

STAGGERWING

FULL TREATMENT

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Logline:

What's more important for the young, intelligent, and enchanting aviatrix Maggie Rockwell: To marry her Argentine sweetheart, or compete in the annual Bendix Trophy cross-country air race before pursuing a career as a pilot and an aeronautical engineer?

Place & Time:

Southern California. 1930s. The height of the Great Depression.

Principals:

Maggie Rockwell, 23: pilot, Hollywood stunt woman, college student

Fernando Martín, 25: pilot, polo player, college student

Luke Whitney, 41: pilot, flight instructor, businessman

Betty Anderson, 22: college student, waitress, Maggie's best friend

When the nominations come out, Maggie will be up for best actress, Fernando for best actor, Betty for best supporting actress, and Luke for best supporting actor.

The story has some additional supporting players but these four carry the bulk of the weight.

Maggie Rockwell's from Montana, where she grew up on a ranch with nothing but brothers and cowhands. She learned to ride a horse before she learned to walk, and she had her first airplane ride at age ten. A fourth-year aeronautical engineering student at the California School of Engineering, Maggie's wicked smart, quick-witted, adventurous, and when pushed can be as gnarly as an old grizzly. Even hint at the possibility that girls aren't the equal of boys and she'll rip your head off.

Fernando Martín is also a fourth-year student at the California School of Engineering. He is putting himself through school by caring for the university stables, training horses, and playing on the university polo team. He is handsome, quiet, and well-mannered. Fernando keeps to himself, but of course he and Maggie are destined to meet and fall in love. An air of mystery surrounds Fernando and not until deep in the story will his past be revealed.

Luke Whitney is Maggie's flight instructor, and together they perform various stunts for Hollywood movies. Luke is just about old enough to be Maggie's father but he deeply desires to have a romantic relationship with Miss Rockwell. But as that seems unlikely, Luke pursues a friendship with Maggie based on their mutual love of flying. Maggie's immediate goal after graduation is to compete in the Bendix cross-country air race, and Luke is determined to find her a plane.

Betty Anderson is Maggie's housemate, best friend, and alter ego. Since we cannot know exactly what Maggie is thinking, we have Betty to drag it out of her. Betty is everything Maggie isn't—

amusing, light-hearted, optimistic. Whereas Maggie tends to believe the Depression and all it represents will drag her hopes and dreams down forever, Betty just finds the economic downturn a bump in the road.

Concept Summary:

Staggerwing is a love story. With a few twists.

Sure, Maggie is going to fall in love with Fernando—that's predestined despite all the difficulties their affair will entail—but Miss Rockwell is already in love with so much else. Abbie, for instance, her small, speedy palomino that's as fast as a cheetah and as agile as a ballerina. Maggie deeply loves her pony and the time they spend together.

And Luke, sure, she loves him too. She may not love him as a lover but she loves him as a friend and mentor and father figure. He is an extraordinarily important figure in her young life.

And her education—Maggie loves learning. She's come all the way from Montana to California to earn her degree in aeronautical engineering because no college closer to home would accept female students into their program. And now, after four years breaking her butt, she's about to graduate with high honors, summa cum laude.

But maybe most of all Maggie loves flying. She loves airplanes and everything they represent: dreams, freedom, adventure. From the moment of her first flight as a young girl she'd found her destiny. She was born to fly. And not only fly but design airplanes and push the fledgling technology of aviation into the future.

But hey, when a boy and a girl meet and biology and chemistry do their thing, it's anybody's guess what might happen.

ACT I**Scene 1:**

All quiet and just after dawn under a clear blue desert sky. A Waco F-Series biplane, engine roaring, blasts into the scene. The plane loops and rolls in a series of spectacular stunts. In the open fore and aft cockpits sit Maggie Rockwell and her instructor, Luke Whitney.

Scene 2:

The biplane lands and taxis over to a large aluminum hangar. Across the top of the hangar a sign reads: WHITNEY AVIATION.

Maggie and Luke climb out of the cockpit onto the wing and jump to the ground. Maggie, 23, is lean and athletic. She pulls off her goggles and leather helmet, exposing green eyes and long, lush auburn hair.

Luke, 41, removes his goggles. "Maggie, I've been teaching stunt flying for a lot of years and never have I had a student pick it up so fast."

"It's not me, Luke. It's the instructor."

"We both know that's not true."

They discuss Maggie's desire to fly in the Bendix cross-country air race later that summer.

Scene 3:

A movie set in the California desert. Cameramen, soundmen, grips, assistant directors, producers mill about. The wind blows a gale. Dust flies everywhere. The German director Eric Von Steinman shouts, "Action!"

Movie cameras, covered in canvas to protect them from the harsh desert conditions, roll.

Sound grips steady their microphones.

Several seconds pass before Luke Whitney's biplane is first heard and then seen flying low over the desert, just ten or so feet off the ground. Then a rider on horseback is seen galloping and traveling in the same direction as the biplane. Fifty yards behind the lead rider, a group of half a dozen other riders makes chase.

The wind tosses the small plane about like a balloon on a turbulent sea. The tips of its wings nearly touch the ground. A rope ladder dangles from the fuselage. It twists and turns in the wind.

The rider, standing in the stirrups, reaches out and tries to grab the bottom rung of the ladder. But the wind blowing and the sand flying make the task next to impossible. Still, the rider tries as the cameras roll.

And then, an instant later, the rider's out of the saddle and off the horse and bouncing along the hard desert floor.

Scene 4:

Several people rush to the rider's assistance but quickly the rider, Maggie Rockwell, is up and dusting herself off. She might be bruised and a little battered but more than that she's hot. Steaming hot. Fire in her eyes and jaw set, she moves fast in the direction of the director, Von Steinman. But just before she reaches him and tears his head off, she pivots, and marches off into the desert.

The biplane lands not far away. Out of the cockpit and onto the wing comes pilot Luke Whitney. He's even hotter than Maggie, smoke practically billowing out of ears and nose. He hops off the wing and beelines for Von Steinman, his voice rising above the howling wind. "You stupid, arrogant SOB! We told you it was too damn windy! Too much sand blowing around. We told you to wait until the winds died! But would you listen? No. You insisted we go. And what did you do? You damn near got Maggie killed!"

Scene 5:

Maggie loads her palomino, Abbie, into a trailer hooked to her pickup at the edge of the movie set.

Luke Whitney ambles up. He and Maggie discuss what a fool Von Steinman is. Then Luke tells Maggie he had a call from aircraft manufacturer Walter Beech. He says Beech has a brand-new airplane and is thinking of entering it in the Bendix.

Maggie's ears perk up. "So why did they call you?"

"They wanted to know if I wanted to fly her."

"But you can't."

"That's right. I told them I broke my back in a crash last fall and an hour in the cockpit is about all I can stand. After that the pain just drains me. To have a shot at winning the Bendix you need ten-hour stints in the cockpit."

"Did you tell them I could do it?"

"I did, but they don't want a female pilot, kid."

Scene 6:

Maggie turns onto the campus of the California School of Engineering. She follows the road past classrooms and dormitories and laboratories, out around the gymnasium and the football stadium to an open field with a large barn and horse stables off to one end. Beyond the stables is another field

surrounded by low bleachers where the university plays its polo matches. A horse and rider charge up and down the polo field, stopping, pivoting, turning, moving backward, racing forward.

Maggie watches the horse and rider for several seconds before parking the truck and trailer alongside the stables. She steps out and takes a walk around. She goes into and out of the stables, in and out of the barn, but doesn't see a soul. "Hello?" she calls out. "Anybody here? Anybody around? I'm looking for someone named Fernando!"

No answer.

Maggie opens the trailer gate and unloads her stunt pony, Abbie. The pony has a noticeable limp. She favors her right front leg. Maggie speaks tenderly to the animal as she leads her to the side of the stable where there's a spigot with a hose attached. Beside the hose is a bucket and brushes. She begins giving Abbie a bath.

A horse and rider appear, the same horse and rider Maggie had seen out on the polo field.

"Hello," the rider calls.

Maggie turns, shields her eyes from the sun at the rider's back, gives a little wave.

"May I help you?" asks the rider.

"I don't know. Maybe. I'm looking for Fernando."

The rider removes his polo helmet, exposing a thick mane of dark brown, almost black hair. "I'm Fernando. How may I help you?"

Scene 7:

Luke Whitney makes a phone call at his desk in his office crowded with aviation paraphernalia. He calls Beech Aviation in Wichita, Kansas, and pitches Maggie to Walter Beech and Ted Wells, Beech's head designer. He tells them she's the best young pilot he's ever seen.

Scene 8:

Maggie stands in the stall with Abbie. She has Abbie's right front leg bent so she can inspect the hoof. She cleans out some compacted dirt and sand.

Fernando stands just outside the stall. "See anything?"

"A lot of gunk in there. I think it was just irritating her. She'll be fine."

"No bruising below the knee? I thought I saw a bit of swelling, and her gait looked more like fetlock or coronet rather than hoof."

They go on to discuss Abbie's injury. Both have strong opinions. Their relationship does not get off to a snazzy start.

Scene 9:

Maggie studies in a small spartan kitchen of the tiny house near the campus of the California School of Engineering. The kitchen door opens. In walks Betty Anderson, Maggie's roommate. Betty wears a white waitress's uniform. She sighs, kicks off her shoes, sits.

The two young ladies talk things over. Eventually Maggie mentions Fernando.

"I met someone today."

"Clark Gable? James Cagney? They say he's homely but I think he's divine. I love his smirk."

"You would."

"So who then? Someone rich and handsome, I hope."

"Definitely handsome. Definitely not rich."

"Avoid him like the plague."

"You're awful."

"Realistic."

"He works out at the university stable where I'm boarding Abbie while I work on the picture

about the bank robbers.”

“That’s just what you need, Mag. A stable boy.”

“I don’t need or want *any* boy. I’m just saying I met him and he was very nice and very good-looking. And he’s a senior, though for some reason I’ve never seen him before.”

“Works at the stables, huh?”

“Yes, knows a lot about horses. I forgot to ask him about his major.”

“Fernando Martin.”

“Fernando. Yes. You know him?”

“I know who he is. There’s some mystery around him.”

“Mystery?”

They go on to discuss Fernando in some detail, Maggie feigning disinterest.

Scene 10:

Maggie enters the stable as dawn breaks. She searches around for a light switch but then notices a spot of light coming from the far end of the stable. She walks down between the stalls until she reaches Abbie’s stall, where she finds Fernando unwrapping a compression bandage from around the pony’s right front leg. At first she’s annoyed, until she realizes Fernando’s treatment has relieved her pony’s limp.

They talk. Exchange histories. Maggie learns Fernando’s family is also in the ranching biz. A budding chemistry begins to brew.

Scene 11:

A first look at the Staggerwing, a biplane with its top wing slightly aft of its bottom wing to aid in stability and passenger comfort. Designed by Ted Wells and built by Beech Aviation of Wichita.

The plane sits on the tarmac under a clear blue sky just outside Beech Aviation’s large steel and glass hangar. Walter Beech and Ted Wells stand beside the plane. They discuss the Bendix Trophy race and who they might get to pilot the Staggerwing in the race. Various names come up, including an unknown pilot recommended by Luke Whitney.

“Luke really went out of his way to plead this pilot’s case,” says Ted. “Said in all his years flying and instructing he’s never seen anyone better.”

“Sounds promising,” says Walt. “When do we meet this guy?”

“That’s the thing. It’s not a guy.”

Walt frowns, rubs his chin. “Hmm. I don’t know. What did you tell him?”

“I told him I’d talk to you.”

“Are they permitting the ladies in the race this year?”

“They are.”

“Some first-class female pilots out there.”

“That’s a fact. And they soak up the publicity.”

“Earhart. Cochran. Markham. But I don’t know, Ted.”

“Luke tells me she’s a real looker. Best of the whole bunch.”

Walt nods, rubs his hand over the fuselage of the Staggerwing. “Can we trust her to a girl?”

“No harm in talking to her.”

“She out West with Whitney?”

“I believe so.”

“If she’s willing to come to Wichita, sure, okay, we’ll talk.”

Scene 12:

Maggie sits in a classroom with seven other students. She and Betty Anderson are the only females.

The professor paces back and forth in front of the classroom. He asks if anyone can explain in layman's terms how an airplane gets off the ground and what keeps it aloft.

Maggie's arm shoots up.

"Why," says the professor, "did I feel certain, Miss Rockwell, I'd see your hand first."

Maggie gives a succinct answer to the professor's question.

Scene 13:

Maggie parks her pickup outside the stable, steps out, and goes inside. She finds Abbie in her stall, dozing, happy. They have a nice reunion and then Maggie checks the right front leg. She finds no swelling so they head out for a short walk.

The university polo team practices on the polo field. Maggie leads Abbie over to the edge of the bleachers so she can watch the action. It's immediately clear one of the players is far superior to the others in both his skill with the mallet and his horsemanship. This player is Fernando.

Maggie and Abbie return to the stable. Maggie brushes, waters, and feeds her pony. But after putting Abbie back in her stall, she lingers. Checks to see if the polo practice has ended. Checks her watch. Returns to the stall. Visits with Abbie. Checks her watch again. Mills about.

Finally practice ends and the players walk their mounts back to the stable. They tether the ponies outside in the shade, remove their saddles and tack, and provide water. Maggie watches this from inside. The players depart and Fernando begins to bathe the ponies. Maggie steps outside.

"Hey," she says, casually, "I just came by to check on Abbie. She seems fine."

Fernando nods. "She's a quick healer."

"You think I could ride her hard day after tomorrow? We're shooting this action scene out in the desert first thing in the morning. Right after first light in the hope there'll be no wind."

Maggie and Fernando talk, casually. About horses. And movies. And stunt flying. They get to know one another. After hemming and hawing, Maggie finally gets around to asking Fernando if he'd like to join her on the movie set and watch the stunt scene she'll be performing with Abbie.

Fernando accepts.

Scene 14:

Maggie pulls into the parking lot of Whitney Aviation and Flight Instruction. There's a single shabby hangar large enough to accommodate half a dozen small aircraft. A wooden work bench occupies one wall. Engine parts, tires, struts, propellers, and other aircraft paraphernalia lie strewn about. A small office occupies the back corner. Luke sits at his desk paying bills and cursing under his breath.

Maggie knocks on the open door and enters. "You look grouchy. Trouble in paradise?"

He looks up, smiles, shakes his head. "You're late."

"Is that news?"

"When you're late I do paperwork, which means bill paying, which makes me grouchy."

"Hire someone to do it. Hire me to do it."

"I don't have the money to hire *me* to do it. I just send everyone a couple bucks and hope that appeases them until next month."

"I'll do it for free. Well, instead of paying for lessons."

"You haven't paid for a lesson in months. Maybe a year or more."

"Yeah, but I keep a tab. Once I'm gainfully employed I'll write you a big fat check."

Luke smiles and nods. "I'll look forward to that."

"Good. So let's go flying."

Scene 15:

Maggie in the front seat, Luke in the rear seat of Luke's Waco biplane. They fly north toward the

Sierra Nevada in search of clouds. They find some over the Sequoia National Forest, but nothing carrying rain or electricity. Maggie flies through towering cumulus clouds.

Scene 16:

Back over the airfield, and after performing some dips and rolls, Maggie lands and taxis over to the hangar. They climb out onto the wing and jump to the ground.

"That's the trouble with being a pilot in California," says Maggie.

"What?"

"There's never any bad weather."

"That's not true."

"Pretty true, Luke. How can I learn to handle adverse conditions if I don't get to practice?"

"Was that a question?"

"Not really."

"I didn't think so. And as for bad weather, the hard and fast rule is: fly around it."

Maggie shrugs, asks if Luke has heard anything from Beech Aviation. Luke says they didn't say no when he told them his pilot was a female. But they didn't say yes, either.

Maggie rants a bit, does her whole gig about girls being every bit as capable as boys.

Luke's phone rings. He goes to his office at the rear of the hangar to answer the call. He returns after a few seconds and tells Maggie the call's for her.

She looks mystified but goes off to answer it.

It's Ted Wells from Beech. He asks her if she'd like to come to Wichita and take a look at the Staggerwing.

She practically passes out with excitement.

After the call, Luke says, "Remember, Maggie, this is just a meet and greet. Get acquainted. No guarantees they'll offer you the Bendix."

"I'm not looking for guarantees, Mr. Whitney. I'm looking for opportunities!"

Scene 17:

It's still dark when Maggie pulls up to the stable, trailer in tow. She makes her way into the stable, sees a light burning at the far end. Fernando is already up and has fed, watered, and walked Abbie.

"That leg," he says, "looks as good as new."

Maggie smiles, tells Fernando she was up late studying and would he mind driving so she could grab a little nap.

Fernando says he's happy to drive and then adds, "In my country, women drive. But rarely does a woman drive if she is in the car with a man."

Maggie stares at him in disbelief and says, "A lot of baggage to unpack there, Mr. Martin. But I might need to unpack it later as I can barely keep my eyes open. Just one question."

"I'll do my best to answer, as you are of the opinion I don't enjoy personal questions."

"What crazy country are you from where women don't drive if there's a man in the car?"

"Argentina."

Scene 18:

The desert movie set. Director Von Steinman stands atop a platform, megaphone in hand. The sun is just about to pop over the eastern horizon. The air is still, not a wisp of wind. The large movie crew—cameramen, soundmen, grips, assistant directors—prepare to shoot the scene.

"Let's roll this, people!" shouts Von Steinman. "We'll never get better conditions!"

An assistant director standing beside Von Steinman raises a white flag into the air and brings it down sharply. Cameras roll.

Fernando stands off to the side, out of the shot, looking interested but anxious.

Across the flat desert, a couple hundred yards distant, a lone rider on horseback appears.

Moments later a larger group of riders chasing the lone rider comes into view.

And then, flying barely ten feet above the desert floor, a biplane roars over the heads of the of the charging group on horseback.

A rope ladder dangles from the cockpit of the plane. The plane slows slightly and keeps pace with the lone rider.

An instant later, the rider, a female with long hair blowing beneath a black cowboy hat, stands in the stirrups, reaches high overhead, and grabs the bottom rung of the rope ladder. She scurries up the ladder just as her horse gallops past the platform where Von Steinman and his assistants watch the action.

Scene 19:

The desert movie set. The crew mills about, excited by the success of the action shot.

Fernando stands off to the side looking relieved.

The biplane lands nearby. Luke and Maggie climb out of the cockpit onto the wing and drop to the ground. Crew members surround them and offer their congratulations.

As the crowd disperses, Fernando steps forward. "That, Miss Rockwell, was absolutely terrifying. I was sure it would be the end of you."

Maggie smiles. "Not as terrifying as it looked. Luke and I practiced a whole bunch of times to make sure it was actually possible."

Luke steps forward, reaches out his hand. "Luke Whitney."

Fernando takes the hand, briefly reacts to the aggressive grip. "Fernando Martin."

"You with the movie, Fernando?"

"No, just a friend of Maggie's."

Luke glances at Maggie. "A friend, huh?"

Fernando nods. "Are you Mr. Rockwell?"

"Okay, okay," says Maggie, "that's enough."

The two men eye one another.

Finally Fernando says, "That's a beautiful biplane. A Waco, I believe. Looks like she's set up to do stunts."

"If you two bulls will excuse me, I'm going to find my pony, make sure she's okay." Maggie hands Luke her goggles and leather flight helmet and heads off.

The boys watch her go.

Luke says, "You know something about flying?"

"A thing or two."

"Care to go up?"

"A short flight over the desert might be fun."

Luke hands Fernando the goggles and helmet. "Let's take a spin."

They climb into the cockpit, Luke up front, Fernando in back. They taxi and take off.

Scene 20:

Aerial shots of Luke and Fernando flying over the desert, the biplane performing a variety of rolls, dips, twists, and turns.

On the ground below, the crew, necks craning, watch the action.

"Looks like Luke," Maggie says to no one in particular, "is doing his best to make Fernando throw up and maybe pass out. Poor thing."

The plane lands. Maggie crosses to where the plane comes to a stop. Fernando is out of the

cockpit first, onto the wing, and down on the ground with a great leap. Luke comes out a bit slower, jumps off the wing, and lands with a grunt.

“Now that,” says Fernando, “was great fun. Thanks, Luke. That’s a heck of a stunt plane.”

Maggie gives Fernando the once-over, then says to Luke, “Those were some pretty wild rolls up there, Mr. Whitney. Were you trying to make my friend lose his breakfast?”

“Maggie,” says Luke, “for your information, that was Mr. Martin on the stick through most of those maneuvers, not yours truly.”

Maggie looks shocked.

Scene 21:

Maggie drives. Fernando rides shotgun. They head across the desert.

“Just a whole lot of mystery here, Mr. Martin. I hardly know where to begin. You ride and play polo at some kind of crazy level but on the university team. Out of the blue you tell me you’re from Argentina where women don’t drive if men are in the car. And now the topper of toppers, I find out you’re an aviator.”

“I’m hardly an aviator. I just fly a bit.”

“You impressed Luke Whitney. One of the most experienced pilots in the whole country.”

“I just did a couple simple tricks is all. The plane does all the work.”

“Whatever you say.”

“That bit of horsemanship and then dismounting onto that rope swinging wildly in the wind definitely impressed me. I hope you get paid well to put yourself at risk like that.”

“So again with the redirect. I think you’re practiced at the art, Mr. Martin.”

“Hardly practiced.”

“Then you won’t mind telling me where you learned to fly.”

“Argentines volunteer a year or two of military service. I served in the Escuela de Aviación. And there I learned to fly.”

“What about the stunts? The dives and rolls?”

“What about them?”

“Where did you learn those?”

“In this country, barnstormers perform tricks for money and entertainment, but it is all part of combat readiness training. In a dogfight you better know how to roll your plane to avoid enemy combatants or you’re a sitting duck.”

Maggie glances at Fernando. “Hmm.”

Scene 22:

Back at the stable, Maggie bathes Abbie. She brushes the pony, leads her back to her stall, and gives her food and water.

Maggie exits the stall and takes a walk around the stable. She glances into several stalls, but not finding what she’s looking for, she crosses to the barn, enters, and looks around. At the back, beyond additional stalls and the tack room, she sees an open door and peers inside.

Fernando sits at a wooden desk, his concentration on a thick textbook. In addition to the simple desk there is a wooden dresser and a narrow bed not much larger than an army cot. Some pants and shirts hang on pegs on the wall. The other walls are bare. A family photograph occupies the top of the dresser.

Maggie takes it all in, then knocks softly.

Maggie and Fernando chat. A bit awkwardly. Something exists between them but neither wants to admit it or talk about it.

Finally Maggie asks if he’d like to get something to eat later. Not a date but just something to

eat. Fernando hems and haws and finally says yes.

Scene 23:

Maggie sits at her kitchen table scribbling furiously. She stops to scan the pages of her textbook. There's a knock on the kitchen door. Maggie stands, crosses the kitchen, opens the door. Luke fills the doorway. He tells her they're going to Wichita. By plane. On a TWA DC-2.

Scene 24:

Maggie and Fernando sit across from one another in a faux red-leather booth in a small chrome-and-glass diner. It's late, after nine o'clock. The other booths are empty. One gentleman sipping coffee and reading the paper sits at the long counter on a chrome swivel stool with a faux red-leather cover.

Maggie says, "It's kind of nice being out late, you know, on a date that's not a date."

They chat, offer a bit more of their personal histories. Their relationship deepens.

Betty brings their food. She embarrasses Maggie by telling Fernando this is the first date Maggie's been on since arriving at the university nearly four years earlier.

Scene 25:

The old Chevy pickup pulls up to the barn, Fernando driving, Maggie, half asleep, riding shotgun. He shuts down the engine. Maggie stirs.

"You know," says Fernando, "I could drive you home and get a taxi."

"Don't be ridiculous," Maggie says sleepily.

"Okay, then I could drive you home, drive the truck back here, and be back at your place first thing in the morning."

"Just stop. That's the boy who grew up in a country where girls don't drive talking. Here girls drive... and ride horses... and fly airplanes... and study engineering."

"You're half asleep, Miss Rockwell."

"That's Maggie to you, Mister."

"You're half asleep, Maggie. And maybe dreaming."

"I'm wide awake. Sure, okay, I've been up since, what, 3:30, but I'm wide awake now, not dreaming, and one hundred percent in my right mind."

"Are you sure?"

"Let me show you."

Maggie opens the creaky passenger door, slides out, and walks around the front of the truck to the driver's door. She pulls the door open.

"Come on, Mr. Martin, professional polo player and military combat pilot, step out of the truck please."

Fernando steps out of the truck.

They stand close, face to face.

"Well?" asks Maggie.

"Well what?"

"Well are you going to kiss me or just stand there?"

They embrace. And kiss.

ACT II

Scene 26:

Maggie and Luke sit side by side on a DC-2. A dozen other passengers sit fore and aft. A stewardess

serves sodas and snacks. The cabin is a bit noisy but very luxurious.

"This is perfectly insane," says Maggie. "I honestly can't believe we're flying commercially to Kansas. I didn't know such a thing was possible."

"Douglas Aircraft Company just started this service to the Midwest a few weeks ago. And already they've announced the DC-2's successor, the DC-3, that'll be bigger, faster, more powerful, and carry twice as many passengers."

"It's crazy how fast the aviation industry is moving."

Luke nods. "You got that right. Think about it. It's just three short decades ago Orville made that first twelve-second flight."

The plane flies on.

Scene 27:

The DC-2 lands at Wichita Municipal Airport early in the morning. Maggie and Luke, looking a little sleepy and discombobulated, disembark and cross the tarmac to the terminal. They each carry small leather satchels. At a lunch counter inside they order coffee, eggs, and toast.

Luke says, "I can't say I got much sleep."

"Oh I did some sleeping," says Maggie, "but more waking since it felt like we were landing and taking off every five minutes."

Luke smiles. "I'm sure Douglas is still working on its schedules. Flying overnight with stops along the way doesn't seem ideal."

"At least we made it in record time. Would've taken two days by train. And forever by car."

Scene 28:

Beech Aviation. Luke Whitney, Ted Wells, and Walter Beech stand on the tarmac outside the large Beech Aviation hangar. It's midmorning under a clear blue midwestern sky. High above, a cherry-red biplane climbs, circles, descends, and climbs again.

"I have to be honest with you, Luke," says Ted Wells, "Walt and I agreed to this meeting out of our mutual respect for you. We can see this gal can fly, and it's clear as day she's a looker with a sparkly personality that would be an asset in any publicity."

"But?"

"But, well, you know, we have a lot riding on the Bendix race. Maybe even the survival of Beech Aviation."

Luke nods. The trio discuss if Maggie has the right stuff. Walt and Ted seem dubious.

Scene 29:

Beech Aviation. Maggie lands the Staggerwing flawlessly and taxis over to where the three men stand. She opens the cockpit door and easy as can be slides out onto the lower wing and jumps to the ground.

"Now that, gentlemen, is some airplane! Fast. Agile. Responsive. She performed that barrel roll all by herself. Didn't even ask me. And the cockpit! I could live in there. So spacious and all the glass for visibility. I don't know who's responsible, but I'd have to call whoever designed that cockpit an aeronautical genius. Give me enough petrol and I'll fly that sucker New York to LA nonstop with second place still back trying to clear the Rockies."

Luke smiles and quietly shakes his head. Walt and Ted exchange glances.

Scene 30:

Maggie and Luke in a Wichita taxi.

"Kudos for being yourself, Maggie," says Luke, "but you might've poured on a little too

much gasoline.”

“You can never have enough gasoline, Mr. Whitney.”

“I don’t know. A couple pretty conservative midwest businessmen, those two.”

They discuss whether Maggie has a shot at piloting the Staggerwing in the Bendix race. Luke tells Maggie not to get her hopes up.

Scene 31:

Maggie pulls into the stable area in her pickup. She climbs out, looks around, sees there is a polo match being played on the polo field. Lots of expensive automobiles in the parking lot and a large well-dressed crowd watching the match.

Maggie slips in a side gate and watches the match. Fernando is clearly the best player.

Scene 32:

The polo match over, Maggie grooms Abbie outside her stall.

Fernando enters. “You’re back.”

Maggie nods. “Yes.”

“How did it go?”

Maggie shrugs. “I’m going to stay positive, but the truth is they don’t want a girl. It was plain as day. All but said out loud.”

Fernando swings down off his pony, takes Maggie’s hand. “I’m sorry to hear that. Obviously shortsighted of them.”

Maggie shrugs. “We’ll see. Maybe I’m wrong. Or maybe I’m just a dreamer. Maybe I’ll never fly in the Bendix race.”

Fernando does his best to reassure her.

Maggie changes the subject, tells Fernando he was by far the best player on the field.

“Hardly,” he says.

And they begin their deepest conversation yet about the past and the future.

Fernando tells Maggie he was sent to New York from Argentina to attend college. It did not go well. He drank and gambled and finally flunked out. His father disowned him. For over a year he wandered around the States. Finally wound up here at the university where he had paid his own expenses and is now ready to graduate. He tells her he has had very little communication with his family over the past few years, but he’s hopeful his parents will attend the graduation.

Maggie takes all this in but can hardly believe Fernando is describing the same responsible, mellow person she knows today.

And then it’s her turn. She tells Fernando, “I’ve been plotting my future ever since I was a little girl and this barnstormer landed his little plane on the road in front of our ranch up near Bozeman and for one dollar he gave me my very first airplane ride. Before we even landed I’d decided to be a pilot, fly around the world, set records, do stunts, and then, once I had that out of my system, I’d go to work for some company that made airplanes and I’d design the coolest, fastest, best-looking planes to ever leave the earth behind.”

“That’s something, Maggie. That’s really something.”

“This summer I’m going to fly in the Bendix, Fernando. I might not win but I’m going to compete. And a year from now I hope to be sitting at a drafting table in Seattle working for Boeing or in Burbank for Lockheed or Long Beach for Douglas. Of course, with the Depression killing hopes and dreams at a furious rate, all that might have to wait. And then there’s the matter of this young man I’ve met. I’ve been ignoring young men like the plague ever since I arrived here almost four years ago. Eyes on the prize every second of every day. No room for any extracurricular affairs or activities. Aeronautical engineering is not for the lazy. But then, just when I thought I’d made it,

cleared the last hurdle, who shows up and diagnoses my pony's leg injury?"

"What," Fernando asks, "are we going to do?"

"Right now," answers Maggie, "you're going to kiss me, hard, as I've been thinking about a kiss ever since I took off for Kansas. And after that, well, we'll worry about the future a little bit later."

Their second kiss is even more robust than their first.

Scene 33:

Maggie studies at the kitchen table. Betty enters.

They discuss the trip to Wichita, the Bendix race, and, of course, Fernando.

After some prodding, Maggie admits to having some deep feelings for Fernando, but then she quickly reiterates that no way is she giving up her dreams to follow some guy to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

"Go ahead," says Betty, "try to deny your heart. You won't win."

"I'm gonna win that Bendix race and then I'm gonna win this coveted spot at Lockheed. My interview's tomorrow morning. Ten o'clock sharp. Wanna come?"

"Can't. Too much work. But you know I wish you luck."

"I'll need it."

Scene 34:

Maggie pulls into the parking lot of Lockheed Aviation in Burbank. After a long walk and a longer wait in an outer office she's ushered into a conference room with a long table. Dan Dolan, a middle-aged gentleman in a fancy suit and slick-backed hair, sits at the far end of the table. He motions for Maggie to sit. Maggie sits.

The gentleman opens a folder and rifles through some pages. "Bachelor of Science from CSE in aeronautical engineering. Impressive."

"Well, almost. Graduation's coming up. But I'm graduating summa cum laude."

The gentleman nods. "Very good. You must be a hard worker."

"Super hard worker. And super smart. And I'm a pilot."

He looks up. "You fly?"

"Yes, sir. Stunt pilot. I just completed a picture with MGM. Eric Von Steinman directed, starring Irene Dunne and Leslie Howard."

The conversation goes on from there. Dolan becomes increasingly condescending. Tells Maggie he might have something on the assembly line.

Maggie can hardly believe her ears but asks how much.

"With that degree," says Dolan, "you might start as high as seventy cents an hour."

"Seventy cents?"

"We have Negroes and uneducated women on the line making half that. It's the Depression, Miss . . . Rockwell. People line up every morning looking for work. Practically begging for it."

Scene 35:

Back in Fernando's room in the barn. Fernando sits at his desk.

Maggie paces. She looks furious.

"I just . . . I swear I just wanted to strangle him. So smug and condescending. When he said that typically new female employees start out on the line I almost punched him in the nose."

Fernando laughs. "Probably best you didn't."

"Why? I'm not going to get the job."

"You never know."

“Oh but I do know. It’s just like Walter Beech and Ted Wells. They humored me, let me fly their plane, but they’re not going to hire a girl. And you can bet your last dollar the old boys’ club at Lockheed isn’t going to let a girl into their lair either.”

“Because you have to work so much harder, success will be all the sweeter.”

Maggie sighs. They embrace.

Fernando says they’re going for a long ride in the hills, then when they get back he’s grilling up some big juicy hamburgers and they’re going to laugh and dance and forget all this other nonsense.

Scene 36:

A montage of Maggie and Fernando riding in the hills north of campus, sitting outside the barn at a picnic table eating hamburgers, talking and laughing, music playing on an old Victrola while Fernando teaches Maggie to tango, and they dance closer and closer, the evening ending with a strong embrace and a long, lavish kiss.

And then it’s morning, the sun just rising over the eastern horizon, casting a long shadow over Maggie’s pickup.

Scene 37:

Morning sunlight streams in the kitchen window. Betty sits at the kitchen table and pours over her textbooks. She glances at the clock on the wall: 8:47.

Moments later, Maggie enters through the kitchen door. She makes very brief eye contact with Betty then crosses to the kitchen sink where she first gets a glass of water and then begins to wash her hands. Several seconds pass.

“That’s an awful long hand wash,” says Betty.

Maggie says nothing.

“They must be really dirty.”

Still Maggie says nothing.

“Four years we’ve been roomies. Never once have you not come home.”

“Sorry, I fell asleep.”

“You fell asleep? Did you think I might be worried?”

It turns out Betty was not worried because Fernando had called her late the night before to say that Maggie, exhausted, had fallen asleep on his couch and he didn’t have the heart to wake her.

Once it’s established that Fernando is obviously a stand-up guy, Maggie admits she’s fallen in love and doesn’t know what she’s going to do about it. Betty of course tells her she needs to follow her heart, as it’s not like love is something that knocks on your door every day.

Scene 38:

Later that afternoon, Maggie, showered and in clean clothes, sits out on the front porch studying a textbook. She reads, underlines, makes notes. Very focused.

A pickup pulls up along the road out front. Luke Whitney reaches a hand out the driver’s window and gives a wave. Maggie waves back.

It’s unusual for Luke to show up at Maggie’s house but here he is. And, unfortunately, he’s the bearer of bad news.

Jimmie Baker has become available, and Walter Beech has hired him to pilot the Staggerwing in the Bendix Trophy race.

Maggie, at first angry and then in tears, retreats to the kitchen when the phone rings.

Scene 39:

Things quickly go from bad to worse. It's Lockheed on the phone, and they are in fact prepared to offer Maggie a job. A part-time job on the assembly line, twenty hours a week, for the princely sum of forty-three cents an hour.

Maggie, in shock, hangs up and again begins to cry.

Luke comforts her. Maggie begins to whine. Really plays the pity card. The world's against her. No one's going to give her a chance. She wishes she'd been born male.

Luke listens for a while but then has heard enough. He tells her to knock it off. "Quit feeling sorry for yourself." He tells her she's been knocked down but it's her choice to either stay down or get up.

She doesn't want to hear it. They argue. Luke heads for his trucks. Reminds her she has a flying lesson at four o'clock and she better not be late.

Scene 40:

Maggie and Luke aloft in Luke's biplane. Maggie up front. She puts the plane through a series of rolls and dips. They fly through some big, lovely clouds. Maggie is all smiles.

The plane descends, pulls level, and does a double barrel roll before they land. Maggie climbs out onto the wing and jumps to the ground.

"Whew!" says Luke. "That was some wild flying. All that angst from earlier busting loose."

Maggie smiles. "You want to hear something really pitiful?"

"Sure."

"That was the second time in less than twenty-four hours."

"Second time for what?"

"Second time I bawled my brains out. Second time I cried like a spoiled baby who didn't get what she wants."

Luke chuckles. "Hey, listen, kid, we all have our moments."

"That's right, old man, we all have our moments."

Luke smiles. "So when was the first time?"

"Last night. With Fernando. I cried those crocodile tears 'cause I knew darn well Beech was never going to hire me to fly his stupid airplane."

Luke frowns. "Fernando, huh? Hmm."

Maggie laughs. "Oh my, what's this? A tad jealous, Mr. Whitney? Maybe a little possessive?"

Luke mutters something under his breath.

Maggie takes his arm and together they walk across the tarmac.

Scene 41:

Sunset at the stables. Maggie pulls up in her truck, finds Fernando grooming Abbie.

They embrace and kiss, an obvious chemistry between them.

They chat about school, graduation, what a nice time they had the night before, the Bendix race. Maggie tells Fernando that Beech Aviation did not offer her the seat in their new Staggerwing airplane.

"I know you've had your heart set on flying in this cross-country race," Fernando says.

He then goes on to tell her he had never heard of the Bendix race till she mentioned it, but now he's had a chance to read up on it.

They discuss the race and how the airplanes have evolved since the race started several years earlier. Maggie tells him how each year only a handful of planes compete because of the cost and the planning required and the lack of experienced pilots.

Fernando listens, and then, out of the blue says, "I might be able to help."

"What are you talking about?"

"I've just been thinking."

Maggie stares at him. "Yeah, but what do you mean? Help how?"

"I might be able to put together a team. No guarantees of course but—"

"Wait. I'm confused. I know you can pilot an airplane but how could you possibly..."

"Before I make any inquiries or set anything in motion, I first want to make sure I do so with your knowledge and permission."

"Fernando, I'm serious, what it takes, to compete for the Bendix Trophy, I mean, well, you're getting through school . . ."

"Shoveling horse manure."

"And taking care of the stables and coaching polo. Which in my book is all one hundred percent noble and laudable, unlike the rich kids who go to a couple classes every day and spend the rest of their time sashaying around campus, going to parties, and waiting to go to work in Daddy's business. But," and here Maggie smiles, "it does put kind of a damper on the idea of you sponsoring me in the Bendix."

"My family, Maggie, it's, well . . . we have varied interests."

"Interests?"

"We own land. That was the start of it a few generations back. Land on the pampas. Cattle farms mostly. That's where I learned to ride. But also, more recently, crops, especially wheat, corn, and soybeans."

Maggie just sits and stares.

"My grandfather," continues Fernando, "moved the family into transportation to save the money being spent getting his cattle and crops to market. He started with trains, then, when the government started building roads, trucks. And my father, he's moved the family into ships, bulk carriers to haul products out of the ports in Buenos Aires, La Plata, and Bahia Blanca."

"This is crazy, Fernando. You're talking crazy. You're a stablehand. You live here in the barn. What is all this talk?"

Fernando smiles. "As I mentioned, in New York, a few years ago, I did not live up to my father's expectations. I let him down. I let the family down. But I found a way to redeem myself. In my own eyes and hopefully in his eyes. He knows I will soon graduate. With high honors. I hope he will attend the graduation. And if he does, Maggie, he will very likely fly here from Buenos Aires in one of the company airplanes. We now have a small fleet, as Argentina is a large country traversed far more quickly by air. I am hopeful one of these planes, perhaps our Curtiss-Wright or our B-2 Brown could—"

"Fernando! Please! Stop! My head is spinning. This is too much for me to take in. I don't know what you're saying. I don't know who you are or why you're suddenly telling me all this."

"I just want to help, Maggie. I just—"

"No! Stop! I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know what's true."

And with that Maggie stands and moves quickly toward her truck.

"Maggie! Wait! I'm sorry. That was too much information too fast."

She's already reached her truck by the time Fernando starts after her. "Maggie!"

She climbs in behind the wheel and starts the engine. Out the open window she says, "Not now, Fernando. Not now. I have too much... on my mind. I don't know... I just know not now."

And she floors the accelerator and spins away through the dust and dirt just as Fernando reaches the truck.

Scene 42:

Maggie and Betty sit at their kitchen table. Betty's books and notes are spread across the table. They have obviously been discussing the details of the scene out at the stables.

Betty says, "Okay, Maggie, that was quite a mouthful, but if I had to sum up in a sentence or two: You tell Fernando about the jerks in Kansas and the jerks in Burbank, and he tells you he's rich and might be able to get you an airplane for the big race, and you freak out, scream at him, and drive away. Is that about the gist of it?"

"That's . . . that's an absurd oversimplification."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

Betty tips her head and eagle-eyes Maggie. "How so?"

"It's just . . . way more complicated than that."

Betty doesn't buy it. She thinks Maggie totally overreacted.

The phone rings. Maggie looks at it but doesn't move to answer. It rings a few more time.

Betty finally rolls her eyes and answers. "Hello? Oh hi, Fernando."

Maggie waves wildly, mouths the words, "I'm not here!"

Betty rolls her eyes, shakes her head. "No, Fernando, she's not home. Probably at the library. You know, finals and all . . . Yes, of course, I'll tell her . . . Bye bye."

Betty hangs up, heads for the bedroom, stops and mouths the word, "Coward!"

Scene 43:

The next morning in the blue skies over Whitney Aviation, Maggie and Luke practice ascents and descents, stalls and restarts. After a bit they come in for a landing and pull up next to the hangar. They exit the plane and cross the tarmac.

As nonchalantly as she can possibly muster, Maggie says, "Someone asked me yesterday if Fernando was a member of some well-to-do Martin family from Argentina. Of course I didn't have a clue about any well-to-do family in Argentina named Martin, but I told them I didn't think so. I mean, he lives out at the stables and takes care of the horses."

Luke shrugs. "You got me. Maybe ask Fernando."

"That would be awkward. What am I going to say? Are you part of the Martin family that's loaded?"

"Sounds like a plan to me."

"Oh forget it."

Luke laughs. "Let me make a couple calls. I'll let you know what I find out."

Scene 44:

A montage of scenes wherein Maggie studies at the kitchen table (the phone rings; she doesn't answer). She works on a paper in the library. She takes tests in a couple different classrooms. And then back in the kitchen again studying at the table (the phone rings; she doesn't answer).

Betty enters, hears the phone blaring, looks at Maggie, rolls her eyes, and answers, "Hello? Hi Fernando . . . No, sorry. Not here . . . Oh, you know, busy busy. School winding down. Everything happening at once . . . Yes, I told her . . . Absolutely, yes, I'll tell her again . . . No problem. Bye."

Betty hangs up the phone, stares at her roommate. "Have you lost your marbles, girl?"

Scene 45:

Late that afternoon Fernando shows up at the house. He arrives in a taxi, comes up the front walk, and knocks on the door.

Maggie, in the kitchen studying, stands and crosses to the door that leads to the living room. She can't see who's at the front door but through the window she sees the taxi.

Another knock on the door.

Maggie doesn't move.

"Maggie, are you in there? Maggie? Come on, Maggie, I know you're in there. Your truck's in the driveway plus I ran into Betty on campus. She told me you were home. I just want to apologize. I didn't mean to upset you. I just wanted to offer my assistance."

Maggie looks like she might start to cry but still she doesn't move.

"I'm just a stable boy, Maggie. That's where I'm happiest. Especially when you're there with me. That's about the happiest I've ever been in my whole life."

Tears well up and slide down Maggie's face.

"I'm going to go now, Maggie. I don't want to upset you and I know you have work to do. But rest assured, I'll be back."

Maggie waits, listens, steps into the living room. She watches as Fernando climbs into the taxi and the taxi drives away.

Scene 46:

Dusky outside the house now. Inside Maggie lies on the sofa, eyes closed, a heavy textbook across her chest.

A firm knock hits the front door. Several knocks.

Maggie wakes with a start. The textbook hits the floor with a thud. She glances out the window, sees Luke's pickup at the end of the driveway.

He again bears news. Two offerings this time.

The first piece of news concerns Fernando. Luke has learned his surname is actually Martín, not Martin, and his family is among the wealthiest in Argentina.

This news of course throws Maggie for a loop. They discuss the details.

Luke says, "Probably we should've guessed something like this. I mean, the telltale signs were there. It didn't really add up. You know, him being a stable boy when he was a world-class polo player who could also fly airplanes."

Maggie shrugs. It's all too much too fast. She sighs and says, "You said you had two pieces of news."

"You're right, I did."

"So?"

"So Walter Beech changed his mind."

"Changed his mind?"

"He wants you to fly the Staggerwing."

"What?"

"Yup, you heard right. The man came to his senses. Of course, it didn't hurt that Jimmy Baker crashed in a pylon race and broke his leg, but any way you shake it, kid, you're going to pilot the Staggerwing in the Bendix Trophy race."

Scene 47:

Early morning, just after dawn. Maggie parks her pickup beside the stables and climbs out. She finds Fernando just exiting the barn, halter in hand.

"Hey," she says.

A smile breaks across his face. "Hey."

"Sorry," she says. "I'm a fool. Always have been and probably always will be."

"You don't need to be sorry."

"I know all about Estancias de la Familia Martín."

Fernando looks momentarily startled, then, after a moment, "Okay."

"Look, Fernando, I'm mule-headed and not very good at friendship let alone, you know, the

whole boy/girl thing. I guess I always think people have ulterior motives.”

Fernando shrugs. “Often they do. And I suppose that includes me. You see, Miss Rockwell, I love you, and of course I’d like that love reciprocated, but I didn’t want my family or the family business or . . . or any of it to have anything to do with how you felt about me.”

Maggie steps forward, takes Fernando’s hands, looks him in the eye, holds his gaze. “I fell in love with the stable boy and I’m still in love with the stable boy. When you suddenly turned into this person offering to get me an airplane, well . . . I sort of . . . flipped out.”

Their love declared, Maggie and Fernando go on to discuss the future and how they both hope they face it together. Neither wants to consider a future apart.

But when they again embrace, each of them looking into the distance, their faces look consumed with uncertainty and dread.

Scene 48:

Maggie enters the kitchen through the back door. The phone rings. Betty steps out of the bedroom, waves to Maggie, and answers. “Hello? Yes, she is. Hold on one second.”

Betty covers the mouthpiece and turns to Maggie. “How did the final go?”

Maggie beams. “Easy. I think I aced it.”

“Congrats! To both of us! We made it. Nothing left but graduation.”

“It’s been quite a ride.”

“We’ll celebrate later. I need to get ready for work.” Betty hands the receiver to Maggie and goes back into the bedroom.

“Hello? Yes, this is Maggie Rockwell . . . Yes . . . No . . . Seriously . . . Well it’s just that . . . that’s not very good news . . . I will, yes . . . Thanks. That’s okay . . . Goodbye.”

Maggie hangs up the receiver. “Dammit!”

Betty from the bedroom, “Trouble?”

“Not really I guess, as I didn’t want the stupid job anyway, but still, a degree with honors from CSE and I can’t even get a job on an assembly line.”

Betty comes out wearing her waitress uniform. “Lockheed?”

Maggie nods. “Just about no new orders coming in so they just announced a hiring freeze.”

“Terrible luck graduating now in the middle of all this mess. I almost wish we had another year of school.”

“Might be a while before things get better.”

“Supposed to get worse first.”

“Swell.”

“Hey, look on the bright side. At least you’ve got a rich boyfriend.”

“I don’t want a rich boyfriend.”

“Silly Maggie.” Betty heads for the door, pulls it open. “Gotta go or I’ll be late.”

“Fernando and I are going to stop by later for something to eat.”

“Super. See you then.” And she exits.

Scene 49:

Late afternoon. Whitney Aviation. Maggie pulls up to the hangar in her pickup, climbs out. She sees Luke’s plane but no sign of Luke. She finds him in his office, on the phone.

He covers the mouthpiece and mouths to Maggie, “Ted Wells.”

Maggie steps close.

Luke listens, replies, “Hmm, yeah, I hear you . . . No, I wouldn’t be comfortable with that situation either . . .”

Maggie pantomimes.

Luke shrugs, says, "Sure, I see the problem . . . Rudder. Flaps. Engine vibration. A combo of several things . . . Right . . . Odd though that it popped up after so many successful trial flights . . ."

Maggie gesticulates wildly. Her face goes through several contortions.

Luke says, "Thanks for letting us know . . . I'll definitely tell her . . . Okay, Ted. So long."

And he hangs up.

Maggie says, "You gotta be kidding me?"

Luke shrugs. "Stability problems. Haven't been able to figure it out. Plane's all over the sky."

"Yeah, okay, but they will, right? Figure it out?"

"Working on it night and day, kid."

"They'll figure it out. They have to figure it out."

Luke returns to the sofa, sits with a grunt. "Yup, I'm sure they will. Ted's a smart guy. But for now, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Beech has pulled the Staggerwing from the Bendix."

Scene 50:

At the diner near the end of the dinner hour. A few of the booths and half the stools are occupied.

Betty serves customers.

Maggie and Fernando enter, in a bit of a rush.

"Don't worry," says Fernando, "we have plenty of time. It's not a big deal."

"I'm just saying," says Maggie, "you don't have to eat with me. I'm perfectly capable of eating by myself."

Fernando starts to reply but Betty calls out, "Table for two? Right this way, kids." She grabs two menus and leads them to a booth along the far wall. She drops the menus on the table. "Kind of late. Was starting to think you'd dined elsewhere."

Maggie shrugs, sits. "Got a little hung up is all."

"I'm just going to order a cab now," says Fernando, "so I don't have to wait once we're done eating. Hi, Betty. How are you? Would you mind if we order? What do you think, Maggie? Are you good with hamburgers, fries, and milkshakes?"

Maggie shrugs.

"Good," says Fernando. "Thanks, Betty. Vanilla shake for me please." He turns and moves to the phone booth back near the restrooms.

"I sense a little tension," says Betty.

"Not even a smidgen," says Maggie.

"Just another day in paradise then."

Maggie smiles. "All good. Just lost my airplane again. Mechanical problems. And Fernando's parents are arriving for graduation. He just found out. They're due at the hotel in a little while."

"He seems kind of jazzed up."

"He hasn't seen either of them for over three years."

"Three years. Wow. No wonder he's jazzed."

The kitchen bell rings, alerting Betty an order is ready. "I'll be back. And I'll tell Al to get your order out asap."

Maggie nods.

Fernando returns, sits. He's keyed up. "Talking to my father on the phone earlier," he says, "I didn't know what to expect. I was plenty nervous. It's been so long that we've been estranged. And barely a letter for over three years. Sure, I've communicated with my mother, so I knew how he was and how the family was, but still, I don't know, it was very emotional."

Maggie squeezes his hand. "You must be very happy he's come."

The food arrives and they continue to discuss Fernando's family situation.

Fernando indicates he will definitely be going back to Argentina after graduation. He barely hears when Maggie says she may visit but she does not intend to live there.

And he's condescending when she tells him about the Lockheed job. And dismissive when she tells him she again lost the Staggerwing. "Let me talk to my father," he says. "See about maybe getting you outfitted with a proper airplane."

Maggie just sits there.

Fernando finishes his meal, stands, and reaches into his pocket. "I need to go but you take your time." He tosses a twenty-dollar bill casually onto the table. "I'll talk to you tomorrow. Love you." He exits.

Maggie stares wide-eyed at the twenty-dollar bill, then she shifts her gaze out the window as Fernando slips into the back of the taxi and closes the door. She looks forlorn, almost teary-eyed.

Betty returns. "And off he goes."

"He wants to marry me," says Maggie. "Wants to whisk me off to Buenos Aires."

"Lucky you," says Betty.

"Yeah," says Maggie, "lucky me."

ACT III

Scene 51:

The graduation ceremony inside the university's small football stadium. Several hundred graduates sit in folding chairs. Friends and family occupy the bleachers under a clear blue late-afternoon sky.

The university president is in the middle of announcing graduates who earned high honors.

Both Fernando and Maggie graduate summa cum laude.

Scene 52:

Graduation over, the graduates mingle with their families in celebration.

Fernando stands off to the side with his parents, Miguel and Anna Martín. They speak quietly. Miguel has his hand on Fernando's shoulder. They stand close. Miguel, a very serious fellow, lectures. Fernando listens, nods. Anna, expressionless, does not participate.

Across the way, Betty meets Maggie's parents, Richard and Mary Rockwell, for the first time. Hugs and smiles and light-hearted chatter all around.

Maggie goes to find Fernando. He introduces her to his parents. They chat and get acquainted.

Maggie takes Fernando by the hand and introduces him to her parents. Pleasantries are exchanged.

Scene 53:

Morning at the stable. Maggie pulls up in her pickup. Climbs out. Looks around. Sighs. She visits with Abbie then finds Fernando in his room in the barn. His bags have been packed. The room looks empty and nearly deserted. He puts a few last things in his satchel.

"Hey," says Maggie.

He turns. "Hey."

"You look about ready to go."

"I wish you were coming."

"We both know the time's just not right."

Fernando nods, sighs. "I know. I don't want to go either."

"Then why go?"

"It's been almost three years, Maggie. I need to see home. I want to see my siblings. My

horses. My dogs.”

Maggie smiles. “I understand.”

They chat. It’s awkward and uncomfortable. Neither has a handle on the future. Both try to explain their attachments to the past.

Maggie again tries to tell him she wants more than to just be some man’s wife. She wants to fly. She wants to compete. She wants to design airplanes.

Fernando says he understands.

But nothing is decided.

The time comes for Fernando to go.

Limbo.

Scene 54:

Outside the barn. Fernando puts his bags in the trunk of a taxi.

Fernando and Maggie embrace. Kiss. He climbs into the back of the taxi, closes the door, lowers the window, and waves.

Maggie waves back. She’s still waving as the taxi disappears in the distance. Rivers of tears stream down her face.

She enters the stable. Saddles Abbie. Leads her outside. Mounts up. Rides off into the hills, tears still flowing.

She returns to find her parents waiting for her. They drive a newer, fancier pickup and pull a brand-new trailer.

It quickly becomes clear that Abbie will be returning with them to Montana.

Mary asks her daughter if she, too, might like to come home, even if “just for a while.”

Maggie, tears again flowing, says she’d like nothing better than to come home, but fears if she does she might never gain find the courage to leave.

Scene 55:

Montage of Maggie depicting the passage of time. Writing a letter: *June 5. Dear Fernando, It’s only been a few days since our goodbye and already . . .*

Flying with Luke.

Sitting at the counter in the diner chatting with Betty.

Tossing the newspaper (dated June 14) on the kitchen table, sitting, and opening to the want ads. The jobs section is short and not particularly engaging. Maggie sighs, goes into the living room, flops on the couch.

Flying again with Luke.

Writing another letter: *June 22. Dear Fernando, It’s been a few weeks and still I haven’t heard from you. It must take forever for a letter to get from Argentina to California. I think maybe . . .*

Maggie and Betty stand in the kitchen packing glasses and dishes into cardboard boxes.

Again flying with Luke, but this time the plane has mechanical trouble. They almost crash short of the runway but manage to land safely.

Scene 56:

Late at night. Betty and Maggie at the diner. They sit in stools at the counter. No customers. Just the cook cleaning up back in the kitchen. They drink milkshakes and discuss the future. Betty is headed home to Texas. She invites Maggie to come. Maggie declines.

Betty calls Maggie “about the saddest creature I’ve ever seen.”

Scene 57:

Finally time for things to start looking up for Maggie.

She pulls up to Whitney Aviation in her pickup. She climbs out of the truck and heads for the hangar. Finds Luke on a stepladder working on the engine of his plane.

He says, "I had a premonition you'd be coming."

"Premonition?"

"Yeah, I had this vision of me up on this ladder and you walking into the hangar and me saying best get ready to race."

"Race?"

"We're going to New York, kid. Leaving asap. Ted Wells called. That Staggerwing stability problem turned out to be nothing but some loose bolts. Beech is back in, Maggie. And not only that, they're in it to win it. With the world's coolest plane and most beautiful pilot at the helm."

Scene 58:

Maggie and Luke on the train to Chicago. Luke sits in the dining car. Maggie joins him. He tells her they're taking the train to Chicago then they're going to fly to New York.

They talk aviation, the Bendix race, life's ups and downs.

Luke supplies Maggie with some additional race details such as route, refueling stops, the Staggerwing's capabilities.

He next tells her the press will be out in force in the days leading up to the race. Including *TIME* magazine, the newsweekly that might put an aviator on the cover of their next issue.

Maggie finds the whole picture difficult to comprehend. She can't believe how quickly her life has changed.

Scene 59:

Luke and Maggie on the flight from Chicago to New York. Out the window the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Then over the East River and across Brooklyn to Floyd Bennett Field on Jamaica Bay.

"Floyd Bennett Field," says Luke. "Race takes off from here. Typically on Runway Two-Zero northeast to southwest, out over of the Atlantic, and then due west for the City of Angels."

"Easy schmeasy," says Maggie, all smiles. "Fuel me up and let's roll."

The plane lands. Passengers disembark.

Walt Beech and Ted Wells are on the tarmac to greet them. Handshakes all around.

"Just want to apologize for the late notice," says Ted. "We practically had the plane ripped apart and had started to wonder if there was a flaw in the original design when one of our mechanics found a pair of loose bolts on the engine mount, and the rest, hopefully, is history."

"Can I get a look at her?" asks Maggie. "Is she in one of these hangars?"

Walt smiles. "We're keeping her down the road a piece. Away from prying eyes. Want to unveil her at the pre-race event the day before departure. We even flew in under cover of darkness."

Luke and Maggie nod and smile. They all climb into a large sedan and start off.

Scene 60:

They pull onto a small grass airstrip with a couple of large barns at one end. Ted, behind the wheel, parks next to one of the barns. They climb out. Ted and Walt swing open a pair of large barn doors. Inside rests the Staggerwing, draped in drop cloths. Ted and Walt remove the cloths and roll the plane out into the late afternoon sunlight.

She has a new paint job: still red but now with white accents.

They ooh and ahh over the plane, then perform a preflight check.

Maggie climbs into the cockpit, fires up the powerful radial engine. Soon she's airborne.

The men watch from the tarmac as Maggie circles the airstrip several times, ascends and

descends, and comes in for a perfect landing.

Scene 61:

Maggie, Luke, Walt, and Ted sit at a round table in a large restaurant having dinner. Their meals have been served and half eaten.

They discuss the race, the flight, the competitors, and of course the Staggerwing. Ted wants Maggie to take the plane up for a three- or four-hour test flight the following day to get acquainted and see what adjustments might be made.

Maggie asks about speed.

Ted says, "She'll do 220, 225, faster with a tailwind, of course, but fuel efficiency is as important as top speed. At 200 to 210 you're burning significantly less fuel than wide open. One fuel stop at 200 knots will deliver a better result than two stops at 220 knots."

Maggie trades glances with Luke. Luke shrugs.

All agree, with a little luck and a lot of hard flying they have a shot at winning the Bendix.

Scene 62:

Floyd Bennett Field. A beautiful summer afternoon. Lots of activity inside the hangars and out on the tarmac. Hundreds of people have gathered. The public is here as well as photographers and reporters from newspapers, magazines, and radio.

Airplanes and pilots vie for attention. A large contingent surrounds Amelia Earhart.

A smaller but growing contingent has gathered around Maggie Rockwell, who stands on the steps of the Floyd Bennett Field Terminal Building. She stands several feet above the reporters shouting questions at her while photographers pop flashbulbs in her face. Maggie seems entirely unfazed by the attention, as though she'd been doing this all her life. And she looks spectacular in her leathers with her eyes shining and lovely locks flowing in the breeze.

"Where's this snazzy new flying machine, Maggie?" shouts a reporter.

"Yeah, Maggie, when do we see this new plane, this . . . what's it called?"

"The Staggerwing!" shouts Maggie. "The Beech Aviation Staggerwing. A bold revolutionary new design by Walt Beech and his chief designer, Ted Wells. Fellas, I gotta tell you, I was up in her this morning for a few hours. Flew up over Nantucket and up around the tip of Cape Cod, across the bay to Boston, and I gotta say this is one terrific airplane. Maybe it won't win the Bendix, but it's gonna take a hell of an airplane to beat her."

Maggie garners more and more attention as the afternoon wears on.

Scene 63:

The following morning, under overcast skies, another large crowd has gathered at Floyd Bennett Field. More planes are on display, including Earhart's Lockheed Electra, Paul Pomeroy's Douglas DC-2, and Bill Gulick's Vultee V1A.

Luke, Ted, and Walt stand on the edge of the tarmac and look skyward off to the east. Ted brings binoculars to his face, adjusts the focus knobs. "Here she comes."

Moments later the Staggerwing soars over the field, turns, passes again over the field, but this time lower, less than a hundred feet off the runway. Halfway across the field the plane does a double barrel roll that sends the crowd into a frenzy.

"Who's that?" they shout.

"What plane is that?"

"Gotta be a stunt pilot!"

"I think it's Maggie Rockwell. In her Beech Staggerwing!"

Maggie turns once more and this time comes in for a perfect landing, stops practically at the

feet of her bosses. In her leather flight jacket, leather flying cap, and goggles, Maggie gives the crowd a chance to arrive before she exits the cabin and stands at the front of the lower wing.

Maggie once again becomes the center of attention. She answers questions with expertise and a sense of humor. The flashbulbs pop. Lots of photographs are taken. Including several by the photographer from *TIME* magazine.

Scene 64:

In a conference room of the terminal, the race officials meet with pilots and their sponsors. Bob Ewing is the head official. He stands at a podium at the front of the room and says, "First of all, welcome and thank you for your participation in this year's Bendix Trophy race. This year, as you know, we're flying east to west, New York to LA, rather than LA to Cleveland like in years past. Also we're very happy to welcome our female flyers back for this year's race."

Light applause for the ladies in the room.

The pilots trade barbs and ask questions.

Bob goes over the rules of the race.

Maggie, Luke, Ted, and Walt powwow after the meeting in the back of the conference room. Since the race has a staggered start they decide to take off from Floyd Bennett Field the following morning at 5:30.

Scene 65:

Around midnight. Maggie, in her hotel room, tosses and turns. She finally sits up, turns on the light beside the bed. Sighs. Stands. Paces.

She sits at a desk in the corner of the room. Turns on the desk lamp. Pen and paper rest on the desk. Maggie takes up the pen, thinks, begins to write:

Dear Fernando, How does love work when there's so much distance between us? How can we possibly

Maggie sighs, shakes her head, crumples up the paper and tosses it in the trash can beside the desk. It comes to rest atop a dozen or more pieces of crumbled up paper.

Maggie stands, paces some more, glances out the window. Nothing but darkness out there.

She sits again at the desk, begins to write:

Dear Fernando, I lost my plane. I lost my job. I lost my guy. That's a strikeout on anybody's scorecard. But it's just a strikeout. It's not the end of the game. Heck, it's not even the end of the inning. Still two outs to go.

The letter goes on from there. She professes her love and tells him they still have a long way to go. Satisfied, she folds the letter into thirds and stuffs it into a special airmail envelope. She goes back to bed, folds her hands over her stomach, takes a few deep breaths, and falls sound asleep.

Scene 66:

Early morning. Still dark out. Maggie, Luke, Ted, and Walt sit in a diner near Floyd Bennett Field.

More discussion about the flight. Ted offers the latest weather report and goes over the final flight plan. It's slightly different from what had originally been discussed but Maggie agrees it's an excellent route and might allow for a single refueling stop.

They discuss the other competitors and who has a legitimate chance of winning. All agree Pomeroy in his DC-2 is the favorite, followed by Earhart in her Lockheed Electra. After that it's the Beech Aviation Staggerwing all the way.

Scene 67:

Maggie, Luke, Ted, and Walt on the tarmac with the Staggerwing at Floyd Bennett Field. The sky has lightened but the sun has still not poked its head over the horizon.

A line of photographers stands back fifty feet or so behind a rope barrier. Flashbulbs pop.

“How you feeling, kid?” asks Luke.

Maggie, all smiles but clearly nervous, replies, “Never better, old man, never better.”

They go over the weather one more time. A line of thunderstorms is moving east over the Alleghenies.

Word arrives that Ron Young’s Curtiss-Wright has a broken wing strut and is already out of the race. Burt Rodgers is also grounded in his Brown B-2 but he is expected to fly again.

They briefly discuss the possibility of not flying because of the weather, but Walt gives the nod and Maggie climbs aboard. She turns and smiles and waves as the sun climbs over the horizon.

The flashbulbs pop.

Maggie enters the cabin, closes the door, and settles into the seat. She taxis to the far end of the runway and turns the Staggerwing into the wind. For several seconds she checks gauges, pedals, and switches.

After a big breath she says, “Come on, baby, just get me off the ground.”

The Staggerwing rolls forward, slowly picks up speed, almost seems to lumber under the weight of all that fuel. Together Maggie and her plane use every last inch of runway before they lift off and head southwest over the Atlantic, bound for Sandy Hook and the great state of California.

Scene 68:

A sweeping montage of the race planes in the air and on the ground. First Maggie over the Atlantic, headed for the Jersey coast.

Ron Young’s abandoned Curtiss-Wright in a Lancaster cornfield.

Burt Rodgers and his Brown B-2 still on the ground in Hagerstown, Maryland.

Amelia Earhart and her copilot, Helen Richey, both looking concerned, navigate their Lockheed Electra through wind and rain.

More of the same for Paul Pomeroy’s DC-2.

And for Bill Gulick’s Vultee V1A.

Back to Maggie now over the city of Philadelphia with mostly clear skies, a few clouds off to the west, an airspeed of 212 knots.

Frank Fuller in his all-metal Seversky P-35 single-seater fighter plane, committed to the southern route, flies over Washington, D.C.

Howard Benjamin in his DGA-6 left early and decided on a northern route, crossed the Alleghenies and Lake Erie and is now almost over Detroit.

Katherine Bliss and Audrey Burns in their Wedell Williams 44 followed Benjamin and are now about to overtake him.

Maggie’s west of Washington, the Blue Ridge off to her right along with dark gray clouds and flashes of lightning. Clear skies to the south and east. She flies on.

Burt Rodgers in his Brown B-2 taxis and takes off out of Hagerstown.

Earhart and Richey clear the storm but something is amiss with the Lockheed Electra. They land at a small airport near Columbus.

Pomeroy in his DC-2 clears the storm east of Cincinnati and flies on.

Gulick in his Vultee follows Pomeroy.

Fuller in his Seversky flies farther south, stays well east of the Blue Ridge and bad weather.

Maggie continues southwest on the east side of the Blue Ridge.

“Gotta head west!” she shouts over the whine of the engine. “South is safe but south’s a loser. Come on, girl, gotta head west. Make a move! To hell with the weather. It’s now or never!”

She takes one last look out her starboard window and then turns in that direction, directly for the mountains, directly into the bad weather.

Scene 69:

The massive storm looms dead ahead but still several miles off. Maggie surveys the scene, checks her gauges, glances out at her wing tips. She leans forward, peers skyward. Storm clouds reach as high as she can see. Dead ahead the peaks of the Blue Ridge loom. To the northwest the skies look black and ominous.

Maggie changes course slightly, heads southwest into the teeth of the storm. Thunderclaps roar and lightning bolts streak across the sky. The first raindrops pelt the windshield. Winds toss the Staggerwing about. Face drawn tight, she grips the yoke. She struggles to see through the mist and wind. And then, suddenly, there's the tip of a mountain peak looming just ahead.

The stunt pilot takes over. Maggie makes an instantaneous evasive maneuver by turning sharply to port and ascending at a quick rate. But with the peak cleared Maggie levels her ship and keeps flying.

She clears the Blue Ridge and levels out at eight thousand feet over the Cumberland Plateau as rain gives way to clouds and clouds give way to clear blue skies.

Scene 70:

Another montage of the various racers. Frank Fuller in his all-metal Seversky P-35, far to the south, avoids the massive storm but loses valuable time.

Gulick's Vultee V1A sits on the ground in St. Louis for refueling.

Earhart's Electra flies high and straight over the Midwest but a quick look at her air speed shows the plane is traveling at just 174 knots. The frustration is evident on the famous flyer's face.

Pomeroy's DC-2 is on the ground at a remote airstrip west of the Ozarks. Pomeroy is out of his plane and checking some problem with the tail. He, too, looks plenty frustrated.

Bliss and Burns fly on somewhere northeast of Kansas City.

Burt Rodgers in his Brown B-2 continues to fly but clearly the plane is having trouble and the gauges are not working properly.

Howard Benjamin in his DGA-6 is out over the Great Plains and flying well.

Scene 71:

Maggie flies due west beyond the Ozark Plateau near the border of Missouri and Kansas. Headwinds are strong out here on the open plains. The Staggerwing struggles a bit through the turbulence.

Maggie works to keep the plane flying straight and level.

Her fuel supply running low, she barely makes it to the Beech Aviation facility in Wichita. But there she refuels, takes a quick bathroom break, and then back to the race.

Scene 72:

Another race montage. Paul Pomeroy's DC-2 is back in the air but clearly the pilot is having trouble keeping the plane flying level. At the airfield outside Amarillo, Pomeroy circles and lands. He taxis, cuts the engine, and climbs out. The favorite to win the Bendix race is now out of the race.

Burt Rodgers and his Brown B-2 are back on the ground, in New Mexico this time, the race over for them also.

Frank Fuller in his Seversky P-35 is still flying but he's far back and out of contention unless others falter.

Bill Gulick in his Vultee is now over New Mexico. He has just overtaken Howard Benjamin in his DGA who left a full hour earlier.

Earhart and Rickey in their Lockheed Electra, flying the more common southern route and now over Albuquerque, continue to struggle with their speed.

Bliss and Burns fly on over northern New Mexico near the Four Corners in their Wedell

Williams 44. They're in the lead but unfortunately need a refueling stop in Flagstaff.

Maggie, flying straight and true in her Staggerwing, races past Amarillo and into New Mexico at nearly two hundred and twenty knots. Despite Ted's advice, she's got the throttle wide open now.

Winds are light out of the southwest. Skies are clear. Virtually no turbulence. Perfect flying weather. She passes over Albuquerque. And not long after, along the border of New Mexico and Arizona, she spots a plane dead ahead flying at a slightly higher altitude. It's Earhart's Electra.

Maggie ascends, gives plenty of clearance, and flies alongside. She smiles and waves.

Earhart momentarily frowns, but then smiles, and gives a thumb's up.

Maggie flies on.

Scene 73:

Maggie passes Palm Springs off to the south, flies through a gap in the mountains, and makes her final approach into greater Los Angeles.

She spots the Rose Bowl just off to the north, checks her map, and quickly locates the Union Air Terminal northwest of Burbank. Maggie descends from three thousand feet to two thousand and then to a thousand feet.

She spots the runways and a large crowd gathered on the tarmac. Also on the tarmac are two airplanes: Gulick's Vultee V1A and Bliss and Burns's Wedell Williams 44. Maggie checks her watch: 6:22 Eastern time. 3:22 Pacific time.

The wind direction calls for a landing from the northeast but to save time Maggie decides to fly straight in. But just as she makes her approach three military planes practicing maneuvers cross her flight path.

Maggie is forced to make another instantaneous flight adjustment. She rolls to starboard, a full barrel roll, descends rapidly, but pulls level before crashing into the runway. No one expected the Staggerwing for at least another hour.

Maggie whistles softly, takes a deep breath, and ascends. "Damn, that was close."

She circles, and now coming in with her nose into the wind, she makes a clean landing, and taxis across the tarmac.

The crowd surges forward.

Maggie looks confused. "What are they doing?" She checks her watch, glances at the two planes on the tarmac. "Katie Bliss left over an hour before me. And Bill Gulick a half hour before me. If he's been here less than half an hour . . ."

Maggie brings the Staggerwing to a stop and shuts down the engine.

The cheering crowd surrounds the plane.

"Did we do it?" Maggie asks out loud. "Is it even possible that we . . ."

Scene 74:

The Trophy presentation. The seven pilots, five females and two males—Maggie Rockwell, Amelia Earhart, Helen Rickey, Bill Gulick, Katherine Bliss, Audrey Burns, and Frank Fuller—who finished the race sit atop a raised platform before a large crowd. Troy Jackson, Bendix CEO, speaks into the microphone.

"A terrific race this year. Just five of nine planes finished, but a heck of a race. Miss Rockwell, if you'll step up and receive your trophy and your prize money, I'm sure everyone would like to hear what you have to say."

Maggie stands.

A nice round of applause. Some cheers and whistles.

Maggie steps up to the microphone. "Not too much to say. Just happy I made it. I give all the credit to Walt Beech and Ted Wells for building such a spectacular airplane. I just want to thank

them for trusting me to fly it. I also want to thank Luke Whitney for turning a novice pilot into a Bendix Trophy race winner!”

Maggie holds the trophy up high.

More applause and cheers.

A young man approaches the podium and hands Troy Jackson a stack of magazines. Troy looks, breaks into a wide smile, then hands a copy to each of the pilots sitting on the podium. He approaches the microphone, hands a copy to Maggie, and holds up a copy for the crowd to see.

It’s a picture of Maggie Rockwell on the cover of *TIME* magazine. And beneath the picture:

MAGGIE ROCKWELL: AVIATRIX & AERONAUTICAL ENGINEER

Troy says, “How’s that for a storybook ending?”

More applause. More cheers.

Maggie blushes. And says, “Well that’s kind of embarrassing.”

Laughter.

Maggie waits, then, “Lastly I just want to say this. For a couple years women weren’t allowed to compete in the Bendix Trophy race. I thought it was because the boys didn’t want us girls to get hurt.”

Maggie half turns and opens her right arm to the pilots sitting behind her. “But now I see it’s because the fellas were afraid us girls would beat their pants off.”

The crowd roars.

Scene 75:

Maggie steps off the podium surrounded by well-wishers. A boy hands her a telegram. It reads: CONGRATULATIONS MAGGIE. WELL DONE, KID. WALT, TED & I SHOULD REACH LA TOMORROW. CAN’T WAIT TO CELEBRATE. IN THE MEANTIME THINK ABOUT A FULL-TIME DESIGN JOB WITH WHITNEY AVIATION. GOING INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH WALT ON A WHOLE NEW MODEL & HECK, I NEED A TOP-NOTCH DESIGNER! THE OLD MAN

Maggie shakes her head and smiles.

People shake her hand and pat her on the back.

Dan Dolan from Lockheed, the condescending oaf who interviewed Maggie some weeks earlier, pushes his way through the crowd.

“Miss Rockwell! Miss Rockwell!”

Maggie stops. “Yes?”

“Do you remember me?”

“I most certainly do.”

He introduces himself anyway. “Dan Dolan from Lockheed.”

“What can I do for you?”

He carries a copy of *TIME* in his hand. “It’s what I can do for you.”

“Oh, and what’s that?”

“A job. In our design department.”

Maggie laughs. “Doing what? Getting coffee for the boys?” She walks on.

“Miss Rockwell, wait. Don’t you . . . aren’t you interested—”

“Too late, buster,” says Maggie. “Already have myself a job. At Whitney Aviation. In the future, you’d be wise to remember, a woman can do anything a man can do, and usually, because she needs to try so much harder, she’ll almost always do it better.”

Dolan’s mouth hangs open.

Maggie walks on.

Suddenly the crowd thins out a bit. No one stands in front of her for thirty or forty feet.

And there, looking good enough to eat, a broad smile on his face and arms outstretched, stands Fernando.

Maggie stops. Stares. Smiles. And breaks into a sprint that ends when she leaps into his arms.

THE END