

JAG

"Pilot Error"

#007

Written

by

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Return to Script Department  
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Shooting Script  
9/13/95

CAST

"PILOT ERROR"

LT. HARMON RABB, JR  
LT. J.G. MEG AUSTIN

SGT BARNES  
CORPORAL MARTINEZ  
LT. LUCAS PENDRY  
LT. TESS MCKEE  
LT. J.G. MARCUS  
MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE (ONLY)  
LT. KYLE STANS  
JAMES REID  
COMMANDER DALE BISHOP  
LT. J.G. PARKER  
LT. CABRESE  
ANNIE PENDRY  
JOSH PENDRY  
BARTENDER  
COMMANDER BISHOP  
LT. MOORE  
LSO

## SET LIST

### "PILOT ERROR"

#### INTERIOR

LT. LUCAS PENDRY'S COCKPIT  
LT. TESS MCKEE'S COCKPIT  
SQUADRON READY ROOM  
BEACH HOUSE  
COMBAT SIMULATION CENTER  
    COMBAT SIMULATION ROOM  
    SIMULATOR CONTROL ROOM  
TALBERT'S TAVERN  
NAVY SEDAN  
TOMCAT COCKPIT  
HARM'S COCKPIT  
ANNIE'S HOUSE  
ANNIE'S KITCHEN  
TALBERT'S TAVERN  
COMMANDER BISHOP'S OFFICE  
CLOSE ON APTERN  
ANNIE'S CAR

#### EXTERIOR

BLUE PACIFIC OCEAN - STOCK  
TOMCAT SECTION - STOCK  
CAMP PENDLETON RIDGE LINE - STOCK  
ON THE TOMCATS - STOCK  
LUCAS'S TOMCAT - STOCK  
TESS' TOMCAT - STOCK  
APMS REMOTE SITE  
TOMCAT CRASH SITE  
LA JOLLA SUBURB  
F-14  
MIRAMAR FLIGHT LINE  
TALBERT'S TAVERN  
HARM'S NAVY SEDAN  
MILITARY CEMETERY  
COMBAT SIMULATION BUILDING  
ANNIE'S COTTAGE  
    FRONT PORCH  
MIRAMAR NAVAL AIR STATION  
    RUNWAY  
    TARMAC  
LSO PLATFORM  
HARM'S TOMCAT - STOCK  
OBSERVERS' HUMVEE - STOCK/ SFX  
NAVY HUMVEE  
USS AMERICA - STOCK  
REAR OF ANNIE'S CAR

## "PILOT ERROR"

## TEASER

FADE IN:

- 1 EXT. BLUE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY - STOCK MONTAGE 1
- SUPER: 0730 HOURS FIFTY NAUTICAL MILES WEST OF SAN DIEGO
- Its bow frothed in white, the nuclear carrier America plows through the Pacific swells. A pair of F-14 launches off the bow and the lead Tomcat executes a climbing roll.
- 2 INT. LT. LUCAS PENDRY'S COCKPIT - DAY 2
- A ruggedly handsome pilot, Lucas, grins broadly as he smoothly rolls the big Tomcat.
- 3 INT. LT. TESS MCKEE'S COCKPIT - DAY 3
- A female Naval Aviator who can fly with the best of them, Tess smiles and shakes her head at her flight leader's launch acrobatics.
- 4 EXT. TOMCAT SECTION - DAY - STOCK 4
- Lucas rolls out and Tess slides her Tomcat in beside him. Together they soar up into the blue.
- 5 EXT. CAMP PENDLETON RIDGE LINE - DAY - STOCK 5
- A Humvee with an APMS (Avenger/Pedestal-Mounted Stinger) is parked atop the ridge.
- FIFTY METERS AWAY
- Two Marines man the remote control firing unit. Sergeant Barnes picks up a radio call and brings his binoculars to his eyes. Corporal Martinez is monitoring the remote.
- SGT. BARNES  
Hog Eye has two inbound bogies.
- CPL. MARTINEZ  
We nail them, we'll have bagged the whole squadron.
- SGT. BARNES  
Teach the Squids not to mess with Marines.
- Cpl. Martinez grins. Exactly.
- 6 EXT. ON THE TOMCATS - DAY - STOCK 6
- They level off at their assigned altitude.

7 INT. LUCAS' COCKPIT - DAY 7

He checks his TACAN and keys the mic on his control stick.

LUCAS  
Miramar Control. Red Dog One-  
Five with a flight of two at  
Point Alpha.

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
(over radio)  
One-Five, Miramar Control. You  
are cleared to the range.

LUCAS  
One-Five, Roger.

He glances to his right at Tess' Tomcat and switches to their  
TAC frequency.

LUCAS  
Wildcat. Red Dog. Ready to save  
the squadron's honor?

INTERCUT WITH:

8 INT. TESS' COCKPIT - DAY 8

She glances over at the Lucas' Tomcat just off her wingtip.

TESS  
Ready and able, Red Dog. How low  
you gonna go?

LUCAS  
Burrowing animals better not  
stick their heads up.  
(beat)  
I'll call your break, Wild Cat.

TESS  
Copy that, Red Dog.

ON LUCAS' TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK

He snap rolls and dives sharply down to the left. Tess'  
Tomcat continues flying straight ahead.

9 EXT. LUCAS' TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK MONTAGE 9

Lucas' Tomcat screams out of the clouds in a steep descent  
and levels out a hundred and fifty feet above ground.

10 INT. LUCAS' TOMCAT COCKPITS - DAY 10

The RIO in the rear seat, LT. J.G. MARCUS, keys his intercom.

10 CONTINUED:

10

LT. J.G. MARCUS  
APTERN zeroed at Point Bravo.

LUCAS  
Pick your feet up.

LT. J.G. MARCUS  
Sitting on my heels, Sir.

CLOSE ON APTERN

Lucas snaps on the indented switch.

LUCAS' VOICE  
APTERN engaged.

A green light winks on and the small artificial horizon on the APTERN begins to move up and down slightly as the radar-controlled system flies the Tomcat as low as possible over the terrain.

11 EXT. LUCAS' TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 11

It rockets up and down across the desert, maintaining one-hundred and fifty feet above the undulating ground.

12 INT. LUCAS' COCKPIT - DAY 12

He gingerly releases the control stick and watches it moving slightly as electronic signals are inputted to the control surfaces by the APTERN.

LUCAS  
Three-Niner. Break!

13 INT. TESS' COCKPIT - DAY 13

She acknowledges Lucas' report.

TESS  
Three-Niner. On my way.

14 EXT. TESS' TOMCAT - STOCK 14

She flips over and into a steep dive.

15 INT. LUCAS' COCKPIT - DAY - GREEN SCREEN 15

From the RIO's POV, the desert flashes past as they bore in on their target.

- 16 EXT. SGT BARNES POV - BINO MATTE - DAY 16  
Sgt. Barnes scans the horizon for a sign of the approaching Tomcats.  
CPL. MARTINEZ'S VOICE  
Contact. I think.
- 17 EXT. APMS REMOTE SITE - DAY 17  
Sgt. Barnes glances from binoculars to Cpl. Martinez.  
SGT. BARNES  
You think?  
CPL. MARTINEZ  
If it's him, he's lower than a Texas bug f....  
SGT. BARNES  
(cuts in)  
There!  
They scramble to get a lock.
- 18 EXT. LUCAS' TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 18  
Lucas' Tomcat flashes past so low it kicks dust.
- 19 INT. LUCAS' COCKPIT - DAY 19  
He grabs the control stick with one hand and flips off the APTERN with the other.
- 20 EXT. LUCAS' TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 20  
He screams over the ridge, inverts and dives for the ground.
- 21 EXT. ACROSS THE MARINES - DAY - SFX 21  
The Tomcat impacts inverted into the desert and explodes in a huge ball of orange flame and black smoke. The Marines hit the deck as a wave of heat and debris envelops them.  
ON SGT. BARNES  
He lifts his head as the explosion fades away. He frantically calls on the radio.  
CPL. MARTINEZ  
Hog Eye! Fly Catcher! Aircraft down! Aircraft down!

22 INT. TESS' COCKPIT. - DAY

22

She is leveling out across the desert to begin her run,  
when....

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
Three Niner, Miramar Control.  
Abort. Abort. Climb to Angels  
One-Five. Establish left hand  
orbit. Over.

She immediately initiates a climb.

TESS  
Three-Niner climbing to Angels  
One-Five. Why the abort,  
Miramar?

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
We have an aircraft down.

Tess immediately banks and looks down.

TESS' POV - DESERT BELOW

A column of black smoke stands out against the desert.

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
Three-Niner. Do you see a  
parachute? Over.

23 INT. TESS' COCKPIT - DAY

23

She keeps her voice steady, but her heart is in her throat.

TESS  
Negative, Miramar. Three-Niner  
does not see a parachute.

We MOVE IN close on Tess as she fights the tears.

START MAIN TITLES:

END OF TEASER



## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

24 EXT. TOMCAT CRASH SITE - DAY

24

SUPER: 0745 HOURS LT. PENDRY'S CRASH SITE

A number of military and civilian investigators are picking through debris guarded by Marines when a HUEY lands near the wreckage. Harm and Meg jump along with LIEUTENANT KYLE STANS, from the Pax River Flight Data Division. As they walk toward the grim scene....

LT. STANS

Lieutenant Pendry's mission was to simulate taking out an Avenger missile unit manned by Marines.

(to Meg)

The Avenger is our latest mobile SAM system. It's....

MEG

(finishing)

...eight infra-red and ultra-violet seeking Stingers mounted on a Humvee with a range of three miles that's effective from ground level to over 10,000 feet.

Lt. Stans is impressed and continues without commenting.

LT. STANS

It was the toughest mission profile in the intra-squadron competition. None of the Howlers, that's Lieutenant Pendry's squadron, took it out. He was their last chance.

HARM

What was the mission profile?

LT. STANS

Basically, to go in on the deck from one direction while his wingman made her run from another.

MEG

His wingman's a female?

LT. STANS

Lieutenant Tess McKee. One of the best from what I hear.

24 CONTINUED:

24

HARM

Did the Marines get a lock on Lieutenant Pendry before he augured in?

LT. STANS

No.

(pointing)

They didn't see him until he came over that hill, inverted.

HARM

(surprised)

His profile called for low level inverted flight?

LT. STANS

No, Sir. And flying with APTERN, it's difficult to understand why he was inverted.

HARM

(surprised)

APTERN?

LT. STANS

Auto Precision Terrain Radar Navigation.

HARM

I know what it is. But it's an Air Force system. What's it doing in a Navy Tomcat?

MEG

Defense cutbacks, Sir. DOD is pushing hard for inter-service systems commonalty. It saves R&D.

HARM

Unfortunately sometimes you save money and lose lives.

LT. STANS

Truth is, we haven't had any problems with APTERN.

HARM

Until now.

REID'S VOICE

This crash wasn't caused by APTERN, Lieutenant.

24 CONTINUED:

24

## ANOTHER ANGLE

They turn to face JAMES REID, a civilian in his forties.

LT. STANS  
James Reid, Tricorp. Lieutenants  
Rabb and Austin, JAG.

He puts out his hand, Harm takes it.

HARM  
I take it Tricorp manufactures  
the APTERN.

REID  
That's right, Lieutenant. We  
check every incident involving  
one of our systems--in fact, the  
Pentagon requires it. Not all of  
our products are perfect, but  
APTERN's close to it.

HARM  
Even if it caused this crash?

REID  
(smiles)  
Tell you what, Lieutenant Rabb.  
If you don't jump to conclusions  
about APTERN, I won't jump to  
conclusions about Lieutenant  
Pendry.  
(beat)  
Fair enough?

HARM  
Fair enough.

REID  
Shall we take a look?

Without waiting for an answer he walks on to the crater.  
Harm instantly dislikes this man.

## MOVING WITH THEM

As they walk through the debris field to the crater.

LT. STANS  
The bodies have been removed but  
there may still be....

He hesitates, glancing at Meg, who continues calmly.

24 CONTINUED:

24

MEG

...parts of them embedded in the wreckage. I know, Lieutenant.

As they near the hole we CRANE UP over them to reveal....

THE CRATER

A massive hole fifteen feet deep with a few metal fragments, one large twisted engine and most of a vertical stabilizer.

MOVING IN ON VERTICAL STABILIZER

The squadron insignia of a howling cat with the word HOWLERS and VF-241 is scorched, but visible.

MATCH CUT TO:

25 INT. SQUADRON READY ROOM - DAY - CLOSE ON HOWLERS INSIGNIA

25

We MOVE OFF the howling cat to discover a number of pilots sipping coffee, shooting pool and talking. Visible beyond them, in a glassed-in cubicle, Meg and Harm interview the Squadron CO, COMMANDER DALE BISHOP. We MOVE THRU the glass to pick up on the middle of their conversation.

CMDR BISHOP

Luke was one of the best. A natural. Maybe that's why he could push the envelope a little further than most.

MEG

He took chances, Sir?

CMDR BISHOP

You take a chance every time you go up in this business, Lieutenant.

MEG

Yes, Sir. But you implied he took more than most or do I not understand what 'pushing the envelope' means, Sir?

CMDR BISHOP

Perhaps you don't, Lieutenant.

MEG

As I understand it, Sir, it means going to the known limit of the aircraft and then a little beyond.

25 CONTINUED:

25

CMDR BISHOP

Close enough. And we all do it  
at one time or another.

MEG

Yes, Sir. But you said  
Lieutenant Pendry pushed the  
envelope a little further than  
most.

CMDR BISHOP

(getting pissed)

Because he had the talent to get  
away with it.

HARM

Lieutenant Austin, wasn't  
Lieutenant McKee scheduled to  
join us by now? Would you mind  
stepping outside, see what's  
keeping her?

They hold a look. Meg knows she's being forcibly excused,  
doesn't like it, swallows it.

MEG

Certainly, Sir.

She walks out and we go with her to....

POOL TABLE

A couple of pilots shooting pool don't notice her coming out  
of the interview room and she picks up on their conversation.

LT. J.G. PARKER

I can see trying it in combat,  
but an exercise?

LT. CABRESE

Luke didn't give a damn if the  
mission was real or simulated.  
He wanted to win.

LT. J.G. PARKER

Yeah, but to go inverted to avoid  
negative Gs. Man, you have to be  
crazy to try that on the deck.

They notice Meg and cut the conversation, ad-libbing about  
their pool game instead. Meg continues toward the door and  
meets Tess as she enters.

25 CONTINUED:

25

MEG  
Lieutenant McKee? Lieutenant  
Austin, JAG. I'm sorry about  
Lieutenant Pendry. I've heard he  
was a good man.

The simple words affect Tess unexpectedly. Her eyes tear up.

TESS  
You have no idea, Lieutenant.

Tess goes for a cup of coffee and we hold on Meg's reaction.

BACK ON HARM AND THE SQUADRON CO

Commander Bishop, alone with Harm, has relaxed a little.  
It's not a guy thing; it's a pilot thing.

CMDR BISHOP  
I heard about what you did on the  
Seahawk. Hell of a feat.  
Considering you hadn't flown a  
Tomcat in four years.

HARM  
I got lucky, Sir.

CMDR BISHOP  
It takes that sometimes.  
Especially when your highly  
competitive.

HARM  
Aren't most good pilots, Sir?

CMDR BISHOP  
Of course. But, Luke would have  
loved being the only one to nail  
that SAM.

HARM  
Commander, are you suggesting  
Lieutenant Pendry pushed it too  
far?

CMDR BISHOP  
No. Just that he ran out of  
luck. Nothing more.

HARM  
Yes, Sir.

25 CONTINUED:

25

ON MEG AND TESS

The other pilots have left and they are sitting alone drinking coffee in a corner of the Ready Room.

Tess is showing the strain as she talks to Meg.

TESS

Conditions were ideal. Good visibility, no turbulence. It was all by the numbers. Then just after I began my run, Miramar told me to abort and asked me to look for chutes.

(beat)

There weren't any.

MEG

Did Lieutenant Pendry communicate with you during his run at the target?

TESS

Just to break.  
(off Meg's look)  
Start my attack.

HARM'S VOICE

How long have you been flying with APTERN?

ANOTHER ANGLE

They turn to find Harm standing behind them. He sits down across from Tess.

TESS

About three months.

HARM

Any problems?

TESS

(unenthusiastic)

No. The terrain-following radar is accurate and it performs specific maneuvers as programmed by the mission profile.

HARM

But you don't like it?

25 CONTINUED:

25

TESS  
No pilot likes to turn control  
over to a black box.

MEG  
Did Lieutenant Pendry dislike  
APTERN, too?

TESS  
He felt the same as the rest of  
us.

MEG  
Would he have shut down APTERN to  
fly the Tomcat himself?

TESS  
No. The mission profile called  
for the use of APTERN. He  
wouldn't have turned it off  
unless it was malfunctioning.

HARM  
Was it malfunctioning?

TESS  
I wouldn't know. I wasn't in his  
cockpit, Lieutenant.

MEG  
Lieutenant Pendry liked to fly on  
the edge.

TESS  
On the edge of what?

MEG  
I think you know what I mean,  
Lieutenant.

TESS  
I don't think I do, Lieutenant.

MEG  
If none of the Howlers flew a  
successful mission using APTERN,  
maybe Lieutenant Pendry thought  
he could do better without it.

TESS  
He probably could. But the  
competition called for the use of  
APTERN and Luke was a  
professional.



25 CONTINUED:

25

HARM  
(to Tess)  
Thank you, Lieutenant.

MEG  
I have more questions, Sir.

HARM  
So do I. But we can ask them as  
the investigation proceeds.

ON HARM AND MEG

Tess leaves and Meg turns on Harm.

MEG  
What was that about?

HARM  
She just lost her wingman, go a  
little easy.

MEG  
(amazed)  
We have an investigation to run!  
(off his look)  
Sir.

HARM  
I'm aware of that, Lieutenant,  
which is why I want you to pull  
all the Gripe Sheets on APTERN,  
for Navy and Air Force. I want  
to know every problem they've  
ever had or thought they had, no  
matter how trivial.

MEG  
Yes, Sir.

HARM  
I'm going to visit Lieutenant  
Pendry's wife.

MEG  
Would you like me to come along?

HARM  
No. I'd like you to pull those  
Gripe Sheets.

MEG  
Yes, Sir.

25 CONTINUED:

25

Meg, feeling the sting of being overridden repeatedly, salutes formally. Harm softens, starts to say something, then returns the salute and leaves. Meg watches him go.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. LA JOLLA SUBURB - DAY

26

Harm, in a Navy Sedan, pulls up in front of a comfortable California cottage with a porch. He gets out and slowly walks up the path.

HARM'S POV - A LITTLE BOY

Peeking through the front window.

BACK CLOSE ON HARM

Remembering, as we....

CUT TO:

27 INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY - SLOW MOTION FLASHBACK

27

Strange dehydrated colors. Over a YOUNG HARM (six years old) looking through the living room window at a NAVY AVIATOR and CHAPLAIN walking up the path. Their faces are long and somber. One of them catches Harm's stare and looks away. There is a SLOW KNOCK at the door.

ON HARM'S MOTHER

She smiles at him as she walks to the front door and opens it.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. ON HARM - TODAY

28

Standing in the doorway of Lt. Pendry's house.

ON ANNIE PENDRY

Standing in the doorway, surprised to see him. She's wholesome, pretty, but looking emotionally worn and haggard, as expected.

ANNIE

Harm.

HARM

Hi, Annie.

There's an awkward beat.

28 CONTINUED:

28

ANNIE  
 God, I feel like calling out--  
 telling him you're here.

Her eyes well up. She can barely finish her thought....

ANNIE  
 He would've liked to have seen  
 you.

FEATURE HARM

Annie breaks into tears and he takes her into his arms. For a moment he says nothing, then he sees her six-year-old boy, JOSHUA, staring up at him, puzzled. Annie follows Harm's look.

ANNIE  
 (gaining composure)  
 Josh, remember Harm?

Apparently, he doesn't. He backs up--timid.

HARM  
 Hi Josh.

Then runs into the other room.

ANNIE  
 I don't think he really  
 understands, yet.

HARM  
 (from experience)  
 I think he does.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. ON AN F-14 - TWILIGHT

29

It streaks past against the orange/pink hue of the Pacific sky. We TILT DOWN to....

HARM

Standing on the porch of Annie's cottage watching the Tomcat pass out of view. He hears the back screen door open, turns to be handed a longneck beer by Annie.

HARM  
 Thanks.

29 CONTINUED:

29

ANNIE  
(motioning)  
Sit down.

Harm sits on the swing with her. As he does, he hears a crack. He sat on a balsa Tomcat glider.

HARM  
Sorry. I'll fix it.

ANNIE  
Don't bother. I want to get rid  
of them.

Harm doesn't respond. He works at putting the model back together.

ANNIE  
Do you miss flying?

HARM  
I go up now and then.  
(smiles)  
When I can find a CO who'll let  
me play.

ANNIE  
That's what it is, isn't it?  
Playing. You're all just boys  
playing with bigger toys.

HARM  
I'd like to think it's a little  
more than that, Annie.

ANNIE  
(touch bitter)  
It's not.

Harm is wise enough not to say anything. After a beat.

HARM  
Annie, listen. I'm heading up  
the investigation.

ANNIE  
I'm surprised they let you. I  
mean, you and Lucas being such  
good friends.

HARM  
I don't think they know.

29 CONTINUED:

29

ANNIE  
Lucas wouldn't want you to get  
yourself in any trouble on his  
account.

HARM  
Yeah, he would.

Annie laughs. Harm grins, glad he's been able to lighten her  
grief, however briefly.

ANOTHER ANGLE

At that moment Josh comes out on the porch.

ANNIE  
Hey, you're supposed to be in  
bed.

JOSH  
I'm not sleepy.

The boy climbs onto her lap, she rocks him gently. Josh  
peeks at Harm.

JOSH  
Did you fly with my Daddy?

HARM  
A long time ago.

JOSH  
He was the best, wasn't he?

HARM  
Yes, he was.

JOSH  
Then why did he die?

Annie tears up and bites her lip.

HARM  
I don't know, Josh. But I'm  
going to find out.

On Harm's determination, we....

FADE OUT:

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

30 EXT. MIRAMAR FLIGHT LINE - DAY

30

SUPER: 0815 HOURS MIRAMAR NAVAL AIR STATION

Harm and Meg appear walking rapidly down the flight line. He's scanning the hangers. She's embroiled in paper work.

HARM

(frustrated)

That's the last time I ask directions from a commissary waitress.

MEG

(reading)

The way she looked at you, it's probably directions to her house.

HARM

Very funny, Lieutenant. You got anything there?

MEG

(reading)

No APTERN related accidents have ever been reported.

HARM

What's the recalibration frequency?

MEG

About once every sixteen-point-five hours of flight time.

(beat)

That's actually pretty good for a chip-driven avionics system.

Not what Harm wants to hear. He spots the building.

HARM

There it is.

(beat)

Those figures for the Navy or the Air Force?

MEG

They didn't separate them.

HARM

Do it.

30 CONTINUED:

30

MEG  
Yes, Sir.

He opens the door for her and as it closes, we read: MIRAMAR  
COMBAT SIMULATION CENTER.

31 INT. COMBAT SIMULATION ROOM - DAY

31

Screening room atmosphere with multi-screens and a bank of  
computers where Lt. Stans is talking with one of the  
technicians. Jim Reid and Commander Bishop look up as Harm  
and Meg enter.

HARM  
Sorry, Sir. We were mis-  
directed.

REID  
Is that a pilots way of saying  
lost, Lieutenant?

HARM  
Pilots don't get lost, Sir. Just  
momentarily confused.

Reid laughs.

CMDR BISHOP  
Let's get started Lieutenant  
Stans.

LT. STANS  
Aye, Sir.

He steps behind a lectern with computer controls that face a  
large screen and dims the lights as everyone takes their  
seats.

LT. STANS  
We have two visuals to show you  
today.

(beat)  
First, based on the mission  
profile, a computer animated  
cockpit view of Lieutenant  
Pendry's attack as it was  
intended to be executed.

INTERCUT WITH:

A LARGE MONITOR

Graphic animation of a PILOT'S POV diving down toward the  
desert.

31 CONTINUED:

31

LT. STANS  
Here you see Lieutenant Pendry  
descending to initiate his  
attack.

The animation levels out and POINT BRAVO flashes on the  
screen.

LT. STANS  
Point BRAVO is where he engaged  
APTERN and radioed Lieutenant  
McKee to initiate her attack.

The animation takes every advantage of the hills as it skims  
across the desert toward a ridge line.

LT. STANS  
As you can see, APTERN's pre-  
programmed flight path is taking  
maximum advantage of the terrain  
as it approaches the target.

The animation sweeps over the crest of the hill revealing the  
mobile SAM Humvee in the distance. POINT CHARLIE flashes on  
the screen.

LT. STANS  
Point Charlie is where he fires  
his Maverick....

An animated missile fires and we break hard left in a low  
turn behind another hill.

LT. STANS  
...and breaks left to escape on  
a pre-programmed route.  
(looks to them)  
That's what was supposed to  
happen. Here's what did.

Everyone tenses as COCKPIT VIDEO of the actual attack fills  
the huge screen. At first, it looks very similar to what  
we've already seen.

LT. STANS  
Lieutenant Pendry made his  
descent on profile.

The video shows him leveling out and racing across the  
desert.



31 CONTINUED:

31

LT. STANS  
Crossed Point Bravo on profile.  
(beat)  
But at one-point-five seconds  
before Point Charlie....

The POV suddenly goes inverted.

LT. STANS  
He goes inverted and impacts the  
ground seven-tenths of a second  
later.

As the video zooms at the ground and goes black.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The mood of the room is very somber as the lights come up.

LT. STANS  
Obviously neither the pilot or  
RIO has a chance to eject.

For a moment there is silence, then....

REID  
It looked to me as if Lieutenant  
Pendry shifted to shut off the  
APTERN and take control before  
going inverted.

HARM  
I didn't see that.

LT. STANS  
It appears that he did,  
Lieutenant.

Lt. Stans picks up a charred piece of twisted metal with  
imprinted circuitry still discernible.

LT. STANS  
The APTERN system uses an  
indented switch designed to lock  
in place. It was in the off  
position.

REID  
You can't blame APTERN if it  
wasn't even on.

HARM  
Unless Lt. Pendry shut it off  
because it was malfunctioning.

31 CONTINUED:

31

REID

APTERN doesn't malfunction, Lt. Rabb.

(pointing)

Those Gripe Sheets Lieutenant Austin is holding will bear me out. Even if it did, APTERN's designed to automatically roll the wings level and initiate a four-G pitch-up.

HARM

Maybe that malfunctioned, too.

REID

Face it, Lieutenant. He thought he could do better on his own, so he shut APTERN down and went over the hill inverted.

MEG

(remembering)

To avoid negative Gs.

Harm looks at her as if she's a traitor.

REID

Exactly. To stay low over the hill would have subjected him to too many negative Gs. Inverted, he could have stayed on the deck and got off his shot. From all I hear, Lieutenant Pendry was a man who liked to win and maybe he thought this was the only way.

HARM

He wasn't reckless, Mr. Reid.

REID

No, Lieutenant. Just an excellent pilot, who went a little too close to the edge.

Suddenly Reid switches gears--smiles understandingly.

REID

I appreciate your position, Lieutenant Rabb, I really do. You room with a man in flight school, it forms a bond.

Suddenly all eyes are now on Harm--including Meg's.

31 CONTINUED:

31

REID

I didn't mean to drop a bombshell, Lieutenant. I assumed you disclosed your relationship with Lieutenant Pendry before accepting this assignment.

HARM

It will in no way undermine my objectivity, Mr. Reid.

REID

It already has, Lieutenant.

With the air of a man who has dispatched an opponent, Reid leaves the room. The others, including Meg, just stare at Harm as we....

CUT TO:

32 EXT. TALBERT'S TAVERN - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

32

The lights of San Diego twinkle in the distance as the sound of music drifts from this unofficial Officer's Club near Miramar.

33 INT. TALBERT'S TAVERN

33

A group of Marines are at one end of the bar, Harm is at the other, sipping a drink. Rows of pictures cover the wall, immortalizing generations of pilots. The BARTENDER reorganizes one of the rows, clearing a spot on the end. Over this....

TESS' VOICE

Mind if I join you, Lieutenant?

Harm turns to see Tess.

HARM

Not at all.

She sits on the stool next to him.

TESS

I heard you stood up for Luke and I wanted to tell you how much the Howlers appreciate that.

HARM

I'm standing up for the truth, Lieutenant which I hope is on Luke's side.

33 CONTINUED:

33

The conversation is interrupted by the sound of POUNDING as the Bartender drives a nail into the wall.

CLOSE ON A FRAMED PICTURE OF LUKE

He takes his place among a tragic but honorable fraternity.

ON HARM AND TESS

As they stare at it.

ANOTHER ANGLE

LT MOORE, a Marine sitting a stool away with his buddy calls out to the bartender. .

LT. MOORE

How come he gets up there? I thought these guys are supposed to be legends.

BARTENDER

They are.

LT. MOORE

Some legend. He damn near took two of my men with him.  
(to his buddy)  
All a flyboy has to do to get on that wall is screw the pooch.

Before Harm can stop her, Tess slugs Moore right in the face. He staggers back off the stool.

HARM

(to Moore)

Sorry. She was his wingman.

LT. MOORE

She's acting like she was more than just his wingman.

Whereupon Tess slugs him again. He reacts by slugging Harm, knocking him against the bar!

HARM

What the hell was that for?

LT. MOORE

I don't hit women.

HARM

Neither do I.

33 CONTINUED:

33

And he knocks Lt. Moore to the floor. Meanwhile....

TESS

Spots a fire extinguisher, yanks it off the wall.

RESUME BAR

As Lt. Moore climbs to his feet and smiles at Tess.

LT. MOORE  
Equality's one thing, Honey, but  
I don't think you want to be  
treated equal in a Marine brawl.

Tess starts forward but Harm corrals her.

HARM  
Come on, Lieutenant. Now.

As he pushes her out the door.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. HARM'S NAVY SEDAN - DAY

34

It clears the Miramar Gate and drives onto the base.

35 INT. NAVY SEDAN - NIGHT

35

Harm drives Tess in silence. She's still worked up; now that her pent-up feelings have been released, it's hard to turn them off. Finally....

TESS  
Sorry, Lieutenant. Thanks for  
jumping in there. That Gyrene  
just ticked me off.

HARM  
Really?

Tess smiles. But it's short lived.

TESS  
BOQ is the next left.

He drives toward it. After a beat.

HARM  
How long did you fly with Luke?

TESS  
Six months.

35 CONTINUED:

35

HARM  
You hang out much together?

TESS  
(incredulous)  
You're not paying attention to  
what that crazy Marine said?

HARM  
(a lie)  
Of course, not.

TESS  
Other pilots hang out with each  
other. People don't  
automatically assume they're  
sleeping together.  
(beat)  
This is it.

Harm stops the sedan. Tess opens the door to get out.

TESS  
Thanks for the ride. It saved me  
cab fare.

HARM  
Anytime, Lieutenant.

Tess gets out and stares at him for a moment with the door  
open.

TESS  
I'm not going to say I didn't  
have feelings for Luke.  
(beat)  
I want him back more than  
anything.

HARM  
So do I.

They stare at each other for a beat, then Tess shuts the door  
and walks toward the BOQ. Over this we HEAR THE SOUND OF A  
DRUM ROLL and....

CUT TO:

36 EXT. MILITARY CEMETERY - DAY

36

A row of snare drums trill in unison. Starch white gloves  
lift an American flag off a casket and fold it.

36 CONTINUED:

36

WIDER

A large assembly of service comrades and friends gather for Lt. Pendry's funeral. Most in full dress uniform.

FEATURE HARM AND MEG

Standing at attention, their faces somber. He glances at Tess who is stoic and stately, in contrast to the night before.

THE MARINES

Finish folding the flag, pass it to Commander Bishop, who walks it over to where Annie and Josh are seated. He hands the flag to Annie and speaks a few words of consolation.

ON HARM

Watching, shifting his focus to....

JOSH

We PUSH IN on the little boy, who both understands and doesn't understand what's happening around him. His eyes find....

HARM

Who smiles slightly.

BACK ON JOSH

Stares back at him gravely. He jumps as....

THE MARINE GUARDS

Fire their rifles into the air. After three rounds, they lower the rifles. Taps begin to play and over this we hear the roar of approaching jets.

ON A FLIGHT OF TOMCATS - STOCK

Passing over the cemetery, one of them climbs out of formation and disappears into the blue as the others fly on without him.

ON HARM

Saluting, along with the other Officers present.

36 CONTINUED:

36

ON JOSH

Looking at Harm, he salutes as well. HOLD on this for a beat, then....

DISSOLVE TO:

37 EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

37

Harm escorts Annie and Josh to a waiting Navy car. On the way, they pass Tess.

TESS AND ANNIE

Exchange a glance.

BACK ON HARM AND MEG

They both notice the looks and each applies their own meaning to what they see. Then Jim Reid approaches Annie, and Harm stiffens.

REID

Mrs. Pendry, James Reid. I represent a military contractor and I wanted to tell you how much we respected your husband. He's a great loss to all of us.

Harm is outraged, but can say nothing. Annie, having no idea who Reid is, replies graciously.

ANNIE

Thank you, Mister Reid.

Reid leans down to Josh.

REID

Young man, your father was a fine man and a fine pilot. You should be very proud of him.

Josh nods slightly, leans against his mother. With an effort, Harm again controls himself. As Annie and Josh get in the car....

HARM

(to Annie)

I'll be in touch.

Annie nods, Harm closes the door.



37 CONTINUED:

37

## ANOTHER ANGLE

The Navy sedan pulls away and Harm turns to Reid.

HARM

I wish you meant that.

REID

Lieutenant, none of this is personal. Just because I have a job to do, doesn't mean I'm not sorry the man's dead.

HARM

You're a real sensitive guy. Unless it interferes with the bottom line.

REID

Everybody's got a family to feed, Lieutenant--even people who work for corporations.

He looks in the direction of Annie's receding sedan.

REID

Mrs. Pendry seems like a fine woman. Little boy's nice, too. Be a shame if Lt. Pendry's memory was marred by something...ugly.

HARM

What are you talking about?

REID

Sometimes it's better just to let things go, Lt. Rabb.

He walks away without further explanation.

MEG

What did he mean?

HARM

I'm not sure.

A beat. Meg seems to be waiting for something, and Harm knows what it is.

HARM

I owe you an apology, Lieutenant. You're my partner, I should have told you about my friendship with Lieutenant Pendry.

37 CONTINUED:

37

MEG

No apology necessary, Sir.

But it was, and she appreciates it, which makes it all the harder to say what she has to say next.

MEG

Sir...is it possible you might be a little too personally involved?

He gives her a look--et tu, Meg?

MEG

I don't question your integrity for a second, Harm. But you're human. You care about Lieutenant Pendry, you care about his family.

HARM

I just don't believe he screwed the pooch.

MEG

How can you be so sure? The evidence is against him.

HARM

I can't explain it, Meg. You fly with a guy, you get to know him, maybe better than you know yourself.

MEG

That was years ago. People change.

HARM

In some ways, maybe. But, if anything, most pilots I've known become more careful once they have kids. Luke may have been ambitious, but he wasn't crazy.

(beat)

And I'm gonna prove it.

MEG

How?

HARM

The only way I know.

Off that we....

CUT TO:

38 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY

38

Harm is flying on the deck. The ground rushes past. Harm's eyes concentrate on the hill rushing up on the horizon.

LT. STANS  
(over the radio)  
Sending malfunction...now!

ON APTERN

The green light flashes red and a HORN SOUNDS.

BACK ON HARM

His head snaps back as he is thrown into a four-G climb.

HARM'S POV - THE DESERT

Falling away below as he climbs up.

39 INT. COMBAT SIMULATION ROOM - DAY

39

Stans monitors all of Harm's flight displays from this high tech command center. Reid smiles and shakes his head. Meg and Commander Bishop look disappointed.

REID  
Haven't we seen enough? That's the eighth malfunction we've transmitted to APTERN and every time it's put him into a wing level, nose-up recovery.

CMDR BISHOP  
(keys mic)  
Call it a day, Lieutenant Rabb.

HARM'S VOICE  
(over radio)  
Sir, I'd like to try another.

REID  
(keys mic)  
Lieutenant, we've fed every known APTERN malfunction and it hasn't crashed you yet! If you want to try something, try flying the mission inverted like Lieutenant Pendry did!

MEG  
No!

- 40 INT. HARM'S COCKPIT - DAY 40  
Harm stares out at the desert rushing past.  
HARM  
Roger that.  
He banks around to make another pass.
- 41 INT. COMBAT SIMULATION CENTER - DAY 41  
Reid is smug and confident. Meg looks concerned. As does  
Commander Bishop. But he nods to Lt. Stans who keys the mic.  
LT. STANS  
You sure you want to try this  
without APTERN?  
HARM'S VOICE  
(over radio)  
Only way to know.  
LT. STANS  
(checking data)  
You're coming up on point Bravo.
- 42 INT. HARM'S COCKPIT - DAY 42  
Back on the deck flying low toward the distant hill.  
HARM  
Disengaging APTERN.  
CLOSE ON APTERN  
He snaps the indent switch OFF.
- 43 INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY 43  
Everyone is staring at the monitors.
- 44 INT. COCKPIT - DAY 44  
Harm is rocketing at the hill.  
HARM  
Here we go.  
He rolls over to cross the hill inverted.
- 45 INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY - FEATURE MEG 45  
Her eyes are wide with fear.

46 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY

46

Harm is looking up at the ground "below" him. He tries to roll back, but he's too low.

LT. STANS  
(over the radio)  
Recover! Recover!

HARM  
Too low!

The desert zooms up at us and EVERYTHING GOES BLACK!

END OF ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

47 INT. COMBAT SIMULATION CENTER - DAY - CLOSE ON HARM - SFX 47

SUPER: 1015 HOURS MIRAMAR COMBAT SIMULATION CENTER

He climbs down from the cockpit with the desert in the background. We WIDEN TO REVEAL....

AN F-14 SIMULATOR COCKPIT - SFX

Mounted on a pedestal with cables leading away. Behind it, THE DESERT FADES AWAY as the imagery system shuts down leaving only A BLUE SCREEN.

48 INT. SIMULATOR CONTROL ROOM - DAY 48

Through the glass window we can see Harm walking toward us. Reid is looking pleased. Everyone else is depressed. Harm enters.

REID

You're dead, Lieutenant.

LT. STANS

Once you inverted that low, you didn't have a chance.

REID

Now will you write up your report?

HARM

We still don't know why Lieutenant Pendry was inverted.

REID

(frustrated)

Because he wanted to win!

HARM

(to Lt. Stans)

Could there be an interface problem between APTERN and the autopilot?

LT. STANS

It would have shown up on the printout.

48 CONTINUED:

48

CMDR BISHOP  
Lieutenant Rabb. I'd like to believe it was APTERN and not Luke, but you've exhausted every possibility.

(beat)  
It's time we face reality.

MEG  
Perhaps not, Sir.

Reid groans.

MEG  
(to Reid)  
Do you know how often APTERN has to be re-calibrated?

REID  
(promptly)  
An average of once every Sixteen point five flight hours.

MEG  
That's a combined figure for the Air Force and Navy.  
(reading)  
The Air Force figure is twenty-two-point-three. In the Navy it has to be recalibrated every eight-point-one hours.

HARM  
Nearly three times as often!

Reid's caught off guard, but recovers quickly, shrugs.

REID  
It's relatively new to the Navy. Your technicians aren't as proficient as the Air Force yet.

CMDR BISHOP  
I wonder when Lieutenant Pendry's APTERN was recalibrated?

REID  
I'll check it out.

HARM  
No, Mister Reed. We will.

A beat. Reid shakes his head, half in frustration, half in admiration.

48 CONTINUED:

48

REID  
You don't quit, do you,  
Lieutenant?

HARM  
No, Sir.

REID  
Well, neither do I, Lt. Rabb.

On that we....

CUT TO:

49 EXT. COMBAT SIMULATION BUILDING - DAY

49

Harm and Meg come through the door into the sunlight. As they don their sunglasses, Harm notices Meg's expression.

HARM  
What's wrong, Lieutenant? We may  
finally be on to something  
significant.

MEG  
I don't think so, Sir.  
(off his look)  
I looked up the Maintenance  
Report on Lieutenant Pendry's  
Tomcat. APTERN was recalibrated  
the morning of his final flight.

HARM  
(sagging)  
Why didn't you say so in the  
room?

MEG  
I didn't want to give Mister Reid  
the satisfaction.

HARM  
(appreciative)  
We have to promptly disclose  
facts, pro or con, Lieutenant.

MEG  
Yes, Sir.

HARM  
There has to be a reason for that  
frequency difference beyond  
technicians getting up to speed.



49 CONTINUED:

49

MEG  
If you say so, Sir.

HARM  
You don't believe me.

MEG  
I believe Lieutenant Pendry was a close friend and that you're grasping at straws and have me doing it.

HARM  
Sounds like something Reid would say.

MEG  
I don't like him any more than you, Harm. But that doesn't mean everything he says is wrong.

Harm's jaw tightens slightly.

HARM  
Anything else?

MEG  
I've been hearing rumors about Lieutenants Pendry and McKee.

HARM  
So have I and I don't believe them.

MEG  
If true, it might explain why he tried something as risky as going in inverted.

HARM  
You want to write this up as showing off for a girl friend?

MEG  
If he was having personal problems, it could have affected his flying.

HARM  
Not Luke.

MEG  
Reid's probably heard the rumors.

49 CONTINUED:

49

HARM  
I'm sure he has.

MEG  
He'll use them.

HARM  
I know.

MEG  
Have you thought how that would  
affect his family?

HARM  
Meg, this isn't just about  
salvaging Luke's reputation or  
protecting his family. If  
APTERN's flawed, finding the flaw  
will save lives. And that is our  
ultimate responsibility.

MEG  
(smiles)  
You sound like my Dad.

HARM  
I'm in trouble when you start  
comparing me to your father.

MEG  
My brother?

HARM  
Even worse. How about a second  
cousin?

She laughs and as they walk on we....

CUT TO:

50 .EXT. ANNIE'S COTTAGE - TWILIGHT

50

Harm, carrying the repaired Tomcat glider, exits his car and  
starts up the path. We FOLLOW HIM onto the porch. The door  
is partially open and the sound of music drifts out. He  
sticks his head inside.

HARM  
Hello?

No answer. He walks inside.

51 INT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

51

Harm looks around and calls out.

HARM

Annie?

The music's loud and he doesn't hear a reply. He slowly walks toward the source of the music as we....

FLASH BACK TO:

52 INT. YOUNG HARM'S POV - DAY - SLOW MOTION

52

He moves through a mixed group of Navy pilots and wives at his beach house. He looks into the living room as he passes and sees a group watching news of the Vietnam war on television. Others stand or sit quietly, smile as he passes, trying to reassure him.

ON YOUNG HARM

He moves on down the hallway, making his way through long legs as through a forest.

YOUNG HARMS - POV - THE KITCHEN

His mother sits with a friend, choked by tears. She looks up. Harm sees her pain.

CUT BACK TO:

53 INT. ANNIE'S KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

53

Harm stands in the doorway. We ADJUST to include....

ANNIE

cooking at the stove. Josh is standing next to her. He tugs at her dress. She turns and smiles at Harm.

ANNIE

I didn't hear you come in.

HARM

That's okay, I'm early.

He holds out the Tomcat and Josh's eyes light up.

JOSH

You fixed it!

HARM

Good as new.

Annie frowns at the repaired glider.

53 CONTINUED:

53

JOSH  
Will you help me fly it, sir?

HARM  
(looking at Annie)  
Well....

ANNIE  
(to Harm)  
Go on. I'll join you with drinks  
on the porch.

Josh takes the model from Harm and flies it off down the hall. Harm smiles weakly at Annie, then follows him.

ON ANNIE

She's wishing Harm hadn't done that.

54 EXT. FRONT PORCH - TWILIGHT

54

Josh flies out the front door with the Tomcat and hands it to Harm.

HARM  
Let's see. I'm not checked out  
in this model.

He adjusts the wings and tosses it off the porch. The Tomcat immediately sails into a loop and returns to him.

JOSH  
How'd you do that?!

HARM  
(showing him)  
Tweaked in a little up elevator.

JOSH  
What's that do?

HARM  
Puts down pressure on the tail  
which causes the nose to rise.  
The air travels a different speed  
over the top and bottom control  
surfaces. Breaking the lift on  
the....

He stops, realizing Josh isn't following him.

54 CONTINUED:

54

HARM  
Next time you're in a car, stick  
your hand out the window.  
(demonstrating)  
Tilt it like this and your arm  
will fly up. Just like your  
Tomcat.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Annie comes out on the porch with gin and tonics.

ANNIE  
Go wash up, young man.

JOSH  
I'm clean.

ANNIE  
You're filthy. I should make you  
take a bath before dinner.

JOSH  
I'm gonna fly first.

Josh turns to toss the model, but....

HARM  
Josh. Listen to your Mom.

JOSH  
Yes, Sir.

He runs into the house. Annie hands Harm his drink and they sit on the swing.

ANNIE  
A man's voice. Women like to  
think it doesn't make a  
difference. But it does.

HARM  
I don't know. After my Dad went  
down, Mom kept a pretty tight  
rein on me.

ANNIE  
I forgot about that Harm. How  
old were you?

HARM  
Josh's age.

54 CONTINUED:

54

ANNIE

And you became a Naval Aviator  
because your Dad was one.

HARM

I suppose it had a lot to do with  
it.

ANNIE

I don't want Josh flying.

HARM

He's only six, Annie.

ANNIE

That's when it starts.

For a moment Harm says nothing. They sip at their drinks,  
then....

HARM

I suppose Luke wasn't around any  
more than my Dad.

ANNIE

Two and six months out of nearly  
eight years of marriage. But  
when he was home, it was perfect,  
maybe because of all the time he  
was away.

Harm takes a breath. There's no good way to do what he has  
to do.

HARM

How do the wives feel now that  
women are being deployed at sea?

ANNIE

Most of them don't like it. But  
it didn't bother me.

HARM

Even with a wingman as pretty as  
Lieutenant McKee?

She turns slowly and looks at him. Her look makes him  
squirm.

ANNIE

He wasn't sleeping with Tess.

HARM

Annie, I....

54 CONTINUED:

54

ANNIE

I've heard the rumors. But that's all it is...rumors.

HARM

Annie, I'm sorry. It's just that it's been suggested that personal problems might've played a part in the accident.

ANNIE

With what we had, Luke didn't have to look anywhere else.

(reads his look)

I know, another wife in denial. Uh-huh. Not this girl--I'm not the denying type. Luke was mine and I was his. And that's just the way it was.

She looks at him, intensely. He smiles, wanting to believe her, but not sure he does.

FEATURE JOSH

He slams through the screen door and sticks his hands in his mothers face.

ANNIE

(slight dig)

Don't show them to me, Lieutenant Rabbs the inspecting officer tonight.

Josh runs to Harm. Who looks chagrinned as he checks his hands and we....

CUT TO:

55 EXT. TALBERT'S TAVERN - NIGHT

55

The music is loud and from the number of cars in the lot, the bar is packed.

MEG'S VOICE

Lieutenant Pendry sounds like a lot of fun.

56 INT. TALBERT'S TAVERN - NIGHT

56

Meg and Tess sit in a booth, nursing beers. Beyond them the dance floor is filled with dancing couples.

56 CONTINUED:

56

TESS  
He was that.

MEG  
You spend much time with him and  
Annie?

TESS  
Some.  
(looking up)  
Uh-oh.

FEATURE LT. MOORE

The Marine from the previous night. He saunters over to the table, but from the look in his eyes, fighting isn't on his mind. His glance takes in both women, but it's obvious he's focusing on Tess.

LT. MOORE  
Lieutenants. Could I buy you a  
drink as a way of apologizing?

TESS  
Another night.

LT. MOORE  
Name it.

TESS  
I'll let you know.

LT. MOORE  
I'll be waiting.

He smiles at Meg and walks back to the bar.

ON TESS AND MEG

They watch him go, amused.

TESS  
Marines. The only species on the  
planet that develops a crush when  
you punch 'em out.

Meg laughs.

MEG  
Where were we?



56 CONTINUED:

56

TESS  
I think you know where we were,  
Lieutenant. Or at least where we  
were headed.

Eyes boring into Meg, who says nothing.

TESS  
Let me do the asking for a  
minute. You find Lt. Rabb  
attractive?

MEG  
(honestly)  
Yes.

TESS  
You work together, see each other  
off-duty occasionally?

MEG  
Yes.

TESS  
(challenging)  
You sleep with him?

Meg bristles. Tess grins.

TESS  
Fair's fair, Lieutenant.

MEG  
I'm the one conducting an  
investigation.

TESS  
Let me put it this way--do you  
think it's possible you might  
sleep with him some day?

MEG  
Anything's possible.

TESS  
If he were married?

MEG  
(beat)  
No. That's not possible.

TESS  
Why not?

56 CONTINUED:

56

MEG  
That's not who I am. Or who he  
is.

TESS  
That's not who we were either,  
Lieutenant?

Over that, we hear the roar of Tomcat engines and....

CUT TO:

57 EXT. MIRAMAR RUNWAY - DAY - STOCK

57

SUPER: 0800 HOURS MIRAMAR NAVAL AIR STATION

A flight of two Tomcats lifts off the runway and we MOVE  
TO....

HARM AND MEG

Watching the planes take-off as they walk from the parking  
lot to the entrance of the building.

MEG  
If I had to bet, I'd bet against  
it.

HARM  
But you're not sure?

MEG  
No.  
(looking ahead)  
But, he is.

ON REID

Walking up to them from the opposite direction.

REID  
Going to wrap this up today,  
Lieutenants?

HARM  
I doubt it, Sir.

REID  
Then, I think you should read  
this.

He hands Meg a newspaper.

57 CONTINUED:

57

CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER

The headline reads: NAVY SCANDAL BEHIND FATAL CRASH?

RETURN TO SCENE

Meg scans the article, reading quickly and with increasing outrage....

MEG

(reading)

'A source close to the investigation of Navy Lieutenant Lucas Pendry's fatal crash revealed he had an affair with his female wingman, resulting in her pregnancy and subsequent abortion. The source speculated that the resultant stress contributed to the accident....'

She looks up in disgust in time to see Harm go for Reid.

MEG

Harm!

She tries to block him but Harm has Reid by the lapels.

HARM

You scum bag!

REID

(calmly)

Check the date.

Harm, within an inch of slugging him, ignores this.

REID

The paper. Check the date.

Meg does.

MEG

The fourteenth...that's tomorrow.

Harm relaxes his grip slightly. Meg shows him the paper. Confused, Harm releases Reid.

REID

That's a mock-up of what the world will see tomorrow if you don't conclude your investigation today.

57 CONTINUED:

57

MEG

You can't blackmail us with an ugly lie!

REID

It's not a lie, Lieutenant.

Reid reaches into his pocket, produces some documents. He holds them up one at a time as he talks.

REID

Affidavits from people who saw Lieutenants Pendry and McKee together in bars. A doctor's bill for a DNC, which as we all know is a euphemism for abortion. And affidavits from two nurses who saw Lieutenant Pendry pick Lieutenant McKee up at the hospital.

HARM

All circumstantial.

REID

We're not in a court of law, Lieutenant.

MEG

Even if it is true, it doesn't prove pilot error.

REID

Somehow I don't think the Navy would agree with you and the public certainly won't.

(softer)

I don't want to tarnish the memory of a brave man or embarrass his family. But, I do intend to protect Tricorp from investigating Officers wearing blinders! How far I have to go to do that is up to you.

He walks away. Off Harm and Meg, looking down at the newspaper, we....

FADE OUT:

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

58 EXT. MIRAMAR NAVAL AIR STATION - DAY - STOCK - SFX

58

SUPER: 1215 HOURS MIRAMAR NAVAL AIR STATION

A Tomcat crosses the runway and touches down with a chirp. As it rolls out past, WE MOVE IN on one of....

THE SQUADRON HANGERS

Continuing to a lone F-14. We SWEEP UP to the cockpit to find....

HARM

Sitting, lost in thought. After a moment....

MEG'S VOICE

Permission to come aboard, Sir.

Harm looks down.

HARM'S POV - MEG

Standing below, looking up at him.

HARM'S VOICE

Permission granted.

CLOSE ON BOTH

As Meg climbs up to the cockpit and peers in.

MEG

Not much room in here.

HARM

You wear a fighter cockpit.

MEG

Like a pair of panty hose.

Harm laughs, then sobers.

HARM

Did she deny it?

MEG

Nope. Except it wasn't an abortion. She mis-carried.

HARM

(sadly)  
I thought better of Luke.

58 CONTINUED:

58

MEG

No need to change your opinion.  
He wasn't the father.

HARM

Who was?

MEG

Privileged information.

HARM

We're on the same team, Meg.

MEG

Telling you isn't going to alter  
the outcome of our investigation,  
Harm.

He stares at her for a beat, realizing she's probably right.  
Meg looks back to the instruments.

MEG

Where's APTERN?

HARM

(pointing)

Here. Next to the Auto-Pilot.

MEG

Still think it's at fault?

HARM

Luke wouldn't have inverted  
intentionally that low.

(beat)

Did Lieutenant Stans feed every  
possible APTERN malfunction to  
the simulator?

MEG

Every one ever found on a Gripe  
Sheet.

HARM

Maybe it's some seemingly  
insignificant thing Luke did that  
hadn't been done before.

(sudden idea)

Fate is the Hunter.

MEG

What?

58 CONTINUED:

58

HARM

A film. Everyone wanted to blame a fatal crash on the dead pilot, Rod Taylor.

MEG

Who's Rod Taylor?

HARM

An actor. They said it was pilot error, but Glenn Ford didn't believe them.

MEG

(guessing)

Another actor.

HARM

So he re-created the flight down to the smallest detail.

MEG

On a computer.

HARM

They didn't have computers, I saw this movie when I was a kid.

MEG

Oh, way back.

He shoots her a look, but it doesn't dampen his growing enthusiasm.

MEG

He even had Suzanne Pleshette, who played the surviving stewardess....

MEG

I know her.

HARM

...bring coffee to the cockpit like she did the night of the crash. It turned out to be the key to what caused them to go down.

MEG

Coffee?

58 CONTINUED:

58

HARM

He put the cup on the console.  
When they lost an engine it  
spilled, shorting the instruments  
which then gave false readings.

MEG

I don't think Lieutenant Pendry  
had coffee in his cockpit.

HARM

We don't know what he had or did  
and no computer can exactly  
duplicate his last flight.  
Unless I....

MEG

Play Glenn Ford?

HARM

Yeah. But, there's no way in  
hell, I'd ever get permission.

MEG

(thoughtful)  
Maybe there is. If I tell you my  
privileged information.

Off Harms reaction, we....

CUT TO:

59 INT. COMMANDER BISHOP'S OFFICE - DAY

59

Commander Bishop sits behind his desk, Harm is across from  
him.

CMDR BISHOP

Lt. Rabb, it's out of the  
question.

HARM

Sir, there are unknowns the  
computers can't factor.

CMDR BISHOP

Lieutenant, there was nothing  
wrong with APTERN. The only  
person who won't accept that is  
you.

HARM

I'd like a chance to find out,  
Commander.



59 CONTINUED:

59

CMDR BISHOP

If something went wrong it could end my career and your life.

HARM

I'm willing to risk it, Sir.

CMDR BISHOP

I'm not.

(sympathetically)

Lieutenant Pendry was a good man, but he was human. He made a mistake.

He spreads his hands--end of story, case dismissed.

HARM

He wasn't the only one, Commander.

CMDR BISHOP

Meaning?

HARM

I understand Lieutenant McKee became pregnant recently, Sir.

A shadow passes over Bishop's face quickly, then he suppresses it.

CMDR BISHOP

That's her business, Lieutenant, provided it doesn't interfere with her duties.

HARM

Yes, Sir. But the father was a member of this squadron and Mister Reid is planning to make that public.

CMDR BISHOP

Damn him!

HARM

He believes the father was Lieutenant Pendry.

CMDR BISHOP

You don't.

59 CONTINUED:

59

HARM

I know he wasn't, Sir. But it's a knowledge I would never repeat outside this room.

Commander Bishop has to look away. When he speaks, it's as much to himself as to Harm.

CMDR BISHOP

People make mistakes. A man shouldn't have to risk losing his career for one mistake.

HARM

No, Sir.

(beat)

If I can't prove it wasn't pilot error, Reid will make what he believes to be true, public.

(beat)

It's hard enough for a boy to grow up without his father. He shouldn't be ashamed of him, too.

Off Commander Bishop's expression, we....

CUT TO:

60 EXT. MIRAMAR TARMAC - DAY

60

We find Harm and Tess reviewing a checklist with Meg and Lt. Stans. Behind them, a ground crew prepares a Tomcat for flight.

LT. STANS

Weight, balance, ordinance, fuel load every spec is identical to Lieutenant Pendry's last flight.

TESS

Except no one's in the back seat.

HARM

Can't risk it.

TESS

I can.

HARM

No way, Lieutenant.

60 CONTINUED:

60

TESS  
He was my friend too. And if  
someone isn't back there it won't  
be like Luke's last flight.

HARM  
I'll compensate with weight.

TESS  
It's not the same and you damn  
well know it!

MEG  
She's right, Lieutenant.

HARM  
(after a beat)  
I'm not going to argue with both  
of you. Climb aboard.

Tess winks at Meg and climbs up to the RIO's seat.

LT. STANS  
You take off in five minutes.  
Proceed to the America to make  
five landings and then fly the  
mission.

HARM  
Five traps?

LT. STANS  
That's what Lieutenant Pendry did  
the morning of his flight.

HARM  
(shakes his head)  
That's like preparing for a  
football game by having five  
boxing matches.

Harm starts up the built-in steps.

MEG  
Good luck, Harm.

HARM  
Thanks, Meg.

He climbs into the cockpit. Meg walks quickly away.

61 EXT. ON THE TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK

61

Harm taxis to the end of the runway.

- 62 EXT. NAVY HUMVEE - DAY - ON MEG 62  
 Watching the take-off with Lt. Stans, Reid and Cmdr. Bishop.  
 THEIR POV - THE TOMCAT - STOCK  
 It barrels down the runway and lifts into the air.  
 BACK ON MEG  
 Shading her eyes from the sun as she watches Harm and Tess  
 fly into the distance.
- CUT TO:
- 63 EXT. USS AMERICA - DAY - STOCK 63  
 From the deck of the ship we see a Tomcat on final approach.
- 64 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 64  
 Harm flies, concentrating intently as he pulls up over the  
 carrier's wake and heads for the deck.
- HARM  
 Tomcat Zero-Four. Ball. Eight-  
 point-Nine.
- 65 EXT. LSO PLATFORM - STOCK 65  
 The landing officers intently watch Harms approach.
- LSO  
 Roger ball.
- 66 EXT. ON THE TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 66  
 Harm slams hard into the deck, catching the second wire.
- 67 INT. CLOSE ON APTERN - DAY 67  
 It jars out of focus from the impact.
- 68 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 68  
 Tess and Harm slam into their harnesses.
- HARM  
 Sorry. I'm a little rusty.
- TESS  
 You're not rusty, Lieutenant,  
 you're corroded!

- 68 CONTINUED: 68  
Harm grins and taxis forward to the catapult.  
CUT TO:
- 69 SERIES OF TOMCAT TRAPS - DAY - STOCK 69  
Four of them--emphasizing the awesome power of the machine,  
and the incredible pounding it and the crew take with each  
landing.  
INTERCUT WITH:
- 70 APTERN 70  
Jarring with each landing.  
CUT TO:
- 71 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 71  
Harm and Tess jerk forward in the harnesses on their last  
trap.  
TESS  
Thank God that's over. You're  
making me wish I'd joined the Air  
Force.  
Harm smiles, then begins to think about it. He glances down  
at....
- 72 THE APTERN 72  
Next to the Autopilot controls.  
CUT TO:
- 73 EXT. CAMP PENDLETON RIDGE LINE - DAY - STOCK 73  
The APMS Humvee is parked atop the ridge.
- 74 FIFTY METERS AWAY 74  
Sgt. Barnes and Cpl. Martinez are at the remote control  
firing unit. Nearby, gathered around their Humvee, Cmdr.  
Bishop, Reid, Lt. Stans and Meg listen to the radio calls on  
a speaker. Lt. Stans holds the mic.  
HARM'S VOICE  
(over radio)  
Miramar Control. Tomcat Zero-  
Four at Point Alpha.

74 CONTINUED:

74

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
(over radio)  
Zero-Four, Miramar Control. You  
are cleared to the range.

HARM  
Zero-Four, Roger.

75 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK

75

He snap rolls and dives sharply down to the left.

76 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK MONTAGE

76

Harm's Tomcat screams out of the clouds in a steep descent  
and levels out a hundred and fifty feet above ground.

77 INT. TOMCAT COCKPITS - DAY

77

Tess keys the intercom.

TESS  
APTERN zeroed at Point Bravo.

CLOSE ON APTERN

Harm snaps on the indented switch.

HARM'S VOICE  
APTERN engaged.

A green light winks on and the small artificial horizon on  
the APTERN begins to move up and down slightly as the radar-  
controlled system flies the Tomcat as low as possible over  
the terrain.

78 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK

78

It rockets up and down across the desert, maintaining one-  
hundred and fifty feet above the undulating ground.

79 INT. HARM'S COCKPIT - DAY

79

He gingerly releases the control stick and watches it moving  
slightly as it's controlled by APTERN.

80 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK

80

The desert flashes past as they bore in on their target.

81 EXT. FEATURE SGT BARNES - DAY

81

Scanning the horizon with his binoculars. He turns to the  
others.

81 CONTINUED: 81

SGT. BARNES  
Here he comes!

82 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 82

Flashing by so low it's kicking dust.

83 EXT. OBSERVERS' HUMVEE - DAY 83

Meg shadows her eyes as she tensely watches for Harm.

HARM'S VOICE  
(over radio)  
Approaching Point Charlie.

Heartbeats race. This is the moment.

84 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 84

The fighter begins buffeting. Harm throws a quick glance to....

THE APTERN - INSERT

The horizontal indicator flips and shows him INVERTED.

BACK ON HARM

He grabs the stick.

HARM  
The APTERN Attitude Indicator  
just inverted.

85 EXT. OBSERVERS' HUMVEE - DAY 85

Reid blanches. Lt. Stans keeps the mic.

LT. STANS  
Shut it off!

86 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 86

Harm reaches for the indent switch.

ON HIS HAND

Hovering over the switch.

BACK ON HARM

He pulls his hand from the switch.

- 86 CONTINUED: 86
- HARM  
Negative. I'm over-riding first.
- 87 EXT. ON THE TOMCAT - DAY 87
- Harm puts it into a steep climb.
- 88 EXT. OBSERVERS' HUMVEE - DAY - STOCK/SFX 88
- Harm's Tomcat screams over them and everyone whips around to follow him.
- 89 EXT. ON HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 89
- He levels off high above the desert.
- 90 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 90
- Harm looks to the APTERN box and keys his mic.
- HARM  
APTERN still indicating we are inverted. Shutting it down....
- He reaches forward, flips the switch.
- HARM  
Now!
- 91 EXT. ON HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 91
- The big fighter rolls inverted and dives sharply toward the desert.
- 92 EXT. OBSERVERS HUMVEE - DAY 92
- Everyone is craning their necks.
- 93 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 93
- Screaming in a vertical dive toward the desert.
- 94 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY 94
- Harm, calmly pulls the nose up.
- 95 EXT. HARM'S TOMCAT - DAY - STOCK 95
- He levels off smoothly and climbs back to altitude.



96 EXT. OBSERVER'S HUMVEE - DAY

96

Everyone lets out a sigh of relief.

INTERCUT WITH:

97 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY

97

Harm shakes his head and keys the mic.

HARM

When you disengage APTERN it's programmed to roll wings level with a four-G pitch up. Which is fine unless APTERN thinks you're flying upside down. Then it throws you on your back and down.

CMDR BISHOP

(stunned)

It rolled Luke over and dove him into the ground!

LT. STANS

(keys the mic)

What made APTERN think you were inverted?

HARM

My guess is those five traps I made before the mission did something to it.

MEG

(realizing)

That's why the re-calibration frequency is higher for the Navy than the Air Force! APTERN wasn't designed to take the pounding of carrier landings.

REID

(shaken)

It will be.

MEG

Thanks to Lieutenants Rabb and McKee...Sir.

98 INT. TOMCAT COCKPIT - DAY

98

Harm looks into his mirror at Tess in the backseat.

HARM

It wasn't Luke's fault, Tess.

98 CONTINUED:

98

CLOSE ON TESS

Tears fill her eyes.

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
Zero-Four. Miramar. Will you be  
returning to base?

ON HARM

Watching Tess in the mirror, he keys his mic.

HARM  
Miramar. Zero-Four. We're going  
to orbit the area for a while.

MIRAMAR CONTROL VOICE  
Zero-Four. Miramar. Roger.

Harm looks forward, then pulls the nose up and climbs into the clouds.

99 HARM'S POV - THE CLOUDS - STOCK

99

Rushing past at incredible speed.

CUT TO:

100 EXT. ANNIE'S COTTAGE - DAY - CLOSE ON JOSH

100

Shading his eyes as he peers up at the sound of a Tomcat high above.

ANNIE'S VOICE  
(calling)  
Josh. Come on. We'll be late  
for the movie.

We WIDEN as Josh runs to his Mom's waiting car.

101 INT. ANNIE'S CAR - DAY

101

Josh climbs in and looks back out the window to see if he can see the jet. Annie studies him as they pull away.

ANNIE  
Your Uncle Jim wants to take you  
to the Padre game this weekend.

JOSH  
Cool.

ANNIE  
He's a doctor.

101 CONTINUED:

101

JOSH

I know.

ANNIE

Doctors are very important, Josh.  
They help people. People who are  
sick. They save lives. It's  
something to think about as you  
grow older and decide what you  
want to do with....

102 EXT. REAR OF ANNIE'S CAR - DAY

102

As her voice fades away, Josh's arm comes out of the window  
and FLIES!

FADE OUT:

THE END