

INTREPID CODE HERO

Screenplay

by

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Based on the true story Danger In The Clouds  
By  
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FADE IN:

EXT. OLD CHICAGO AIRPORT - ILLINOIS - DAY

SUPER: THIS IS A TRUE STORY - FEBRUARY 1930

The blazing sun is a golden orb which hangs defiantly in a cloudless sky.

At one side of the landing strip is a row of mature trees.

The sound of a distant biplane eclipses the happy CHATTER and LAUGHTER of a mom and dad with their young daughter waving handkerchiefs and CHEERING.

EXT. PLANE - DAY

The plane is at a steady 1500 feet as it approaches the landing field.

INTERCUT PLANE COCKPIT - PLANE FLYING

Flight Instructor JOSEPH (JOE) DONNELLAN, twenty nine, has a nervous pupil to contend with.

Sweating profusely, twenty eight-year-old RICHARD KING, now on his third hour of training, white-knuckles the stick as if his life depends on it.

THE PLANE FLYING

The Parks Trainer makes an unsteady turn to prepare for landing then drops steeply to 300 feet.

PLANE COCKPIT

JOE  
You need to be lower, go around again.

THE PLANE FLYING

The little plane makes its perilous way round the perimeter again, dropping quickly to prepare for landing.

INSERT

Altimeter hovering around 200 feet.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe looks out his window and sees the landing strip.

JOE

Okay Richard, I want you to attempt the landing now -- and relax a bit.

Richard lifts a hand to protect his vision.

RICHARD

I -- I'll try. Sun's in my eyes.

JOE

There's the landing strip so you need to turn in now. *TURN IN NOW.*

RICHARD

Don't know if I can....

Richard is shaking uncontrollably, tightening his grip on the joystick.

His face is a deathly white and sweat drips from his chin.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

The plane approaches the airstrip at a crazy angle, engine SCREAMING, as it rocks towards the ground.

Richard's parents watch, transfixed and terrified, aware that all is not as it should be.

Two mechanics come rushing from a hangar alarmed by the unusual engine noise.

The mechanics, in greasy overalls, look skyward in disbelief at the plane rocking from side to side as it hurtles towards the turf.

MECHANIC #1

What in Christ's name...?

MECHANIC #2

It's out of control!

MECHANIC #1

That's Joe up there -- but -- I've never seen him rockin' like that before.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Richard is frozen with fear. The joystick is rooted to the spot, an immovable object in his hands.

Joe desperately tries to reach backward from his seat in the front and wrench the joystick from Richard's grasp.

But the stick is trapped by Richard's legs.

With every second the plane catapults closer to its doom.

JOE

(screaming)

For Chrissakes, pull the stick back  
-- NOW, Richard. Pull the nose up.  
Ya'see those trees. Pull the nose  
up. You're going to hit them. *PULL  
THE STICK BACK.*

RICHARD

(shakey voice)

I -- I can't, Joe.

JOE

Let go of the stick, Richard. *LET  
GO OF THE STICK.*

THE PLANE FLYING

The little plane continues on its crazy flight path.

FREEZE FRAME

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MICHIGAN - DAY

SUPER: JULY 1914

A barn door is open.

It's a large traditional structure, with more drafts than doors.

The floor is littered with straw and other debris.

A young man, JOE DONNELLAN, just thirteen, has his back to the door.

He's a good looking boy with a permanent, cheery smile on his young face.

Various tools are scattered haphazardly on a bench.

The farm machinery he's been repairing lies in front of him.

EXT. HOUSE - REAR DOOR - CONTINUOUS

His mother, MARY DONNELLAN, opens the door, looks left and right, sees Joe.

MARY

Come in Joe, your dinner's getting cold.

JOE

Comin', ma.

Joe appears in the doorway wiping his hands on a rag.

He bounds athletically up a few steps to the house and throws open the door.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mary notices Joe's dirty hands.

MARY

(chiding)  
They're filthy.

JOE

Bin' doin' a job for dad. It's only a bit of dirt, mom.

Joe's dad, JOHN SENIOR (SR), sits quietly reading the newspaper throughout their exchange.

John sr is a commanding man; a definite authoritarian but with a kind heart and charming affability.

JOHN SR

How'd it go son?

JOE

Oh great, shouldn't be any more trouble now.

JOHN SR

Thanks, saves me buying a new one.

(beat)

Joe, there's something else I'd like you to do for me. I'm going to the Ford dealership.

(MORE)

JOHN SR (CONT'D)

Looking at buying a new automobile.  
Any chance I could convince you to  
come along and drive it back?

JOE

(mouth agape)  
Me, pop?!

John sr smiles slyly at Joe's elation.

JOHN SR

Yeah, you can deal with anything  
mechanical with the salesman.  
Shouldn't be too much trouble for  
ya.

JOE

If you think I can, pop?

EXT. FORD DEALERSHIP - DAY

The horse and buggy that Joe and his dad traveled in waits  
outside.

The horse munches contentedly on the sweet grass.

Joe, John sr and a SALESMAN exit the showroom.

The salesman, dressed in a fancy suit, is a quick-witted whiz  
kid.

He's on his second sale this week and working towards his  
bonus.

SALESMAN

I'll explain all the controls, and  
what you've got to do to look after  
the automobile.

John sr places his hand on Joe's shoulder.

JOHN SR

Don't explain it to me. Tell my son  
Joe here, he's the mechanical  
genius in the family. He'll be  
driving her home.

Joe smiles widely.

SALESMAN

(surprised)  
Are you sure, sir? She's a gem of a  
car.

JOHN SR  
Definitely.

SALESMAN  
(to Joe)  
Follow me son, I'll explain what  
you have to do to drive her and  
keep her running, okay?  
(beat)  
How old are you?

JOE  
(proudly)  
Thirteen, sir.

The salesman's brow plows a deep furrow; his eyebrows do a two-step.

Joe quietly follows.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

A shiny new Model T Ford in obligatory black chugs up a rutted dirt road.

Joe is at the wheel.

John sr follows the car bouncing along in his horse and buggy.

He stands up and, calls to Joe.

JOHN SR  
How's it goin' son?

JOE  
(shouting)  
Great! It's a lot more comfortable  
than that old buggy! More horses,  
too!

A biplane, flying low, crosses Joe's field of vision.

JOE  
(to himself)  
Now that's how I would like to  
travel.

The Ford chugs on into the distance with Joe's dad following in the buggy.

## JOE'S VOICE

That journey set the seal on my future. I knew that airplanes would play a large part in my life.

EXT. SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE - ILLINOIS - DAY

SUPER: SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE - BELLSVILLE - ILLINOIS - 1917

Self-assured and super keen, sixteen-year-old Joe, walks up to the guardroom and approaches the SENTRY.

JOE

Where do I go to join up? I want to be a pilot.

SENTRY

How old are you, kid?

JOE

(proudly)  
Sixteen.

SENTRY

(grinning)  
You'll have to grow up a bit, first. These aren't model planes, son.

Joe is relentless.

JOE

Where do I go?

SENTRY

Wait here, I'll have someone come out to see ya'.

The sentry marches briskly into the guardroom.

SENTRY(O.S.)

Yeah, there's a kid here who says he wants to be a pilot. What? -- oh he's sixteen.

(beat)

Okay, I'll tell him.

The sentry returns.

SENTRY

Spoke to the chief flying instructor.

(MORE)



SENTRY (CONT'D)

He said you've got to be at least  
eighteen to train as a pilot.

JOE

But -- I really want to fly for the  
war effort sir ....

Joe backs down from the look on the sentry's face.

Okay. I'll go somewhere they will  
have me.

SENTRY

Good luck, kid.  
(under his breath)  
You'll need it.

The sentry watches Joe walk away.

SENTRY

Brave kid.

He shakes his head.

Joe marches off, head held high, arms swinging, WHISTLING  
TUNELESSLY.

JOE'S VOICE

I'm determined to be a pilot. If  
Uncle Sam won't have me, I'll find  
somewhere who will.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMOUR HEIGHTS FIELD - TORONTO/CANADA - DAY

SUPER: 'ARMOUR HEIGHTS FIELD - TORONTO - CANADA - 1917'

A De Haviland (DH-4) biplane rips through a sky full of  
fluffy clouds.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - DAY

Joe is at the controls with his flying instructor behind him.

He leans forward to check Joe's progress.

NOTE: All communication between the flying instructor and  
pupil in this or subsequent flying scenes is through the  
communications tube unless otherwise noted.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Don't grip the stick so tightly,  
 Donnellan. Let the plane fly  
 naturally.

Joe makes the adjustment.

JOE  
 Okay, but I really think I'm  
 getting the hang of it now sir. Can  
 I practice a landing?

The flying instructor sighs.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Give it time, boy. You've only had  
 three hours instruction.

JOE  
 I feel ready to give it a try, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 (drily)  
 Well, we'll give it a bit longer  
 shall we? I'd like to live a few  
 more years. If you do okay tomorrow  
 perhaps I'll let you try.

Joe is delighted.

ON THE GROUND

The instructor lands the plane effortlessly.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NEXT DAY

Joe and the flying instructor stand by the plane before his  
 lesson.

JOE  
 Will I getting the chance to  
 practice my landing technique  
 today, sir?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Rome wasn't built in a day you  
 know. Have you done all the pre-  
 flight checks?

JOE  
 Yes sir. Oil's okay, gas tanks  
 full, ailerons and rudder all  
 working as they should be.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
And the instruments?

JOE  
All okay.

The flying instructor nods his acceptance of Joe's thoroughness.

Joe climbs over the wing into the front seat.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Prime the carb.

Joe pumps a small lever by his right side. The flying instructor grabs the propeller to introduce gas into the engine.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Contact.

JOE  
Contact, sir.

It takes three spins for the engine to roar into life with a throaty rasp.

The flying instructor swings himself into the seat behind Joe and buckles his safety harness.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
I want you to do the take off,  
Donnellan, but make it better than  
the bumpy way you did it yesterday.  
If you give me a smooth ride I'll  
let you land her later.

JOE  
I'll do my best, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Okay, she's all yours. Off we go.

Joe eases the throttle forward, the engine screams with impatience. The plane begins steadily moving forward.

Joe eases the stick back and the landing wheels detach themselves from the bumpy grass that serves as an airstrip.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
I want you to do a couple of  
circuits, then land her -- but  
gently, remember?

JOE  
I understand, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Okay, you got it.

The flying instructor lifts his hands to relinquish control to Joe.

He sits back in his seat. His contented face shows he's going to enjoy this ride.

ON THE GROUND

A group of new cadets watch as the biplane completes its final circuit.

The plane is preparing to land, and Joe's in charge.

The approach is straight and level, then the plane drops normally until at a couple of feet Joe drops the plane smoothly.

The plane bumps along the grass landing strip for a hundred yards or so before it comes to a gentle stop.

There is general AD LIB chatter. One voice stands out. It's cadet JAMES HAWKINS who mouths his opinion.

JAMES  
(arrogantly)  
That wasn't bad. Bet I'll be as  
good when I've had a few lessons.

Several cadets jeer.

JAMES  
You'll see.

AT THE PLANE

The engine is still running.

JOE  
Was that okay sir?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 (smirking)  
 Suffered worse.

Joe smiles with him.

JOE  
 What now, sir?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 How do you feel about going solo.

JOE  
 Solo?  
 (thinking)  
 Yes sir, I'll do it.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Well take her up, do one circuit --  
 that's *ONE* Donnellan -- then land.  
 And remember, I'm watching.

The flying instructor holds a hand up with his index finger extended.

JOE  
*YES SIR!*

He goes alongside the engine and cups an ear to listen to the mechanical clamor.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Now what 'ya doin', boy?

JOE  
 Listening to the engine -- makin'  
 sure it's okay.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 Listening to -- oh never mind, just  
 get this thing off the ground.

JOE  
 Just needed to make sure  
 everything's working right.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
 And is it?

JOE  
 Yes sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Well get going, before I change my mind. I've others to train besides you.

Joe jumps back aboard. Buckles in, moves the throttle slowly forward.

The plane roars off, leaving a slight smoky trail and a whiff of spent gas.

The flying instructor walks towards the cadets.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

(to the cadets)

That lad's had just three hours at the controls. Do any of you think you'll be as good?

JAMES

Bet I will, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Well, we'll see. *You're next.*

James suddenly loses his bravado.

IN THE AIR

The small plane swings around preparing to land.

ON THE GROUND

The flying instructor watches as Joe completes his circuit.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

(under his breath)

Down boy, come on, do it nicely for me.

And Joe does. It's a textbook landing as before.

He taxi's the plane and brings it to a smooth stop.

Joe cuts the engine, climbs out and walks over to the flying instructor

JOE

How's that, sir?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

You're getting better.

Joe's face shows disappointment.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
(encouragingly)  
You're doin' okay, kid.

He pats him on the back.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Come and see me after I've given  
the next lesson.  
(turns to Hawkins)  
Come on, your turn. Let's see how  
good you really are.

JAMES  
(shakily)  
Yes sir.

They walk towards the plane. Suddenly Hawkins is treading  
with two left feet!

Joe get's pats on the back from some of the other cadets.  
Cries of 'WELL DONE' are heard.

The flying instructor hears them and turns.

He sports a broad grin.

INT. FLYING INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

The flying instructor sits at his desk doodling on a pad.

A knock at the door causes him to look up.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Come in.

The door opens and Joe walks in.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Sit down, Donnellan.

Joe sits.

JOE  
You asked me to call, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Yes I did.

JOE  
Have I done wrong, sir?

The flying instructor swivels his chair, purses his lips, then leans forward on his desk.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Did you know the other cadets look up to you with respect?

JOE

No sir?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Well they do. I think you have the makings of a good leader. You might only be sixteen, but you're quite advanced for your age.

JOE

(modestly)

I'm pleased you think so, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

I suppose you're still unsure about why I wanted to see you?

JOE

I just wondered, that's all.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Nothing wrong -- on the contrary.

Joe looks puzzled.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

How would you feel about becoming a trainee flying instructor?

JOE

I'd jump at the chance, sir. But I'm too few hours in?

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

You've shown me that you have a natural ability to teach others. Do you think you could turn the riff-raff we have here into decent pilots?

JOE

I'd do my best, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Well, some of them have the wrong attitude. I want you to correct that.



JOE  
(reticently)  
Yes sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
How do you picture yourself  
teaching others?

JOE  
I'd teach them the basics first --  
you know, the reason why a plane  
flies and what keeps it up. Then  
I'd spend some time going over the  
controls, then care of the engine.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
I like that. You do realize it will  
mean some promotion. I'll speak to  
the higher-ups about that.  
(beat)  
How do you think the other boys are  
going to like you teaching them?

JOE  
I'll treat them properly.

The flying instructor stands, holds out a hand to Joe.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
Welcome to the club, er Joe, isn't  
it?

Joe blushes slightly at being addressed by his first name.

He shakes the flying instructor's outstretched hand.

JOE  
Thank you, sir.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
The name's Gary.

JOE  
Oh, thank you sir, er, Gary.

They both laugh at the irony of it all.

FLYING INSTRUCTOR  
I'll get a chalk board set up in  
the hangar and some colored chalks  
for you to teach them in there.

JOE  
That would be great , sir -- er  
Gary.

Smiles all round.

JOE  
Guess I'm just going to have to get  
used to it.

INT. HANGAR - DAY

Joe has six recruits gathered round him including know-all  
James Hawkins.

JAMES  
(to Joe)  
How come you get to be our flying  
instructor?

JOE  
Didn't ask them.

JAMES  
You've haven't done much more  
flying than us.

JOE  
(modestly)  
P'raps I'm better. Now gather  
around the board.

There is a slight murmur of disagreement amongst the cadets.

JOE  
(forcefully)  
I said gather round.

The cadets grudgingly gather around the board.

JOE  
Right, thank you. Now first we're  
going to look at the theory of  
flight.

JAMES  
Thought this was a flying lesson.

JOE  
Do you understand why a plane  
flies?

JAMES  
I don't need to.

JOE  
Yes you do. Because if you don't  
you could drop out the sky.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

The flying instructor is eavesdropping on Joe's first lesson.  
He seems satisfied that Joe has things under control. And a  
slight smile crosses his lips as he moves away.

INT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

JOE  
Now you know why a plane flies. But  
what helps to keep it up there?

Joe points to ANDREW MITCHELL.

MITCHELL  
I s'pose it's the engine.

JOE  
Yeah, and the lift created by the  
propeller which creates lift under  
the wings as the plane is moving  
through the air. Any questions?

JAMES  
Yeah, I've got one. When are we  
going to get our flying lessons?

JOE  
Soon.  
(beat)  
Hawkins, er James, can you ask a  
mechanic to warm up the trainer?

JAMES  
(grudgingly)  
Yeah, I s'pose.

He walks away.

JOE  
(to the cadets)  
Now I want to tell you what to  
listen for in an engine.

EXT. AIRFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Hawkins sees a trainer all lined up and ready for the off - except its engine isn't running.

He walks up to the plane, runs his fingers fondly over the fuselage.

He looks nervously around - nobody near.

His face betrays his intentions.

JAMES  
(to himself)  
I'll show Mr. Fancy Pants.

He heaves himself over the wing to the cockpit. With the carburetor primed he hoists himself out of the cockpit and spins the prop three times.

Back to the cockpit to switch on, then out again to fire the engine.

On the second spin it starts.

James removes the chocks and the biplane begins to creep forward.

He dashes back to the wing which is moving ever faster. At first try he rolls off the wing into the dirt.

Briskly picking himself up, he tries again and manages to scramble into the cockpit.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

With no time to strap his harness on, he guns the throttle.

The biplane rocks as it traverses the rough ground of the landing strip.

INT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

Joe hears the biplane engine revving up.

JOE  
What the...

He dashes outside the hangar.

EXT. AIRFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Joe stares in disbelief at the rapidly disappearing trainer zigzagging as it traverses the runway.

He sees the plane lift off from the landing strip, but it's not flying level.

JOE  
(under his breath)  
You stupid idiot.

He stamps a foot in frustration.

THE PLANE

Suddenly the plane dips forward, smashes into the earth with a powerful EXPLOSION.

EXT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

The cadets come rushing out to join Joe.

Their horrified faces tell all.

JOE  
(sadly)  
Let that be a lesson to you. If I ask you to do something, don't do something else. We're not here to do what we want.

INT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

Joe finds an upturned barrel, sits down. His eyes are wet with tears.

JOE  
(to himself)  
I caused that. Why did I send Hawkins? Could have been anybody.

The cadets are standing in a group, there is hushed AD LIB chatter.

Joe's thoughts are broken by the arrival of a mechanic.

MECHANIC  
Who gave permission for that plane to be taken up?

JOE

All I wanted was Hawkins to ask you to warm her up. I didn't tell him to fly the plane.

MECHANIC

Well that leaves us short now.

JOE

(furious)

It leaves that boy dead. That's more important than the damn plane.

The mechanic snorts derision and exits the hangar.

JOE'S VOICE

I just had to carry on, and so did the cadets.

MONTAGE (MOS)

- Joe at the blackboard.
- Joe in the air teaching.
- Joe with cadets examining engine.
- Joe seeing cadets pass out as qualified pilots.
- Cadet doing a loop the loop.

END MONTAGE

INT. OUTSIDE STATION COMMANDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Joe stands outside the STATION COMMANDER'S office.

He looks nervous. Checks his watch again and again. Finally he is satisfied that it's time to face the boss.

He knocks at the door.

STATION COMMANDER (O.S.)

(Scottish accent)

Come in.

Joe opens the door, sees the Station Commander at his desk.

INT. STATION COMMANDER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Joe marches in smartly, salutes, stands to attention.

It's an impressive office with a large oak desk and several filing drawers. The Station Commander has a sumptuous leather chair.

A simple sit up and beg chair is reserved for more lowly types.

JOE  
Donnellan, sir. You wanted to see me?

The Station Commander is a big man with kind twinkling blue eyes. He seems to wear a permanent half smile.

STATION COMMANDER  
Relax, Donnellan. Stand easy.

Joe shuffles his stance.

STATION COMMANDER  
I've been hearing good reports about you from the chief instructor.

JOE  
I'm pleased sir.

STATION COMMANDER  
How old are you?

JOE  
Eighteen sir.

STATION COMMANDER  
You must be wondering what I wanted to see you for?

JOE  
Yes sir.

STATION COMMANDER  
It's really good news, son. The Canadian Air Force is commissioning you with the rank of Captain.

JOE  
C.. Captain, sir?

STATION COMMANDER  
Yes, it's Captain Joseph Donnellan. Effective immediately.

The Station Commander smiles.

JOE

I don't know what to say, sir,  
about the promotion I mean.

STATION COMMANDER

Just say, I accept.

JOE

I accept -- thank you very much,  
sir.

STATION COMMANDER

Well as much as I'd like to take  
all the glory, it was other people  
who recommended you. Men like the  
mechanics, the cadets and others  
whose paths you've crossed.

The Station Commander stands, extends a hand to Joe.

STATION COMMANDER

Congratulations Captain Donnellan.  
You must be proud of all the cadets  
you trained to the rank of pilot.  
Certainly helped the war effort you  
know.

JOE

I'm pleased I was given the  
opportunity, sir.

The Station Commander looks away, then turns and faces Joe.

STATION COMMANDER

You'll be leaving here soon and  
taking up a posting at the Canadian  
Flying School in Ontario. You'll  
have American, Canadian and a few  
British sub lieutenants under your  
control.

JOE

Very good sir.

STATION COMMANDER

I'm sure you'll manage.  
(serious now)  
There's one more job for you to do  
before you do move to your new post  
Captain.

JOE

Sir?



STATION COMMANDER

I would like you to take the salute  
at the passing out parade of the  
young lads you helped to become  
accomplished pilots.

JOE

I'd like that sir.

STATION COMMANDER

That's all for now, Captain.

He salutes the Station Commander and exits the office  
briskly.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

A band plays a military march. A flight sergeant barks orders  
and on a dais stands Joe. Rigidly at attention in his best  
blues, he waits for 'his boys' to pass.

From the corner of an eye he sees the leading pair.

The sergeant gives the order 'eyes right' and the cadets  
march proudly past Joe who gives a longest way up and shorted  
way down salute.

His chest swells at his accomplishment.

INT. CANADIAN SCHOOL FLYING SCHOOL - ONTARIO - DAY

SUPER: CANADIAN SCHOOL OF SPECIAL FLYING TO TRAIN INSTRUCTORS  
- ONTARIO - CANADA - TWO WEEKS LATER.

Joe marches smartly in to a briefing room.

It's a soulless place with high windows, bare walls and  
chairs for about a hundred people.

On the wall behind Joe is a large blackboard with sticks of  
colored chalks.

Already waiting are eight young sub lieutenants.

They stand to attention as Joe enters.

JOE

Please sit.

Their butts descend into hard wooden chairs. SCRAPING on  
wooden floors follows.

Joe clears his throat.

JOE

My name is Captain Joseph Donnellan and I'm going to be your flight trainer. I want to keep things informal when we're in here so please call me Joe.

There's muttering among the trainees.

JOE

Outside, it's sir as normal. I'm going to start with a bit of flight theory before we go outside to examine the plane. Are there any questions?

No hands are raised.

JOE

What I want to emphasise is that  
(forcefully)  
*WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO -- YOU DO.* Is that understood? Aviation is dangerous when people try to go their own way.

COCKNEY VOICE/JIM BAKER

(softly to his seating partner)

Marvellous innit? Travel three thousand miles and then get a bleedin' babe in arms to teach us how to fly.

Joe faces the dissenting voice.

JOE

I heard that. What's your name?

COCKNEY VOICE/JIM BAKER

Jim Baker.

JOE

If you want to drop out of this little party, Baker, don't let me stop you.

COCKNEY VOICE/JIM BAKER

No sir.

JOE

Perhaps you'll remember in future, there's a war on. We're here to do our bit. Okay?

COCKNEY VOICE/JIM BAKER

Yes sir.

JOE

If you have an opinion be good  
enough to tell me to my face.

(beat)

How old are you?

COCKNEY VOICE/JIM BAKER

(embarrassed)

Nineteen sir.

Joe turns away, begins writing on the blackboard.

EXT. CANADIAN FLYING SCHOOL - AIRFIELD - DAY

The small group of trainee pilots gather round a De Haviland trainer. They all wear flying suits and helmets with goggles perched on top.

Joe is gesticulating and pointing to various important parts of the aircraft.

JOE

Who wants to be first to fly?

JIM BAKER

Me sir.

JOE

It's Jim isn't it?

JIM BAKER

It is sir.

JOE

Climb up here and pump that lever  
once when I tell you.

Jim climbs into the rear seat, buckles his harness. Joe shows him the priming pump.

JOE

Then push that switch forward when  
I say contact -- I'll repeat  
contact and spin the prop to start  
the engine, okay?

JIM BAKER

Okay.

Joe gestures to Jim to prime the carb, spins the prop once.

JOE

Contact.

Jim pushes the switch.

JIM BAKER

Contact.

Joe winds the prop and the old DH-4 coughs into life.

NOTE: No communications tube in this or subsequent flying scenes.

He jumps into the front seat, turns to face Jim.

JOE

(shouting above engine  
noise)

I'll take her up, then you can try  
your hand at flying level.

He gives the thumbs up.

Jim returns it.

He looks nervous as Joe revs the engine. The plane gathers speed and taxi's away.

The remaining trainees look on enviously.

EXT. THE PLANE FLYING

The plane wobbles slightly before leveling out.

INT. CANADIAN FLYING SCHOOL - DAY

SUPER: 'Three months later. The tenderfoot flyers have done basic training. Next up is learning how to outsmart the enemy in the air.'

INT. TRAINING SCHOOL - SAME TIME

All eight trainees watch attentively as Joe explains what they will need to practise for in war combat.

MONTAGE: - AIRPLANE SOUNDS

INTERCUT TRAINING SCHOOL/PLANE FLYING

- Joe demonstrates a rolling loop.

- The plane does a rolling loop.
- Joe demonstrates a loop the loop.
- The plane does a loop the loop.
- Joe demonstrates a steep dive and last minute pull out.
- The plane does a steep dive and last minute pull out.

STOCK. Old newsreel footage of the surrender in Compiegne forest.

JOE'S VOICE (OVER NEWSREEL FOOTAGE)

But it was all in vain. Because the news everyone was waiting for came through. WAR HAS ENDED. THE ALLIES ARE VICTORIOUS! I was discharged from the Canadian Air Force. I'll go back to dad's farm. I'm not going to let my flying experience go to waste though -- I have other plans.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

SUPER: Late November 1918

An unproductive field. Joe is carting barrow loads of earth away from an area he's marked out with sticks.

Joe notices the shadow of a person at his side. It's his younger brother JOHN.

JOHN

Want some help, Joe?

JOE

Wouldn't stop you if you wanted to do somethin' useful.

JOHN

Tell me what to do.

JOE

Get a shovel and help me flatten these mounds out.

JOHN

What do I do with the earth?

JOE

Look-see, just tip it on that pile over there. We'll need it to fill in the holes later.

JOHN

Crazy, eh. We take it from one place to put in t'other.

JOE

It needs to be as flat as a griddle cake.

John smiles.

JOE

When it's done, gonna buy me a plane, go barnstorming at county shows and the like. Gonna take people up to look at their houses.

JOHN

Will I be able to help?

JOE

D'ya know I'd be pleased to have you alongside.

John looks mighty thankful he asked his brother.

JOHN

What d'ya plan to do when you give up this barnstorming lark?

JOE

Hadn't thought too much. I 'spose what I want to do is give flying lessons. Get ordinary folks flyin'.

JOHN

Well you can't do barnstorming forever. The flying school sounds good.

JOE

Yeah, I'd most like to have my own flying school. Buy a piece of land. Then of course we'd need a building -- for when the weather was bad.

Joe looks away, then he turns back to John.

JOE

I'd want you to help'n all.

JOHN  
Would you teach me to fly?

JOE  
You could be my first student. Do  
you a discount -- only fifty  
dollars an hour.

He turns away from John. A broad grin on his face.

JOHN  
(crestfallen)  
Fifty dollars?!

EXT. BENTON HARBOR AIRPORT - DAY

The tires on a Ford Model T crunch the snow-covered airfield leading up to a brightly lit hangar. The car passes a sign that says "Benton Harbor Airfield".

INT. CAR - DAY

Joe has a steel grip on the wheel. His big smile and bright eyes lead the way.

On the seat next to him, a pamphlet.

INSERT PAMPHLET: Jack Whatley's Air Travel, Ten Dollars a ride. Come and see your neighbors from the sky!

BACK TO SCENE

'Keep the Home fires Burning' comes over the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER  
This one's for all our brave boys  
back from overseas.

Joe parks the car at the entrance to the hangar.

EXT. HANGAR - DAY

Collar high, Joe walks through the massive hangar door.

Planes line the airfield behind him and dot the sky. The planes and the airfield dwarf the Model T.

INT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

A group of men wearing grey overalls stand in a circle. In the middle of the group is FRED, a forty-something bear of a man with a thick jaw and thicker stogie.

Fred dismisses the men and walks toward Joe.

FRED  
Well, if it ain't Joe Donnellan,  
the flyin' teacher.

Fred extends his hand. Joe gladly shakes it.

JOE  
Thanks Fred. Good to be back home.  
Dad sends his best. Mom gives her  
love to Gloria.

FRED  
Had a coupla beers with your dad at  
the Legion a week back. Said you  
were due home soon.  
(curious)  
What can I do you for?

Joe turns his head to focus on a specific Jenny plane sitting off to the side.

He walks toward it.

JOE  
Wanna buy a Jenny. Fashioned an  
airstrip at dad's farm.

FRED  
So you did. What you gonna do with  
her?  
(laughs)  
Teach spoiled Michigan kids to fly?

JOE  
Do some barnstormin'. Maybe make a  
dollar or two.

Joe runs his hand lovingly along the side of the fuselage as he makes his way to the front of the plane.

JOE  
George Backwater's campaign.  
Whatever I can. Why's she all by  
her lonesome?



FRED

(laughs)

Backwater? That braggart? He's got more money than brains. Had a new guy up there last week. We've got some beauties over here, though.

Fred attempts to guide Joe away from the damaged plane.

TED, the spindly and balding head mechanic, spins the prop on one of the Jenny planes beside them.

He makes two attempts. Both splutter out. He mumbles something to his co-worker about the gas line.

JOE

How much do you want for her?

FRED

Hmmm -- for you four-fifty? I can get our man Ted to fix her up for ya. Wouldn't be more than twenty extra.

JOE

No need. Three fifty and the use of your tools for a day. I'll get her hummin' like a widow at a rich man's wake.

FRED

Kid, Ted knows the Jenny. Let him do a pass.

JOE

(unfazed)

Your tools -- and -- I'll fix that engine.

FRED

Can't go lower. You know better'n' anyone, son, Jenny's a gem.

The mechanic spins the prop for a third time. A slew of curse words fly from the cockpit.

FRED

(reticent but frustrated)

Fine. This better be good.

Joe walks over to a wall of tools, chooses a standard screwdriver, and returns to the plane.

He fiddles in the engine for a couple of minutes and stands back.

JOE  
(yells)  
Wind her up, Ted!

The engine starts immediately. Fred and Ted are happily dumfounded. Joe smiles and walks away from the men and out of the hangar.

JOE  
(loudly, hand waving)  
Seven a.m. start. See ya tomorrow,  
fellas.

INT. HANGAR - MORNING

Joe walks in all bright-eyed and eager to get fixed up with the Jenny.

He's wearing a 'seen better days' coverall which is a whisker too small for him.

He searches for Fred and finds him on steps looking into a Jenny. Not any old Jenny though -- this is *JOE'S JENNY*.

JOE  
Mornin' Fred.

Fred lifts his head quickly and bangs it on the top wing.

He mutters some incoherent cuss words and turns to face Joe.

FRED  
S'pose you've come to fix this heap  
of crap.

JOE  
Now you mention it, yes.

FRED  
Still want four hundred for her.

JOE  
Less my wages for making it good.

FRED  
(spluttering)  
Your wages....

JOE  
Yeah. I'll make it like new.

FRED  
Then I'll want six hundred.

JOE  
Offer still stands. Three fifty and  
I fix it.

FRED  
I paid more'n that for it.

JOE  
Take it or leave it. That's my  
final offer.

FRED  
You wait 'til I see your dad again.  
I'll tell him he's raised a bad'un.

Joe laughs, Fred joins in. He comes off the steps and shakes  
Joe's hand.

FRED  
Okay son, you gotta deal.  
(forcefully)  
But you've gotta fix the Goddamn  
thing.

JOE  
I accept.

LATER

Joe stands on steps with his head inside the engine  
compartment. He's covered in grease. Bits of the engine lie  
on the ground.

Fred wanders over.

FRED  
How's it going?

JOE  
Like clockwork. Soon have her  
singin' like a bird.

FRED  
More like an old crow.

JOE  
You'll see. Pass that carb up  
please Fred.

Fred does Joe's bidding.

Joe tinkers around in the bowels of the engine with a tap-tap here and a screwdriver there, he soon emerges from the depth's of the engine with a broad grin.

JOE  
There -- now we'll see if the old  
crow's in tune.

He jumps down from the steps, climbs in the cockpit and primes the carburetor.

JOE  
Swing the prop Fred.

Fred spins the prop three times.

JOE  
Contact.

Fred spins the prop again, the old Jenny fires up immediately.

Joe jumps down from the cockpit. He wears a smile from ear to ear.

JOE  
What were you saying about a  
certain type of bird?

FRED  
She sound's good -- I'll give you  
that.

JOE  
So we agreed on three fifty did we  
not?

Joe reaches into the back pocket of his coveralls, fishes out a handful of bills.

He carefully counts out three hundred and fifty dollars worth, hands them to Fred.

FRED  
I must be crazy letting you have  
that beautiful plane so cheap.

JOE  
Ya got any more you want fixin'?  
I'll sort the 'em out for fifty a  
go.

He returns to the cockpit, switches off, then jumps down, slaps Fred on the back.

JOE  
Pick her up tomorrow.

He exits the hangar.

Ted wanders over.

TED  
He's fixed it then.

Fred looks ruefully at his handful of bills.

FRED  
Plane's not the only thing he's  
fixed.

EXT. JOE'S AIRSTRIP - DAY

Joe lands his new baby smoothly.

As it comes to a standstill, John runs towards it.

JOHN  
(shouting above noise)  
She looks great.

JOE  
(shouting, waving)  
Climb aboard, I'll take you up.

John climbs nervously into the front seat. Joe motions for him to strap himself in.

Once Joe is satisfied his brother is safe he guns the engine, swings the tail and turns the plane to face the opposite way.

Pushing the throttle forward, the plane bumps along until the wheels unstick.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe leans forward, taps John on the shoulders.

He gives him the thumbs up.

JOHN  
(shouting)  
I'm fine.

EXT. THE PLANE FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Joe does a circuit, lands effortlessly.

EXT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe switches off, turns to John.

JOE  
Whatd'ya think?

JOHN  
I like it a lot.

JOE  
Let's go inside, plan what we're  
going to do next.

They both jump down from the cockpit.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Joe and his brother sit at a large table. In front of them are sheets of paper, pencils and various drawings.

JOE  
I think we should try round here  
first. See how local people like  
the idea.

JOHN  
Yeah, that's good . What we gonna  
call ourselves?

JOE  
How about 'Donnellan Brothers, for  
the ride of your life. Ten minutes  
for five dollars. See your house  
from the air'.

JOHN  
(taking it in)  
Trouble is, you'll be doin' all the  
work.  
(beat)  
What can I do?

Joe scratches his head, sucks a pencil.

JOE  
I know what'll keep you busy.

JOHN

Uh, oh.

JOE

I'll teach you how to look after the plane -- you know, gas, oil and the like. Also, you can keep an eye on the fabric. I'll show you how to mend it if it gets torn.

JOHN

(eagerly)

Yeah, I'd like that.

JOE

First, we've got to design some flyers to hand out and I'll have to paint a big sign to stand by the plane.

JOHN

Sounds good.

JOE

When I've done that, can you take them to Artie's print shop and get five hundred run off? Take the car -  
- make it easier for you.

JOHN

Yeah, okay.

Joe sets about designing the flyers.

He sits at the table, his tongue visible in the corner of his mouth.

John watches as Joe skillfully draws the outline of his plane on a piece of paper. He then picks another piece of paper for the words.

JOE

Think I'll use my title this time.

He reads his handiwork to John.

JOE

'Captain Joseph Donnellan and his brother, John, invite you to take a ride with them. See your town and spot your own house from the air. Ten minutes for \$5'.

He hands it to John.

JOE  
What d'ya think of that?

JOHN  
Looks good.

JOE  
We'll think up some stunts -- make  
it more exciting.

JOHN  
Like what?

JOE  
Oh, wing walking, having someone  
tied up suspended from the plane,  
and other stuff.

JOHN  
What good is that?

JOE  
Trick is, they've got to get free.

JOHN  
Hope you don't think I'm doing that  
stupid stunt.

JOE  
I thought you'd be jumping like a  
crazy dog wanting to volunteer.

He sees John's anxious look.

JOE  
I'm kidding.

JOHN  
Thank God for that.

JOE  
We'll pay some deadhead to do it  
for us.

They both laugh.

JOHN  
You happy with these?

He indicates Joe's handiwork.

JOE  
Yeah. They're good to go.



John picks up the artwork and the written words, makes to leave the room. Stops at the door, turns to Joe.

JOHN  
What are you doing tonight?

JOE  
Thought I might eyeball the church social.

JOHN  
Any reason?

JOE  
Not 'specially -- why?

JOHN  
(smirking)  
Just wondered.

JOE  
Oh.

JOHN  
Wouldn't be hoping you might meet sweet little Josephine, would you?

JOE  
(flustered)  
Hadn't given her a thought.

JOHN  
Hah!

He exits the room.

INT. ARTIE'S PRINT SHOP - DAY

It's a typical small print shop. Smells of grease and ink and makes lots of noise.

In the background a press THUNDERS.

John enters and explains to ARTIE what Joe wants.

ARTIE  
Five hundred eh?. When d'ya want 'em?

JOHN  
Soon as you can do 'em.

Artie takes a good look at the material.

ARTIE  
D'ya want this picture on the  
flyer.

John nods.

ARTIE  
Okay, it'll be ten bucks.

JOHN  
Much as that.

ARTIE  
Feller's got to live.

John fixes him a blank stare, exits the print shop.

INT. CHURCH HALL - NIGHT

A middling-sized hall - packed with heaving bodies jumping to a fiddle player and drummer contriving to make music of a sort.

Joe stands around listlessly, his eyes surveying the room. He sees everyone but notices nobody.

He jumps as a female voice startles him.

JOSEPHINE (JOSIE)  
Hello Joe.

He turns sharply to see a girl with long black hair and pretty features. This is JOSIE.

She flutters her bright eyes at him.

JOE  
(innocently)  
Hello Josie. Didn't think you'd be  
coming tonight.

JOSEPHINE (JOSIE)  
You know I usually come to these  
gatherings.  
(beat)  
Ooh, it's so hot in here.

She fans her face with her hands.

JOE  
Let's go outside. Music's not up to  
much anyway.

They laugh together and exit the hall arm in arm.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH HALL - CONTINUOUS

The night is clear. A hundred million stars shine brightly around the radiant moon.

Joe and Josie lean up against a wall and stare into each other's eyes.

JOSIE

So what are you doing with yourself these days Mr. Farmer boy?

JOE

Got myself a plane now. Goin' barnstormin' with John.

JOSIE

Sounds exciting Joe.

JOE

Starting in a few days over at a field in Sodus.

JOSIE

Marvel....

Joe places a finger on her lips.

JOE

(cutting in)  
Where'd we got to when I left to join the Canadian Air Force?  
(scratching head)  
Ah yes, I remember.

Joe pulls her close and plants a deep kiss on her moist lips.

JOSIE

Oh, Joe.

JOE

Don't say anymore.

They look into each others eyes again.

They kiss once more.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOES AIRSTRIP - DAY

Joe's painted sign leans against the plane.

INSERT: Sign:

'Let us take you for a ride. See your town from the air, pick out your own house. Enjoy the thrill of airplane travel. Ten minutes of wonderful aviation for \$5.'

BACK TO SCENE

John stands back and admires it.

JOHN

You've done a good job there, Joe.

JOE

Glad you think so. When we get the flyers we'll be on our way. Should'a had some tickets printed at the same time.

JOHN

I'll put the money in a tin for now.

JOE

Yeah, that'll do. See how we go. May not get any customers.

They smile together.

JOE

We'll zoom over the town and drop flyers from the plane.

EXT. PLANE COCKPIT - DAY

John drops flyers off in handfuls.

He watches as they stream through the air.

Some are caught in the slipstream from the plane and swirl like mad things until the rowdy air passes them by.

Others waltz down gracefully.

JOE

(thumbs up, shouting)  
Well done.

ON THE GROUND

A little girl sees the leaflets fluttering down. One lands close. She picks it up and studies it for a moment, then runs out of shot.

BACK TO SCENE

Joe makes a graceful turn, heads back to base.

EXT. JOE'S AIRSTRIP - LATER

The Jenny lands flawlessly.

Joe switches off and jumps down.

John follows.

JOHN

What now?

JOE

Food and drink'd be good.

JOHN

No, I meant, what do we do now with the barnstorming idea?

JOE

First we'd better see if dad wants any help with the farm.

JOHN

Yeah, you're right. Been neglecting things lately.

JOE

Can't expect dad's support if we stop helping him. We'll catch up with the barnstorming on Saturday.

JOHN

Can't wait.

EXT. SODUS FIELD - DAY

The Jenny shines like a new pin.

Early morning sun reflects off the engine nose, while a slight breeze rocks the wings.

Joe stands by the plane hoping that the town's population would turn out to marvel at his pride and joy.

He shades his eyes and peers down the road that passes as his rudimentary landing strip.

Suddenly he notices a few stragglers coming their way.

JOE  
People coming.

JOHN  
Many?

JOE  
'bout twenny, I reckon.

JOHN  
If they all want to go up that's a hundred dollars.

JOE  
If they all want to go up we'll be here all day.

JOHN  
Think of the dough you'll make.

The people walk into the field, but hang back. All except young JIMMY BROWN, seven, who walks up to the plane.

He has a very mischievous grin which makes him look cheeky.

JIMMY  
You gonna fly again, mister?

JOE  
Yup.

JIMMY  
Can I come?

JOE  
You'll have to sit on somebody's knee if you do.

JIMMY  
Can't I stand up?

JOE  
You'll have to have a safety harness on. Can't go up without it.

JIMMY

Oh.

Joe looks at the crowd of people which has grown to about fifty.

Cupping his hands he calls out to them.

JOE

Come on ladies and gents. Who's gonna be the first to see Sodus from the air?

A youngish man walks over to Joe.

YOUNG MAN

Five dollars, yeah?

JOE

That's right.

The man hands Joe five silver dollars, who passes them to John.

JOE

Jump up in the front.  
(remembering Jimmy)  
Can you take this young lad up with you? He'll have to be strapped in.

YOUNG MAN

All right.  
(to Jimmy)  
Come on son.

He holds out a hand then hoists Jimmy aboard.

Joe motions to John to swing the prop. Then he shouts,

JOE

Contact.

John swings again and the engine fires immediately.

Joe taxi's to the take off point. Looks over to the front seat, ensures they are both safely strapped in. Satisfying himself that they are he sits down, pushes the throttle lever forward.

The Jenny picks up speed and leaves the bumpy turf below its wheels.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe flies over the town. The young man whoops and hollers as he sees places he recognizes and points them out to young Jimmy.

ON THE GROUND

The ten minutes is soon over and Joe returns safely to the field.

He switches off and jumps down. The young man helps little Jimmy out. John catches him.

JIMMY

That was great!

YOUNG MAN

(exuberant)

That's the best five dollars worth  
I've ever had.

JOE

Tell your friends.

His hair is tousled and his cheeks beetroot red, but he goes off whistling.

A queue of people are waiting to get their own five dollars worth.

An OLD MAN approaches Joe.

OLD MAN

Is it safe in that there flying  
thing o'yourn?

He points to the Jenny.

JOE

Why it's safe as ....

Joe struggles to find an example of safety.

John comes to his rescue.

JOHN

(cutting in)

Houses.

JOE

There you go, safe as houses.



OLD MAN  
Five dollars each?

JOE  
Yes.

OLD MAN  
Is there a reduction for two?

JOE  
(smiling)  
There's only one of you.

OLD MAN  
Me old girl wants to come an' all.

He waves to an old bent-backed crone of a woman in the crowd who shuffles forward.

OLD MAN'S WIFE  
(cupping an ear)  
What's he say?

OLD MAN  
Nuthin'.

JOE  
Okay, eight dollars for the two of  
you.

The farmer hands Joe eight loose dollars. Joe gives them to John.

OLD MAN  
Can we get on now?

JOE  
Who's going first?

OLD MAN  
Can't we go together?

JOE  
No, it's not safe.

OLD MAN  
(protesting)  
You said it's safe as houses.

JOE  
I can only take one passenger at a  
time.

The old man and his wife mumble between themselves. The wife steps forward.

OLD MAN'S WIFE

I'm first.

Joe helps her up. She slips and slides. Eventually she's seated and strapped in.

Joe climbs up, waves to John to swing the prop. Three swings then he gives the thumbs up to Joe.

JOHN

Contact.

Joe switches on, waves to John.

He gives the prop a mighty swing, the engines crackles into life. A tongue of flame shoots from the exhaust.

Then they're off.

John watches as the plane picks up speed.

He sees the plane taxiing away, lifting off and doing a circuit.

Ten minutes later Joe returns with a slightly chastened old girl.

Joe helps her out.

JOE

Did you enjoy that?

OLD MAN'S WIFE

What?

JOE

(raised voice)

Have you enjoyed it?

OLD MAN'S WIFE

No!

Joe motions to the old man.

JOE

Your turn.

OLD MAN

Don't think I want to now.

JOE

Why?

OLD MAN

Oh, all right then as long as it's safe. If I must I must.

Joe looks at his brother. Eyebrows raised, frustration shows.

JOE

Come on then climb up, let's get going.

OLD MAN

(pleading)  
You sure it's safe?

JOE

Brought your wife back didn't I?

OLD MAN

(shakily)  
Guess you did, son.

Eventually the old guy is in and harnessed up.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe does a steep climb then, at 1,000 feet, sends the Jenny into a dive.

The ground zooms toward them.

Screams are heard from the front cockpit.

Joe smiles mischievously.

He pulls the Jenny up in time to land the plane gently and comes to a stop.

ON THE GROUND

The old man quickly unbuckles himself, stands up in the front cockpit and turns to Joe.

OLD MAN

(fuming)  
You dang near scared me to death.  
What you wanna do that skylarking  
for?

JOE

(innocent expression)

Oh, didn't you enjoy it? I was going to do a loop-the-loop. But I heard you screaming. Didn't know whether you were having a good time or not.

OLD MAN

Well I shan't be coming with you anymore.

JOE

(softly to himself)

Now ain't that a shame.

The old man gets out and walks away, mumbling to himself and anyone who's interested.

Joe cups his hands together like a make-believe megaphone.

JOE

Who's next?

A pretty twenty-something female waltzes up to him. She flutters her eyelashes provocatively.

GIRL

Guess it's me.

JOE

Okay, climb aboard.

She hands him her five dollars, makes to get on the plane, then turns to Joe.

GIRL

Can you give me a hand please?

JOE

Why sure I can.

He puts his arms round her waist and lifts her on to the wing. She manages to climb into the cockpit unaided.

GIRL

(turning to face Joe)

My those are strong arms.

JOE

(blushing)

Can you strap yourself in please.

The Jenny takes off, does its necessary sweep over the town and lands elegantly.

The girl leaves the cockpit and contrives to fall in to Joe's arms.

GIRL

Thank you. You're a very good pilot aren't you?

JOE

I appreciate that comment ma'am. Thank you.

GIRL

Do you need any help? I'd be prepared to do wing walking for you.

JOE

Tell you the truth, me and my brother just started this lark. Hadn't thought about wing walking.

He beckons John over.

JOE

This young lady has just said she'd like to do some wing walking for us. What'd'ya reckon?

JOHN

Think it'd be a good draw. Get crowds to watch that.

JOE

Could charge more and pay this young lady.

(to Girl)

What'd'ya say, ma'am?

GIRL

Sounds good.

JOE

Can't keep calling you ma'am. What's your name?

GIRL

Some people call me Penny, but my given name is Penelope.

JOE

What shall we call you?

PENNY

I like Penny.

JOE

Okay, Penny it is. You from round these parts?

PENNY

Yeah, you're on my dad's farm.

She laughs at the sight of Joe and John's faces as they exchange glances with each other.

JOE

Well that's really useful. Now we know how to get hold of you when we've made up our mind about this wing walking business.

Penny waves goodbye, exits the field.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

The two brothers relax in easy chairs in their parents comfortable sitting room.

It's bright and airy with big panoramic windows.

JOE

What d'ya think about this wing business?

JOHN

Worth a try. We could mix it in with taking people up to see their town.

JOE

What about Penny, she might need her folks to give permission? It's pretty dangerous too. I saw a barnstormer over in Lansing and the girl had to climb out the front cockpit and crawl along the wing holding the struts.

JOHN

Sounds terrifying.

JOE

Anyhow Penny, says she's willing to give it a go.

Joe goes quiet. His face shows he's concentrating hard on the task ahead.

EXT. PLANE FLYING - DAY

Joe flies over the town, buzzes a few low buildings. Scares a car driver chugging along on the highway and makes a field of cows scatter.

PLANE COCKPIT

John throws the leaflets out, whooping and hollering as he does so.

JOE

Think they know we're coming now?

People line the streets as the plane flies low.

Some children wave as they pass over.

JOHN

Yeah, they know.

JOE

(shouting)

I'll fly to Penny's place -- speak to her.

John nods.

EXT. SODUS FIELD - AFTERNOON

Joe lands the plane in the same field as before.

Jumps down and makes for Penny's house.

It's a tumble-down shack of a place and Joe climbs a few stairs to the front door.

He knocks, and the sound of SNARLING DOGS rushing to tear at the woodwork is heard.

Joe steps back in alarm as the door is opened a few inches and the face of a large dog with even larger bared teeth peers round it.

He is relieved when a human face appears. This is old MRS. STEVENSON. Older than Methuselah by the look of things.

MRS. STEVENSON  
(croaky voice)  
If you're selling, we don't want  
it.

JOE  
No, no. I came to see Penelope.

MRS. STEVENSON  
Well she's not in.

The croaky old woman goes to shut the door.

JOE  
Can you tell me when she will be  
in?

MRS. STEVENSON  
No.

The door begins to close.

JOE  
It's about a job.

The door opens slightly. The dog is still there, growling and  
baring its yellow teeth.

MRS. STEVENSON  
Well, why didn't you say so.

Joe kicks at the wooden porch floor.

MRS. STEVENSON  
(pointing)  
She's in the strawberry field over  
there.

The door shuts again, and this time it's final.

Joe sets off in the direction the old woman indicated.

He soon sees her trim figure bending down picking  
strawberries.

He calls out to her.

JOE  
(shouting)  
Penny.

She looks up and waves, then make her way to Joe.



PENNY

Hi.

JOE

You'll have to get your mom and dad to give you permission to help us.

PENNY

You've met dad -- he was the one who let you use his grass field for your plane.

JOE

Yeah, he's all right. What about your mom?

PENNY

I don't have a mom, she died 'bout ten years ago.

JOE

I'm very sorry to hear that. Who's that woman at your house?

PENNY

She's my gran. Blames dad for mom dying young.

(changing the subject)

I'll talk to dad later.

JOE

We're going to Lansing in a couple of days. Shall I call tomorrow?

PENNY

Yeah. I'll be in this field picking strawberries.

Joe shakes her hand, walks back to the plane.

INT. BARN - DAY

Joe is fixing up a cage for Penny to hold on to while wing flying.

John saunters in.

JOHN

How's it going?

JOE

Okay, I guess. Just about finished.

John inspects the cage.

JOHN  
How'd's it fit to the plane?

Joe picks it up.

JOE  
I'll show ya'.

EXT. JOE'S AIRSTRIP - DAY

The plane is silhouetted against a leaden sky as Joe and his brother approach.

JOE  
I'll go on the top wing, you pass  
it up when I call.

Joe climbs aloft, inspects the area where the cage is going, turns to John.

JOE  
Okay.

John hands the cage up to Joe who checks its position. Satisfying himself that it's okay, he climbs down, admires his handiwork.

JOE  
Looks good. Just got to fix it.

John gives a waxen smile.

They are interrupted by a girl's voice.

JOSIE  
Hello again boys.

JOE  
Oh hi there, Josie.

JOHN  
Miss Josephine.

JOE  
Good to see you again.

She points to the wing cage.

JOSIE  
What's that for. Don't tell me  
you're sending John up there?

JOE  
No, it's for Penny. John was too  
chicken-livered to do it.

JOSIE  
Who -- who's Penny?

A slight flicker of jealousy crosses her lovely face.

JOE  
She's the girl who's going to do  
the fancy stuff for us.

JOSIE  
Uh, huh.

JOE  
Never asked her. She just put  
herself forward.

JOSIE  
Where you doing your 'storming  
next?

JOE  
Oh, we're going to Lansing on  
Sunday.

JOSIE  
And is Penny going to be there?

JOE  
Yeah, she'll be flying the wing.

JOSIE  
I see.

EXT. LANSING - ILLINOIS - MORNING

Joe buzzes the town before landing at the airstrip. John and Penny arrive together in the Model T shortly afterwards.

Joe takes off his goggles, stands up in his cockpit, and looks around.

He spots a group of people already on their way.

JOE  
Folks coming.

He picks up a home-made megaphone, hands it to John.

JOE  
 (smiling)  
 Whip 'em into a frenzy.

JOHN  
 Don't know whether I can.

JOE  
 Just tell 'em to come closer, then  
 we can explain all.

JOHN  
 (through megaphone)  
 Roll up, roll up, ladies and  
 gentlemen. We've got a special  
 attraction today. This young lady,  
 (he points to Penny)  
 is going to perform a death defying  
 stunt.

Penny curtsays to the assembled crowd of men, women,  
 toddlers, older children and a varied assortment of dogs.

Even a curious cow in a nearby field looks over a fence.

Some people cheer and there's a sprinkling of AD LIB chatter.

JOHN  
 As I was saying...

A shout of 'GET ON WITH IT' comes from somewhere in the  
 crowd.

John won't be beaten.

JOHN  
 This young lady is going to fly  
 with Captain Donnellan. But she'll  
 be outside the plane -- ON THE  
 WING!

Cue OOH'S and AAH'S.

A man calls to John.

MAN  
 Thought you were giving rides --  
 that's what it says on this.

He holds up one of the flyers.

JOHN  
 All in good time, friend.

The man turns to someone next to him and mutters something.

Joe whispers into Penny's ear. She climbs onto the bottom wing then expertly pulls herself on to the top.

She straps herself into the cage, shouts to Joe.

PENNY

All secure.

Joe climbs into his cockpit. John turns the prop.

JOHN

Contact.

JOE

Contact.

John swings the prop again and the engine roars in to life.

Joe pushes the throttle forward and taxi's down the field.

He looks up at Penny - she seems okay.

Joe turns his plane round, guns the engine and lifts off perfectly into the wind.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Joe's face shows concentration and concern for Penny.

JOE

(shouting)

You all right up there?

Penny doesn't hear him.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

A general HUBBUB of voices, some raised, others murmuring as they watch the tiny plane with its extra bit of streamlining.

A couple of men go up to John. Faces set in a worried look.

MAN #2

She going to be all right, mister?

MAN #3

Don't think it should be allowed.

JOHN  
She asked to do it. Nobody made  
her.

MAN #2  
Still don't think it should be  
allowed.

John gives a sigh of relief as they walk off.

He is about to go for gasoline when he hears a familiar  
voice.

JOSIE  
Hello John.

He turns and faces Josie.

JOSIE  
I take it that's Penny up there?

JOHN  
Yeah -- that's Penny.

JOSIE  
Might as well stay and say hello.

She points at the plane now approaching the landing area.

People begin cheering and clapping as the plane taxi's close  
to the waiting crowd.

As the engine dies they CLAP, WHOOP AND HOLLER, as Penny  
gracefully jumps down.

She looks a little chilled but still manages to curtsy  
again.

JOE  
Hi Josie, how long've you been  
here?

JOSIE  
A coupla minutes. Aren't you going  
to introduce us?

JOE  
Sorry, this is Penny -- Penny this  
is my very good friend Josie.

They nod 'hello'.

Penny goes over to Joe, throws an arm round him.

PENNY

Are we going up again, Joe boy?

Joe does his best to dislodge the arm without being ungracious.

JOE

Not today, Penny. Got to take people up now.

(turns to Josie)

Do you want to be first?

JOSIE

(curtly)

No thank you.

JOE

You'd enjoy it. Do it for free.

JOSIE

Thank you. No.

Joe turns to kiss her cheek, she turns away.

He is embarrassed by her action.

JOE

(to John)

Are you gonna whip up a bit of enthusiasm?

JOHN

Okay.

(on megaphone)

Who's for a ride, see your town from the air, pick out your own house. See what others are getting up to.

Josie exits into the crowd.

The first to step forward is a middle-aged bloated woman. She has a fearsome look as she marches up to John.

FEARSOME WOMAN

Here ya're.

She thrusts five dollars into John's hand.

FEARSOME WOMAN

Are we going straight away.

JOHN

Soon as we get the engine going.

## FEARSOME WOMAN

Good. Haven't got all day.

John ushers her to the front cockpit. Her bulk is a hindrance to climbing aboard. John hesitates before helping. At last the big woman is in, John points out the harness.

The poor little Jenny seems to groan as the fearsome woman wrestles with the safety straps.

Joe moves up to his brother. His eyes twinkle.

JOE

Might need some extra lift.

John has to turn away to chuckle.

JOE

We'll need some more gas when I get back.

John gives the thumbs up. Goes for extra gas.

TEN MINUTES LATER

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

The plane returns and as Joe jumps from the Jenny he is approached by a man in a snazzy jacket and black trousers.

On his head, a straw boater.

This is FRANK MOZZELLO, a flying circus operator. Naturally, he has the compulsory cigar.

He also has sharp features and an almost bird-like manner with his hands.

FRANK

Who's the boss?

JOE

Guess I am.

Frank holds out a hand, introduces himself.

JOE

How can I help ya?

FRANK

Ya ..er, ya enjoying this routine, son?



JOE

Yes.

FRANK

How'd'ya like to come and work for me?

JOE

We're quite happy just doing this.

FRANK

How much ya making?

JOE

Enough. Anyway, what ya offering?

Frank turns away, looks at the plane, then turns sharply back to face Joe.

FRANK

I own the Mozzello Flying Circus. You'll have heard of us, naturally.

JOE

Can't say I have.

FRANK

(rubbing his chin)  
It's a bit remote up here I suppose.

Joe looks as if his hackles might be rising.

JOE

Suits us.

FRANK

Listen kid. The future's in the big outfits. Ya know, considerable money.

He rustles thumb and forefinger together.

JOE

Money's not everything. Anyway where would we fit in to your flying circus?

FRANK

Saw your young lady friend on the wing. Impressive. You could do that for me.

(beat)

Can you do loops?

JOE  
Standing on my head.

FRANK  
With her on the wing?

JOE  
Too dangerous.

FRANK  
Kid, a flying circus is all about  
danger. That's what brings the  
crowds.

JOE  
I'm not risking Penny's life for  
any circus act.

FRANK  
Okay, okay you can do loops and  
some wing flying. Come on kid,  
what'd'ya say?

JOE  
I'll talk it over with my brother.  
Where would Penny fit in?

FRANK  
She could be a crowd puller. She's  
a mighty fine looking woman.

JOE  
How do we get in touch?

FRANK  
Where ya operating next.

JOE  
Peoria. Next Sunday.

FRANK  
I'll see ya there.

He disappears into the waiting crowd.

LATER

The crowd has dwindled to one or two people including a  
cheeky-faced boy.

BOY  
Can I stand up there.

He indicates the cage.

JOE  
Come on then.

Joe lifts him into the cockpit, jumps in himself then hoists him onto the wing.

BOY  
Are we going...?

He points up.

JOE  
'fraid not

The boy looks devastated.

Joe lifts him down.

He looks for Penny and John. Sees them sitting in the Model T, walks over.

JOE  
That guy I was talking to wants us  
to join his flying circus.

JOHN  
What did you say?

JOE  
Told him we'd be at Peoria on  
Sunday. He said he'd see us then.

JOHN  
Like it best as we are.

JOE  
Me too.  
(to Penny)  
What about you?

PENNY  
Can't we just stay like this?

JOE  
Trouble is, we'll get squeezed out  
with the big operators. See what he  
says on Sunday.

EXT. PEORIA - ILLINOIS AIRFIELD - MORNING

All three principal characters are here. Joe polishes various bits of the Jenny. John and Penny sit in the car.

Joe is lost in his thoughts and is startled by a commotion just O.S.

He turns to look and is surprised to see Frank Mozzello berating a FLYER standing by his plane.

He struggles to hear the conversation.

AT THE FLYER'S PLANE

FRANK

You'll do what I say, d'ya hear.

FLYER

It's too dangerous.

FRANK

What are you talking about.  
Everyone else can do it, why not  
you?

FLYER

I'm not doing it and that's all.

Mozzello throws his hands in the air dismissively and walks away.

As he does, he notices Joe by his plane and walks over.

BACK TO SCENE

FRANK

Well, well if it isn't our wing  
stunt champ. How are we my friend?

JOE

I'm fine thank you. I only do the  
flying. Penny's the wing stunt  
champ.

He gestures to the flyer.

JOE

What was all that about?

FRANK

Oh no matter, just a little  
disagreement. It was nuthin'.

JOE

Didn't sound like nuthin'.

FRANK  
These things happen.

He takes a large drag on his cigar.

FRANK  
Have you thought anymore about my offer?

JOE  
Against my better judgment, we'll join you.

FRANK  
So you'll finish here and then move to Charlevoix to join up with the rest of the boys and girls.

JOE  
(curious)  
What sort of footing are we on with you?

FRANK  
You work for me, I guarantee you money -- even if we don't turn a profit.

JOE  
Not sure about that. Y'see we're all working for ourselves.

FRANK  
Son, the big money is in flying circuses, not doin' your own thing.

JOE  
No, I don't think we'll join you.

FRANK  
How much you making -- hundred -- one fifty?

JOE  
'bout that.

FRANK  
I'll pay you two hundred every time -- what'd'ya say?

JOE  
Answer still stands.

Frank takes his straw boater off, throws it on the ground.

Joe wanders over to John and Penny.

JOE  
Just put my foot in it, I reckon.

JOHN  
Told him what to do with his offer?

JOE  
Yeah, and he offered two hundred  
even if we weren't working.

JOHN  
Who cares? I'd still rather be  
independent.

PENNY  
So would I.

JOE  
Still think I've burnt my boats.  
Perhaps we should think a bit more  
about it.

JOHN  
Perhaps you're right.

EXT. AIRFIELD - MORNING

It's a beautiful sunny morning. The deep blue sky is dotted here and there with clouds floating like cotton wool balls.

Joe, John and Penny are sitting under a wing of the old Jenny.

The grass field has about two dozen men, women and kids standing idly around. A large dog barks incessantly. A baby cries.

Lots of AD LIB chatter and an occasional belly laugh adds to the commotion.

Suddenly Joe spots the straw boater of Frank Mozzello among the crowd.

He looks over to Joe, waves. Joe nods.

JOE  
Don't look now but that Frank guy  
is over there.

He nods in Frank's direction.

JOE

He must be keen to get us on his team. Think I might say yes this time.

JOHN

So you're givin' in?

PENNY

Don't think I want to work for him, he's creepy.

JOE

At least it would be regular money, and Penny, you'd get a proper wage. It'd help your dad back home. Can't be easy for him now with you away so much.

Joe closes his eyes for a moment.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

Joe is helping his dad on the farm. John is there too and together they are collecting strawberries and putting them in a hand cart. They are both laughing and joking.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOHN

(nudging Joe)

Hey, don't go to sleep. We've got to get things moving.

JOE

I was just resting my eyes, not asleep.

JOHN

That circus guy is coming our way.

Joe stands, sees Frank almost there.

FRANK

Hello again. Have you thought any more about joining me.

JOE

You're a nagging sort, I'll grant you that.

FRANK

Well, *WELL?*

JOE  
Yeah, we'll join. What's next?

FRANK.  
You carry on here as usual today.  
On Friday come down to Charlevoix  
where the circus is set up.

JOE  
Okay. That seems fair enough.

FRANK  
To show you I'm genuine here's a  
hundred for goodwill.

JOE  
Can't accept that Mr. Mozzello.

FRANK  
Frank, Goddamn it, call me Frank.

JOE  
I'm Joe, this here's my brother  
John and our friend Penny.

Frank stares at the boys.

FRANK  
The likeness is uncanny. Just knew  
you were brothers.

He tips his boater to Penny.

FRANK  
How do you put up with them Miss  
Penny?

PENNY  
I keep 'em in check.

She giggles loudly, they all laugh with her.

FRANK  
Friday, ten o'clock okay?

JOE  
We'll be there.

Frank gives a mock salute, turns and exits.

JOE  
Really burnt our boats now.



JOHN  
You're the one who played with  
matches, Joe.

JOE  
(changing the subject)  
Come'n, we've got to get this show  
on the road. Grab the megaphone and  
get 'em aroused.

John picks up the megaphone.

JOHN  
Roll up, roll up ladies and  
gentlemen. See the daredevil young  
lady as she defies death on the top  
wing. Later take a ride with us,  
see your town, your house, see  
who's visiting your house. Five  
dollars for ten minutes. Come on,  
who's first -- its only 50 cents a  
minute.

A joker steps up.

JOKER  
I've only got a dollar. Can I have  
two minutes worth?

JOHN  
What you gonna do, jump out when  
your time's up?

The joker laughs and walks away.

EXT. CHARLEVOIX FIELD - MICHIGAN - MORNING

Joe lands at Charlevoix, Michigan. The Model T is already  
there.

A local oompah band is playing something completely  
forgettable.

Frank is in a large podium area, megaphone in hand.

The trio walk down the field to speak to him.

Frank spies them and immediately jumps down, pumps Joe's  
hand, pats John on the back and pecks Penny's left cheek.

FRANK  
Welcome my friends. Glad you  
decided to come.

JOE  
Said we would.

FRANK  
(to Joe)  
We'll start with you. How about a  
loop to get them all fired up?

JOE  
I'll do that if you want me to.

FRANK  
(softly)  
Joe, *JOE*, listen. We've enticed the  
mayor here today. Give a good show  
and I'll introduce you to him  
later.

JOE  
(matter of fact)  
Okay.

The trio walk to the plane. Joe turns to John.

JOE  
Do we need more gas in her John?

JOHN  
Not if you're going straight up and  
down. We'll gas her up before you  
do the wing thing.

Joe nods, climbs in the cockpit, puts harness on and goggles.

Motions to John to turn the prop.

John turns then puts thumbs up.

JOE  
Contact.

John swings the prop and the engine fires.

Joe waves to Penny, taxi's away.

#### THE PLANE COCKPIT

He climbs almost vertically and at 1,000 feet throws the  
stick forward.

As the plane goes into a steep dive he pulls the stick back  
and begins to climb again.

At the top of the climb he throws the stick forward and the little Jenny seems to hang in mid air before it does a perfect loop.

ON THE GROUND

The assembled crowd cheer.

Mozzello looks mighty pleased.

Joe lands and cuts the engine.

He jumps down and looks at John and Penny.

JOE  
How was that?

PENNY  
Perfect.

John moves off to replenish the gas tanks.

MOZZELLO  
(moves to Joe.)  
Right Joe, how about some near miss stuff -- I'll give you some colored paper to toss out while you're up there.

JOE  
Okay by me.

FRANK  
Just fly straight and level at Lindbergh. At the last minute turn to the right, the right, got that?

Frank gestures 'right'. Joe nods.

JOE  
Straight and level, then turn to the right. Got it.

FRANK  
Chuck the colored stuff out as you move away.

JOE  
Yeah, okay.

Lindbergh runs up to Joe.

LINDBERGH  
I'm Charles.

He offers a hand.

JOE  
Glad to know you. I'm Joe.

LINDBERGH  
Have you done this stunt before?

JOE  
No.

LINDBERGH  
As long as you remember to turn  
right at the last minute you'll be  
okay.

Joe laughs.

JOE  
I'm very pleased to hear that  
Charles.

LINDBERGH  
Guess we'd better be going.

Frank climbs into his rostrum.

FRANK  
Now laydeez and gennelmen -- we  
offer you a real exciting  
challenge. who'll be the first to  
turn away from a mid-air collision?  
Will it be cheerful Charles.  
(he points to Lindbergh's  
plane)  
Or will it be jovial Joe?

Joe smiles at the remarks.

JOE  
(to himself)  
Jovial Joe's on his way.

Both planes are revved up and raring to go.

Joe sits in his cockpit, a determined expression on his face.

Charles likewise. He shakes a fist at Joe. Joe responds.

Mozzello waves a flag and away they go.

Climbing to 250 feet they split off. Now they're facing each other.

Joe guns his throttle and makes for Charles' DH-4.

When it seems certain that there will be a mid-air collision they both turn off as instructed.

Joe climbs and as a gesture of bravado does another loop-the-loop, dropping his colored paper as he does so.

He then returns to earth amid a rousing cheer.

He waves a hand to the crowd. Taxi's to a stop and climbs out.

JOHN  
Had my heart in my mouth.

JOE  
*You did!*

PENNY  
That was spectacular.

JOE  
(modestly)  
Probably looked more dangerous than  
it was.

Charles joins them. He holds out a hand, slaps Joe on the back.

LINDBERGH  
Nice work, Joe.

JOE  
You did all right an' all.

LINDBERGH  
We'll meet up later. Have a stiff  
drink or three.

JOE  
Okay.

They are brought back to earth, literally, by Mozzello.

FRANK  
(in megaphone)  
And now we come to the most daring  
feat ever.  
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

See this young woman defy gravity as she stands on the top wing of Captain Donnellan's plane. Watch in amazement.

The crowd cheer.

Joe goes over to Penny and whispers to her.

She smiles and prepares to climb on the wing.

JOE

Okay, John.

John spins the prop, the plane moves off.

As he taxi's he calls to Penny.

JOE

(shouting)

All okay?

PENNY

(shouting back)

Yeah.

Joe takes off, makes a circuit of the field. On his way back he starts to climb.

At 300 feet he turns back to the field.

Then he dives steeply towards the crowd.

As he gets closer some kneel down, others bow down. One poor soul puts his hands together as if praying. The brave remain upright as the little plane screams towards them.

Overall there is a buzz of excitement and fear.

Mozzello looks on in admiration at the stunt.

FRANK

(softly)

Come on Joe, part their hair.

Joe, now less than 10 feet above them, pulls away at the last moment.

There is visible relief written on the faces in the crowd.

Some laugh noisily.

But as Joe pulls away there is loud cheering and clapping.

Mozzello looks gratified.

FRANK  
 (to himself)  
 We've got a new star.

IN THE COCKPIT

JOE  
 (shouts to Penny)  
 Didn't frighten you too much did I?

PENNY  
 Thought you weren't going to pull  
 out of that dive.

JOE  
 I'm too important to kill myself.

ON THE GROUND

Joe lands, helps Penny down.

PENNY  
 Mozzello is walking over with  
 somebody.

They chat and laugh among themselves as Frank and the mystery  
 man get closer.

FRANK  
 Joe, I have the honor of presenting  
 the mayor of this city.  
 (beat)  
 Mr. mayor, this is Joe, the pilot,  
 John his brother and I'm sure  
 you'll recognize this young beauty,  
 the fearless star of the last  
 event.

MAYOR  
 I really enjoyed the last stunt.  
 Didn't think you were going to make  
 it though. Must have been pretty  
 frightening for you young lady.

PENNY  
 No, because I trust Joe. He's one  
 of the best pilots in the world I  
 reckon.

MAYOR

Is that so?  
 (to Joe)  
 You've got an admirer son.

JOE

(modestly)  
 We're just good friends, really.

They all enjoy the remark.

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - EVENING

Charles, Joe, John and Penny sit at a table laden with various drinks and snacks.

There is animated talk between them, the occasional laugh.

Throughout the bar there is AD LIB chatter.

LINDBERGH

That certainly was some stunt, Joe.

JOE

Never tried that before. Reckon Penny was the brave one though.

She blushes.

JOE

Anyway Charles, what you got in mind after this circus business?

LINDBERGH

Oh, stupid things like designing a monoplane -- even dreamt about flying to Paris from New York.

JOE

Wow, that's some ambition.  
 (beat)  
 But wouldn't a monoplane be dangerous. I mean won't the wings drop off?

LINDBERGH

Not if they're strengthened.

JOE

New York to Paris -- how you going to fill the gas tanks while you're flying?



LINDBERGH

Have spare tanks fitted. That'll solve the problem.

JOE

Be a bit weighty though.

LINDBERGH

(dreamily)

Depends if I get the right plane -- we'll see.

(changing the subject)

What about you?

JOE

Farming and flying. What else is there?

LINDBERGH

What a glorious combination; armfuls of muck -- or lung fulls of pluck.

They all laugh heartily at Lindbergh's comment.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Joe and John sit at the kitchen table. Joe yawns, get's up and stretches.

JOE

I'm pooped. My lovely soft bed is calling.

JOHN

You remember what Charles asked you. I mean about your future?

JOE

Yeah.

JOHN

Have you really thought about it?

JOE

Saw an ad by the state of Michigan. They wanted mail pilots -- that sounded interesting.

JOHN

Go for it.

JOE  
D'ya think I should?

JOHN  
You can't bum around with stunt  
piloting for ever. I'll go back to  
helping dad.

JOE  
Penny'll be disappointed.

JOHN  
(emphasizing)  
You've got to think about yourself.

JOE  
Don't like to let folks down.

JOHN  
She'll get over it.

Joe gets up from the hard kitchen chair.

JOE  
P'raps. Good night. Another tough  
day tomorrow.

Joe exits the room.

John is lost in his thoughts.

EXT. PEORIA - MORNING

The three lie under a wing away from the merciless morning  
sun and wait for another day of stunts to begin.

JOHN  
Thought any more 'bout what you  
said last evening?

JOE  
Just keeps 'goin' around in my  
head.

JOHN  
Grab it Joe. Can't do this for  
ever.

He waves an arm expansively round yet another field.

JOE  
'spose not.

PENNY  
What's the matter, Joe?

JOE  
Just this mail pilot's job that's  
come up.

PENNY  
So you'd be leaving this?

JOE  
'Fraid so. Maybe not yet.

He smiles at Penny.

JOE  
Come on, let's go and talk about  
what we're goin' to thrill the  
folks with today.

They walk around the field, Joe waving his hands in the air  
to demonstrate to Penny what is expected of them both.

John watches them, shakes his head.

LATER

Penny stands by the plane. John prepares to swing the prop.

Joe is in the cockpit, suited and goggled up ready to try  
another daring stunt.

FRANK  
Now ladeez and gennelmen, Captain  
Donnellan will attempt a maneuver  
from one thousand feet as he  
prepares to sideslip down to five  
hundred feet before a long slow  
victory roll over your very heads.  
Be amazed, be thrilled, and show  
your appreciation by clapping and  
cheering him.

John swings, Joe gives the thumbs up.

JOE  
Contact!

John gives an almighty heave on the prop.

The engine gives a lusty roar.

Joe begins to taxi.

John and Penny wave.

The assembled crowd cheer him on.

Joe taxi's away and up into the blue.

He climbs to 1,000 feet until his plane is just a small dot in the sky.

The crowd shield their eyes as they strain to watch Joe.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Joe looks out his cockpit, smiles.

He sees the crowd as ants against the green of the field.

He throws the stick forward and begins a steep dive.

On his way down he moves the left pedal forward to move the rudder.

EXT. THE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

The Jenny begins to sideslip to the left.

To the right, then left again.

Joe does a complete victory roll at 300 feet.

An almighty cheer breaks out from the crowd.

Joe does a circuit then lands to a thunderous round of applause.

EXT. AT THE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

The plane comes to a stop near the crowd.

Joe drops to the ground and waves to them.

There is much WHOOPING and HOLLERING.

Joe bows.

JOE

A fella could get used to this.

JOHN

You won't get this much affection  
if you're a mail pilot.

JOE  
Maybe not.

JOHN  
I'll gas her up. You just bask in  
the attention.

A small boy runs up to Joe. He has a notebook and pencil in  
his grubby little hand.

BOY  
Can I have your autograph mista?

Joe smiles, and obliges.

BOY  
I'm going to be a pilot when I'm  
grewed up.

JOE  
How old are you?

BOY  
Fourteen.

JOE  
Give it two or three years then  
hunt me down. I'll teach you, if  
you still want to fly.

The boy opens and closes his mouth like a stranded fish.

JOE  
Okay?

The boy regains speech.

BOY  
(mumbling)  
Thank you.

Joe pats him on the back.

JOE  
See you later.

John and Penny share a smile.

The boy exits, clutching his precious notebook.

PENNY  
He's a lovely man. Always has time  
for others.

JOHN  
He's always bin like that. Never  
could say no.

John walks off to get more gas. Joe is checking the plane.

Penny sits on the warm grass.

PENNY  
That was a lovely thing you did for  
that young boy, Joe.

JOE  
It was nuthin' really. I was like  
that at his age. Couldn't wait to  
get up there.

Joe looks up at the sky.

FLASHBACK

Joe is driving the Model T. A biplane flies overhead.

JOE  
(softly)  
That's for me.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

PENNY  
Some people would have told the boy  
to get lost.

JOE  
Yeah, but I ain't some people.

John returns dragging a large drum brim full of gas.

JOHN  
Should be enough here Joe.

JOE  
Will be. We'll make the next stunt  
the last for today.

Joe goes to pick up the drum. John goes to help.

JOHN  
I'll give you a hand to pour it in.

JOE  
Thanks, it's darned heavy.

JOHN  
I know, I dragged it here.

They begin to fill the wing tanks.

Mozzello joins them.

FRANK  
Ready boys?

JOE  
Give us two ticks.

FRANK  
Okay. I'll announce what you're gonna do. Crowds gettin' a bit restless.

JOE  
We've got a new routine today.

FRANK  
What is it?

JOE  
Watch.

Joe is satisfied he has enough gas. He climbs into his cockpit, motions for Penny to climb aloft and strap herself to the cage.

When he's okayed with her he motions to John to swing the prop. He swings it three times.

JOHN  
Contact.

JOE  
Contact.

John swings until large resistance is felt then lets it swing back to start the engine.

Joe lets it idle for a moment, then thumbs up to John and away.

In the b.g. Mozzello announces Joe's routine.

FRANK (V.O.)  
Ladeez and gennelmen, Captain  
Donnellan and the lovely Penny are  
going to thrill you today as they  
....

His words are drowned out as Joe's plane roars overhead.

He climbs to 500 feet then turns and makes his way back to the field.

As they approach the crowd, Joe rocks the wings and Penny begins to throw colored papers which fan out.

Joe continues to rock the plane from side to side which makes a very pretty scene as the colored papers spread.

The plane turns, climbs and makes its way back towards the crowd.

Joe rocks the wings as before then climbs to 100 feet before heading back to the assembled throng.

As they pass overhead Penny gives a yell and Joe reaches into a bag at his side and throws handfuls of colored paper over the crowd.

He makes a circuit and lands.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

Joe taxi's to his position on the strip. Cuts the engine and jumps down. Penny, windswept but happy, joins him.

The crowd CHEERS and CLAPS.

Mozzello rushes up, slaps Joe on the back and hands him a cigar. Joe brushes it aside.

FRANK

That was pretty good, Joe. What's next?

JOE

Frank, I'm giving it up. Seems to me there's more to life than stunt flying.

PENNY

You can't....

She disappears behind the plane. SOBBING is heard.

Frank stands wide-eyed and speechless.

John looks relieved.

JOE

Sorry folks. That's the way it is.



He looks at John.

JOE  
You were right John. Got to think  
of myself sometimes.

JOHN  
'Bout time n'all.

JOE  
Better speak to Penny.

He exits behind the plane.

FRANK  
Well, if that don't take the  
biscuit.

He shakes his head, marches off. Smoke trails behind him as  
he puffs aggressively on his cigar.

ON FRANK

FRANK  
(muttering to himself)  
If that ain't a kick in the head.

BEHIND THE PLANE

Joe comforts Penny. She is visibly upset.

JOE  
Sorry kid. Just feel I need to move  
on.

PENNY  
(tearfully)  
I loved this life.

JOE  
Couldn't have done it forever.

PENNY  
I know.

She begins crying again. Joe holds her close.

JOE'S VOICE  
Times were changing for me. Did a  
bit more barnstorming then got  
hooked up to my dear sweetheart,  
Josephine.

CLOSE ON JOE FOR FLASHBACK

Joe and Josephine leave a Catholic church as a married couple. John throws confetti. Mom and dad follow the happy pair. (Organ music over.) Joe kisses Josephine.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOE'S VOICE

Penny went back to pickin' strawberries. Mom and dad invited Josie and me to set up home at the farm until we were ready to get our own house.

SUPER: Three years later

INT. DONNELLAN FAMILY FARM - BEDROOM

Joe is packing his belongings for his trek to Beaver island.

Joe's young and lovely wife, Josie, petite with lustrous black hair and bright eyes enters the room carrying a pile of freshly washed laundry.

JOSIE

That's the last of it, then Joseph.  
Don't forget your long johns.

Gershwin plays softly on the bedside radio.

Josie stands behind Joe, tenderly touching his shoulder in the hope he will change his mind.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Rain and sleet expected in the  
North East. Old man winter isn't  
done with us yet, folks.

Joe quickly turns off the radio and turns his attention toward Josie.

He adds the remainder of the freshly washed clothes to his leather-bound duffle bag and zips it shut.

He sits down on the bed and pulls her, standing, tightly towards him.

JOE

(looking up)

My love, I must do this. I was the one who got the contract out of all those fellas. You know this is a big deal for us.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Maybe we can finally look at buying  
our own place....

Josie hangs her head and begins to cry. Joe touches her face softly.

JOE

(brushing hair from her  
face)

What do I always tell ya? Huh? I  
got a horseshoe with our names on  
it. Nothin's gonna touch me out  
there. It's a straight run to  
Beaver Island.

JOSIE

Joseph, you can't be lucky forever.  
I don't know if I can -- being here  
with mom and pop is fine and all,  
but I feel like I don't have a  
husband most of the time. I'm  
lonely, Joe.

Josie begins to sob. Joe stands up and holds her close to him.

JOE

(whispers)

It ain't nothing to do with luck,  
beauty. Just another day at work.  
The Lord saw me through goin' up  
with those rookies for two years,  
he'll see me though this one, too.

JOSIE

(pleading)

Joseph you know what the fog can be  
like this time of year. Can't you  
just -- how about -- let it pass,  
Joseph. A couple of days and we'll  
be rounding the corner into spring.

JOE

If I don't leave tomorrow, supplies  
and mail will be another four days  
out. My contract will be  
jeopardized. People up there at  
Beaver need 'em. This fog will  
clear out as quick as it comes. Not  
to worry, my love.

Josephine pulls herself together -- and away from Joe,  
knowing he won't back down.

JOSIE

Well, there's no changing your mind, as usual. I need to help with lunch for everyone.

Josie leaves the room hurriedly, wiping her face with her apron. Her sadness has turned to frustration.

Joe sits down on the bed, before continuing packing.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Joe descends the stairs, bag in hand.

The Donnellan family kitchen buzzes with daily lunchtime preparation. The entire brood has the lunchtime routine shipshape, Joe's mother at the helm.

Josie removes loaves of bread and fruit pies from the oven.

MARY

(without seeing Joe)  
Joseph will you be eating before you take off? I'll set another place if need be.

JOE

No ma. Gotta get 'er up and running. Time's a tickin'.

Josie pauses upon hearing her husband's voice making sure she doesn't react too visibly.

Bonnie, Joe and Josie's two and a half year-old daughter with strawberry blond curly hair and a round face, comes toddling over to her mother and pulls at her skirt.

Josie scoops her up with a kiss and places her firmly on her hip.

BONNIE

Daddy going to fly?

JOSIE

Yes, honey. He will be back very soon.

Joe walks over to Josie and Bonnie.

JOE

(kissing Bonnie on the cheek)  
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Daddy is going to bring his special girl back a dolly with a real pretty dress.

Satisfied, Bonnie smiles and reaches her arms out to Joe.

MARY

You're going to spoil that one, Joseph. No two year old needs that many dolls.

Joe grabs Bonnie and gives her a big hug.

JOE

(eyes locked to Bonnie's)  
A little girl can never have too many dollies. Come with daddy while he gets his boots on. See ya, ma. Back in a heartbeat.

Mary, who has not missed a routine step in the lunchtime routine, shakes her head in disapproval.

She remains standing in her place and wipes her hands on her apron.

MARY

Spring crops will be sprouting by the time you get back. Lots'a work to do. You take care now, Joseph.

Mary resumes her lead in the assembly line.

Joe and Josie lock eyes. Advanced longing washes away the past fifteen minutes.

Bonnie's soft curls bounce with Joe's step as he makes his way to the foyer with her in his arms.

Josie trails behind them.

JOE

I'm off then, my loves. I'll be back in time to see those tulips come up in the backyard. This nasty stuff is the last kick at the can before spring is sprung. Over 'for you know it.

Joe hands Bonnie back to Josie.

JOSIE

Joseph, please be safe. We always miss you so much.

JOE  
Always, my love.

Joe gives Josie a tender peck on the lips.

He steps out on the porch, bag in hand and raises his collar high. The wind is crisp for April.

Grey mist rolls through the fields as spring tries to remove the white-knuckle grasp of winter.

Josie stands at the door stroking Bonnie's hair hoping the obvious risk in the conditions will make him turn around.

Collar high, Joe turns to take one last look at his wife and daughter. He sets off down the stairs for the airstrip.

MARY  
(shouts from kitchen)  
Come'on now Josephine, we're  
waiting on you to say grace.

Josie closes the door, a tear in her eye and Bonnie on her hip.

EXT. JOE'S LANDING STRIP - DAY

A predictably unpredictable northern Michigan April day on the Donnellan family farm. The air is cold and tired with a winter hangover. The overzealous tulips flanking the farmhouse pucker tight toward the pale sun.

Duke Ellington's new song EAST ST LOUIS-TOODLE-OO is the BACKGROUND MUSIC.

Joe completes his initial flight checks and assumes the position in the cockpit ready for take-off to Charlevoix.

He checks for all the basics: compass, maps, blankets, flashlight, tent, all supplies required to get him there unscathed.

Joe's father, JOHN sr emerges from the barn moving hurriedly but decisively toward Joe's plane.

JOHN SR  
(yelling)  
Joseph wait! Your mother has a  
package for you. JOSEPH!

The engine mutes his shriek. He runs faster still shouting as the plane starts its heavy crawl along the muddy field.

Joe sees his father out of the corner of his eye and stops the plane in its tracks, literally; the field is muddy from the snow and his wheels are buried deep in an inch of mud.

John sr approaches the plane.

JOHN SR

Helluva day, Joe. We're wondering  
if maybe you shouldn't hunker down  
here for the night, leave on sun up  
instead.

John sr hands the box to Joe.

Joe feigns interest in his father's concern while looking through the box. It is expertly arranged with meat pies and cookies on one side, a Bible on the other. A small family photo is tucked into the cover.

JOE

(chuckles)

Thanks pop. Ma always sends a pic.  
I expect she thinks I will hit my  
head on the way down and wake up an  
orphan.

Joe looks concerned.

JOE

Pop, I gotta get her up or Beaver  
Island will be another three days  
out by the time I load up in  
Charlevoix. I've already been  
through this with Josie. I've got  
responsibilities, mail contract was  
a real nasty one to land; I don't  
want Lindbergh or another 'stormer  
getting it. We need this money.

Joe and his dad survey the ominous sky.

JOHN SR

(pauses)

Well, all right lad. You just take  
'er easy up there in the wild --  
grey -- yonder, you got everything  
you need?

Joe goes through his leather duffle and realizes the long johns are missing. He doesn't have the time or inclination to go back and get them.

JOE

Sure do. I will be back muckin' up your field before you know it. We gotta start planting the strawberries.

JOHN SR.

All right son. You take care of yourself. If things start lookin' too scary up there, you head back. Understand?

Joe looks away, adjusts his head gear and glances out into the field.

JOE

Sure pops, will do.

Joe looks at his father and nods goodbye.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE AND JOSIE'S BEDROOM

EAST ST LOUIS TODDLE-OO croons from the bedside radio.

Bonnie plays with her doll on the floor nearby.

Josie puts away the rest of the laundry on the bed from earlier. She discovers Joe's long johns under a towel and sheets.

She rushes over to the window to see if she has time to run them out to him

She sees John sr standing alone on the airstrip watching his son's plane trail into the grey sky.

INT. CHARLEVOIX AIRSTRIP/HANGAR - DAY

The hangar doors are closed half way. The wind rattles the large wooden entries and snow swells in the field.

Arthur, mid-twenties, a former Sodus boy with a thick beard and broken smile, is lead mechanic at Charlevoix.

Grounded pilots sit around tables by the hangar office chatting, drinking, and aimlessly passing the time until the storm passes.



Arthur approaches Joe who hurriedly performs his pre-flight checks and loads the mail and supplies destined for Beaver Island into the plane compartment.

ARTHUR

You made it, Joe! Swell day for a flight, huh? You're not planning to take her up to Beaver in this -- are you -- you can't be?

Joe continues his hurried flight checks.

JOE

No, friend. I am not planning to -- I'm going to. Be 'outta your hair before know it.

ARTHUR

Out of your mind is more like it -- why don't you take a seat and wait it out like the others over there -- like Don over there.

Arthur turns toward the small group of pilots and mechanics standing in a circle.

They laugh uproariously at the bad jokes of DON FREEMAN.

Don is a fortysomething pilot best known for youthful barnstorming and middle-age scotch swilling. His generous midsection tries to emancipate itself from his bomber jacket.

ARTHUR

Okay, maybe not exactly like Don.

(beat)

It could be mid-August with the sun ablaze in crystal blue skies and he'd still be stuck up in the lavatory drinking coffee.

Joe musters an out of breath laugh and looks Don's way to acknowledge the joke, but remains focused on finishing his checks.

JOE

Flight in from Sodus was a breeze. We've all seen this stuff change in a heartbeat. Up over the Grand Lac and this nasty stuff will be a distant memory.

ARTHUR

I dunno Joe -- radio is sayin' this isn't going to pass for another twenty four hours. You know April 'round these parts. After a cold snap like this fog is going to start rollin' over the lake like nobody's business.

Mechanic #1 walks over to the plane with a large bag of mail and box of supplies.

MECHANIC #1

That should do it, Joe. All she wrote. I wouldn't go up for all the tea in China today, man. Best of luck.

Mechanic #1 walks away shaking his head in disbelief.

ARTHUR

(serious)

You know I could ground you. It's my call. Don't matter what Coolidge does or plans to do. I run this place. I make the call. Another day isn't going to...

Joe stops dead in his tracks and looks out of the hangar and up at the blustery sky. He walks over to Arthur and stands in front of him meeting his gaze.

At that moment, a YOUNG MECHANIC runs out of the office.

YOUNG MECHANIC

(yells)

Just heard from Beaver. Looks like we're gettin' the brunt of it. Nothing all the way up to the Sioux from there. They haven't had a lick of snow for a coupla days.

Arthur holds Joe's gaze, unfazed by the new information.

JOE

(quietly pleading)

Look, I know the risks, but you know if I run into trouble out there I can fix myself up. I've got extra parts and supplies. This supply run is already behind.

Joe looks away, then turns back to Arthur

JOE

Don't ground me. I've got to keep this contract before Coolidge gives them all to the big boys he has in his pocket. We all know it's a matter of time, Arthur. You know I could do this run in my sleep.

Arthur's gaze softens slightly.

ARTHUR

All right, all right, enough grovelling. This is all you, Joe. There ain't nothin' between here and Beaver. Nothin' but bears and frozen loons. You'd have to be nuts to try this stunt. I'm not going to be able to stop you, am I?

Joe gives Arthur a wide grin and a friendly slap on the arm.

He runs back to his plane and resumes his hurried checks.

JOE

(excited)

Thanks, Arthur. You can say I told ya so. I will buy you a beer on my way next run.

ARTHUR

One beer? Make it five. I'm going to need a dozen after this.

JOE

You got it, Arthur. All the drinks you want on me. And if I make it, you'll recommend me for more supply runs, right?

Joe winks and laughs a little.

ARTHUR

Don't push your luck, Donnellan. Now get outta here before I change my mind.

Arthur stands, arms crossed, steadily unsure of his decision.

Joe finishes his pre-flight checks and jumps in the cockpit.

JOE

Contact.

Arthur swings the prop, the engine fires and Joe begins to pull the plane out of the hangar toward the airstrip.

All of the men in the hangar stop what they are doing and look at Joe.

Don and another young pilot, equally drunk but more steady, run over to where Arthur stands watching Joe.

DON  
 (slurring)  
 What the hell! Is he crazy? That  
 DH-4 will never make it in this!  
 The wings will snap like a  
 brassiere on prom night.

Arthur recoils from the waft of stale liquor on Don's breath.

ARTHUR  
 Nothin`was gonna stop him.

Arthur puts a supportive arm round Don.

ARTHUR  
 Sheesh. Let's get you some real  
 coffee before you breathe on a gas  
 tank and combust one of my girls.

DON  
 That boy has a death wish.

Arthur grabs the coffee cup out of Don's hand and chokes back a swig.

ARTHUR  
 Nah. I'm pretty sure he thinks he  
 has nine lives.

EXT. CHARLEVOIX AIRSTRIP/PLANE COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Joe's plane idles on the airstrip just before take-off.

He puts his goggles down and grabs the Bible from the care package his mother gave him. He extends his arm until the visibility is zero and he can no longer see the Bible.

He brings it back toward him about four inches from his face where he can finally see it. He places it in a nook in the seat beside him.

He continues down the airstrip.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT

JOE  
(muttering to himself)  
It's Beaver Island, now or never.

EXT. THE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

The little plane rises into the fog.

LATER

The weather is worsening. Snow begins to obliterate the sharp edges of the plane.

Fog mixes with the snow to make a hell on earth combination.

Wind whistles deafeningly through the wing struts, muting the roar of the engine.

The little plane rocks threateningly as the blizzard rages.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Joe struggles with the controls. He wipes snow from his goggles.

His brown flying suit is flecked with blinding white rime which drips from his suit on to the cockpit floor.

A SPLUTTER is HEARD from the engine.

JOE  
Come on old girl, don't let me down  
here.  
(quietly)  
Wish I'd listened to 'em.

He looks out the cockpit.

He sees ice sheets appearing intermittently through the fog and snow which covers the water of Lake Michigan.

Joe wipes his goggles again.

EXT. THE PLANE - DAY

Amidst severe wind and sleet, Joe's engine begins to SPLUTTER again and choke.

## IN THE COCKPIT

Joe knows something is very wrong when he hears a wing tear,. He surveys the situation with a flashlight through broken bits of visibility.

He sees that a wing has indeed torn.

He is losing power. There is no choice but to land directly on the desolate white landscape.

The engine dies.

Time freezes as solid as the ice drifts below, and for a moment, Joe and the plane seem to float in calm silence. He is at the mercy of the elements.

His heart pounds out of his chest; he is about thirty feet from landing.

Ice drifts are making their way into view as visibility increases. The prop spins a few times from the force of air.

## EXT. THE PLANE

The plane blasts to the ground with a really loud, metallic bang.

## INT. PLANE COCKPIT

The force knocks Joe's head against the back of the cockpit.

The wings are torn between ice ridges.

The Bible is projected from the cockpit into a pile of snow.

## EXT. ON THE ICE - CONTINUOUS

Groggily, Joe manages to crawl out of the plane which is sliding around on the frozen surface.

Wind whips at Joe's flying suit as he searches a locker on the side of the plane.

Finding a length of steel rope and an iron spike he begins to lash the undercarriage to the ice with a hammer.

He knows that he has to get off the ice and goes to the cockpit where he retrieves his maps and compass.

He checks his flashlight, and satisfying himself that it's okay begins to walk on the ice toward Garden Island.

The wind intensifies as Joe manages to find his balance on the ice.

He dodges ice floes.

His thoughts turn to his nice warm home and his lovely wife and daughter.

JOE  
I should'a listened to Josie. Hope  
they're both okay.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

Joe, Josie and Bonnie are playing games on the carpet. Bonnie is laughing and clapping her hands. Joe has his arms round Josie. They laugh as Bonnie tries to catch a ball but misses.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Joe, his face almost white over with the driving snow, presses on at a slow pace.

His flying suit is almost covered, too. He's beginning to resemble a walking snowman.

He checks his compass. But it's difficult with his thick flying mitts.

JOE  
(muttering)  
Could do with three hands for this  
job.

He tries to balance the compass and flashlight in one hand. In the other are emergency supplies he removed from his plane.

Eventually he takes a bearing and satisfies himself that he's on course for Garden Island.

JOE  
Hope someone's got a kettle boiling  
on the island. What I'd give for a  
hot drink right now.

He carries on in the direction his compass indicated.

JOE

Darned good job I kept myself in  
shape -- never've managed  
otherwise.

The wind WHISTLES eerily round the ice floes. Joe shields his eyes to see if he will make landfall anytime soon.

He sees a bleak landscape of ice and snow.

Occasionally a piece of driftwood slides across the ice like a crazed skater.

Joe trudges onwards, occasionally checking his bearings with map and compass.

He pulls his goggles off the top of his head and considers covering his eyes with them.

JOE

Lot of use you are.

He places them back where they had been.

JOE

Wonder what they're doin' at home?

INT. SITTING ROOM - DONNELLAN FAMILY HOME - SAME TIME

Josie, Mary, John sr and John jr gather around an ancient radio.

Bonnie is sitting in a comfy chair playing with a doll.

No one daring to speak in case they miss a precious piece of information during a news broadcast.

ON THE RADIO(V.O.)

... four party leaders gather at the White House to meet with the President. There's still no news of the missing mail pilot Captain Joseph Donnellan who took off from Charlevoix yesterday for Beaver Island. Communication with the island is impossible at present as extreme weather has dragged the phone lines down. The news from Germany is getting bleaker as Herr Hitler....

John sr switches the radio off, turning to the family.



JOHN SR

I'm sure our son'll be okay -- you know what he's like; he'll be able to take care of himself. He'd have been in touch if he could. Wires are down is all.

JOSIE

I just hope you're right. Miss him so much.

Her eyes fill with tears and she runs from the room.

John sr and Mary exchange worried glances.

EXT. ON THE ICE - CONTINUOUS

Joe puts one foot in front of the other, very slowly, very carefully.

He takes an old pair of binoculars from a pocket deep inside his flying suit and scans the horizon.

JOE'S POV/ BINOCULAR MASK

As he searches back and forth he returns to one particular spot. It's fuzzy but it looks like land. It's only about a mile away.

BACK TO SCENE

Joe cheers.

JOE

Looks like I will make it. That's Garden all right.

Now he's feeling brighter.

ON JOE

His face lights up in a broad grin.

His eyelashes have frozen spikes hanging from them.

BACK TO SCENE

His heart is cheered and the pace of travel quickens.

JOE

Be good to be on solid ground agin'.

A pair of seagulls fly close, and swoop down to look at this strange object on their territory.

JOE

All right for you, you varmints.  
Lend me your wings for a bit and  
I'll soon get off this darned ice  
and out of your feathers.

He gives a broad laugh at the absurdity of his remark.

Joe looks through his binoculars again.

JOE'S POV - BINOCULAR MASK

Now the island comes into sharp focus. He can see people, see people doing what people do. Kids skating on ice patches. A couple of women chatting. An old man with a stick making his way carefully on a treacherous road.

He sees some young children staring at him and waving.

In the now still air he can HEAR children's voices -- see horses with steam erupting from their nostrils. Hear a dog BARKING.

BACK TO SCENE

Joe does a little jig on the ice.

JOE

Praise be dear Lord for sparing me  
in this ordeal.  
(beat)  
Must try to get a message home,  
folks'll be worrying.

Joe gets close to the shore of Garden Island and notices that the ice is getting thinner.

JOE

Better watch my step or my  
prayer'll have bin in vain.

The ice starts CREAKING as Joe gets within a hundred yards of a snow-covered beach.

He walks carefully putting his feet down gently to avoid slipping into the icy water.

At last Joe is able to reach the shore and steps onto solid ground.

He puts his hands together, mouths silently.

JOE  
Thank you.

EXT. GARDEN ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

As Joe begins his walk through Garden Island he becomes aware of people following him.

He turns and sees children, some as young as five and some as old as sixteen, walking behind him, some mimicking his weary steps.

JOE  
Bet you've never seen anyone  
dressed like this 'afore?

CHILD #1  
Who are you mista?

JOE  
I'm a pilot -- plane croaked over  
there.

He points across the ice field.

CHILD #2  
How'd you get here then?

JOE  
I walked.

The children CHATTER excitedly at this news.

JOE  
Say, is there a telephone on the  
island -- do you know?

CHILD #3  
Don't know. Ask 'em over there.

The child points to what appears to be a general store.

JOE  
Thank you very much.

Joe stumbles across a cart track with deep ruts to a dilapidated store. He opens the door and enters.

INT. GENERAL STORE - MOMENTS LATER

It's a very old and Spartan establishment. A musty smell pervades the atmosphere.

Dusty shelves, empty of goods, boxes piled on top of each other on the floor and a general air of total neglect.

From this garbage appears an old woman who startles Joe by apparently appearing from nowhere.

OLD WOMAN

Yes.

JOE

Pardon me ma'am, I was wondering if you had a telephone?

OLD WOMAN

What is this, a mail office? No I don't have a telephone.

JOE

Can you tell me where there will be one?

(beat)

You see I need to let my folks back home know I'm safe.

OLD WOMAN

You had an accident?

JOE

Plane crashed, out there.

OLD WOMAN

There's a mail office up the road a piece. Try there.

JOE

(sarcastically)

Well thank you and good day.

Joe exits, stung by the unfriendly attitude of the store keeper.

JOE

(to himself)

And good riddance.

He allows himself a cheeky grin.

JOE

They can't all be like her surely.

He continues walking in the direction the old woman indicated and comes to a small establishment proclaiming to be 'The United States Mail Service'.

INT. MAIL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

He enters into a small, but cleaner, establishment where a smartly dressed young man is sitting behind a counter.

He gives Joe a weird look.

YOUNG MAN

Sir.

JOE

Do you have a telephone here, I need to make an urgent call to Sodus -- to my family -- let them know I'm safe.

YOUNG MAN

We have several phones here, sir. But won't do you any good because all the lines are down. We've had a terrific storm and....

JOE

(impatiently)

I know about the storm. I was caught up in it.

(beat)

So you can't help me?

YOUNG MAN

I'm afraid not.

Joe shrugs, exasperated.

JOE

Thank you.

He exits.

EXT. GARDEN ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

JOE'S VOICE

Must get to the mainland, but I need to get to Hog Island first. Should be able to walk over the ice to there. That's my only chance of making contact with my Josie.

INT. DAY - SODUS GENERAL STORE - DAY

Josie blasts into the store in a flurry, visibly upset, with no time for small talk.

The shopkeeper greets her knowing exactly why she is there. She grabs a newspaper from behind the counter.

SEAMUS

We heard about Joe. So sorry to hear ma'am -- the radio didn't say much, but....

JOSIE

(hurriedly)  
He will be fine, Seamus. May I have the paper, please?

Josie places twenty five cents down and grabs the NEWS-PALLADIUM from the counter.

She walks with her back to Seamus and furiously thumbs through the pages until she reaches the headline:

INSERT:

RESCUE PARTY SEEKS AIRMAN

BACK TO SCENE

Tears well in her eyes and desperation crosses her face as she reads the article. She leaves the store and returns to John sr, sitting in the buggy. She gets in the buggy and stares into space.

He sees the look on her face and takes the paper from her to read the same headline.

JOHN SR

Have faith, Josephine. My boy will make it home to you and Bonnie.

Josie remains silent for a moment until tears overcome her, welling in her eyes, filled with sheer desperation.

JOSIE

(soulfully)  
He's the one who is lost, but I'm the one who can't find my way.

John sr, remains silent and prods the horses.

EXT. GARDEN ISLAND - MUCH LATER

As Joe reaches the northern tip of Garden Island he looks across the ice field to Hog Island.

It appears to be a short trip. Joe's experience tells him it might be otherwise.

JOE'S VOICE

(unsure)

Doesn't look too much, but can't really tell. Should be able to make it before dark though.

EXT. ICE WALK TO HOG ISLAND - DAY

He gets to the shore line. If anything, the ice is thicker here, it should make the journey easier.

Joe steps out tentatively testing the ice first. He satisfies himself that it's solid and begins the perilous walk across.

There's the occasional CREAK as he goes forward. He ignores them and slowly advances.

Joe notices there's more water on top of the ice now and he tries to quicken his pace in case a thaw has begun.

JOE

Bet the old plane's gone through now. Hope the mail and supplies have been saved though.

(thinking aloud)

Expect the phone lines have been mended.

EXT. CRASH SITE - SAME TIME

A white speck comes into view, a dog sled edges forward and we SEE a biplane moored on the ice.

EXT. BIPLANE - SAME TIME

Joe's biplane, ghostly, eerily alone.

EXT. CRASH SITE - SAME TIME

The dog sled arrives at the spot where Joe's plane ditched.

The four dogs pant at full pace, their breath blown away like smoke from a chimney on a windy day.

The panting sounds like a locomotive struggling up a long slope.

It's a scene of desolation as the DH-4 slithers around on the ice, occasionally a wing bangs into an ice ridge with a spooky, hollow metallic sound.

On the sled are MICHAEL, a mechanic, thin, with arms like spaghetti.

Also on the team is ALVIN, Joe's mechanic, left behind at Charlevoix because his plane was overloaded with mail.

Scattered around the abandoned plane like confetti are letters the unceasing wind has ripped from the fuselage.

Lying wet and abandoned, frozen to the ice, the letters of good news, bad news and the odd bill or two will remain there until a spring thaw consigns them to the deep waters of Lake Michigan.

MICHAEL

Wonder where Donnellan has gone. No sign of him on Beaver. Oh well, lets see if we can get this old heap'a'junk off'a here.

He jumps from the sled and goes to a fuselage locker. Open now as wind moans around what's left of the wing struts.

MICHAEL

Looks like we've got a job and a half.

Alvin nods in agreement.

Michael giddily runs around the plane inspecting every nook and cranny.

MICHAEL

Just needs a little elbow grease mista. But first we need to rescue mail and supplies.

He goes to the locker and begins unloading the mail bags.

He throws them onto the ice, Alvin picks them up and loads them on the sled.

Medical and other essentials are unloaded and handed to Alvin who carefully packs them on the sled.

MICHAEL

We're gonna need extra dog teams and men to help get this beast outta her. Us two can't do it.



ALVIN  
Yeah, you're right. Be stupid to  
try.

EXT. THE ICE WALK TO HOG ISLAND - LATER

Joe continues on his trek to Hog Island.

He sees that Hog Island is indeed quite near now.

JOE  
Might get a hot drink on Hog -- God  
knows I need one.

He begins whistling a memorable melody reminding him of home.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

Joe and Josie are sitting in comfy chairs listening to the  
radio.

HOME SWEET HOME by the Paul Whiteman Orchestra plays.

Joe closes his eyes, taps his fingers in time to the music.

Josie watches him and smiles sweetly.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

EXT. ON THE ICE WALK TO HOG ISLAND - LATER

Joe becomes aware that someone on the shoreline is waving to  
him.

He gets the binoculars out and focuses on the character on  
the snowy beach.

JOE'S POV - BINOCULAR MASK

He sees a scruffy individual with ragged clothes. The man has  
a friendly face full of character. An unlit pipe dangles from  
his mouth.

BACK TO SCENE

Joe waves back.

JOE  
(softly)  
Natives seem friendly enough.

As Joe gets closer the man calls out.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 (Welsh accent)  
 I'm Johnnie, welcome to Hog.

JOE  
 (shouting)  
 I'm Joe.

A seagull, alarmed at human voices, circles overhead, CRYING OUT loudly.

Joe is close enough to see the man clearly now. He's about forty-five, an odd character who looks like a hot bath may do him no harm.

As Joe get's very close to the end of his dangerous journey he realizes that his requirement for a hot drink, and hopefully some food, are getting desperate.

JOE  
 Greetings, Johnnie. Ya got any food  
 and drink ya' could spare me?

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 Sure thing, friend. I'll share what  
 I've got.

Joe steps onto the snow covered beach.

He shakes hands with this half human, half wild animal.

JOE  
 Sure could do with some sustenance  
 right now, been walking for forty  
 hours.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 Where ya come from?

JOE  
 Crashed my plane other side of  
 Garden and walked from there.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 (incredulously)  
 WALKED?

JOE  
 That's about the size of it -- so  
 you see I could do with a few  
 things to keep me going.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

Follow me, my little cabin is at  
your disposal.

EXT. JOHNNIE'S CABIN IN THE WOODS - LATER

Joe and Johnnie approach a tumble-down log cabin set in a clearing in a wood. It has a tiny window and a rickety chimney leaning over at a crazy angle.

Joe's is wide-eyed with amazement.

It's not the Ritz but it's a place just as welcoming given Joe's trek.

JOE

Build it your self?

JOHNNIE HAWKS

It was a hunter's cabin.

JOE

Hunter's. What where they after,  
lions and tigers?

JOHNNIE HAWKS

(laughing)

Oh, elephants, crocodiles, that  
sort of thing.

(still laughing)

Think it was an excuse to get away  
from home for a while.

JOE

Can't be anything more dangerous  
than a rabbit can there?

JOHNNIE HAWKS

Thank God for rabbits -- my staple  
diet. But there's also a few deer --  
and ducks.

(beat)

Come on let's go in.

INT. JOHNNIE'S CABIN IN THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Johnnie leads the way into the cabin. Joe slowly follows.

If the exterior looked decrepit then the interior runs it a close second.

Joe surveys the scene; a straw mattress on a bare wooden bed, a pot-bellied stove, a chair that looks straight out of a Dickens novel and a rough looking plank balancing precariously on a tree stump acting as a table.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

What'd'ya think of my humble abode?

JOE

(stumbling over his words)

Looks like paradise to me, Johnnie.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

I'll get the stove roaring, put the coffee pot on -- then we'll have some rabbit stew -- how's that?

JOE

Great.

(beat)

Where d'ya get supplies from -- can't be a store on here?

Johnnie turns away from meddling with the fire.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

I trade rabbits, fish and ducks with a store owner in Cross Village. He takes my stuff, I take his.

JOE

How far is it to Cross?

JOHNNIE HAWKS

Well it all depends. If the wind's in the right direction you could spit cross the water and it'd land right in the middle of the village.

JOE

That's heartening news. I'll try walking across tomorrow. If you can put up with me tonight.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

You kin have my bed. I'll crash down in the chair.

JOE

I won't hear of it. I'm quite comfy here. I'll just wrap my flying suit around me to keep warm.

(beat)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

By the way Johnnie, hope you don't mind me asking, what's that accent of yours?

JOHNNIE HAWKS

Came from Wales a few years ago. Tried to settle in Chicago but too noisy for me. I like the quiet life -- sorry about the accent.

JOE

No, it's -- musical. Yeah, that's what it is -- musical.

Johnnie smiles.

JOHNNIE HAWKS

Not what some people say.

They both laugh.

LATER

All is still in the cabin. Dying embers in the fire cast strange shadows.

Johnnie snores.

Joe is trying to snatch elusive sleep. His mind wanders.

FLASHBACK

A church, bells peal, a young married couple walk hand-in-hand down a graveled path. People stand on all sides cheering and throwing confetti.

Joe and Josie, the happy pair, very much in love walk on.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

INT. JOHNNIE'S CABIN IN THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

A contented smile crosses Joe's lips.

He sighs, snuggling down in the chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNNIE'S CABIN IN THE WOODS - MORNING

Joe rouses from the chair, sluggishly stands, yawns and stretches.

There's no sign of Johnnie.

JOE  
 (to himself)  
 Wonder where...?

His question is answered as the door opens and Johnnie enters carrying a bundle of sticks.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 You were sleepin' like a babe.  
 Didn't have the heart to wake you.  
 I'll get the coffee on so you'll  
 have a hot drink to see you on your  
 way.

JOE  
 That's real kind of you Johnnie.  
 Need to get to a phone in Cross  
 Village, let my family know I'm  
 okay.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 Of course.

EXT. TIP OF HOG ISLAND - DAY

Joe and Johnnie are standing at the edge of the ice. Joe looks across to see the mainland.

JOHNNIE HAWKS  
 Just go straight to that point.  
 (he indicates)  
 Leads you direct to Cross Village.

JOE  
 I'm real grateful Johnnie. Been a  
 pleasure sharing your cabin.

They shake hands.

Joe sets off across the ice.

EXT. JOURNEY TO CROSS VILLAGE - SAME TIME

INTERCUT: JOE ON THE ICE - JOHNNIE ON THE BEACH

- Johnnie watches as Joe progresses over to Cross Village.
- Joe struggles on, wary of the strength of the ice here.

- Johnnie watches as Joe becomes a small dark figure slipping and sliding.

ON JOE

He sees what appears to be a dog sled team.

And the hot breath from the dogs gives the game away.

He is aware that a person on the team is waving to him.

Joe waves back.

JOE

Thank the Lord, I'm gonna get a ride.

As the sled gets close to Joe he sees Alvin.

JOE

Hi Alvin. God am I glad to see you.

ALVIN

Joe -- we've bin so worried about ya.

JOE

(cheekily)

Made lots of new friends. But how did you know I was here?

ALVIN

We've been following your trail after we found the plane near Garden.

JOE

Is it still there?

ALVIN

It is -- but I think it's damaged beyond repair. We got all the mail off though.

JOE

Thank the Lord for that.

ALVIN

(pointing)

This here's Peter Jensen. He's a fisherman on Garden. He told us about this strange creature who appeared from an ice field. We just put two and two together.

JOE  
I'm right grateful to you Peter.

Peter nods 'okay'.

PETER  
We'd better get going to Cross  
Village. Might be getting a bit  
treacherous now.

He turns the sled which is almost runner deep in water.

The dogs bark excitedly and strain to be off.

Joe climbs aboard. The ice creaks ominously.

He settles into a seat which has blankets on it. Joe gratefully pulls one round him.

PETER  
Mush, mush.

The dogs set off.

Joe closes his eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

- Joe is pacing around a living room. He looks nervous. Opens a door and listens.

- He hears nothing but a STRIVING noise.

- Suddenly, a baby CRIES.

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

EXT. JOURNEY TO CROSS VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Joe's eyes are still closed but now he has a contented smile.

Peter turns and looks at Joe.

PETER  
Poor fella's exhausted.

ALVIN  
After what he's bin through, can  
you wonder?



EXT. BEACH - CROSS VILLAGE - LATER

The sled has made it to the shoreline of Cross Village. As it moves from the smoothness of the ice onto the bumpy beach it jolts Joe awake.

He looks round in wonderment at the mainland.

JOE

Thank God. We made it.

ALVIN

Thanks to Peter here. We sure did.  
I'll phone the mail depot, get 'em  
to send two planes up for us.

JOE

I need to phone my family. They  
must be worried sick by now.

EXT. CENTER OF CROSS VILLAGE - LATER

Joe is in a mail office, picks up a phone.

JOE

Operator, I'd like a collect call  
to Sodus 5427 please -- yes I'll  
hold.

Joe drums his fingers on a shelf, shuffles his feet.

After what seems like an eternity he hears his mom's voice.

INTERCUT: JOE MAIL OFFICE and MOM/JOSIE DONNELLAN HOME

JOE

Hi mom -- it's Joe.

MARY

Joe, Joe -- my God -- how are you?

JOE

I'm fine mom. Very good to hear  
you.

MARY

We've been so worried Joe. I'll  
call Josie, she's been lost without  
you.

(calling)

Josie, it's Joe.

He hears hurried footsteps, sounds of the phone being handed over.

JOSIE  
*JOE, JOE*, darling how are you?

JOE  
 I'm okay, my love. Looking forward to seeing you all, that's for sure.

JOSIE  
 When will you get home?

JOE  
 Be there in a few hours or so.  
 How's my little Bonnie?

JOSIE  
 She's right here with me. Shout hello.

JOE  
 HELLO BONNIE DARLING.

He hears Bonnie SQUEAL with delight.

JOSIE  
 Hi there again, sweetie. Really want you back home.

JOE  
 Be there in a heartbeat, my love.

INT. DONNELLAN FARMSTEAD - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary HEARS a plane approaching and shouts to Josie.

MARY  
 Josie come quickly, I think Joe's here.

JOSIE (O.S.)  
 I hear him mom. Me and Bonnie are getting coats on to go out and meet him.

Josie comes down the stairs holding on to Bonnie.

She's breathless at the bottom.

MARY  
 Give him my love.

JOSIE  
Aren't you coming out with us?

MARY  
No -- it's only right and proper  
for you to greet him first, after  
all said and done you're his wife.

JOSIE  
But you're his mom.

MARY  
Go on now. I'm just pleased he's  
safe.

Josie gives Mary a peck on the cheek and exits.

EXT. FARMYARD - SAME TIME

She's just in time to see Joe land his new DH-4 on his home turf.

Josie picks Bonnie up begins running to greet Joe.

EXT. LANDING STRIP - SAME TIME

She arrives at the plane as Joe is leaving the cockpit. He sees her and Bonnie and waves.

JOSIE  
Oh Joe. Thought I'd lost you for  
ever.

JOE  
(laughs)  
Can't get rid of me that easy.  
(to Bonnie)  
How's my little darling.

BONNIE  
Hello daddy.

Joe put's an arm round Josie, holds Bonnie's hand. He sees his dad waving from the next field. Waves back.

JOE  
I'm desperate for a hot bath -- and  
a hot drink.

JOSIE  
What's first?

JOE  
Hot drink'd be nice.

JOSIE  
I'm sure it can be arranged.

INT. FARMSTEAD - KITCHEN - EVENING

Joe, Josie, Mary, John sr and John jr sit around the kitchen table. Dirty dinner plates show their evening meal has just finished.

JOE  
Boy, that was good medicine for an empty belly.

MARY  
When did you last eat Joe?

JOE  
Had some rabbit stew on Hog last night.

MARY  
Nothing since?

JOE  
Only fresh air and plenty of water. Never want to see any more water unless I'm bathing in it.

They all laugh.

JOE'S VOICE  
I know how lucky I've been escaping from the crash and the ice. But I might carry mails for a bit longer though.

INT. CHARLEVOIX AIRSTRIP - MAIL OFFICE - DAY

All the regulars are here, Arthur, Don, Alvin, Joe's mechanic, and a couple of grease monkeys.

Arthur goes to Joe, shakes his hand.

ARTHUR  
Good to have you back, man. Thought you were a goner this time.

JOE  
Wasn't too sure that I'd get back  
Guess I was lucky.

ARTHUR  
Next time you might listen to me.

JOE  
(mockingly)  
Next time.

ARTHUR  
(smiling)  
Got a trip lined up Joe. It's just  
a short hop to somewhere you might  
know -- Cross Village.

JOE  
Just escaped from there. Hardly  
worth getting airborne for.

ALVIN  
(grinning)  
I'll come with you. Can't have ya  
gettin' lost again.

JOE  
Be glad of your company.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - LATER

Joe is flying, he looks serious-minded.

JOE'S VOICE  
This life's okay, but poor Josie  
only sees me occasionally. It's not  
fair to her, or Bonnie. I was a  
flying instructor once. Gonna try  
it again. At least I'd be home  
nights.

INT. PIONEER AIR CLUB - DAY

SUPER: Early February 1930

Joe sits at a table with MONTY FREEMAN, forty-eight, a  
sweaty, portly man with a toothbrush mustache and protruding  
front teeth.

MONTY  
 We'd be glad to have you as a  
 flying instructor. You've obviously  
 got the experience we need.

Monty flicks through some papers Joe brought.

JOE  
 Are you very busy though?

MONTY  
 See for yourself.

He points to a chart which is full of names and dates.

MONTY  
 See what I mean?

JOE  
 When do I start?

MONTY  
 (giggling)  
 How about yesterday?

His shoulders shake at the enjoyment of this little joke.

MONTY  
 (calmer)  
 Seriously -- right away. Soon as  
 you can get out of being a flying  
 mail-man. That do for you?

Joe and Monty rise from the table. Shake hands.

JOE  
 Reckon I'll see you in a week then.

MONTY  
 That sounds good.

EXT. PIONEER AIR CLUB - DAY

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

Joe arrives in his dad's Model T.

Monty rushes out of the flying instructors office to meet  
 him.

MONTY  
 Hi ya, Joe. Made it okay in the  
 flivver, then.

JOE  
Yeah, she's a good old girl.

MONTY  
Tomorrow, get someone to drive you here, then you can fly home.

JOE  
That's mighty kind of you Monty.

MONTY  
Just pay for the gas -- okay?

JOE  
Fine by me.

MONTY  
I've got someone ready to go up. First lesson, so be gentle with him. Name of Richard King, 'bout your age -- okay?

JOE  
Wheel him out.

Monty brings out a shy-looking young man. He dresses smartly in a suit of the period and has a bright intelligent face.

MONTY  
Richard, this here's Captain Joe Donnellan. He's gonna look after ya.

RICHARD  
Pleased to meet you, Captain.

JOE  
Oh no need for that, Joe'll do.

RICHARD  
Thanks, Joe.

JOE  
Come on then we'll get aloft.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - LATER

Joe is letting Richard take the controls.

He notices the lad is sweating profusely.

JOE  
Everything okay?

RICHARD  
(unsure)  
Yeah.

JOE  
Don't hold the stick like it's  
gonna jump up'n bite ya.

RICHARD  
Just trying to keep the plane  
level.

JOE  
All right, you've had a coupla  
hours, think we'll call it a day.  
Just watch me as I land.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

Joe lands the Parks trainer smoothly. He and Richard climb out.

JOE  
Next lesson, I'll let you try a  
landing. Think you're ready?

RICHARD  
Yeah, if you're sure.

Joe pats him on the back.

EXT. DINER - DAY

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

It's one of those new flashy, chromium and glass places.  
Billboards promise food and drink at low, low prices.

A Ford station wagon cruises into the car park.

Richard King, twenty-eight-years-old, lean, mean and dressed for any occasion leaves the car followed by his six-year-old sister, Susie.

She's bright-eyed, full of energy - and noisy like most girls her age.

His mom, fifty three, and dad, fifty six also exit the auto.

They all make for the diner entrance.



INT. HANGAR - PIONEER AIR CLUB - SAME TIME

Joe checks the plane engine.

The engine cowl is off, Joe has greasy hands and oil smudges on his face. He's wearing a pair of messy overalls.

He removes a small part from the engine, blows through it and then, satisfied it's clean, replaces it in the engine.

INT. DINER - SAME TIME

Richard and his family are all seated. Richard has a milk shake, mom and dad have coffees while Susie is tucking into a large sticky bun.

The diner is half full and there's AD LIB chatter.

MOM  
(to Richard)  
Are you excited, Rich?

RICHARD  
Why, should I be?

MOM  
Well you do a landing today, don't you?

RICHARD  
Yes, I think so.

SUSIE  
Can I come Richard?

RICHARD  
No.

SUSIE  
(whiny)  
Why not?

She pouts her bottom lip.

RICHARD  
There's not room.

SUSIE  
I can sit on your knee

RICHARD  
 (patiently)  
 No, I'm flying the plane. You can  
 watch from the ground.

SUSIE  
 (petulantly)  
 S'pose I'll have to.

Dad notices Richard's hands are shaking.

DAD  
 You okay Rich?

RICHARD  
 Why?

DAD  
 Your hands are trembling. Never  
 seen that before.

Richard picks up his milk shake and almost spills it.

DAD  
 You *SURE* you're okay?

INT. HANGAR - PIONEER AIR CLUB - LATER

Richard enters, sees Joe working on the plane.

RICHARD  
 Hi, Joe.

Joe turns, checks his watch.

JOE  
 Didn't realize that was the time.  
 Anyway she's all ready and on top  
 line.

Joe gives Richard the once-over.

JOE  
 All okay for your next lesson?

RICHARD  
 (fake bravado)  
 Yeah, I'm ready.

JOE  
 I'll sit with you for a while, then  
 you can land, let me out, and take  
 her away all by yourself.

RICHARD

Okay.

JOE

Climb aboard, we'll get her up in  
the blue.

Richard keeps his hands in his pockets to hide his nerves.

He climbs into the passenger seat, buckles in.

JOE

Prime the carb.

Richard pumps the lever.

Joe swings the propeller three times.

JOE

Contact.

RICHARD

Contact.

Joe swings again.

The Parks Trainer roars into life.

Joe climbs aboard, fastens himself in.

JOE

Okay, Richard. Take her away.

Richard eases the throttle forward, the plane moves out of  
the hangar on to...

THE LANDING STRIP - OLD CHICAGO AIRPORT

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Richard guns the engine. The plane moves faster and faster,  
then lifts raggedly into the sky.

Richard is sweating.

Joe notices, peers out his window. A concerned look on his  
face.

EXT. OLD CHICAGO AIRPORT - SAME TIME

Mom, Dad and Susie wave handkerchiefs and cheer as they see  
Richard manage a fairly shaky take off.

The family watch as the plane climbs away.

MOM

Fancy, that's our Rich up there.

DAD

Yeah, boy's done good.

SUSIE

Wish I was with him.

The family keep watching as the plane becomes barely visible in the bright blue sky.

Susie waves her white handkerchief and keeps CHEERING.

EXT. PLANE - DAY

The plane is at a steady 1500 feet as it approaches the landing field.

INTERCUT PLANE COCKPIT - PLANE FLYING

THE PLANE FLYING

The Parks Trainer makes an unsteady turn to prepare for landing then drops steeply to 300 feet.

PLANE COCKPIT

JOE

You need to be lower, go round again.

THE PLANE FLYING

The little plane makes its perilous way round the perimeter again, dropping quickly to prepare for landing.

INSERT

Altimeter hovering around 200 feet

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - DAY

Joe looks out his window and sees the landing strip.

JOE

Okay Richard, I want you to attempt the landing now -- and relax a bit.

RICHARD

I -- I'll try. Sun's in my eyes.

He lifts a hand to protect his vision.

JOE

There's the landing strip so you need to turn in now. *TURN IN NOW.*

RICHARD

Don't know if I can....

The trainee is shaking uncontrollably, his grip on the joystick tightens.

His face is a deathly white; streaks of sweat drip from his chin.

EXT. ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

The plane approaches at a crazy angle, engine SCREAMING, as it rocks towards the ground.

The parents watch, transfixed and terrified.

Two mechanics in greasy overalls come rushing from a hangar alarmed by the unusual engine noise.

THE PLANE FLYING

The mechanics look skyward in disbelief at the plane which is rocking from side to side as it hurtles towards the turf.

MECHANIC #1

What in Christ's name....

MECHANIC #2

It's out of control.

MECHANIC #1

That's Joe up there, never seen him rocking like this before.

INT. PLANE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Richard is frozen with fear, the joystick rooted to the spot; an immovable object in his hands.

Joe, desperately trying to get from the seat in front of the student and wrench the joystick from him.

He sees the stick is also trapped by Richard's legs.

Every second ticks the plane closer to its doom.

JOE

(screaming)

Chrissakes, pull the stick back --  
*NOW*, Richard. Pull the nose up.  
 Ya'see those trees. Pull the nose  
 up. You're going to hit them. *PULL*  
*THE STICK BACK.*

RICHARD

(shaky voice)

I -- I can't, Joe.

JOE

Let go of the stick, Richard. *LET*  
*GO OF THE STICK.*

Joe tries again to wrench the stick from Richard, but it is so tightly trapped between his legs and hands that he can't free it.

Joe looks towards the ground.

He sees Richard's mother, father and sister, who is waving a white handkerchief. They are watching the plane, then they...

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK

- Joe's mom and dad, his own wife and young daughter. They fade from the scene.

His life flashes quickly through his mind

HE SEES

- A happy day driving the new Ford back for his dad

- Happy meal times with his mom and dad

- Emergency landing on Michigan ice floes

END FLASHBACK - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

NOTE: Each flashback 2-3 seconds maximum.

The plane gets nearer to its inescapable destruction.

Joe's face shows unbearable torment as he realizes there is nothing he can do.

EXT. OLD CHICAGO AIRPORT - ILLINOIS - CONTINUOUS

The mechanics watch helplessly as the small plane SLAMS into the ground with terrific force and bursts into flames.

They dash as close as they can to the wreck but are beaten back by the heat.

The flames get higher and SMALL EXPLOSIONS are heard.

No one could have survived this hellfire.

The mechanics stare horror-struck at the scene they just witnessed.

FURTHER BACK AT AIRPORT

Richard's parents sob helplessly as they realize they lost their beloved son in this inferno.

Richard's little sister screams.

The handkerchief flutters to the ground.

FREEZE FRAME

FADE OUT.

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY - DAY

SUPER: FEBRUARY 1930

A somber day - rain buckets down from a leaden sky.

The casket bearing the body of Joe Donnellan is brought out from the Catholic church.

John and his dad are among the pall bearers together with friends and colleagues.

Mary, Joe's mom, Josephine, his wife, and little daughter Bonnie follow close behind.

As they reach the grave they HEAR a plane fly overhead.

A wreath drifts from the plane and lands at the feet of Joe's mom.

EXT. PLANE FLYING - CONTINUOUS

The plane does a circuit then returns.

EXT. GRAVE SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Rose petals rain down, showering the mourners.

IN THE B.G.

A guard of honor provided by the US army FIRES a military salute and a lone TRUMPETER silhouetted against a dark sky plays the LAST POST.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END