can call me
Frankie, everyone does.

HAZEL

Hazel Ying. You can call me Hazel.

Cornelia's thoughts are interrupted as Mary Catherine and Shirley enter. Mary Catherine SCREAMS and signs the cross.

MARY CATHERINE

I think I just saw a scorpion!

Shirley takes off her sunglasses. Eyeing the place.

SHIRLEY

Needs a ladies touch but we'll make it work. Hi ladies! Shirley Slade! That's Shirley with a Y.

HAZEL

How else would you spell it?

FRANKIE

Frankie.

MARY CATHERINE

Mary Catherine. How do you do?

Mary Catherine curtsies. Frankie shakes her hand and awkwardly curtsies nearly losing her balance.

Ruth STORMS in.

RUTH

Geez. Could we be any further from the mess hall? Ooooh. Top bunk! MINE!

Ruth climbs up and JUMPS on the top bunk nearly collapsing the bed, she notices Hazel and JUMPS down from the bunk.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Uh-uh. No way I'm bunking with her!

Hazel heads at her with fists raised. She YELLS in CHINESE.

HAZEL

Shut Up, pig!

Frankie steps in front holding Hazel back.

FRANKIE

Hey!

CORNELIA

Ladies!

Hazel doesn't flinch.

RUTH
Go ahead! I'll cut your fuel line!

Ruth mimics a plane spiraling downward as she WHISTLES and makes an EXPLOSION sound.

HAZEL
(still in Chinese)
I'll fly barrel rolls around you any day!

RUTH
Talk English!

CORNELIA
I beg your pardon!

Cornelia gets in their faces and separates them.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
You've all been given an opportunity. To aid the war? To fight for freedom? Right?

She steps back and CROSSES her arms.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
Truth is you're all here to fly. It's like a drug. You need it now.

A beat.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
Well let me tell you something, ladies. You still need your wings. Wings or Wash Out, there's only two choices.

Calmer. She paces back toward them.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
Six bunks to a room, twelve to a bathroom.

Everyone GASPS. CLOSE IN on Shirley's disgust.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
Be thankful there's running water.

Pacing back toward the door.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
Inspection's at 0600 hours like a regular Army. At 0700 you start half the day with ground training and half with flight training til 1900 hours.

Cornelia OPENS the barrack door to exit.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)
2200 is lights out. There is to be absolutely no fraternizing with any instructors or cadets or you wash out.

SHIRLEY
I'm as good as gone!

CORNELIA
Demerits are given for inspection, failures, insubordination or misbehavior. Get enough demerits? You wash out. Ruth? Hazel? You each just earned yourselves a demerit. Dinner is at 1800 hours.

Cornelia leaves and the door slams shut behind her.

RUTH
Shit!

MARY CATHERINE
There's no need for cussing!

Mary Catherine holds her palm out. Ruth just stares at her.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)
I make my students put a nickel in a cuss jar for every cuss and we save it for a rainy day!

Mary Catherine SMILES as Ruth BATS her hand away.

RUTH
Get the hell away from me!

MARY CATHERINE
Shall we make it a dime then?

To read the rest please email Mark @ markdtrent@gmail.com