

TOP GUN: MAVERICK

Based on Characters Created by
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Story by
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Screenplay by
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Paramount Pictures

1

EXT. CARRIER DECK - DAWN

1

FIGHTER JETS roll on the silhouetted deck as FLIGHT CREWS work their technical ballet. Men and women devoted to detail and duty, preparing their warriors for the arena. All the while, MUSIC builds over OPENING TITLES as jets LAUNCH into the sky, afterburners blazing, roaring like thunder...

A3

EXT. CARRIER ELEVATOR - DAWN

A3

AN F-18 silhouetted against the morning sky, rising to the main deck. A HELMET edges into frame, bearing red white and blue stripes along with the name: MAVERICK.

BOOM UP TO REVEAL the man holding the helmet, his back to us, his head turned slightly. Something troubles him. Deeply.

MAVERICK

Talk to me, Goose...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Captain Mitchell.

And as the pilot turns we MATCH CUT TO:

A12

INT. AIRSTREAM - DAY

A12

PETE "MAVERICK" MITCHELL opens his eyes from a deep sleep. He sits up, takes a deep breath, taking in the humble trailer he calls home. For those of us who know Maverick from long ago, we're left to wonder how he ended up here.

He stands, moves to the kitchenette to start the coffee machine and, along with, his day.

12

INT. HANGAR HOME - DUSK

12

CLOSE ON the door of Mav's trailer as he exits, holding a plate with his breakfast and a cup of joe. Pull back with him TO REVEAL:

The Airstream occupies a space one could only describe as the ultimate bachelor pad - motorcycles, a vintage car, a workbench covered with memories of a life dedicated to flight and, the centerpiece: A World War Two-era P-51 MUSTANG.

If we suspected for a moment that Maverick had ended up on his ass, we were sorely mistaken.

TIME CUT: As Maverick eats his breakfast at a small table across from an empty chair.

(CONTINUED)

12

CONTINUED:

12

Maverick finishes his breakfast, stands, pats the P-51 with affection as he passes her on his way to the workbench.

REVEAL: CLOSE SHOTS of Mav's surroundings (as he dresses in b.g.): TROPHIES and AIRSPEED RECORDS, PHOTOS of a younger Maverick, with ICEMAN, at Ice's wedding, with GOOSE, CAROLE and their young son BRADLEY. Mav with that same boy as a TEEN.

He opens a cabinet lined with jackets. He pulls one out, wrapped in plastic, saved for special occasions, it seems. He rips the plastic off revealing patch laden leather that's been around a long, long time.

Mav passes a calendar, the date marked in red:

MACH 9 TODAY

He walks past a COLLECTION OF MOTORCYCLES, a beaten up old Pepsi machine, stops at one bike under a tarp. Revealing a familiar '86 KAWASAKI NINJA.

CLOSE ON: Aviators and a set of keys by a helmet.

He takes the keys and sunglasses, leaves the helmet...

13

EXT. HANGAR - DESERT ROAD

13

VROOOM. Maverick screams away from the hangar, spiraling dust, taking his machine to the limit.

14

EXT. CHINA LAKE TEST FACILITY - CALIFORNIA - DUSK

14

A maximum security military facility. At a gatehouse checkpoint, two ARMED UNIFORMS see him coming, open the gate, wave him through without stopping. They watch him go.

15

INT. TEST HANGAR - DUSK

15

A prototype high-hypersonic jet, THE DARKSTAR, dominates the hangar. It is unlike any machine we've ever seen before - itching to scream across the heavens. All it needs is a pilot. Mav strides in, ready to ride it. He stops, sees:

Several ENGINEERS (JACK, SIMON & MATTHEW) and TECHS, strangely motionless. Something is amiss. All sense of momentum stops. An amiable, salty Warrant Officer, BERNIE "HONDO" COLEMAN (35), grimaces.

MAVERICK

Hey. What is it?

(CONTINUED)

15

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW (SENIOR)

It's over Mav. Three years of our
lives, down the drain.

HONDO

We've been ordered to stand down.
They're scrapping her.

MAVERICK

Says who?

Hondo looks to SIMON, the meek engineer who balks.

HONDO

Well go on.

JACK (JADED)

(to Maverick)

His girlfriend works at the
Pentagon-

SIMON (MEEK)

She swore me to secrecy-

JACK (JADED)

Just tell us.

HONDO

They say we fell short. The
contract threshold is Mach Ten.

MAVERICK

Mach ten. That's Mach ten two
months from now. *Today's* test point
is Mach *Nine*.

HONDO

Well, that's not good enough for
someone at the Pentagon.

Maverick focuses on Simon.

MAVERICK

Who?

JACK (JADED)

Just say who it is.

HONDO

Spit it out Simon.

JACK (JADED)

Go.

(CONTINUED)

15

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON (MEEK)
Admiral Cain.

MATTHEW (SENIOR)
So it really is over.

HONDO
Of course. The Drone Ranger. He
wants our budget for his unmanned
program...

MAVERICK
Well he's not gonna get it. Not
today.

SIMON (MEEK)
Mav, Cain's coming down now. He's
on his way to shut us down
personally.

MAVERICK
He's not here yet.
(re: plane)
They want Mach ten, let's give it
to them. Get her ready to run up at
eighteen-thirty.

SIMON (MEEK)
The test wasn't 'til nineteen
hundred.

MAVERICK
Well, that was before the weather
changed.

The team looks out at the perfectly calm, clear sky.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Gotta get out early if we want to
beat this storm.

HONDO
That's... blue sky up there, Mav.

MAVERICK
Yeah, but dark blue. Ominous.

JACK (JADED)
(catching on)
Ah. Yeah. Downright menacing.

MATTHEW (SENIOR)
Scary.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (3)

SIMON (MEEK)
Guys, the weather's fine, I've been
checking all d-

Matthew gives Simon a shoulder tap.

SIMON (MEEK) (CONT'D)
Oh... OOOOOH.

16 INT. SUIT-UP ROOM - TEST FACILITY - DUSK

16

State of the art. Maverick runs a treadmill. He wears a HIGH-
TECH OXYGEN MASK and heart monitor. Deep, steady breathing.

HONDO
Don't do this, Mav.
(Mav keeps running)
Mav, for God's sake, you don't need
to do this. She hasn't passed mach
eight point five. She's *months* away
from ten. There's no way this ends
well.

But he doesn't. He just keeps running.

A17 TIME CUT: Mav finishes dressing in a pressure suit.

A17

HONDO (CONT'D)
Hey, you know, Mike called. He's
out in Reno with all those
billionaires racing their P-51s.
He's making money hand over fist
fixing warbirds, test flying 'em,
too. He needs guys who know their
stuff. We'd be rolling in it.

But Maverick isn't listening.

AA17 INT. LONG CORRIDOR - DAY

AA17

DOZENS OF DARKSTAR TEAM MEMBERS - a mix of MEN and WOMEN -
CIVILIANS and MILITARY alike, mill about in a long corridor,
talking quietly, waiting.

A door opens OS and everyone falls silent. All eyes focus on:

MAVERICK, clad in his space suit, carrying his oxygen. We
follow him from behind, watching as the team parts to let him
pass. Hondo falls in step with him.

We move with them in profile.

(CONTINUED)

AA17 CONTINUED:

AA17

HONDO

Now remember. Contact threshold is
Mach ten. Not point-one, not point-
two. *Mach Ten*. That should keep the
program alive.

(off Mav's nod)

I don't like that look, Mav.

MAVERICK

Only one I got.

And off Hondo's sigh we CUT TO:

B17 **EXT. TEST HANGAR - NIGHT**

B17

The Darkstar is rolled from the hangar into tarmac position.

17 **EXT. DARKSTAR HANGAR - NIGHT**

17

CLOSE ON: Mav's gloved hand stroking the nose of the
aircraft.

WITH A TECH carrying his O2 unit, Mav does a walk-around
inspection of the prototype jet. The engineers look on.

18 **INT. DARKSTAR COCKPIT - NIGHT**

18

Maverick STRAPS IN the pilot's chair. TECHS attach cables and
hoses, secure Mav to his seat, give his harness a big yank.
He fist bumps both of them before they step down. Hondo
remains.

HONDO

Now remember. Contact threshold is
Mach ten. Not point-one, not point-
two. *Mach Ten*. That should keep the
program alive.

(off Mav's nod)

I don't like that look, Mav.

MAVERICK

Only one I got.

19 The canopy LOWERS, drowning him out. Mav gives a thumbs-up.19
Hondo glares. Gives a reluctant thumbs-up back and hops down.

Maverick takes a deep breath, a moment of apprehension as it
sinks in what he's about to do.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Okay.

A20 **INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER**

A20

Hondo now has a headset on, amongst Engineers and Techs watching satellite feeds, cockpit cameras, etc.

MAVERICK

Control, this is Darkstar. How do you read?

20 **INT./EXT. COCKPIT/PLANE - NIGHT**

20

HONDO

Darkstar, Control loud and clear, how me?

MAVERICK

Loud and clear. Ready for APU start.

HONDO

You know Mav, you don't have to do this.

MAVERICK

I know what happens to the program if I don't.

(alt)

I know what happens to everyone else if I don't.

(alt)

Everyone loses their job if I don't.

(alt)

They'll scrap the whole program if I don't.

(alt)

Alright sweetheart, one last ride.

HONDO

Cleared APU start.

Mav presses the APU START button and the left engine whines.

MAVERICK

Good start.

HONDO

Ready left engine start.

Mav flips switch and the left engine whines.

MAVERICK

Good start.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

HONDO

Ready for right engine start.

Mav flips switch and the right engine whines.

MAVERICK

Good start. Darkstar is ready for taxi.

A21 INT. CONTROL ROOM

A21

Hondo turns to his engineers.

HONDO

Thumbs for taxi?

The engineers at their consoles give a thumbs up.

HONDO (CONT'D)

We are ready for taxi.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)

Taxi-ing.

(to plane)

Alright, sweetheart. Let's go for a ride.

21 With a PRIMAL ROAR, exhaust cones spit plumes of BLUE FIRE 21

22 INT/EXT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

22

Mav is on the radio.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)

Tower, this is Darkstar, we are
taxing with information Alpha.

Mav is taxi-ing.

TOWER

Darkstar, you're cleared taxi.
Runway two-one. Winds two-one-zero
at ten.

MAVERICK (ALT)

Engine temperatures are looking
good.

HONDO

Control concurs.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK (ALT)
Batteries holding at ninety-five percent.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Cabin pressure looks good.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Defog set.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Hey Hondo, make a note, right main feels a little stiff.

HONDO
Copy. We'll make a note.

MAVERICK (ALT)
I like the new LEDs on the Mach gauge. Good job.

HONDO
Glad to hear you like it.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Checking CG control.

HONDO
Showing good checks.

MAVERICK
CG at nineteen percent.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Fuel temp's are looking good.

HONDO
Control concurs.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Hydrogen pressure at thirty-five PSI.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Fuel cell's warming up. Looks like good H2 and oxygen flow.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Adjusting helmet temp. Adjusting Suit temp.

HONDO
Check data on.

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED: (2)

MAVERICK (ALT)
Recorder's on.

HONDO
Good data.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Nav points check good.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
IFF on. Squawking one-four-zero-two.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)
Engine oil pressure is looking good.

HONDO (ALT)
Ready for H2 pressure relief check.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Switch on. Switch off.

HONDO
Good check.

HONDO (ALT) (CONT'D)
Control's ready for sweeps.

Mav moves the stick accordingly.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Forward. Aft. Left. Right. Paddle switch on. Off.

HONDO
Good sweeps.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Control are you ready for flight control test?

HONDO
Control's ready for test.

MAVERICK (ALT)
Test complete.

HONDO
Control shows good test.

MAVERICK (ALT)
I've got a flight control air data caution.

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED: (3)

HONDO

Yeah, we're looking into it.

(beat)

It looks like we lost a probe.
Press reset.

Maverick presses reset button.

HONDO (CONT'D)

Looks like good reset. Cleared to
continue.

MAVERICK (ALT)

Take-off pre-checks complete. Seat
armed.

HONDO

Control concurs.

MAVERICK (ALT)

Tower, Darkstar is ready for take-
off. Requesting unrestricted climb
to six-zero-zero and above.

TOWER (ON RADIO)

Darkstar the runway's yours.
Unrestricted climb to flight level
six-zero-zero and above is
approved. Contact Joshua on three-
six-zero point two.

MAVERICK

Cleared take-off six-zero-zero and
above, switching.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Joshua, Darkstar checking in.

JOSHUA (ON RADIO)

Darkstar, you're cleared Isabella
and Owens MOAs, test area 25-0-8
above flight level six-zero-zero.
Your test frequency is two-four-one
point one-two-five.

MAVERICK

Roger. Darkstar, is cleared
Isabella, Owens, 25-0-8 above
flight level six-zero-zero.
Switching to test.

Mav sets the frequency for 241.125.

The Darkstar rolls out, lining up on the tarmac. RUMBLING...

(CONTINUED)

HONDO

Everyone go for takeoff, starting
with engine.

SIMON (MEEK)

Engine. Go.

MATTHEW (SENIOR)

Thermals. Go.

FUEL

Fuel. Go.

JACK (JADED)

Electric. Go.

SURFACES

Control surfaces. Go.

HONDO (O.S.)

Darkstar, Control. Do you
feel the need?

HONDO (ALT)

Darkstar, Control. How do you
feel?

HONDO (ALT) (CONT'D)

Mav, we're a go. How do you feel?

MAVERICK (ALT)

I feel the need...

Maverick pushes the throttle forward.

HONDO (ALT)

Maverick, Cain just pulled up to
the gate. We got a choice here, we
can stop this right now. How do you
feel?

Maverick thinks this over.

MAVERICK (ALT)

I feel the need...

Maverick pushes the throttle forward. Afterburners kick in.

Maverick takes off.

A government sedan arrives. The checkpoint guard meets it:

CAIN'S AIDE

Rear Admiral Chester Cain.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

The guard glances at the OMINOUS SILHOUETTE in the back seat and waves the sedan through. Just then, a distant rumbling catches their attention, growing louder, shaking the foundations of the guardhouse.

REAR ADMIRAL CHESTER "HAMMER" CAIN, a cold-eyed 2-Star Admiral emerges from the back of his sedan as:

DARKSTAR SUDDENLY RIPS OVERHEAD WITH A DEAFENING ROAR. Cain's driver recoils, hit by a gale force DUST BLAST.

Cain himself just closes his steely eyes.

24 INT. DARKSTAR - NIGHT

24

The ground swiftly recedes behind Mav as he heads skyward...

25 INT. MISSION CONTROL - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

25

Hondo and the crew of Engineers and Techs sit with headsets, watching satellite feeds, cockpit cameras, telemetry, etc.

HONDO

Darkstar, you are cleared above six-zero-zero. Increase to Mach 3.5.

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)

Copy, Mach 3.5.

A26 INT. DARKSTAR COCKPIT

A26

MAVERICK

(to plane)

Just a walk in the park for you, though, isn't it, girl?

Maverick pushes the throttle.

B26 INT. MISSION CONTROL

B26

Cain walks in. Engineers stand, struggle to act as if nothing's amiss.

HONDO

Admiral. Uh, just in time, sir-

CAIN

I'm early. And so are you. Care to explain?

(CONTINUED)

B26 CONTINUED:

B26

Awkward looks all around. Hondo never takes his eyes off of Cain as he reaches for the radio.

HONDO
(into radio)
Uh Mav, I have Admiral Cain here...
Uh, how's that storm-front?

26 INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

26

MAVERICK
My bad. You guys were right. Looks like it's breaking up. Guess I'm buying the beers tonight.

27 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

27

CAIN
Tell him to land.

HONDO
He's already at 60,000 feet, sir.
On the test profile for Mach nine-

CAIN
Now.

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
Transitioning to scramjet.
(to plane)
All right, angel, let your hair down.

28 EXT./INT. DARKSTAR - NIGHT

28

Mav hits switches: main engines SHUT DOWN. An eerie silence, then a THUNDEROUS PEAL as SCRAMJET engine bursts to life.

Darkstar ROCKETS into the upper atmosphere, where rapidly thinning air gives way to the blackness of space.

29 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

29

The Engineers are rapt, monitoring with nervous tension...

HONDO
Uh, Mav, Admiral Cain is asking--

CAIN
Ordering-

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

HONDO

Ordering that we bring her down-

MAVERICK

Pi- -ive -grees -ood -lpha-

HONDO

This is where we've had trouble
with comms. Earth's curvature...

A30 INT. DARKSTAR - NIGHT

A30

Maverick is, in fact, simulating the breakup verbally:

MAVERICK

-assing -ach ive- oint-four at,
ninety- -ousan- -eet. -ach six.

HONDO (ON RADIO)

Mav, you have orders to land. Mav,
do you read me? Mav?

Mav says nothing, his half-smile turning to pure focus.

B30 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

B30

HONDO

(to Cain)

Sir, I apologize-

MAVERICK

(to himself)

Come on sweetheart, let's show 'em
what you've got.

MATTHEW (SENIOR)

He's at Mach seven, pushing eight.
Flight data?Simon, the meek engineer checks a monitor to reveal a trickle
of code unreadable to the untrained eye - gaining speed.

SIMON (MEEK)

Receiving. Data is good.

30 EXT./INT. DARKSTAR - NIGHT

30

Thin atmosphere screams past Darkstar's prow, SHEETING INTO
FLAME from the concussive friction. Maverick's in the zone:

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

MAVERICK (TO SELF)
Temperature's climbing. Responses
still stable. We're feeling good.

He's hitting switches, making minute adjustments. Exertion.
Sweat. Airspeed gauges spin upward...

31 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

31

MATTHEW (SENIOR)
Mach eight point eight. Eight-
nine... Mach nine.

They share looks of concern. Everyone is sweating. They are
into the unknown now... Hondo looks at the flight data
monitor, a steady flow now.

HONDO
He's the fastest man alive.

CAIN
This changes nothing. You know why
I'm here.

32 INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

32

MAVERICK
Just a little push.

And he gently nudges the stick.

HONDO (OVER RADIO)
Great work, Mav. Bring it on home.

Mav stows his final test card, looks to the now-blank board.
He shuts eyes, trusts his feel, and whispers:

MAVERICK
Talk to me, Goose...

And he gently nudges the stick.

A33 EXT. SATELLITE ALTITUDE - DAY

A33

Looking down from space, that Darkstar leaves a contrail in a
wide arch across the western half of the U.S.

33 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

33

Amidst the celebration, one engineer now notices:

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

SIMON (MEEK)
Mach nine-one... nine-two...

Cain steps to the screen with just a hint of a smile.

CAIN
You got balls there, stick-jockey.
I'll give you that.

34 INT. COCKPIT

34

But Mav's all resolve. He tenses the throttle, JAMS it all the way forward. Gauges roll past Mach 9.3... 9.4...

35 INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

35

SIMON (MEEK)
Mach nine-three... nine-four.
Passing one hundred thirty
thousand. Approaching high-
hypersonic.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
Nine point five.

CLOSE ON: One of the tech's screen flashes a SURFACE TEMP HOT warning.'

MATTHEW (SENIOR)
Surface temps rising.

JACK (JADED)
We're watching it.

Hondo looks at Cain who stares back.

HONDO
Did anyone offer you a coffee?

36 INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

36

Scramjet engine SCREAMING like a banshee, PLASMA ripping off the nose, casting a purple glow over the cockpit. The speed gauge keeps rolling and reaches Mach 10. Mav grits his teeth.

MAVERICK
ALMOST... THERE, GIRL. SHOW 'EM
WHAT YOU CAN DO.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Wind shield hot caution.

(CONTINUED)

36

CONTINUED:

36

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Come on sweetheart, just a little
more.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Come on.

Maverick looks down at the warning lights.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
(yells)
COME ON.

37

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

37

MATTHEW (SENIOR)
Nine-nine... Jesus.

JACK (JADED)
Mach TEN.

The team CHEERS. Hondo notes the data recorder exploding with new data. A gusher. Cain realizes what this means. The geeky engineer pumps a fist:

SIMON (MEEK)
Put THAT in your Pentagon budget.
(catching Cain's stare)
Uh... Sir.

But Hondo stares at his monitor. He knows his friend well.

HONDO (TO SELF)
Arrright. You made your point, Mav.
Now bring it home.

38

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

38

The speed gauge needle trembles ever so higher...

MAVERICK
That's it, just a little. 10.1.

10.1... 10.2...

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
You see? I knew you could do it.

But now Darkstar JOLTS VIOLENTLY. WARNING LIGHTS pepper the console, ALARMS buzzing in his ear. He swallows hard:

BOOM. Maverick is slammed against the canopy.

All screens go DARK. The stream of flight data vanishes.

Static. Cain doesn't say anything. He doesn't need to.

A country highway. Some trucks blow past; a tumbleweed rolls.

Maverick, dazed, parched, helmet in one hand, stick in the other. Patrons stare. A WAITRESS at the counter pours water for a dumbstruck CUSTOMER and his YOUNG SON eating ice cream.

Maverick motions towards the ice water she just poured. She hands it to him. He drinks it. All of it.

NOISE O.S. Helicopters. The sound of his fate.

A Navy "Rescue Hawk" HH-60 helicopter lands. Maverick is escorted into the waiting embrace of TWO MPs.

Maverick glances back at the heli as it flies away. He sighs, walks away with the MPs to face the music.

Mav enters, followed by the MPs. He stops. REVEAL:

(CONTINUED)

B47

CONTINUED:

B47

Hondo and the same Darkstar team members Maverick left behind are here to greet him. The emotions are mixed; they are proud of what they've all achieved, but unsure of the cost was worth it.

He moves on. They part for him, offering muted thanks, some words of encouragement. Some can't even look him in the eye.

It is a solemn moment of farewell. The passing of a legend.

As he passes the last of them, he stops and looks back.

(Note: We stay in the wide so as not to undercut the moment later in Cain's office)

MAVERICK

Y'all built one helluva a plane.

Bittersweet smiles from the team. Yes they did. Mavericks walks on, ready to face the music. Out on his terms.

47

INT. HANGAR OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

47

SILENCE. The SPs flank the door. Cain sits behind a desk, turns page after page of a file. Mav waits, sweating in his flight suit, gently thumbing the stick in his hand.

CAIN

(looking at file)

Maverick...

(sighs)

Thirty plus years of service...
combat medals... citations... the
only man to shoot down three enemy
aircraft in the last forty years...
ALT: distinguished...distinguished.

After a long wait, Cain closes the file, stares.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Yet you can't get a promotion, you
won't retire and, despite your best
efforts, you refuse to die. You
should be a two-star admiral by
now. If not a senator. Yet here you
are... *Captain*. Why is that?

MAVERICK

One of life's mysteries, sir.

CAIN

This isn't a joke. I asked you a
question.

(CONTINUED)

He stares, waits. Maverick's smile flickers ever so slightly.
This is the end of the line. Beat:

MAVERICK

I'm where I belong... sir.

CAIN

Navy doesn't see it that way. Not
anymore.

Cain stands. Stares out the window at the future.

CAIN (CONT'D)

These planes you've been testing,
Captain, one day they won't need
pilots at all. Pilots that need to
sleep, eat, take a piss... Pilots
that can disobey. All you did was
buy time for those men out there.

(turns to Maverick)

The future is coming. And you're
not in it.

Without taking his eyes off Maverick:

CAIN (CONT'D)

Escort this man off the base...
take to him to his quarters... wait
with him while he packs his gear...

(turns away)

I want him on the road to North
Island within the hour.

Beat.

MAVERICK

North Island... sir?

CAIN

Call came in with impeccable
timing. Right when I was driving
here to ground your ass once and
for all. It galls me to say it, but
for reasons known only to the
almighty and your guardian angel...
you've been called back to Top Gun.

Cain turns, sits back at the desk. Even Maverick is confused.

MAVERICK

Sir-

CAIN

You are dismissed, Captain.

(CONTINUED)

47

CONTINUED: (2)

47

Maverick stands, hesitates, can't help himself:

MAVERICK

On behalf of the team...

He plants the DARKSTAR'S STICK on the desk.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Mach 10 capable, sir. As promised.

Cain never looks up. Maverick turns to leave, stopping on:

CAIN

The end is inevitable, *Maverick*.
Your kind is headed for extinction.

MAVERICK

Yes, sir... But not today.
ALT: Maybe so, but not today, Sir.

And with a sly grin, Maverick is gone.

49

EXT. POINT LOMA - DAY

49

AERIAL RIPS over Point Loma revealing the North Island NAS,
as the TOP GUN ANTHEM theme kicks in.

50

EXT. NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH ISLAND, CORONADO - DAY

50

Maverick rips down a taxiway as an F-18 Super Hornet takes
off beyond. He watches it soar. Can't believe he's back.

A51

EXT. AIRBASE ENTRANCE

A51

Mav rides along an entry drive, stopping to look up at:

An old F-14 TOMCAT displayed on a museum pedestal like a
relic from a bygone era.

CLOSE ON: The faded name just under the canopy:

LT. PETE "MAVERICK" MITCHELL

Under that are the silhouettes of three planes, all X'd out.

Maverick drives on.

51

EXT. OFFICERS' BUILDING

51

Maverick enters the North Island NAS Headquarters.

52 **INT. HALLWAY - DUSK**

52

CLOSE ON: Photos of faces we might recognize: ICEMAN, SLIDER and, of course, GOOSE. For anyone unfamiliar, it's obvious there is story here - Glory and ghosts. We pass a photo of ICEMAN AND MAVERICK, settle on a prominent photo of:

A stern-jawed ADMIRAL TOM KAZANSKY aka ICEMAN. "Commander of the Pacific Fleet".

REVEAL: Maverick, staring at the past.

ADMIRAL'S AIDE (O.S.)
Captain Mitchell... *Captain*
Mitchell.

Maverick snaps from his thoughts.

53 **INT. OFFICERS' BOARDROOM - DUSK**

53

A MONITOR with an image that means little to us now but will come to dominate our thoughts. A HANDSOME, SQUARE-JAWED MAN (40s) steps in front of it. This is:

CYCLONE
At ease. Captain Pete "Maverick"
Mitchell. Your reputation precedes
you.

MAVERICK
Thank you, sir.

CYCLONE
It wasn't a compliment. Admiral
Beau Simpson. I'm the Airboss. I
believe you know Admiral Bates.

CLOSE ON: ADMIRAL BATES (55). An affable, brilliant two-star, otherwise known as:

MAVERICK
Warlock, Sir. I must admit, I
wasn't expecting an invitation
back.

WARLOCK
They're called orders, Maverick.

His tone is friendly enough, but the meaning is clear. No one is exactly excited to see Maverick back.

(CONTINUED)

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

You two have something in common.
Cyclone here was first in *his* class
back in '88.

MAVERICK

Actually, sir, I finished second.
Just want to manage expectations.

Awkward silence. Cyclone nods to Warlock who takes a remote and summons images on the monitors on the walls. Warlock clicks through SURVEILLANCE IMAGES of INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS at the base of a forbidding valley.

WARLOCK

The target is an unsanctioned
uranium enrichment plant,
constructed in violation of a
unilateral NATO treaty. The uranium
produced there represents a direct
threat to our allies in the region.
The Pentagon has tasked us with
assembling a strike team and taking
it out before it becomes fully
operational.

Maverick steps closer, studying the screens as Warlock points to corresponding satellite and archival images, along with a profile of the run:

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

The plant sits in a recess at the
end of this valley. Said valley is
GPS jammed and defended by an
extensive radar array, serving a
limited number of fifth generation
fighters which, in turn, are backed
up by a plentiful reserve of
surplus aircraft; F-16s and even a
few old F-14s.

CYCLONE

Seems we're not the only ones
holding on to old relics.

Maverick lets that go. He has to.

WARLOCK

What's your read, Captain?

MAVERICK

Normally, this would be a cake-walk
for the F-35's stealth. But the GPS
jamming negates that.

(CONTINUED)

The surface-to-air threat necessitates a low level, laser-guided strike, tailor made for the F-18. I figure two precision bombs minimum. Makes it four planes, flying in pairs.

(studies topography)

That's one helluva steep climb out, exposing you to all the surface-to-air missiles. Survive that, it's a dogfight all the way home.

WARLOCK

All requirements for which you have real-world experience.

MAVERICK

Not in the same *mission*, sir.

Beat. Maverick realizes.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Somebody's not coming back from this.

CYCLONE

Can it be done or not?

MAVERICK

How soon until the plant becomes operational?

WARLOCK

Three weeks. Maybe less.

Maverick realizes...

MAVERICK

Well, it's a been a while since I've flown an F-18... And I'm not sure who I'd trust to fly the other three.

Beat.

WARLOCK

I think you misunderstand, Captain.

MAVERICK

Sir?

CYCLONE

We don't want you to *fly* it. We want you to *teach* it.

(CONTINUED)

The words just hang there.

MAVERICK

Teach... sir...

Warlock hits a button and TWELVE PILOT I.D. PHOTOS appear:

CYCLONE

We've recalled twelve Top Gun graduates from their squadrons, all top of their class. You will narrow this pool down to six - the best of the best. *They* will fly the mission.

Maverick's eyes lock on one face in particular. The stoic face of BRADLEY "ROOSTER" BRADSHAW.

CYCLONE (CONT'D)

Is there a problem, Captain?

MAVERICK

You know there is... sir.

CYCLONE

(glances at screen)

Bradley Bradshaw. AKA Rooster. I understand you flew with his old man... What was his call sign?

MAVERICK

Goose. Sir.

CYCLONE

Tragic what happened.

Warlock is uncomfortable with this:

WARLOCK

Captain Mitchell was cleared of any wrongdoing. Goose's death was an accident.

CYCLONE

That how you see it, Captain?

(points to Bradshaw)

Is that how Goose's son sees it?

Maverick has had about enough of this shit, but soldiers on.

MAVERICK

With all due respect, sir. I'm not a teacher.

(CONTINUED)

CYCLONE

You were a Top Gun instructor before.

MAVERICK

Sir, that was thirty years ago. I lasted two months. This is not where I belong.

CYCLONE

Let me be perfectly blunt. You weren't our first choice. You weren't even on the list. But *someone* put your name in the SECDEF's ear. We all know who.

WARLOCK

Captain Mitchell has real-world experience akin to every segment of this operation.

CYCLONE

What Captain Mitchell has is a friend in the Pacific Fleet.

(to Maverick)

You're here at the request of Admiral Kazansky. Iceman is a man I deeply admire. He seems to think you still have something to offer the Navy. What that is, I can't imagine. You don't have to take the job, but I should make it clear: This is your last post, Captain. You fly for Top Gun or you don't fly for the Navy. Ever again.

Maverick looks at the picture of Rooster one more time.

An old yacht club converted into a ramshackle shrine to wild nights and Naval history, beneath a big sign ("The Hard Deck") and a small one ("Help Wanted").

Quiet. A FEW PATRONS waiting for the evening to kick off. Maverick, in his civvies, sits at the bar, his back to the door. In the corner, he sees TWO YOUNG PILOTS playing darts:

JAVY "COYOTE" MACHADO and JAKE "HANGMAN" SERESIN.

Hangman hits three bulls-eyes in a row, smiles, doesn't crow, takes money from Coyote before making brief eye contact with Maverick - no idea who he's looking at.

CLOSE ON: Mav's phone buzzes on the bar. The icon photo is that of ICEMAN, in Admiral's uniform.

ICE: *That went well.*

Mav grudgingly responds.

M: The kid's not ready for this mission.

ICE: No one is. That's why you're here.

M: *You could have warned me.*

ICE: *Would you have come?*

Maverick's thumbs hover, unsure how to reply. Beat.

ICE: *Sorry I couldn't be there.*

M: *Where were you?*

Beat.

ICE: *Think it over.*

He sighs, places his phone on the bar.

VOICE (O.S.)

Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, he walks into mine.

He looks up at THE BARTENDER: PENNY BENJAMIN has a striking face with kind eyes that have seen it all - so much that nothing really ever gets her down.

MAVERICK

Penny.

PENNY

(sighs)

Pete.

MAVERICK

What are you doing here?

PENNY

I should ask you the same thing.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

Long story.

PENNY

I doubt that. Who'd you piss off this time?

MAVERICK

Another Admiral. Speaking of - how's your father?

PENNY

Still mad at you. Retired. I moved back to be closer. And I have to admit it was the one place I thought for sure I'd never run into you.

MAVERICK

I'm just as surprised as you are. How long have you been here?

PENNY

I bought this place three years ago... You must be in a lotta trouble. No way you'd come back here willingly.
(off his look)
Well, you'll sort it out.

MAVERICK

No, this is... I think this is it.

PENNY

Come on. You've been saying that for thirty years. You said it after my father chased you out my bedroom window. You said it again when they busted you for that high speed pass. Next thing I know you're off to Bosnia. Then Iraq. Both times. I don't even remember the charges before they shipped you off to the desert, test-flying God knows what. You get yourself in trouble, Iceman makes a call, you're back in the air.

MAVERICK

Penny, this is different.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY

Trust me. No matter how improbable it seems right now, somehow you'll be back in a fighter plane with your tail on fire.

MAVERICK

Penny-

PENNY

Too late.

MAVERICK

What?

PENNY

You were about to ask me what time I get off.

MAVERICK

No, I was gonna-

PENNY

Too late.

He just looks at her.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Don't gimme that.

MAVERICK

Give you what?

PENNY

That look.

MAVERICK

I'm not giving you a look. I swear.

PENNY

It's the only look you got. And this is not happening.

MAVERICK

I'm not asking.

PENNY

You never ask. That way I never get to say no. Well, this time it's no.

MAVERICK

Penny.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY

No.

MAVERICK

Fine.

PENNY

Fine.

Pause.

MAVERICK

You look good.

PENNY

I know.

She reaches over and rings a bell, CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.
The entire bar CHEERS. AN AVIATOR slaps him on the back:

FERG

Much appreciated, pal.

MAVERICK

What I miss?

Penny points to a "House Rules" sign:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

(reads)

Disrespect a lady, the Navy, or put
your cell phone on my bar...

PENNY

You buy a round.

MAVERICK

For everyone?

PENNY

I'm afraid rules are rules. You're
lucky it's early.

HANGMAN

WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?

Maverick follows Hangman's eyeline to the door.

The first of the night's REVELERS enter, occupying tables,
circling the bar, giving the joint a little life.

Among them are THREE PILOTS: REUBEN "PAYBACK" FLOYD, MICKEY
"FANBOY" GARCIA, and NATASHA "PHOENIX" TRACE.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: (5)

55

Maverick watches them over to the pool table with interest.

A56 INT. HARD DECK - POOL TABLE - DUSK

A56

HANGMAN

Here I thought we were special,
Coyote. Turns out the invite went
to *anyone*... Keepin' it tight, I
see, Phoenix.

Phoenix smiles, annoyed but patient. As she approaches:

PHOENIX

Fellas, this here's Bagman.

HANGMAN

Hangman.

PHOENIX

Whatever.

(to Payback and Fanboy)

You're looking at the only Naval
Aviator on active duty with a
confirmed air-to-air kill.

Hangman demurs with a bit of false modesty.

PHOENIX (CONT'D)

Mind you, the other guy was in a
museum piece from the Korean War.

Hangman's smile fades. Coyote jumps in to defend.

COYOTE

Cold war.

PAYBACK

Same century.

FANBOY

Not this one.

Hangman looks at Coyote. "Thanks for nothing."

COYOTE

(to Phoenix)

Who're your friends?

PHOENIX

Payback, Fanboy, that's Coyote.

(nodding)

Who's he?

(CONTINUED)

A56

CONTINUED:

A56

COYOTE

Who's who?

Phoenix motions, Coyote sees a guy with glasses sitting in the corner - human wallpaper: LT ROBERT "BOB" FLOYD.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

When did you come in?

BOB

I've been here the whole time.

Beat. The other share a look. Bob would have to be invisible for no one to have noticed. And that's exactly what Bob is.

HANGMAN

The man's a stealth pilot.
Literally.

BOB

Weapons Systems Officer, actually.

HANGMAN

With no sense of humor.

Hangman walks away toward the bar as:

PHOENIX

What do they call you?

BOB

Bob.

PAYBACK

No, your call sign.

BOB

...Bob.

Awkward pause. Phoenix studies him.

PHOENIX

You're my new back-seater. Sent
from Lemoore.

BOB

Looks like it.

Long pause. No telling what Phoenix thinks about this until:
She grabs a pool cue.

PHOENIX

Nine ball, Bob. Rack 'em.

B56

INT. HARD DECK - BAR AREA - NIGHT

B56

Hangman approaches with an empty bottle, gets Penny's attention.

HANGMAN

I'll have six more on the old timer.

Maverick sighs, then:

PHOENIX

BRADSHAW. Is that you?

Maverick freezes. Over his shoulder, BRADLEY BRADSHAW, aka ROOSTER, enter. Phoenix strides over with open arms:

PHOENIX (CONT'D)

This is how I find out you're stateside?

ROOSTER

I thought I'd surprise you.

He goes to hug her. She feints a punch to his gut, he flinches.

PHOENIX

Guess I surprised you back.

ROOSTER

(recovering)

It's good to see you.

PHOENIX

Good to see you, too.

Maverick watches with renewed interest as the pilots settle around the pool table everyone sizing everyone up. All of them are good. They all want to know who's best.

Penny hands Hangman his beers.

HANGMAN

Much obliged, Pops.

He heads back to the other pilots.

More people are entering the bar, the night kicking off.

Penny sees Maverick watching Rooster.

(CONTINUED)

B56

CONTINUED:

B56

PENNY

Did you see Goose's son?
(off Maverick's nod)
Not gonna say hello?

Mav decides he should. Just as he stands, Rooster turns and looks at Mav, as if he knew he was there all along. They stare for a beat, then Rooster turns back to Phoenix.

Penny sees this entire thing.

MAVERICK

How's about ringing me out before
the evening rush.

Maverick hands her his card. Penny heads off with it to close him out.

C56

INT. HARD DECK - POOL AREA - DUSK

C56

ON THE PILOTS:

HANGMAN

Bradshaw. As I live and breathe.

He hands Rooster a beer.

ROOSTER

You look good, Hangman.

HANGMAN

I am good, Rooster. I'm very good.

Phoenix and Rooster share a glance.

PAYBACK

So anybody know what this "special
detachment's" all about?

HANGMAN

A mission's a mission. That don't
confront me. What I wanna know is
who's team leader? And which'a
y'all have what it takes to follow
me?

Hangman winks at Rooster, needling him.

ROOSTER

Hangman, the only place you'll ever
lead anyone is an early grave.

(CONTINUED)

C56

CONTINUED:

C56

Hangman looks up from his next shot, stands and walks to Rooster, face-to-face.

HANGMAN

Anyone follows you is just gonna... run outta fuel. But then that's you all over, ain't it... Rooster? Snug on your perch, waitin' for *juuuuust* the right moment. That never comes.

Cold beat. The song changes.

HANGMAN (CONT'D)

I love this song.

He walks off. Rooster exhales as Phoenix steps up, unimpressed by the high-chesting. Rooster never takes his eyes off of Hangman as:

PHOENIX

He hasn't changed.

ROOSTER

No, he sure hasn't.

ANGLE ON: Hangman stepping to the jukebox, smiles and makes a selection.

JOHNNY CASH' COCAINE BLUES kicks off. The energy in the room shifts. It's Hangman's party.

Mav makes note of this, shifts his eyes back to Rooster and Phoenix, who are slightly annoyed that it's too loud to talk now.

ON THE PILOTS:

FANBOY

Check it out. More patches.

At the door: a second wave of PILOTS enter. More hot shots.

PAYBACK

Omaha, Halo, Harvard, Yale... Shit, that's Fritz.

PHOENIX

A regular who's-who. Everyone a top graduate.

FANBOY

'The hell kinda mission is this?

(CONTINUED)

C56 CONTINUED: (2)

C56

PHOENIX

That's not the question you should
be asking.

(off their looks)

Everybody here is the best there
is. Who the hell are they gonna get
to teach us?

And a look darkens Rooster's face as he realizes...

D56 INT. HARD DECK - BAR AREA - NIGHT

D56

Penny drops Mav's card on the bar.

PENNY

It's been declined.

MAVERICK

You're kidding me.

As Maverick sighs, reaches into his pocket:

CLOSE ON: A hand grabs a power cord and yanks it from the
wall. All of the music in the bar stops. The crowd groans,
catcalls, whistles.

CLOSE ON: Hands pull up a bench, open the lid of a piano.

WIDE SHOT of the crowd, all heads turning as someone starts
pounding on the piano.

At the bar, Maverick turns and sees Rooster at the piano,
playing away, the reaction in the room skeptical.

In the back, Phoenix smiles, nods to Payback and Fanboy to
follow her. They do, unsure of what's going on.

Hangman stands up from his next shot at the pool table, left
alone with Coyote. The party is no longer his.

CLOSE ON: Rooster banging away on the keys, finishing the
intro. He starts singing. Phoenix joins in, motions for
Fanboy and Payback to do the same.

It takes a moment, but people in the bar get into it.

At the bar, Maverick holds up all the money he's got.

PENNY

That won't cover it.

(CONTINUED)

D56

CONTINUED:

D56

MAVERICK
(sees the bill, winces)
I can come back tomorrow.

PENNY
(shaking her head)
I'm afraid rules are rules.

Penny rings the bell, this time like a five alarm fire.
Everyone cheers. Whatever that sound is, they love it.

CROWD
OVERBOAAAAAAAAAARD.

A hand grabs Maverick's shoulder. He turns to see Hangman,
backed by Coyote, Payback and Fanboy. Maverick looks back to
Penny.

PENNY
Great to see you, Mav.

She waves him away. Maverick is dragged back, hoisted bodily
into the air, carried to the door as the crowd chants:

CROWD
OVERBOARD. OVERBOARD.

At the piano, Rooster plays on, his friends singing. His back
to the action, he doesn't see Maverick being hauled out.

56 **EXT. REAR OF HARD DECK - NIGHT**

56

The "Over-board" CHANT builds. The back door BLOWS OPEN and
Hangman and Payback force Maverick off back steps into the
sand. A raucous CHEER erupts inside.

HANGMAN
Thanks for the beers. Come back
anytime.

The pilots all laugh and head back in.

57 **INT. HARD DECK - BAR AREA - NIGHT**

57

Hangman high fives Coyote, greets the other pilots. But his
smile fades when the music at the piano changes; the first
strains of Great Balls of Fire. The crowd is into it now.
Rooster has them in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

ROOSTER

You shake my nerves and you rattle
my brains/that kinda love drives a
man insane...

58 **EXT. HARD DECK - NIGHT**

58

Maverick's headed for his bike, brushing off the sand. He
hears the song, turns and looks back at the bar.

MAV's POV. Through the windows, he sees Rooster at the piano.

59 **INT. HARD DECK BAR - NIGHT**

59

ROOSTER (O.S.)

Your kind, so fine/Got to tell this
world that you're-

EVERYONE IN THE JOINT

MINE, MINE, MINE, MINE.

60 **EXT./INT. HARD DECK - NIGHT**

60

Maverick sees a ghost. From this angle, the kid is a dead
ringer for Goose, just as gawky and gangly, loving life.

Penny clocks Maverick outside. She looks to Rooster, back to
Mav. She knows something of this moment's significance.

62 **EXT. TOP GUN TARMAC - MORNING**

62

MUSIC kicks in as jets arrive. Sleek F-18 (Echoes) and
doubles (Foxtrots)... Maverick stands in the path of an
arriving vehicle. Hondo steps out. As they walk:

HONDO

I was out. Inches from a clean
getaway.

MAVERICK

Thanks for coming.

HONDO

Halfway to Reno. A lady waiting for
me, too.

MAVERICK

I need at least one person on my
side here.

(CONTINUED)

HONDO

She's an acrobat. Very flexible.

MAVERICK

I'm never gonna hear the end of this, am I?

HONDO

No you are not. 'The hell they got you doing here, anyway?

MAVERICK

Teaching.

Hondo looks at him. Maverick nods, for real.

HONDO

Teaching *what*? How to recycle perfectly good airplanes?

(Maverick shrugs)

At least we won't be here long.

ADMIRAL'S AIDE (PRE-LAP)

STAND BY... ATTENTION ON DECK.

INT. TOP GUN DETACHMENT HANGAR - DAY

All snap to attention. Cyclone watches from the wings as Warlock steps to a podium and addresses:

Rooster, Phoenix, Hangman, Coyote, Bob, Payback and Fanboy along with pilots we met briefly in the bar: LT BRIGHAM "HARVARD" LENNOX, LT LOGAN "YALE" LEE, LT CALLIE "HALO" BASSETT and LT NEIL "OMAHA" VIKANDER, along with BILLY "FRITZ" AVALONE.

WARLOCK

Good morning. Take your seats.

(they do)

I'm Admiral Bates, NAWDC Commander. Welcome to your special training detachment. You're all Top Gun graduates, the elite, best of the best. That was yesterday. You've all spent your careers flying close air support for troops on the ground with little to no air-to-air threat.

Rooster and Phoenix share a look and sit up as Warlock reveals the image of a new enemy fighter.

(CONTINUED)

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

The enemy's new fifth generation fighter has leveled the playing field. Details are few, but you can be sure we no longer possess the technological advantage. Success, now more than ever, comes down to the man or woman in the box.

Hangman winks at Phoenix, who just rolls her eyes.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

This mission requires two F-18 Echo solo pilots and two Foxtrot dual-seat teams. Half of you will make the cut, half will remain in reserve... One of you will be named Mission Leader.

Rooster and Hangman share a glance. It's on.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

Your instructor is a Top Gun graduate with real-world experience in every mission aspect you will be expected to master. His exploits are legendary and he is considered to be one of the finest pilots this program has ever produced.

CLOSE ON: Cyclone shakes his head. Jesus.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

What he has to teach you may very well mean the difference between life and death. I give you Captain Pete Mitchell, call sign: Maverick.

CLOSE ON: Rooster, hearing the name, his expression icy. Phoenix shoots him a concerned glance. She understands the significance of this moment. Or thinks she does.

Maverick steps to the podium and the other pilots recognize him immediately. They all squirm, Hangman especially.

Maverick looks past Rooster to Hangman and nods as if to say "that's right." He raises a thick bound MANUAL:

MAVERICK

Good morning. The F-18 NATOPS. It contains everything there is to know about your aircraft. What's the load limit of the F-18?

(CONTINUED)

HANGMAN

7.5Gs. Section Four, Chapter Five.

MAVERICK

Max airspeed?

PHOENIX

Mach 1.8. Section Two, Chapter One.

Meanwhile, Hondo has sidled up next to Cyclone, whispering:

HONDO

Sir. Bernie Coleman. They call me
Hondo. I work with Maverick. But
don't hold it against me.

Hondo smiles. Cyclone doesn't.

HONDO (CONT'D)

I'll stand somewhere else.

As he slinks away:

Maverick points to Coyote:

MAVERICK

Lift limit?

COYOTE

34 Alpha.

MAVERICK

(to Fanboy)

Maximum roll rate.

FANBOY

Two hundred and twenty five degrees
per second.

MAVERICK

(to Payback)

Maximum afterburner.

PAYBACK

42,000 pounds of thrust.

MAVERICK

Max rate of climb, everyone.

CLASS

Forty-five thousand feet per
minute.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

So you know the manual/book. Inside and out. Along with the so called limits of your aircraft.

ALL TRAINEES BUT ROOSTER

Yes, sir/Damn straight, sir/etc.

He DROPS his copy of the manual in the trash. The trainees react. Cyclone glowers, throws a look to Warlock.

MAVERICK

... So does your enemy.

Warlock nods. He'll deal with it. Cyclone walks out. This is not lost on Maverick or Hondo.

HONDO

(sotto)

And we're off.

MAVERICK

What the enemy *doesn't* know is you. Your limits. I intend to find them. Test them. Push beyond... Flying faster than the speed of sound with one split second to make a life or death decision requires a level of trust, feel, instinct that doesn't exist in any manual.

And for the first time, Maverick and Rooster make eye contact.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Today we're going to start with what you only think you know. Show me what you're made of.

An explosion of sound as [TWO F-18S ROAR PAST].

[ROOSTER FLIES FORMATION WITH P/FANBOY ON HIS REAR-RIGHT].

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
Good morning, aviators. This is
your Captain speaking. Welcome to
basic fighter maneuvers.

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

FANBOY
Morning, Sir.

They immediately search the sky when they hear Mav. Rooster
looks down at his radar: a wide cone shape emanating from the
nose of a jet icon, sweeping an empty sky.

A77

INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - SORTIE 1 - (OLD SC73)

A77

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
As briefed the arena today is a ten
mile radius. The hard deck is five
thousand feet.
ALT for arena: practice area
The exercise is dog-fighting and
the rules are simple.
Working as a team, you have to
shoot me down. Or else.

B77

INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - SORTIE 1 - (OLD SC73)

B77

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

PAYBACK
Or else what, Sir?

MAVERICK
Or else I shoot back.

C77

INT. READY ROOM - (OLD SC71)

C77

An officer's lounge, complete with bar. A speaker on one wall
broadcasts Maverick's radio like an afternoon football game.
The trainees not flying the first sortie are listening to the
exercise over a radio on the bar. (They no longer enter).

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
If I shoot either one of you down,
you both lose. So cover your
wingman.

(CONTINUED)

C77 CONTINUED:

HANGMAN

Who does this guy think he is?

HALO

Oh, you think you can take him,
Hangman?

Hangman smiles.

D77 INT. PAYBACK/FANBOY/ROOSTER/MAV F-18S - SORTIE 1 - (OLD SC7/3/)

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

Pilot masks are off. Rooster cranes his neck warily in every direction.

ROOSTER

Fanboy, you see him?

Fanboy cranes his neck to look around and looks down at the radar.

FANBOY

No, nothing yet. Nothing on radar.
He must be somewhere behind us.

PAYBACK

Two versus one? He's gotta be
kidding.

FANBOY

(egging him on)
I know, right.

ROOSTER

He is not kidding, Payback.

PAYBACK

Sir, what say we put some skin in
the game?

MAVERICK

What do you have in mind?

ROOSTER

Payback, don't do it-

PAYBACK

How about this, Sir? First one to
get shot down does two hundred
pushups.

(CONTINUED)

D77

CONTINUED:

D77

MAVERICK

That's a lotta pushups.

FANBOY

They don't call it an exercise for nothing, Sir.

ROOSTER

Guys.

MAVERICK

All right. That's a deal.
You ready to go? Fight's on.

Masks go on. Maverick looks up. REVEAL: **[MAV IS SNAKING THROUGH VALLEY BELOW THEM.]**, looking up at their exposed bellies.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Let's grip and rip.

[MAV YANKS BACK ON THE STICK AND SPLITS THEIR FORMATION THROUGH THE MIDDLE.]

ROOSTER

Shit.

[ROOSTER CLIMBS UPWARDS LEFT.]

PAYBACK

Woah.

[PAYBACK JERKS FULL ROLL TO THE RIGHT, THEN DOWN RIGHT.]
Fanboy's head cracks against the canopy, mask half on, almost losing helmet.

PAYBACK (CONT'D)

Where is he? Where is he?

FANBOY

I can't see him.

[MAVERICK PIROUETTES TO THE RIGHT INSTEAD OF FLIP AND DIVES AFTER PAYBACK.]

[ROOSTER BREAKS WIDE LEFT] and, for a beat, we think he's running.

Payback and Fanboy are sitting ducks with Maverick closing.

[P/FANBOY DO A HARD PULL TO THE RIGHT, THEN INTO SCISSORS LEFT/RIGHT.]

(CONTINUED)

D77

CONTINUED: (2)

D77

FANBOY (CONT'D)

Maverick's turning on us. He's
right behind us, going for
position.

ALT: Maverick's on us, he's on our
tail.

ALT: Shit, he's on us, he's on us.

PAYBACK

Rooster, where the hell are you?

Maverick is close to a firing position on Payback, seconds
away.

ROOSTER

PAYBACK, BREAK RIGHT ON MY MARK.

(beat)

3-2-1 BREAK RIGHT.

**[PAYBACK BREAKS RIGHT AS ROOSTER FLIES IN FRONT OF MAVERICK
BREAKING LEFT.]**, replacing Payback as Maverick's target.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

(to self)

That's right. Come and get me.

Rooster flies with everything he has, furiously fighting.
[ROOSTER DIVES DOWN THEN PULLS UP, TRYING TO GET AROUND.]

MAVERICK (TO SELF)

Nice, saved your wingman.

Rooster hustles, pulls a **[HYBERMECH TO LEFT]**.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Woah. Good move Rooster.

Maverick pulls a **[HYBERMECH TO LEFT]**.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

But you sacrificed yourself.
Switching to guns.

FANBOY

(insert directions)

PAYBACK

Ok, got it.

E77

INT.READY ROOM - DAY

E77

The pilots are hearing all of this. Hangman loves it.

(CONTINUED)

E77 CONTINUED:

E77

CLOSE ON Phoenix.

F77 **INT. PAYBACK/FANBOY F-18 - SORTIE 1 - (OLD SCA75)**

F77

Our first taste of dog fighting shows how physically demanding air combat is. **[THE JETS RAPIDLY WEAVE IN AND OUT.]**

Payback is coming around, trying to get guns on Maverick. **[PAYBACK DOES A HARD RIGHT TURN]**. Maverick, meanwhile is close on Rooster. Rooster is working hard, fighting for his life.

FANBOY
(Insert directions)

PAYBACK
Hang in there Rooster, hang in there, we're coming for you.

G77 **INT. F-18S - INTERCUT - SORTIE 1 - (OLD SCC75)**

G77

Rooster hears a loud shrill alarm. He angrily rips off his oxygen.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
That's a guns kill on Rooster.
You're dead. Knock it off.

ROOSTER
(pissed)
Copy. Knock it off.

Payback and Fanboy realize they are too late.

PAYBACK
Shit. Copy. Knock it off.

MAVERICK
Head back to base, Rooster.
See Hondo about your pushups.

[ADD SPECIAL OF MAV BANKING RIGHT.]

77 **INT. READY ROOM - HANGAR - DAY**

77

The class waits in silence. Phoenix stares out the window, Hangman paces. VOICE O.S.:

VOICE
Fritz, Harvard, Yale... You're up.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

They nod to one another, psyche themselves up.

Payback and Fanboy look out of the window.

They take in the lonely sight of Rooster doing pushups.

FANBOY

It should be us down there.

Phoenix joins them.

PHOENIX

But it's not. And now you know a little something about Rooster.

78 **EXT. TARMAC - UNDER JETS - DAY**

78

Fritz, Harvard and Yale step outside and find Rooster sweating through pushups as Hondo paces, keeping count..

HONDO

One hundred and ten... one hundred and eleven...

Fritz, Harvard and Yale share a smile.

HONDO (CONT'D)

You best get on up there. Don't keep the man waiting.

HARVARD

Hold that tarmac down 'til we get back, son.

Harvard takes a selfie. Rooster just keeps pushing.

CLOSE ON Fritz, Harvard and Yale, laughing.

A79 **INT/EXT. MAVERICK'S F-18 / H-YALE'S F-18 - SORTIE 1A MONTAGE**

Maverick's jet soars into frame and instantly locks target on Harvard and Yale's jet.

79 **EXT. TARMAC - UNDER JETS - DAY**

79

Fritz, Harvard and Yale doing push-ups, sweating.

HONDO

One hundred and twenty, one twenty one...

80 **INT. READY ROOM - DAY**

80

Rooster is sitting. Phoenix comes in at the other side of the room.

 PHOENIX
Hey, you good?

Rooster takes a long time to reply.

 ROOSTER
Yeah.

 VOICE (O.S.)
Phoenix, Bob, Hangman. Your turn.

 PHOENIX
With *him*?

Phoenix and Hangman share a look. Neither one wants to fly with the other.

 HANGMAN
With *her*?

81 **EXT. SKIES ABOVE DESERT - SORTIE 2 - DAY**

81

Two more majestic F-18s roar towards camera.

[RIGHT ESCHELON. HANGMAN IN LEAD, P-BOB RIGHT WING.]

82 **INT. HANGMAN'S F-18/INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - SORTIE 2**

82

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

 HANGMAN
Say Phoenix, don't you think your
WSO should have a call-sign?

 BOB
I'm right here you know.

 HANGMAN
Oh shit, I forgot. Howsabout we
tell people Bob stands for
something? Other than Robert I
mean.

 PHOENIX
Don't take the bait, Bob. Hangman's
just projecting.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

He's hates his call-sign. Ever
since Rooster gave it to him.

*
*

HANGMAN
I like to think I've grown into it.
Now let's see, Bob. B.O.B...

*
*
*

PHOENIX
Know why Rooster calls him Hangman,
Bob?

*
*
*

HANGMAN
Wait, wait. I know. Baby On Board.

*
*

[MAVERICK'S JET SOARS RIGHT BETWEEN THEM], loud and shocking.

HANGMAN (CONT'D)
(flinches)
OH SHIT.

83 EXT. SKIES - DAY - SORTIE 2

83

[THE TWO JETS ARE FORCED TO SPREAD AS AN F-18 ROCKETS PAST 16
MILES A MINUTE ON A "KNIFE EDGE", CANOPY-TO-CANOPY].

[SLIGHT MOVE OUTWARDS, BACK INTO LEVEL FLIGHT.]

84 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

84

MAVERICK
Greetings, Aviators. Let's get to
work.

85 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18/INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

85

They listen as they start to put their masks on.

86 INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 / PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

86

MAVERICK
Fight's on.

They put their masks on. [MAVERICK RIPS INTO A HARD, NOSE-
HIGH, RIGHT-HAND TURN.]

HANGMAN
Phoenix, let's take this guy out.
Break right.

(CONTINUED)

PHOENIX
Breaking right.

[PHOENIX BREAKS RIGHT AND HANGMAN CLIMBS.]

HANGMAN
I'm going vertical.

[BOB IN HARD BANK RIGHT, IS LOOKING LEFT.]

BOB
Where's he going?

MAVERICK
That's a mistake. Cover your
wingman, Hangman.
ALT: That's a mistake. Never leave
your wingman, Hangman.

HANGMAN
He called you a man, Phoenix. You
gonna take that?

PHOENIX
So long as he doesn't call you a
man.
(beat)
Talk to me Bob. Where's Maverick?

BOB
Jesus. His nose is already coming
around.

[P/BOB ARE IN HARD LEFT/RIGHT TO EVADE MAVERICK.]

PHOENIX
What?

BOB
He's coming in for position. He's
on us, he's on us.

The class listens. We focus on Rooster.

ROOSTER (WHISPERS)
Watch your back, Fee.

Rooster curses under his breath.

91 CONTINUED:

[HANGMAN APPEARS BEHIND PHOENIX AND MAVERICK.]

HANGMAN
I'm right here.

BOB
Get him Hangman, get him, get him
off us.

Bob struggles to look back and keep a visual on Maverick.

HANGMAN
But dammit I can't shoot him
without shooting you.
(to himself)
Sorry Phoenix.
(to Phoenix)
Now break right. RIGHT.

PHOENIX
BREAKING RIGHT.

[PHOENIX BREAKS RIGHT].

BOB
(looking back)
NO, NO, NEGATIVE. BREAK LE-

95 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

95

Which puts them right in Maverick's gunsights. [MAV "FIRES."]

MAVERICK
Wrong move, Phoenix. That's a kill.
Knock it off.

96 INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

96

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

Phoenix punches her canopy.

PHOENIX
Copy, knock it off.
Thanks Hangman.

BOB
Sorry, Phoenix. That was my fault.

PHOENIX
No, you made the right call.
Hangman sold us out.

(CONTINUED)

96

CONTINUED:

96

ALT: No, no, it's on me. You made
the right call.

[P/BOB RTB BANK LEFT.]

97

INT. HANGMAN'S F-18/MAVERICK'S F-18 - SORTIE 2

97

[HANGMAN IN LOOSE ESCHELON RIGHT.]

HANGMAN

Sir, permission to continue.

MAVERICK

Now I know why they call you
Hangman.
Permission granted. You ready?

HANGMAN

I'll give you a head start.

MAVERICK

Generous. Fight's on.

[MAVERICK BREAKS LEFT INTO DITCH LEFT, SWEEP LEFT, DITCH
RIGHT, SWEEP RIGHT.]

100

EXT. SKIES/INT. HANGMAN'S F-18/MAVERICK'S F-18 - SORTIE 2 100

Mav does everything he can to shake Hangman, but nothing is
working. At first it's exciting, a challenge. But it isn't
long before Maverick is feeling the heat.

[INTO THE RIGHT SCISSORS.]

MAVERICK (TO SELF)

You're good. I can't shake you.

ALT: Damn this kid's good. Can't
shake him.

ALT: I can't shake you, damm you're
good, I'll give you that.

The physical punishment of evasive maneuvering mounts, taking
it's toll as the pursuit stretches on. Maverick is giving it
all he's got. Hangman, on the other hand:

HANGMAN (TO SELF)

*Got it bad, got it bad, got it
bad... I'm hot for teacher...*

MAVERICK (TO SELF)

You're good. But you gave up your
wingman.

(CONTINUED)

And just when we think Maverick has reached his breaking point, **[MAVERICK GOES SUPERSONIC AND CLIMBS. HANGMAN PURSUES. MAVERICK FLIES DIRECTLY INTO THE SUN.]**

Maverick looks over his shoulder so he can fly into the sun while keeping an eye on Hangman.

MAVERICK (TO SELF) (CONT'D)

And you lost your set of eyes.

The strain is intense, as is the light. Hangman closes his eyes, flying blind after Maverick, holding his nerve.

HANGMAN

Phoenix, I can't see him. How close am I?

Phoenix and Bob are masks-off, on the way back to base.

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

PHOENIX (ON RADIO)

I'm dead, dickhead.

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

BOB (ON RADIO)

See you in the afterlife, Bagman.

Hangman holds his nerve as long as he can, until:

HANGMAN

God DAMMIT.

[HANGMAN BREAKS RIGHT, LEVELS OUT], opens his eyes, looking around for Maverick. He hears the tone.

REVEAL: Maverick is behind him. Hangman punches his canopy, defeated. **[MAV PULLS UP ALONGSIDE, SWEATING, WINDED.]**

MAVERICK

That's a kill.

HANGMAN

Copy kill.

[HANGMAN BANKS AWAY HOME]. As Maverick watches him go, he pulls off his oxygen mask and shakes off the tension. That was a close one. Too close.

101 **EXT. TARMAC - DAY**

101

As Phoenix, Bob and Hangman give their two hundred. Hondo listens on radio.

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
You're smoked there, Omaha. Head on home. Next sortie. Come and get it.

102 **EXT. SKIES - SERIES OF SHOTS - SORTIE 3 - DOGFIGHTING MONTAGE**

Two more JETS SOAR, going nose-low to tangle with Maverick... as he puts a jet right in his pipper.

MAVERICK
That's guns on you Fritz.

Another F-18 is targeted.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Lights out, Coyote.

Another. Harvard again.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
That's a kill.

Another. Halo again.

HALO
Copy kill.

Another.

REMAINING PILOT
Copy kill.

103 **EXT. READY ROOM**

103

Too far away to see who is doing the pushups. It doesn't matter. One by one they collapse, exhausted.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
All right. You've all shown me some real talent. You've also proven the very best often have the most to learn. Two of you have my eye for team leader.

104 **INT. READY ROOM**

104

The class is shattered. Demoralized. Halo, Fritz and Harvard stagger in, wasted. Hondo follows.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hangman. Rooster. Your presence is requested.

They look at one another. Rooster is surprised, but neither man is happy about the pairing. Off their confused looks:

105 **EXT. SKIES ABOVE DESERT - LATER - SORTIE 4 - DAY**

105

Final sortie. Rooster and Hangman head-to-head with Maverick.

A106 **INT./EXT. F18S - INTERCUT - SORTIE 4**

A106

[TWO F-18's IN LINE ABREAST FORMATION. ROOSTER ON THE LEFT, HANGMAN ON THE RIGHT.]

Both men are tense, eyes peeled. There's a shark in the water. And they're lunch. Rooster is looking down.

HANGMAN

Nothing on radar. Again.

ROOSTER

He'll be coming low to high.

Hangman is looking back.

HANGMAN

I'm guessing from behind.

ROOSTER

Or both. That was some shit you pulled on Phoenix.

HANGMAN

I just hastened the inevitable. Besides, I paid for it, didn't I?

ROOSTER

That's not the point. Where the hell is he?

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)

Right here.

Rooster and Hangman instinctively look back and down.

(CONTINUED)

A106 CONTINUED:

A106

ROOSTER'S POV. He looks down to his right. Nothing.

He looks down to his left and is shocked to see the tip of Maverick's wing.

B106 **EXT. SKIES - DAY - SORTIE 4**

B106

REVEAL: [MAVERICK IS INSIDE THEIR FORMATION, JUST UNDERNEATH THEM. IN THE NEXT INSTANT, HE ROLLS AND SPLITS THEM FROM BELOW. HANGMAN ROLLS AWAY RIGHT. MAVERICK ROLLS OVER THE TOP OF ROOSTER, INVERTED, LOOKING DOWN AT HIM FROM ABOVE.]

MAVERICK

You boys need to focus.

(at Rooster)

You ready?

ROOSTER

Fight's on.

[ROOSTER TURNS THE TABLES AND INVERTS. MAVERICK DOES THE SAME]. Their planes begin falling towards Earth, each trying to out-spiral one another [IN A LEFT SPIRAL].

106 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18/ROOSTER'S F-18 - SORTIE 4**

106

The Gs are intense, the world spinning, a test of endurance.

ROOSTER

Not this time, Captain.

MAVERICK

Show me what you got.

ALT: Let's see what you've got.

But Rooster has no shot. And neither does Maverick. As they continue to fall.

A107 **INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - SORTIE 4**

A107

He chases them, unable to make a shot at the two tangling airplanes. [FROM 5000 FT IN LEFT TURN, LOOKING LEFT & DOWN.]

HANGMAN

ALT: The agreed upon hard deck is five thousand feet. The actual deck is Mama Earth and you are rapidly approaching it.

ALT: Hard deck is five thousand feet, Rooster.

(CONTINUED)

A107 CONTINUED:

A107

You're running out of room.
ALT: The actual deck is the deck.

107 INT. READY ROOM - SORTIE 4

107

The class is on their feet, staring at the radio in shock as:

A108 INT. ROOSTER AND MAV'S F18S INTERCUT - SORTIE 4

A108

The verbal altimeter is calling out the altitude as they plummet.

MAVERICK

What are you gonna do Rooster?
What's your move?

ROOSTER

What does it matter? You're gonna wash me out anyhow.
ALT: You gonna wash me out?

MAVERICK

Washing out is entirely up to you.

ROOSTER

That wasn't always the case, though, was it, Sir?

MAVERICK

What's past is past, Rooster. Focus on the enemy up here.

ROOSTER

You are the enemy.

They strain as they plummet and spiral.

MAVERICK

Well, the enemy's about to run you into the ground.

MAVERICK'S POV - the Earth is coming up fast.

B108 INT. READY ROOM - SORTIE 4

B108

Close on Phoenix, shocked at how personal this fight is.

108 INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - SORTIE 4

108

As he watches the planes plummet in a DNA-helix of a spiral.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

HANGMAN (TO SELF)

These guys are crazy.

(beat)

ALT: Guys, guys, pull out.

ALT: Guys, guys, watch the deck.

ALT: You guys just blew through the
hard deck.ALT: Don't mean to interrupt but
ROOSTER. YOU'RE COMING UP ON THE
HARD DECK.

109 EXT. SKIES - DAY - SORTIE 4

109

[THE SPIRAL CONTINUES], the ground coming up fast.

110 INT. READY ROOM - SORTIE 4

110

Everyone hears the altimeter dropping.

111 INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - SORTIE 4

111

Both men look at their altimeters dropping rapidly.

MAVERICK

Copy. *Continue*. Bail out anytime,
Rooster.

ROOSTER

I can go as low as you, *sir*. And
that's saying something.

The world below them is spinning wildly, coming up fast.

Finally [ROOSTER AND MAVERICK BOTH HAVE TO PULL OUT, COMING
DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE GROUND], maximum Gs.

112 EXT. SKIES - SORTIE 4

112

[MAVERICK BANKS HARD, ROOSTER FALLING IN BEHIND HIM, BACKED
BY HANGMAN]. Mav nods approvingly, sotto:

MAVERICK

Continue. We're still on.

C'mon Bradley, nose down. Just a
little lower and you have me.

A113 **INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - SORTIE 4** A113

HANGMAN
Rooster, you got him. You got him.
DROP DOWN AND TAKE THE SHOT. TAKE
IT. TAKE IT.

113 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - DAY - SORTIE 4** 113

[ROOSTER BANKING HARD, DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE GROUND]. How much lower can he safely go:

ROOSTER
WE'RE TOO LOW. WE'RE TOO LOW.

114 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18/EXT. SKIES - SORTIE 4** 114

MAVERICK (TO SELF)
Sorry, Rooster.

[MAVERICK LEVELS OUT, STRIKES WITH A COBRA MANEUVER, FORCING ROOSTER AND HANGMAN TO SPLIT AND OVERSHOOT HIM.] Now Mav's instantly in chase position for a shot of his own.

115 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - SORTIE 4** 115

Rooster hears the tone.

MAVERICK
That's a kill.

116 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - SORTIE 4** 116

Rooster seethes, outwitted, but concedes the fight...

ROOSTER
Copy kill.

117 **INT. READY ROOM - SORTIE 4** 117

Everyone exhales, shares a collective look. This is next level shit, even for them.

118 **EXT. TARMAC - ELSEWHERE - DUSK** 118

Close on Rooster, sweating and furious as he does push-ups on the tarmac, punishing himself.

(CONTINUED)

HONDO

Alright. That's enough man.
Rooster, that's enough.

Hondo pats Rooster on the shoulder.

HONDO (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's another day.

Rooster sits up, exhausted. Feet appear next to him. He looks up to see Phoenix above him.

PHOENIX

What is going on with you? You
trying to get kicked out? Breaking
the hard deck. Insubordination.
That wasn't you up there. Talk to
me. What's up?

ROOSTER

Don't worry about it.

PHOENIX

I'm *going* on this mission.
But if you get kicked out, you
could leave us flying with Hangman.
So what the hell was that-

ROOSTER

HE PULLED MY PAPERS.

PHOENIX

What? Who?

ROOSTER

Maverick. He pulled my application
to the Naval academy. He set me
back four years.

Phoenix processes.

PHOENIX

Why would he do that?

Rooster does not answer.

Hangman is staring at something on the wall.

HANGMAN

Yo, Coyote.

(CONTINUED)

119

CONTINUED:

119

Coyote walks over and follows Hangman's eyes to a photo from the CLASS OF '86. Young Maverick, with Goose beside him.

COYOTE

The man, the legend. There he is...

But Hangman is looking at something else. He points to Goose.

HANGMAN

No, next to him. He look familiar to you?

COYOTE

(looking closer)

What have we here?

Hangman reads the names under the photo: Pete "Maverick" Mitchell and his RIO "Goose" Bradshaw.

HANGMAN

Bradshaw...

CYCLONE (PRELAP V.O.)

The hard deck is a parameter set for the safety of my pilots, not to mention their aircraft, aircraft, need I remind you, paid for by the American taxpayer.

120

INT. CYCLONE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING

120

Maverick stands, holding a folder in one hand. Warlock and Cyclone sit. The mood is grim.

CYCLONE

Five thousand feet is *not* just a rule. It is a law. As immutable as gravity.

MAVERICK

The hard deck will be much lower for the mission, sir-

CYCLONE

It does not *change* without my approval and *certainly* not *in the middle of an exercise*. And that cobra maneuver of yours could have killed all three of you. I never want to see that shit again.

(CONTINUED)

WARLOCK

What exactly do you suppose you were teaching today, Captain?

MAVERICK

That as good as they are, they still have something to learn.

CYCLONE

You're talking about the best fighter pilots on the planet, *Captain*.

MAVERICK

That's what they've been told for their entire careers - while they've been dropping bombs from high altitude with little to no dogfighting. The parameters of this mission call for something they've never encountered-

CYCLONE

You have less than three weeks. You will teach them how to fly as a team and how to strike the target.

MAVERICK

And how to come home.

Ugly pause.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

And how... to come home, sir.

CYCLONE

Every mission has its risks. These pilots accept that.

MAVERICK

I don't... sir.

Cyclone shakes this off, collects the papers on front of him.

CYCLONE

Every morning from this day forward, you will brief us on your instructional plans, in writing. Nothing will change without my expressed approval.

MAVERICK

Including the hard deck, sir?

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED: (2)

120

CYCLONE
Especiallly the hard deck, Captain.

MAVERICK
Sir.

Maverick steps forward and places his folder on the desk.

CYCLONE
What is this?

MAVERICK
It's a request to lower the hard deck, sir. To practice the low-level bombing run. Per the mission parameters.

121 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CYCLONE'S OFFICE - DAY

121

Maverick and Warlock exit, walking in silence for a moment.

WARLOCK
You could learn a thing or two about timing, Captain.

They walk past Phoenix and Bob. Maverick glances back, something crossing his mind before he pushes it away.

124 EXT. HARD DECK - DAY

124

Maverick rides his Ninja, passing the Hard Deck. He pulls a U-turn and drives back to the bar.

125 INT. HARD DECK - BAR AREA - DAY

125

Maverick strides in, stops short, a yellow Labrador, "T", approaches. As he pets it.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, Mav.

He looks up, seeing AMELIA (14) sitting at the empty bar, busy with her homework, out of place here.

MAVERICK
Amelia?

AMELIA
I know. I got big. Bar opens at five.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

Just came to pay off a debt.

(confused)

Is your m-

Amelia puts her pen down, shouts upstairs:

AMELIA

MOM.

MAVERICK

How's your dad?

AMELIA

With his wife. In Hawaii.

Penny enters from a back office. She stops, surprised to see Maverick.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Mav says he owes you money.

Maverick winces, holds up a wad of cash.

PENNY

Don't worry about it. You've suffered enough.

MAVERICK

I insist.

Penny knows he won't budge, accepts the cash.

PENNY

One thing you can say about Captain Mitchell. He always keeps his affairs in order.

AMELIA

(realizing)

Captain? Still?

MAVERICK

A *highly decorated* captain.

PENNY

(to Amelia)

Finish up. We need to get the boat to the yard.

AMELIA

I can't go.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY

What do you mean you can't go?

AMELIA

Test tomorrow. I have to study.

(off her look)

They only told us today.

PENNY

I can't sail her alone.

AMELIA

Use the engine.

PENNY

And why are we are we taking her to the yard?

AMELIA

(remembering)

To fix the engine.

MAVERICK

I can help you.

PENNY

Mav.

MAVERICK

Penny. I'm in the Navy.

126 **EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY**

126

A sailboat slams through whitecaps in high wind. Penny's at the wheel, with Mav beside her, very out of his element.

PENNY

Little rougher than I was expecting.

MAVERICK

You don't say.

PENNY

Pump on the backstay and de-power the sails.

MAVERICK

What does that mean?

PENNY

You're supposed to be in the Navy.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

I don't sail boats, Penny. I land on them.

PENNY

We're going to flatten the sail. Sort of like raising the flaps on an airplane.

MAVERICK

To reduce drag.

PENNY

Exactly.

MAVERICK

How do I do that?

Penny points to a handle by the wheel.

PENNY

Pump that handle for me.

Mav navigates, does as instructed, struggling to stay steady on the pitching deck.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Now pull on the outhaul.

(off his look)

That green line there. No, the other one.

Maverick navigates uneasily towards a line running under the boom, looks back to Penny.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Pull it hard.

Maverick does as he's told. The boat begins to stabilize.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Arrright, now we want to take off.

What do we need?

MAVERICK

Lift.

She nods, points to the bottom of the mast, farther away.

PENNY

Pull the Cunningham.

(off his look, points)

Sorry, the red line.

(CONTINUED)

Maverick pulls the Cunningham and the boat moves faster.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Then crank that winch there, to
trim the jib.

Penny points to a winch in the middle of the boat. Maverick moves it with more certainty, cranks the winch.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What are you adjusting now?

MAVERICK

Angle of attack.

PENNY

Right you are.

The boat is sailing steady and fast, whitecaps spraying. Maverick smiles. Not so different than flying. Penny cranks a winch by the wheel.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Ready?

MAVERICK

For what?

PENNY

The afterburner.

And off Penny's smile...

JUMP CUT as the spinnaker pole is extended.

JUMP CUT as Maverick slams the spinnaker bag on the bow.

JUMP CUTS as four lines are attached.

JUMP CUT to Maverick who "jumps" the spinnaker line, using his entire body to haul the spinnaker up the mast.

ANGLE ON Penny hauling in the other end of the line through a cleat to secure it.

In this way Maverick and Penny work together, sharing a smile as:

BOAT TO BOAT ANGLE: the spinnaker deploys, filling with wind with a dramatic CRACK and pulling the boat along even faster.

BACK ON THE BOAT, hauling through the water now. Maverick navigates the deck toward Penny, the sea spraying around him. He takes a place beside her at the wheel.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: (3)

126

PENNY (CONT'D)

Take her.

Maverick eyes the wheel, taking it as Penny steps aside. It takes some effort to hold her steady. After a beat:

PENNY (CONT'D)

Now you're in the Navy.

They share a smile and look ahead.

AB127 **EXT. STREETS - DUSK**

AB127

Maverick drives Penny on his bike, her arms around his waist. We cruise with them a while.

She lays her head on his shoulders, feels the wind in her hair.

AC127 **EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DUSK**

AC127

They pull up to Penny's house. Penny climbs off the bike.

PENNY

Thanks for helping today.

MAVERICK

Not exactly sure I helped.

Awkward silence. Neither is sure how to say goodnight. Until:

PENNY

Don't give me that look.

MAVERICK

What look?

She turns and heads for the house.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

It's the only one I got.

Penny calls back over her shoulder.

PENNY

Goodnight.

MAVERICK

Night.

She turns away without a second thought. As Maverick watches her go, he exhales, starts his bike.

AD127 INT. PENNY'S HOUSE

AD127

Penny enters and closes the door behind her before leaning her back against it, letting go of her cool demeanor.

She closes her eyes, listening to the sound of Mav's bike riding away, then hangs her head and exhales, not unlike Maverick.

AMELIA (O.S.)
Mom, is that you?

PENNY
Yeah.
(to herself)
Yeah, it's me, all right.

She shakes her head and exits frame as:

MAVERICK (PRE-LAP)
Time... is your greatest enemy.

A127 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY

A127

CLOSE ON: The main screen, pulling back from a rapidly ticking timer, counting backwards toward zero...

Looming larger on the screen are schematics of:

MAVERICK
Phase one of the mission will be a low-level ingress, attacking in two-plane teams. You'll fly along this narrow canyon to your target. Radar guided surface-to-air missiles defend the area.

On screen, a schematic of a radar-guided missile array.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
These SAMs are lethal, but they were designed to protect the skies above. Not the ground... Not the canyon below.

ROOSTER
That's because the enemy knows no one is insane enough to navigate that low at high speed.

MAVERICK
And that's exactly what I'm gonna train you to do.

(CONTINUED)

A127 CONTINUED:

A127

ON HANGMAN who smiles. This is gonna be intense.

Overhead animation of two planes zig-zagging through a narrow valley.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Your altitude on the day will be
one hundred feet... Maximum.

Reactions from the pilots.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Exceed this altitude... Radar will
spot you - And you're dead.

As the planes on screen bank, one goes too high... A missile
fires and destroys the high plane.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Speed on the day...860 knots.
Minimum. Time to target, two and a
half minutes.

More reactions from the pilots.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

(pointing)

That's because these Fifth
generation fighters are waiting at
an airbase nearby...

One screen, schematics of the lethal looking next-gen
aircraft.

Beside this, animation shows a Tomahawk Missile launch from a
destroyer in a carrier group at sea as"

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

*Simultaneous to your ingress, a
carrier-based strike* will take out
this airfield, but if any of these
planes are airborne before that,
they'll anticipate your target and
immediately move to defend it. In a
head-to-head with these planes in
your F18s... you're dead.

(more reactions)

You want to get in, hit your target
and be gone before these planes
even have a chance of catching you.
This makes time your *greatest*
adversary.

(CONTINUED)

A127 CONTINUED: (2)

A127

The canyon, the missiles and the fifth gen planes share the screen now.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

The faster you navigate this canyon, the harder it will be to stay under the radar of these enemy SAMs. The deeper you are in the canyon, the less margin for error there will be. The tighter the turns, the more intensely the force of gravity on your body multiplies.

Maverick points to various turns on the canyon map.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

You've all faced sustained Gs before. But this... This will take you and your aircraft to the breaking point.

Reactions from the class. Holy shit.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

For today's exercise, we'll start easy. You'll be flying a route on your nav-system which simulates the valley. Maximum ceiling: three hundred feet. Time to target: three minutes. Good luck.

127 **EXT. MOUNTAINS - "LOW-LEVEL INGRESS TRAINING" - SORTIE 1** 127

ZOOM. POV from the nose of an F-18: ripping a BRUTAL SLALOM through canyons and valleys at incredible speed...

128 **INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S/COYOTE'S F-18S - DAY**

128

Phoenix/Bob fly behind Coyote, blasting above the rocky desert terrain.

Phoenix has one eye on a GPS. A green dot represents their F-18. A blue line represents the route she has to take. Red lines on either side represent canyon walls.

To stay on the line, she has to bank hard, pulling switchbacks with tremendous Gs.

In back, Bob has his own GPS, monitoring the clock, making calculations. They are both sweating.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

BOB

Time to target is one minute
thirty. We're twenty seconds
behind. Increase to 900 knots.

PHOENIX

We gotta move, Coyote.

Sweating, Coyote guns it, banking harder to follow the
proposed route. The Gs intensify and the team strains. It's
grueling.

129 **EXT. TRAINING CANYON - DAY**

129

But he can't make the turn...

130 **INT. COYOTE'S F-18 - DAY**

130

Coyote yanks back the throttle and hits the brakes.

CLOSE ON: The line on Coyote's's GPS. He strays too far and
over the red line. An alarm blares.

COYOTE

God *dammit*.

A131 **INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - DAY**

A131

Phoenix comes around the corner to see Coyote's jet with its
airbrakes extended. She yanks on the stick sending her jet
into a near vertical climb, breaking the 200 foot ceiling.

131 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY - DEBRIEF**

131

Maverick's with all the trainees, replaying the TRAINING RUN
like a coach breaking down postgame film...

MAVERICK

(to Coyote)

Why are they dead?

PHOENIX

We broke the 300 foot ceiling. A
surface-to-air missile took us out.

MAVERICK

(to Coyote)

No. Why are they dead?

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

COYOTE

I slowed down and gave her no warning. It's my fault.

Coyote feels the eyes of the class on him.

MAVERICK

Was there a reason you didn't communicate with your team?

Coyote goes to speak.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

One that their family will accept at the funeral.

Coyote feels the heat.

COYOTE

None... sir.

Then he turns on Phoenix.

MAVERICK

And why didn't you anticipate the turn? You were briefed on the terrain.

Now Phoenix is in the hot seat. Rooster stares daggers at Maverick. Maverick points to Bob.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Tell it to his family.

Off Phoenix's look, Hangman smiles.

132 **EXT. TRAINING CANYONS/INT. F-18S - SORTIE 2 - DAY**

132

Two more F-18s (Payback/Fanboy and Hangman) TWIST along the imaginary route, dangerously close. High G turns. Sweat.

PAYBACK

Hangman ease up. Canyon's getting tighter.

HANGMAN

Negative. Increase your speed.

Payback does so. But Hangman is still pulling away.

PAYBACK

You're going too fast, man.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

Hangman navigates a tight turn.

HANGMAN

No harm in being ahead of schedule.

PAYBACK

DAMMIT, SLOW DOWN- SHIT.

Too close to the canyon wall, Payback pulls up, breaking the ceiling.

FANBOY

We're too high-

An alarm sounds.

FANBOY (CONT'D)

Radar has a lock. We're dead.

133 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY - DEBRIEF**

133

Payback and Fanboy glare at the back of Hangman's head.

MAVERICK

What happened?

HANGMAN

I flew as fast as I could. Kinda like my ass depended on it.

MAVERICK

And...

ROOSTER

He put his team in danger and his wingman is dead.

HANGMAN

They couldn't keep up.

Rooster and Hangman lock eyes. Off Rooster shaking his head:

134 **EXT. TRAINING CANYONS - SORTIE 3 - DAY**

134

BOOM: Rooster, backed by Harvard and Yale, screams along the route, cranking and banking. They're flying with extreme skill and confidence, a polished machine. But:

HARVARD

We're ten seconds behind and dropping. Increase to 920 knots.

135 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18/HARVARD-YALE F-18**

135

ROOSTER
Negative, Harvard. Hold your speed.

YALE
Rooster, we're late.

ROOSTER
We're alive. We'll make up time in the straightaway.

YALE
We're too far behind. We have to go now.

ROOSTER
Maintain current speed. We can make it, WE CAN MAKE IT-

141 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DEBRIEF - DAY**

141

MAVERICK
What did you do wrong?

Rooster just stares at him.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Why are you dead?

PHOENIX
Sir.

Maverick looks to her.

PHOENIX (CONT'D)
He's the only one who made it to the target.

MAVERICK
A minute late. He gave the Enemy aircraft time to shoot him down. He's still dead.

ROOSTER
You don't know that.

HANGMAN
You're not. Flying. Fast enough. You were team leader up there.

(CONTINUED)

COYOTE

Man, on the day, the canyon will be tighter.

FANBOY

We'll be pulling even higher G's, and the missiles will be real.

PAYBACK

The ceiling will be *one hundred feet*, time to target, *two and half minutes*.

HANGMAN

You don't have a second to waste.

But Maverick has never taken his eyes off of Rooster.

ROOSTER

We made it to the target.

MAVERICK

And superior enemy planes intercepted you on your way out.

ROOSTER

Then it's a dog fight-

MAVERICK

Against fifth generation fighters.

ROOSTER

We'd still have a chance.

MAVERICK

In an F18-

ROOSTER

It's not the plane, it's the pilot-

MAVERICK

Exactly.

Maverick regrets saying it in the same instant. Ugly pause. Rooster simmers.

ROOSTER

There's more than one way to fly this mission, *sir*.

HANGMAN

You don't get it.

All eyes turn to him.

(CONTINUED)

HANGMAN (CONT'D)

On this mission, a man flies like
Maverick here or a man doesn't come
back.

(to Phoenix)

No offense.

BOB

Yet somehow you always manage.

HANGMAN

I don't mean to criticize. You're
conservative is all.

MAVERICK

Lieutenant-

HANGMAN

We're going into combat, son. On a
level no living pilot has ever
seen.

(pointing to Maverick)

Not even him. It's no time to be
letting the past hold you back-

MAVERICK

Lieutenant-

ROOSTER

What's that supposed to mean?

Hangman looks around the room, waiting. Finally:

HANGMAN

I can't be the only one who
knows that Maverick flew with
his old man? Or that Maverick
was flying when your old man-

MAVERICK

That's enough Lieutenant-

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Rooster.

But it's too late. Rooster lunges, grabs Hangman's collar.
The class jumps in. In an instant its chaos. Hangman is not
fighting back. Rooster is. Maverick, Phoenix and several
other have him held tight.

HANGMAN

(hands up)

I'm cool, I'm cool. It's all
good.

ROOSTER

You sonofabitch.

MAVERICK

You're all dismissed.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (3)

141

He snaps, tears himself free of those still grasping him.

HANGMAN
(to Maverick)
You know I'm right.

MAVERICK
I said you're dismissed.

Hangman pulls himself free and walks out.

143 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT**

143

Mav sits alone at the end of the day. He gets a text from Iceman. Ice wants to see him.

144 **EXT. ADMIRAL'S HOUSE - CORONADO COAST - DUSK**

144

Maverick RIDES up on his bike, arriving at a stately officer's home right on the ocean. Children are playing the backyard. The sound of laughter.

Mav is greeted at the door by SARAH KAZANSKY, (50).

SARAH
Girls, girls, why don't you head outside?

MAVERICK
Sarah.

SARAH
Maverick.

She tries to smile. Can't.

MAVERICK
(realizing)
It's come back.

SARAH
No one knows. He's still on active duty.

MAVERICK
Sarah...

Her eyes well with tears and he hugs her.

145

INT. ADMIRAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

145

A photo we've seen before - Maverick and Iceman on a carrier deck, a moment of triumph from another age. It holds a place of prominence among many happy memories. Children, grandchildren, birthdays, graduations, adventures.

OUT THE WINDOW we see the same extended. Happy. Content.

Maverick enters quietly. Sarah closes the door behind him.

MAVERICK

Admiral.

REVEAL: A MAN sitting at a desk with his back to us, dressed warmly, too warm for the room, not a blonde hair out of place. His head is turned to the window, watching the children play in the yard.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

How's my wingman?

He doesn't answer. Instead, he turns to the laptop on his desk and types. As Maverick approaches:

REVERSE: TOM "ICEMAN" KAZANSKY looks good for his years, if a little tired. It takes a moment for us to notice the bandage around his throat.

They share a smile that quickly fades...

ON SCREEN: *I'm dying. You have bigger problems.*

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Don't worry about me. I'll be fine.
What can I do for you.

Ice types:

I don't want to talk about me. How's work?

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)

That's not important now-

Ice points to the screen, his eyes adamant. Understanding, Maverick relents.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)

Rooster is still mad at me for what I did.

You were protecting him. You did the right thing.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
I thought he would eventually
understand why. I hoped he'd
forgive me.

There's still time.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
*The mission is less three weeks
away. The kid isn't ready.*

Then teach him.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
He doesn't want what I have to
give.

Ice waves a hand: bullshit.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be teaching the mission
I should be flying it. Don't ask me
to send someone else to die. Don't
ask me to send *him*. Send me.

It's time to let go.

Beat. It pains Maverick to answer.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
I don't know *how*.

Ice waits, knowing not to say anything.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
I'm not a teacher. I'm a fighter
pilot. A naval aviator. It's not
what I am, it's *who* I am... How do
I teach that?

Ice waits.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Even if I *could*, it's not what
Rooster wants - it's not what the
Navy wants. That's why they canned
me the last time. You're the only
reason I'm still here.

Ice waits. Mav takes a long shaky breath, admitting:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
I get it. Rooster's not the only
one holding back. I'm afraid...

(CONTINUED)

If I send him on this mission he might never come home... If I don't send him... He'll never forgive me. Either way, I could lose him... forever.

Ice waits. Mav looks at the screen.

It's time to let go.

And Maverick nods, reaching the core of it, of himself:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

I know... I know...

Ice stands, but his hands on his friend's shoulders, struggles to speak:

ICEMAN

The Navy needs *Maverick*. That *kid* needs *Maverick*. They just don't want to admit it. *That's* why I fought for you. *That's* why you're still here.

Maverick is deeply touched. Then realizes:

MAVERICK

You knew Rooster was on this assignment before you chose me, didn't you?

Busted, Ice smiles. The two friends embrace.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

You're a warrior, Ice. A fighter.

CLOSE ON Ice's face. He knows otherwise.

ICEMAN

So who's the best pilot...

MAVERICK

It's a nice moment. Don't ruin it.

And the olds friends manage to laugh.

Cyclone walks in to find the room empty. Curious.

147 **INT. READY ROOM - DAY** 147

Cyclone peeks in. Also empty.

148 **INT. TOP GUN HANGAR - DAY** 148

Cyclone studies loitering F-18s flanking a deserted hangar.

149 **EXT. CORONADO BEACH - DAY** 149

CLOSE ON: A football. Hands come down into frame, grip it, ready to snap it camera left to camera right.

CLOSE ON: A football. Hands come down into frame, grip it, ready to snap it right to left.

REVEAL: The pilots are divided into two teams, squaring off in a game of football with one unusual feature:

There are two balls. Both quarterbacks snap at the same time. Both teams scramble. In an instant, it is chaos.

Maverick is a quarterback on one team, Rooster on the other. Rooster manages to make a pass. Maverick is sacked. In fact, the opposition seems to care more about sacking the teacher than they do about scoring.

Yet, in the midst of the hard-hits, we see something we haven't seen before: camaraderie.

Hondo makes an epic attempt at a touchdown despite half the class clinging to him. Hangman looks down at a prone Maverick, relishing a kill. Rooster, walks past, stops, grudgingly helps him up. It is the first remotely friendly moment they have shared.

Maverick, a little sore, tenderly heads off field, waving Bob in as his replacement.

150 **EXT. HARD DECK BAR - REAR** 150

Maverick sits in one of two low lawn chairs, watching the chaos, mildly amused. He helps himself to a beer from a cooler as he eyes:

Hangman helping Rooster off the ground. Another truce of sorts.

Both balls snap and the entire class clashes. Anarchy. Mav smiles.

(CONTINUED)

And a shadow falls over Maverick.

Maverick looks up at:

MAVERICK

Sir.

Cyclone is standing just beside Maverick, sunglasses hiding his eyes. He stares at the game, perplexed.

CYCLONE

What is this?

MAVERICK

Dog fight football. Offense and defense at the same time.

CYCLONE

And who's winning?

MAVERICK

Oh, they stopped keeping score a long time ago.

CYCLONE

This detachment has training to do, Captain. Every available minute counts.

MAVERICK

Yes, sir.

CYCLONE

Then why am I looking at this clown show?

MAVERICK

You asked me to build a team, sir. There's your team.

Cyclone looks again. The cadets are split into two huddles, strategizing, working together. They break for the next play.

CYCLONE

The mission has been moved up one week. Last phase of training starts tomorrow.

And he walks away, taking with him any sense of accomplishment the day has produced. Maverick looks back at the class, Rooster's team rallying around him.

B152 **EXT. HARD DECK**

B152

Maverick walks up the beach behind the pilots, keeping the news to himself.

PENNY (O.S.)
You're good with them.

He turns, sees Penny standing by the back door of the Hard Deck.

PENNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
If I didn't know better, I'd say
you're taking to this job.
Maybe even enjoying it.

MAVERICK
I've always liked football.

PENNY
That's not what I mean and you know
it.
(off his look)
If you're not careful you could
find yourself getting used to this.

Mav considers this. Nods, uncomfortable.

PENNY (CONT'D)
You okay?

MAVERICK
I'm okay, it's just... Time, you
know? There's never enough.

PENNY
That's for sure.

They stare at one another for a while.

153 **EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

153

Maverick and Penny arrive on Maverick's bike. Penny climbs off.

A bit of a pause. Easier now. She turns toward the house. Maverick looks away, exhales.

PENNY
You coming or not?

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

He looks and sees her waiting by the door. He's not sure how to respond. Penny heads inside. Maverick climbs off his bike and follows.

154 INT. PENNY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

154

Maverick and Penny lie in bed, laughing quietly.

MAVERICK

Should I go? Before Amelia gets back.

PENNY

She's staying at a friend's tonight.

MAVERICK

You two seem (even/a lot) closer than the last time I saw you.
(off her nod)
How'd you manage?

PENNY

Well you know Amelia has a mind of her own.

MAVERICK

Where'd she get that I wonder?

PENNY

And she wanted more freedom than I thought she was ready for. But, I realized I had to trust her and let her make her own mistakes.

MAVERICK

Not an easy choice.

She sees the look on his face, understands.

PENNY

Is that what happened with Rooster?

He looks at her, realizes she sees everything.

MAVERICK

I stood in his way... I pulled his papers at the academy, took years off his career.

PENNY

Why?

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

His mother never wanted him to fly.
Not after what happened to Goose.
She made me swear to her before she
died. So...

PENNY

Does Rooster know that?

MAVERICK

He'll always resent me for what I
did. Why should he resent her too?

PENNY

Not an easy choice.

MAVERICK

I didn't know what else to do. I
just... I was trying to be the
father he lost. I just wish I'd
handled it better.

Penny touches his cheek. He sighs.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

The truth is, I didn't think he was
ready...

PENNY

Is he ready now?

MAVERICK

He's a great pilot. He has the
instincts. But he's too careful.

(sighs)

He's flying with his father's ghost
up there. I know a thing or two
about that.

Long pause. Penny is about to respond when:

AMELIA (O.S.)

Mom, I'm home.

They freeze.

PENNY

Thought you were staying at Karen's
tonight.

AMELIA (O.S.)

Karen's sick and I have homework to
do.

(CONTINUED)

Mav and Penny share a look, quietly.

MAVERICK

I should go.

PENNY

Yeah.

He leaps up, pulls on his pants and shirt.

PENNY (CONT'D)

(to Amelia)

Did you have dinner?

AMELIA (O.S.)

Not yet. Wanna go out?

PENNY

No, no. I'll make you something.

Maverick heads to the stairs.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Not that way.

MAVERICK

What?

And Penny's nods to the open window. Beat.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

You're can't be serious.

PENNY

I am serious. I have an example to set and I'm not in the habit of bringing men home on the first date.

MAVERICK

This is not a *first date*.

But Penny goes back for Mav's jacket and gives it to him. Pushing him out. He just stares. He can't believe he's doing this. He starts to climb out, looks back.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Fine. But this is the last time I go out your window.

She smiles and they kiss.

155 **EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

155

Maverick's drops to the ground, rolls, picks himself up. He turns, brushing himself off, coming face to face with:

Amelia, in the kitchen, seeing him through the window. After an awkward moment.

AMELIA

Just don't break her heart again.

And she turns away, leaving Maverick to process that.

WARLOCK (PRELAP)

Morning... The uranium enrichment plant that is your target will be operational earlier than expected. Raw uranium will be delivered to the plant in ten days time.

156 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY**

156

Warlock addresses the class. Maverick is off to one side.

WARLOCK

To avoid contaminating the target valley with radiation, your mission has been moved up one week.

(alt)

Your mission has been moved up one week to avoid contaminating the target valley with radiation.

Reactions from the class. This is bad.

COYOTE

Sir, no one here has successfully flown the low level course.

WARLOCK

Nevertheless, you have been ordered to move on. Captain.

As the class absorbs this, Warlock nods to Maverick.

MAVERICK

We have one week left to focus on phase two - the most difficult stage of the mission: a pop-up strike with a steep dive requiring nothing less than two consecutive miracles.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: 156

AN EXPLOSION OF SOUND TAKES US TO:

157 **EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT - "POP-UP TARGETING TRAINING"** 157

Two F-18s blast low over ground pockmarked by scrub brush.

158 **INT. ROOSTER'S/PHOENIX & BOB'S F18S - SORTIE 1 - DAY** 158

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT SCREEN DIRECTION]

ROOSTER and PHOENIX/BOB are [FLYING AS A TEAM], heading toward a U-shaped cluster of RUSTED SHIPPING CONTAINERS.

MAVERICK (V.O.)

Two pairs of F-18s will fly in a welded wing formation.

159 **INT. HANGMAN/PAYBACK & FANBOY'S F18S - SORTIE 2 - DAY** 159

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]

In a separate sortie, Hangman and Payback/Fanboy fly at the same target: A small STEEL TARGET DRUM behind the containers.

MAVERICK (V.O.)

Teamwork - the precise coordination of these aircraft - is essential to both the mission's success, and your survival.

160 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - BRIEF** 160

On the main screen, a simulation of the mission plays out in slow, deliberate motion as Maverick speaks.

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]

MAVERICK

As you know, the plant rests between two mountains. To maintain the lowest possible altitude, you'll invert directly into a steep dive. Your target is an impact point less than three meters wide.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

The aircraft in the simulation climb a mountain and roll onto their backs at the peak before diving, upside down. They roll upright and dive steeply.

161 **EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT/INT. F18S - SORTIE 1&2 - INTERCUT** 161

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]

Both teams' aircraft fly in tandem mimicking this maneuver. [CLIMB A MOUNTAIN AND ROLL ONTO THEIR BACKS AT THE PEAK BEFORE DIVING UPSIDE DOWN. THEY ROLL UPRIGHT AND DIVE STEEPLY.] Of course, they do so without mountains in their way.

162 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - BRIEF**

162

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]

MAVERICK

The two-seat aircraft will paint the target with a laser bullseye. The lead single seat will breach the reactor by dropping a laser-guided bomb through an exposed ventilation shaft on the surface. That's miracle number one.

In the simulation, the first team's bomb hits and the planes pull out.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Second team delivers the killshot.

The second teams' bomb hits and the target is destroyed.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Miracle number two.

163 **EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT/INT. F18S - SORTIE 1&2 - INTERCUT** 163

The teams dive, again without mountains, toward the shipping containers that guard the target.

MAVERICK (V.O.)

If you can't hold your dive, if you lose your laser lock, you'll miss.

(CONTINUED)

163

CONTINUED:

163

Hangman and Payback miss the target.

HANGMAN

That's a miss. Goddamnit. Do your job.

MAVERICK

If either teams misses... You fail.

Rooster and Phoenix, in a separate sortie, miss. Dammit.

ROOSTER

That's a miss. That's a miss.

Rooster flips off mask.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

Sorry Bob. That's on me.

164

INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - BRIEF

164

[EVERYONE POPS UP, ROLL LEFT, OVER THE TOP INVERTED, ROLL RIGHT TOWARDS THE TARGET.]

On the screen, the animated planes arc upward and out of the deep valley as:

MAVERICK (O.C.)

Egress is a steep, high G climb out. And this is where you'll be at your most vulnerable.

Rooster and Phoenix/Bob pull back as hard as they can, crushed into their seats, heads pinned back.

Hangman and Payback, in a separate sortie, do the same.

[INTERCUT AS BOTH PLANES CLIMB], as pilots are strained to the point of breaking.

165

INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - BRIEF

165

In the simulation behind Maverick, an animated pair of aircraft fly into the valley and fail to make the climb. They fly smack into the side of a mountain.

MAVERICK

This... is coffin corner.

The class share looks. This is bad.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Should you manage to avoid this mountain, you'll climb straight up, into enemy radar, losing all your airspeed. Within seconds, you'll be fired upon by enemy SAMs.

Animated planes climb into a hailstorm of SAMs. They take evasive action and dive immediately.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

How fast you can dive back down into the canyon, will mean the difference between life and death.

Phoenix stops Maverick mid-brief.

HANGMAN

A climb like that, at that speed, we'll be pulling at least eight Gs.

MAVERICK

Nine. Minimum.

ROOSTER

The stress limit of the F18s airframe is 7.5 Gs.

Rooster stares at Maverick. Neither man blinks.

MAVERICK

That's the *accepted* limit. To survive this mission you'll have to pull beyond that, even if it means bending your air frame.

He points to the animation of lethal looking SAMs firing on climbing F-18s on the screen:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Climbing out of that canyon, you'll be a sitting duck, with SAMs coming at you from all directions.

EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT/INT. F18S - SORTIE 1&2 - INTERCUT 167

Both teams strain desperately [**PULLING OUT**], **dramatizing what Maverick describes** [**RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT**]:

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK (V.O.)

You'll weigh close to two thousand pounds, fighting with everything you have just to keep from blacking out, your lungs imploding like an elephant is sitting on your chest - your skull crushing your spine.

(Note: Important we include PILOT POV establishing gray-out in the lead up to G-LOCK)

A170

INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - BRIEF

A170

And we're back. The reality of this hitting home. Maverick points to the canyon map on the screen.

MAVERICK

Your only chance of survival will be to get what's left of your aircraft below radar again. Then follow this canyon back to the carrier.

(to Hangman)

Kinda like your ass depended on it.

(to class)

That's *if* you strike the target on time. If you don't, you may have an even bigger problem to contend with.

Maverick clicks a remote. On the screen, the enemy's vaunted fifth generation fighter appears.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

You'll be flying in a damaged F18 against one of the most lethal fighter planes ever produced.

After an ugly silence:

PHOENIX

Sir... is this even achievable?

MAVERICK (V.O.)

In the end, the answer to your question will come down to the pilot in the box.

And Maverick looks to Rooster, which in turn takes us to:

170

EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT - POP UP SORTIE 3

170

[LEVEL FLIGHT]**[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]**In the distance, **[TWO F-18S STREAK TOWARDS]** the target.In the foreground, **[MAV'S BLACK F-18 RISES INTO FRAME]** on a course to intercept.

A171

INT. COYOTE - PHOENIX/BOB F18S INTERCUT - POP UP SORTIE 3 A171

Coyote in the lead, backed by Phoenix and Bob.

BOB

We're twelve seconds late on
target. We gotta move, we gotta
move.

COYOTE

(agitated)
I'm going as fast as I can.

MAVERICK

Blue team, you are spotted.

Radar beeps.

BOB

Bandit, Bandit. Radar contact.
20 miles left, ten o'clock. He's
coming fast. 700 knots closure.

COYOTE

Shit, it's Maverick.

PHOENIX

Stay focused.

**[MAV APPROACHES FROM PILOTS' 10 O'CLOCK. PILOTS' EYELINE IS
10 O'CLOCK.]**

BOB

He's swinging around to the north.

COYOTE

What do you want to do?
(beat)
What do you want to do?

(CONTINUED)

A171 CONTINUED:

A171

PHOENIX

Continue. We're close. Stay on target. Be ready on that laser, Bob.

BOB

On it..

Bob reaches for a button/knob, constantly working.

COYOTE

Popping in 3-2-1.

PHOENIX

Popping in 3-2-1.

171 **EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT/INT. F18S - POP UP SORTIE 3**

171

[COYOTE, P/BOB SCREAM INTO THEIR WELDED WING POP-UP MANEUVER, ARCING INTO THE SKY AND THEN ROLL OVER TO MAKE THEIR 45 DEGREE DIVE.]

Maverick is approaching...

COYOTE

Talk to me, Bob. Where is Maverick?

BOB

I'm a little busy right now.

PHOENIX

WE GOT THIS COYOTE.

Bob paints it with his laser.

BOB

CAPTURED.

COYOTE

GOT IT. BOMBS AWAY.

But as he hits his payload trigger a WARNING LIGHT flashes: "MALFUNCTION." He tries again. And again.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

DAMMIT. HUNG BOMB. HUNG BOMB.

Coyote curses under his breath, **[PULLS OUT OF THE STEEP DIVE]**, Phoenix and Bob close behind, straining under the intense Gs.

Suddenly, an ALARM BLARES in Phoenix's cockpit.

BOB (OVER RADIO)

MAVERICK'S GOT MISSILE LOCK ON US.

(CONTINUED)

171 CONTINUED:

171

PHOENIX (ON RADIO)
Shit, we're dead.

[PHOENIX PEELS OFF RIGHT.]

Meanwhile, [COYOTE PULLS BACK ON THE STICK WITH ALL HE'S GOT.]

A196 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - POP UP SORTIE 3

A196

Coyote's plane crosses the imaginary line.

B196 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

B196

MAVERICK
That's a fail, return to base,
Coyote.

C196 INT. COYOTE'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

C196

But Coyote is determined. He keeps pulling, harder still. And we realize something is wrong.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
Coyote, do you copy?

CLOSE ON: Coyote's eyes. Pinned.

COYOTE'S P.O.V. The world outside is subtly pixilated, the periphery going gray, tunnel vision creeping in.

Coyote is blacking out.

[COYOTE ROLLS LEFT IN A PASSED OUT ROLL.]

196 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

196

Maverick sees [COYOTE'S NEAR-VERTICAL JET START TO NOSE OVER.]

MAVERICK
COYOTE, LEVEL WINGS.

197 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

197

The others watch [COYOTE'S PLANE START TO ROLL]... Cyclone steps closer, knowing something is wrong.

198 **EXT. SKIES OVER RANGE - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3** 198

[COYOTE'S F-18 IS INVERTED, HEADED BACK FOR THE GROUND.]

200 **INT. PHOENIX-BOB'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3** 200

 PHOENIX
 HE'S IN G-LOC. HE'S GOING IN.

202 **EXT. SKIES OVER RANGE - POP UP SORTIE 3** 202

[MAVERICK DIVES LEFT AFTER COYOTE TARGETING HIS PLANE.]

[P/BOB FOLLOW FALLING IN TIGHT FORMATION WITH MAV.]

 MAVERICK
 Come on, come on... gimme tone, you
 sonofabitch.

203 **INT. COYOTE'S F-18 - POP UP SORTIE 3** 203

Coyote is half in, half out of consciousness. A WARNING ALARM
SCREAMS in his cockpit, rousing him back from the brink.

COYOTE'S POV, the ground coming up fast. [COYOTE YANKS BACK
ON THE STICK AND REGAINS CONTROL] , breathing heavy.

 COYOTE
 I'm okay, I'm okay. I'm good...

A204 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3** A204

[LEVEL FLIGHT]

[RIGHT ESCHELON, RIGHT TO LEFT]

Mav pulls off his oxygen mask, exhales relief.

[P/BOB APPEAR BESIDE MAVERICK'S JET.]

 PHOENIX
 (sigh of relief)
 That was close.

 MAVERICK
 Let's return to base.

B204 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3** B204

Cyclone, with Warlock, Hondo and the class, stares as this plays out on SCREENS.

C204 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - POP UP SORTIE 3** C204

Maverick hears a BANG, looks around. What the?

D204 **INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - POP UP SORTIE 3** D204

Phoenix is still giving it her all when BANG.

[BANKS LEFT INTO SLOW LEFT ROLL.]

ALARMS BLARE. Bob's instrument cluster lights up.

BOB
ENGINE FAILURE, LEFT ENGINE IS OUT.
Phoenix, climb.

PHOENIX
Climbing.

Phoenix pulls back on the stick.

Bob looks over his shoulder to see the LEFT engine is on fire.

BOB
We're on fire, we're on fire.

PHOENIX
Throttling back. Shutting off fuel.
Extinguishing fire.

Phoenix pulls back on throttle and activates the fire extinguisher switch.

BOB
We're losing the right engine.

PHOENIX
It's still spinning. I'm gonna try
to restart it.

Phoenix flips the APU switch and pushes the right throttle forward.

PHOENIX (CONT'D)
APU on. Throttle up.

(CONTINUED)

D204 CONTINUED:

D204

Nothing happens.

PHOENIX (CONT'D)
Shit. Trying again.

She tries the APU and throttle again. But suddenly, with a BANG, the right engine now CATCHES FIRE.

E204 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

E204

[MAVERICK SEES PHOENIX'S JET VEERING.]

BOB (ON RADIO)
RIGHT IS OUT.

PHOENIX
Goddamnit.

MAVERICK
Oh my God.

F204 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

F204

Everyone watches, helpless...

Rooster stands, powerless. All he can do is watch.

G204 INT. PHOENIX/BOB'S F-18 - DAY - POP UP SORTIE 3

G204

[PHOENIX STRUGGLES TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE PLANE.]

BOB
I've got every warning light lit up back here.

PHOENIX
We lost hydraulics. I can't control it.

[P/BOB JET STARTS TO ROLL OFF RIGHT.]

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
EJECT. EJECT.

H204 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - POP UP SORTIE 3

H204

ROOSTER
PHOENIX, EJECT.

204 **EXT. SKIES OVER RANGE - POP UP SORTIE 3** 204

Phoenix's grabs the handles. The canopy blows. She and Bob are ejected one after the other seconds before their jet COLLIDES with the desert floor and EXPLODES.

205 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - POP UP SORTIE 3** 205

Maverick watches the two chutes drift, seeing the past flash before his eyes... He pulls off his mask, shutting his eyes.

[Note: Still waiting on technical here]:

MAVERICK (INTO RADIO)
Maverick to tower. We have a plane
down. Send a helo.

206 **EXT. COASTAL MOUNTAINS - DAY** 206

A Coast Guard MH-60T JAYHAWK SOARS OVER the landscape.

INTERCUT QUICK GLIMPSES of the Coast Guard rescue: CREWMEN rappelling from the chopper with a RESCUE STRETCHER. Working expertly, they're able to pluck them off the slope.

CYCLONE (PRELAP)
In the course of training, have you
felt Captain Mitchell was forcing
you beyond your natural abilities?

207 **INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT** 207

Phoenix and Bob are banged up, but alive, being tended to by MEDICS. Cyclone is here.

PHOENIX
No, sir.

CYCLONE
Would you say that his training
left you no margin for error?

PHOENIX
We suffered a double engine failure
at low altitude. We had no choice
but to eject.

CYCLONE
(to Bob)
Would you say that his training
left you no margin for error?

(CONTINUED)

207

CONTINUED:

207

Phoenix and Bob share a look.

CYCLONE (CONT'D)

Don't look at her. Answer the question. *Would you say that his training left you no margin for error?*

BOB

I know what you want me to say. I'm not going to say it.

PHOENIX

We did what the mission calls for. Captain Mitchell is not responsible for what happened out there.

208

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INFIRMARY

208

Maverick waits anxiously. Cyclone emerges from the infirmary and approaches. There is a long, uncomfortable pause as Cyclone ponders what to say. Just as he goes to say it:

WARLOCK (O.S.)

Admiral.

Maverick and Cyclone turns their heads to see Warlock and Hondo approaching.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

At the request of Hondo here, I've just been down to inspect Captain Mitchell's plane.

Cyclone looks to Hondo: "Well?"

HONDO

Bird strike, sir.

CYCLONE

Come again?

HONDO

There's bird guts all down the starboard side of Mav- Of Captain Mitchell's plane, sir. Phoenix was flying in tight formation with him. I'm guessing the wreckage'll show she took a flock of birds head on.

Cyclone looks at Maverick for another beat, then walks away. Warlock follows, leaving Maverick and Hondo to share a look.

209

INT. READY ROOM - DUSK

209

Pictures of Top Gun pilots past: Ice, Maverick, Goose.

A lone light on. Rooster sits alone...

He stares at his phone and a photo of his young self with Maverick. After a hesitant beat, he deletes it.

Maverick enters, notices a photo in Rooster's locker:

GOOSE, his wife CAROL, and a tow-headed 3-year-old Rooster, arms around each other, happy. It watches over the scene:

MAVERICK

They'll keep Phoenix and Bob in the hospital overnight for observation. But they're going to be okay.

ROOSTER

I have never lost a wingman. In combat, off a carrier, never.

MAVERICK

You've been lucky. Fly long enough, it'll happen. There will be others.

ROOSTER

Easy for you to say. No kids, no family. No one to mourn you when you burn in.

MAVERICK

Go home. Get some sleep.

He turns to leave, stopping on:

ROOSTER

WHY DID YOU PULL MY PAPERS AT THE ACADEMY? WHY DID YOU STAND IN MY WAY?

The words sting them both. Maverick wants to tell the truth, but can't. After a long pause.

MAVERICK

...You weren't ready.

ROOSTER

Ready for what? Ready to fly like you?

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

No, ready to forget the book. Trust your instincts. Don't think. Just do. You think up there, you're dead. Believe me.

Rooster smiles at the irony.

ROOSTER

My dad believed in you. I'm not gonna make the same mistake.

Before Maverick can respond:

WARLOCK (O.S.)

Maverick.

Maverick turns, seeing something in Warlock's eyes. And in that moment he knows. The sound of taps takes us to:

EXT. MILITARY CEMETERY - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER

A portrait of Iceman presides over his funeral. An AMERICAN FLAG is presented to his wife. Her sons, their wives and small children are all by her side.

A large group of NAVAL OFFICERS and their FAMILIES are in attendance. Officers are all in crisp dress blues.

Maverick stands beside Iceman's family. Elsewhere, Penny's with Amelia. Cyclone receives the folded flag from the officers and presents it to Sarah.

Sarah glances to Maverick who begins his eulogy.

MAVERICK

Ice understood what it is to be a wingman. A wingman is willing to defend your life with their own...stay with you no matter how impossible the odds... More than anything, a wingman is there to push you beyond your limits, encourage you to find the very best in yourself. Ice was a wingman to his family, his friends, to every life he touched. That is why I know he'll never be truly gone.

Maverick steps forward to the casket, puts his wings on the casket and salutes.

(CONTINUED)

210

CONTINUED:

210

In THE CROWD: Rooster and the trainees are in attendance too, along with many TOPGUN graduates. Rooster watches Mav step away from the casket...

...as there's the rumbling CRESCENDO OF JETS as the Navy's BLUE ANGELS STREAK OVERHEAD. One pulls up into a vertical climb: the "missing man" formation.

Maverick and Cyclone make eye contact.

CYCLONE (PRELAP)

I know that you and Admiral Kazansky were close.

A212

INT. CYCLONE'S OFFICE

A212

Maverick stands before Cyclone, seated at his desk.

CYCLONE

I can only imagine what you must be feeling. Take some time. Whatever you need.

MAVERICK

I appreciate that, sir. But there's no time. The mission is in-

CYCLONE

I'll be taking over the training from here.

MAVERICK

Sir...

CYCLONE

We both know you didn't want this job, Captain.

MAVERICK

Sir, there is only one way to fly this mission-

CYCLONE

There's never only one way-

MAVERICK

They're not ready-

CYCLONE

It was your job to get them ready.

(CONTINUED)

A212 CONTINUED:

A212

MAVERICK

*They have to believe the mission
can be flown-*

CYCLONE

All you've managed to teach them is
that it can't.

MAVERICK

Sir, I-

CYCLONE

You're grounded, Captain.
Permanently. That is all.

Maverick lingers, searches for words.

CYCLONE (CONT'D)

That is all.

Maverick nods and exits.

212 **EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DUSK**

212

Penny is on the porch, waiting for Maverick.

PENNY

I heard. I'm sorry.

Maverick sighs.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What're you gonna do?

MAVERICK

Ice is gone.

PENNY

Then you're gonna have to find a
way back on your own.

MAVERICK

Back? Penny, I'm out. It's over.

PENNY

But you're not *finished*. And you'll
never be finished if you let it end
like this. They're *your* pilots. If
anything happens to them now,
you'll never forgive yourself.

MAVERICK

Penny, what can I do-

(CONTINUED)

212 CONTINUED:

212

PENNY

If you'd lost your wingman up there, you'd keep fighting. You'd never just give up.

And he knows she's right. She smiles a little, hopeful but sad...

PENNY (CONT'D)

You'll find a way, Pete. I know you will. Come back when you do.

She stands and walks in the house. He's left alone with the sunset and the distant RUMBLE of jets ascending...

213 INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - NEXT DAY

213

Rooster and Trainees back in seats. Cyclone instructs. Warlock is there too.

CYCLONE

Time to target is now four minutes. You'll be entering the valley level at reduced speed. Not to exceed 420 knots.

Rooster's eyes narrow. What the fuck is this?

BOB

Sir, won't we be giving their planes time to intercept?

CYCLONE

Well, Lieutenant you have a fighting chance against enemy aircraft. What are the odds of survival in a head-on collision with a mountain?

This is not lost on Rooster.

CYCLONE (CONT'D)

Now you will hit the target from higher altitude, level with the north wall. It'll be a little harder to hold your laze on the target but you'll avoid the high G climb out.

Fanboy whispers to Payback.

(CONTINUED)

213 CONTINUED:

213

FANBOY

And be sitting ducks for enemy
missiles.

The SCREEN behind him shows a JET'S POV approaching a
mountain range. Trainees are, distracted. Cyclone turns.

CYCLONE

Who the hell is that?

214 **EXT. TRAINING CANYONS - DAY**

214

Maverick's BLACK F-18 SCREAMS across the landscape, dropping
lower as mountain peaks loom...

215 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18**

215

Maverick's at the stick, GUNNING it for the mountains...

MAVERICK

Maverick to Range Control. Entering
at Point Alpha. Confirm a green
range.

216 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY**

216

Reactions from the class.

PHOENIX

(whispers)

Nice...

CLOSE ON Rooster, his expression hard to read.

CYCLONE DOES NOT TAKE HIS EYES OFF THE SCREEN.

CYCLONE

Bring all the screens up.

Hondo hits a few buttons and All SCREENS COME ON with the
POVs from Maverick's F-18 as:

BASE ATC (OVER RADIO)

Aircraft calling range control,
range is green, but I don't see an
event scheduled for you. Say your
range event number.

MAVERICK

Make one up for me. Maverick's
pushing.

Afterburner ROARS as Mav slices ahead, studying the THREE ROUTES on his display, as he locks in his focus...

Rooster watches Mav's SCREEN POV lining up for a run...

Reactions from the room.

CLOSE ON ROOSTER, focused on the screen.

Mav's jet ROARS into the course, dipping dangerously low, SKIMMING right above the riverbed floor.

Rooster and the rest watch his **TIMER** and **ALTITUDE** levels...

Mav's F-18 HUGS the tight twists and curves, seeing the Final Canyon final narrow notch now looming ahead as he KNIFES through the final ridge gap that stymied Rooster.

Suddenly, he yanks back on the stick and climbs out of the valley.

The class watches him climb out.

(CONTINUED)

222

CONTINUED:

222

COYOTE
He's backing off.
(to Hangman)
Nobody can do it. *Nobody.*

Reactions of disappointment from all but two:

Rooster, leaning in, waiting...

And Cyclone, who nods ever so slightly, in a way that says he will deal with Maverick permanently.

CYCLONE
Tell the tower to order that man to
land that aircraft.

When he hears no response, he turns to Hondo.

CYCLONE (CONT'D)
Now.

Hondo snaps out of it and reaches for the phone.

223

INT. MAVERICK'S F-18

223

BASE ATC (OVER RADIO)
Maverick... You are ordered to land
immedi-

Maverick shuts off his radio.

MAVERICK
Talk to me, Goose...

Maverick resets the clock, cranks the stick hard and dives, coming back around for a second pass. He repeats the same maneuver's, except:

224

INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY

224

Cyclone turns, noticing the class staring at the screens, enrapt.

CYCLONE
(to Hondo)
Shut them off. Shut them all off-

BOB
He's going again...

Cyclone turns to face the screen as everyone else leans in.

(CONTINUED)

224 CONTINUED:

224

HANGMAN

He's less than a hundred feet off
the deck.

COYOTE

... And dropping.

Bob checks his watch, hits the timer.

CLOSE ON ROOSTER, waiting...

225 **EXT. RANGE**

225

Silence. An empty sky. Barely a breeze. A black spot on the horizon growing larger by the second until THE GATES OF HELL EXPLODE and Maverick's F-18 blows right over us at 920 knots and twenty feet off the deck.

226 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY**

226

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)

Popping in three... two... one.

He SWOOPS into his POP-UP CLIMB, pulling severe G's as he tops out, rolls and PLUNGES INTO HIS BOMBING DIVE.

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO) (CONT'D)

No wingman to laze the target.

Dropping blind.

He struggles to put the shuddering STEEL DRUM target in his crosshairs...

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Bombs away.

227 **EXT. BOMBING RANGE - DAY**

227

He DROPS a TRAINING ROUND as he dives, and SWOOPS INTO A CLIMB at the last possible second. As the SMOKE HITS:

228 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY**

228

FANBOY

Bullseye. HOLY SHIT. BULLSEYE.

BOB

(re watch)

Time on target: Two minutes-
fifteen. To the second.

229 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAY** 229

Mav BATTLES the jet, pulling 10 Gs on his egress, impossibly steep. Fighting hard to clear the "virtual mountain"...

230 **INT. TACTICAL AUDITORIUM - DAY** 230

 MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
 Target is destroyed. Maverick is
 RTB.

The team can see the readout on their screen. 10 Gs, far beyond the accepted limits of the F18.

 HANGMAN
 10 Gs... Damn.

The trainees react. They'd cheer if Cyclone weren't here.

Cyclone stares at the screen, his expression impossible to read. Warlock eyes the trainees.

Rooster sits back, looks down. He's the only one not celebrating. He has too much to think about now.

 CYCLONE (PRE-LAP)
 You've put me in a difficult
 position, Captain.

233 **INT. CYCLONE'S OFFICE** 233

Rain is pouring outside. Thunder rolls. A clock ticks. Mav sits beside Warlock in front of Cyclone's desk. Cyclone's stares out the widow, hands behind his back.

 CYCLONE
 On the one hand, you've
 demonstrated that the mission can
 be flown. Perhaps in the only way
 it can be survived. On the other
 hand, you did so by stealing a
 multi-million dollar military
 aircraft and flying it in such a
 manner that it may never be
 airworthy again.
 (turns)
 Iceman is no longer here to protect
 you. And I have everything I need
 to have you court-martialled and
 dishonorably discharged.

(CONTINUED)

But then I would be disposing of
the one man with a ghost of a
chance of successfully completing
this mission.

Maverick blinks, stunned. Did he hear that correctly?

CYCLONE (CONT'D)

So, what do I do? Risk the lives of
my pilots, not to mention the
success of the mission, by sending
them without you? Or risk my career
by appointing *you* team leader?

Maverick moves to speak, Warlock stops him.

WARLOCK

I believe the Admiral is asking a
rhetorical question, Captain.

MAVERICK

Sir.

And over Maverick's incredulous expression:

CYCLONE (O.S.)

You'll choose your team on the
carrier. You ship out tonight.

Crowded, busy, alive. SAILORS dancing. Maverick enters in
uniform. Behind the bar, Penny brightens when she sees him.

But her smile fades when she sees the look on his face.

And the sounds of the bar give way to:

The sounds of the ocean. Just Maverick and Penny now. She's
up to speed and stunned.

She studies him.

He just stares. His eyes say it all. She embraces him tightly
and shuts her eyes.

CLOSE ON: MAVERICK. His eyes are set on an uncertain future.

And the pre-lap of JET ENGINES warming up gives way to:

238 **EXT. USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - CARRIER READY ROOM - NIGHT** 238

The roar of the ocean as the imposing USS JOHN C. THEODORE ROOSEVELT cuts through the waves.

WARLOCK (PRELAP)

Your target is a clear and present threat: a secret uranium enrichment site under rogue state control.

239 **INT. USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - CARRIER READY ROOM NIGHT** 239

Maverick, Rooster and all of the pilots. Hondo is off to the side with Cyclone. All eyes are on Warlock at the head of the room.

On a SCREEN behind him, a detailed map of the TARGET VALLEY highlights the flight paths of various elements.

WARLOCK

It's an underground bunker tucked between these two mountains. Your route of ingress is heavily defended by surface to air missiles, backed up by fifth generation fighters.

(to Mav's team)

Once your F-18 strike team crosses the border, Tomahawk Missiles from the USS LEYTE GULF will be launched in a synchronized strike on the enemy's airfield... here.

(points)

The moment those Tomahawks hit, the enemy will know you're coming. Your time to target will be two minutes and thirty seconds. Any longer than that and you will be exposed to any aircraft the Tomahawks may have missed.

MAVERICK

Most importantly, remember coffin corner. On the climb out of the valley, you'll be exposed to enemy missiles. Remember, get low as fast as you can and break for home.

Warlock takes a beat, looking over the faces of the pilots. Rooster cannot believe this any more than Maverick.

(CONTINUED)

WARLOCK

Captain Mitchell, select your two
Foxtrots.

MAVERICK

Payback and Fanboy... Phoenix and
Bob.

Phoenix and Bob are understandably moved.

WARLOCK

And your wingman?

Hangman straightens, ready for the job. Rooster looks down.

MAVERICK

Rooster.

Everyone is surprised, most of all, Rooster and Hangman.

WARLOCK

The rest of you will standby on the
carrier in reserve.

CYCLONE

This is what you've all been
training for. Come home safely.
Good luck to you all. Dismissed.

As the pilots fall out, Maverick steps to Hangman.'

MAVERICK

Hangman, you're one of the most
fearless pilots I've ever seen.

HANGMAN

But you need someone who'll put the
team first. I did not demonstrate
that to you, sir.

Maverick doesn't need to reply.

HANGMAN (CONT'D)

Rooster is your man.

He nods falls out. Hondo approaches Maverick as he shifts
attention to Rooster.

HONDO

Is he ready?

MAVERICK

He'll have to be.

(CONTINUED)

239 CONTINUED: (2)

239

Maverick's eyes meet Rooster's. There is nothing to say.

A240 **EXT. CARRIER ELEVATOR - DAWN**

A240

AN F-18 silhouetted against the morning sky, rising to the main deck. A HELMET edges into frame, bearing red white and blue stripes along with the name: MAVERICK.

BOOM UP TO REVEAL the man holding the helmet, his back to us, his head turned slightly. Something troubles him. Deeply.

MAVERICK

Talk to me, Goose...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Captain Mitchell.

Maverick turns to see Warlock looking up as the elevator rises.

WARLOCK

You're where you belong. Make us proud.

Maverick smiles, nods.

240 **EXT. FLIGHT DECK - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - DAWN**

240

A ballet of controlled chaos as various FLIGHT DECK CREWS prepping all the aircraft involved in the mission.

Rooster, Phoenix, Bob, Payback and Fanboy step onto the deck. It's for real now. No more training. They trade determined looks... and head for the planes...

Rooster finds Hangman in his way. After a long pause.

HANGMAN

Give 'em hell.

Rooster nods. Hangman walks away, leaving Rooster to contemplate the gravity of what's happening. Rooster sees Maverick.

ROOSTER

Maverick.

It is the first time we've heard him say that name. The two men meet by Mav's F-18.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

Sir, I...I just want to say--

(CONTINUED)

240

CONTINUED:

240

FLIGHT DECK SPEAKER
Start the go aircraft. Start 'em
up.

MAVERICK
We'll talk when we get back.

They shake hands.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Hey Bradley, you've got this.

Rooster nods walks away, Maverick watches him go.

HONDO (OS)
Maverick.

243

INT./EXT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - MOMENTS LATER - DAWN

243

Maverick snaps out of his thoughts. REVEAL:

He's strapped into his F18. Hondo is leaning into the
cockpit.

HONDO
You with me?

Maverick nods. Hondo stares.

MAVERICK
What?

HONDO
You look like you've seen a ghost.

MAVERICK
You're a good friend, Hondo. Thank
you. For everything.

HONDO
'The hell is that supposed to mean?

MAVERICK
Just that.

Hondo stares at him. Maverick stares back. Something unspoken
passes between the two men.

HONDO
It's been an honor, Captain.

And the two men shakes hands, as if, in case, it is the last
time...

244 INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - DAWN 244

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
Dagger One, comms check.

245 INT. F-18 - PHOENIX/BOB/ROOSTER - DAWN 245

Phoenix and Bob are sweating, psyching themselves past the anxiety.

PHOENIX
Dagger Two, up and ready.

A246 INT. F-18 - ROOSTER - DAWN A246

Rooster shakes off the nerves.

ROOSTER
Dagger Three, up and ready.

246 INT. F-18 - PAYBACK/FANBOY - DAWN 246

Fanboy crosses himself. Payback exhales.

PAYBACK
Dagger Four. We read you, sir.

A247 INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - DAWN A247

HANGMAN
Dagger spare is up and ready.
Standing by.

247 INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - DAWN 247

Maverick is about to respond, hesitates.

A248 INT. F-18'S INTERCUT A248

The other pilots hang in the awkward silence. Finally:

ROOSTER
Sir, do you copy?

B248 **INT. MAVERICK'S F18 - DAWN**

B248

ROOSTER

Sir..?

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)

I want to thank you all for
trusting me to lead you.

C248 **INT. F-18'S INTERCUT**

C248

Reactions from all of the pilots, moved as he continues.

MAVERICK

You're the best of the best. It's
an honor to be flying with you.

We land on Rooster for:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

All of you.

PHOENIX

We're with you, sir. All the way.

D248 **INT. MAVERICK'S F18 DAWN**

D248

MAVERICK

Forget the sir. We're all the same
rank today. Dagger One up and ready
on Catapult one.

Maverick clips on his mask.

248 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - DAWN**

248

Cyclone and Warlock stand with ship's Officers and Comms-
Crew. Hondo is here as well, anxious.

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

Support assets airborne. Strike
package ready. Standing by for
launch decision.

CYCLONE

Send 'em.

249 EXT. FLIGHT DECK - DAWN

249

A CATAPULT OFFICER signals with a two-finger wave, as the two jets facing him throttle ENGINES to full...

Maverick and Rooster, side-by-side, SALUTE the Officer, then press heads back against headrests.

The FINAL CHECK CREWS around each aircraft offer a thumbs-up, one by one, causing the Catapult Officer to crouch, touching the deck to point forward.

Maverick and Rooster's Super Hornets BLITZ across the deck,
RIPPING into the sky.

Phoenix and Bob, Payback and Fanboy are launched a moment later.

250 EXT. SKIES ABOVE CLOUDS - MORNING

250

Four F-18s fly above dark ominous clouds...

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)
Rough Rider. Dagger, Texaco
complete. Comanche, standby check-
in.

251 EXT./INT. HAWKEYE - SAME - MORNING

251

An AIR CONTROL OFFICER watches streams of data roll in:

AIR CONTROL OFFICER
Comanche one-one, set. Lightning
One, status.

252 EXT./INT. F-35 - SAME - MORNING

252

An F-35 PILOT monitors his electronic view of the valley:

F-35 PILOT
Lightning One, set. Bravo route is
clear.

253 INT. F-18S - WITH ROOSTER/MAVERICK - MORNING

253

[ALL JETS ARE ABOVE A LAYER OF CLOUDS. THEY DESCEND THROUGH THE CLOUDS TO 1000 FEET.]

Rooster takes a deep breath. They're going in.

(CONTINUED)

253 CONTINUED:

253

MAVERICK

Taking it down to one hundred feet.

[ALL JETS DESCEND TO 100 FEET]

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Dagger is set. Proceeding to Bravo.

Ready on my mark...

A254 **INT. F-18'S INTERCUT - MORNING**

A254

PHOENIX

Two.

ROOSTER

Three.

PAYBACK

Four.

Maverick, Rooster, Bob and Fanboy all place a finger on a timer start button set for [TIME TBD].

MAVERICK

Mark.

All four push the button and their clocks start counting down.

PHOENIX

Two mark.

ROOSTER

Three mark.

PAYBACK

Four mark.

With Mav taking lead, the Strike Package flies in a delta formation toward enemy territory.

AM254 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - DAWN**

AM254

A TECH STARTS A TIMER ON THE PANEL.

HONDO CLICKS A STOPWATCH OF HIS OWN and holds it in his clenched fist throughout the sequence, checking it periodically.

AA254 **EXT. OCEAN**

AA254

[AS THEY ROAR ACROSS THE OCEAN THE JETS SWITCH FROM DIAMOND FORMATION TO THE SNAKE POSITION]

BB254 **INT. F18S INTERCUT**

BB254

CLOSE ON all of the pilots sweating, riding the ragged edge.

Rooster flips switches on his console, his breathing picks up... This is low. Too low. He's sweating bullets, pushing himself to focus and hold it together.

254 **EXT. SKIES ABOVE MOUNTAINS - MORNING**

254

UP AHEAD: SNOWY MOUNTAINS, all crags and jagged pines, tighter alleys than they ever had in training.

CLOSE ON: Rooster, watching that narrow canyon coming up fast. He glances at his air speed. Too fast.

AA255 **INT. F18S - INTERCUT**

AA255

ROOSTER (TO SELF)
You can do this. Stay cool. Stay cool.

MAVERICK
Target valley up ahead. Comanche, picture.

A255 **INT. F-18S INTERCUT**

A255

AIR CONTROL OFFICER (OVER RADIO)
Dagger, picture clean. Recommend continue.
(beat)
Do you copy? Picture clean.
Recommend continue. Dagger acknowledge.

MAVERICK
Dagger attack.

ANGLE ON each of the pilots taking a deep breath as they commit...

AB255 **EXT. SKIES**

AB255

[**THE FOUR JETS ROAR INTO THE NARROW CANYON.**] Tension gives way to terror.

LOOKING DOWN FROM ATOP A MOUNTAIN on the valley below as the formation flies past.

Phoenix and Bob fly freakishly close below several bridges. Bob looks up at them.

BOB
Uh, Phoenix?

PHOENIX
Don't ask Bob.

REVEAL: IN the foreground, a AUTOMATED SAM MISSILE ARRAY sitting inertly on the mountaintop, watching the skies above.

CLOSE ON Bob looking up at the SAMS above. **GOLD/ORANGE ROUTE**

BOB
SAMS right over our heads. No movement.

PHOENIX
Looks like we're clear on radar, Mav.

MAVERICK
Let's not take it for granted.

B255 **EXT. USS LEYTE GULF - MORNING**

B255

Massive plumes of smoke and fire send Tomahawk Missiles skyward.

255 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING**

255

Cyclone and Warlock monitor, tense:

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
Birds away.

WARLOCK
No turning back now.

256

EXT. SKIES/INT. F-18'S - MORNING - GOLD ROUTE

256

They shoot into an ever-compressing canyon, hauling ass over the broken landscape, snowy trees flashing just beneath...

Training times ten. The valley walls are tight, the high speed and sharp turns resulting in higher Gs. **TBD ROUTE**

ORANGE ROUTE

The physical pressure on the team alone is intense, requiring every ounce of concentration, skill and endurance.

Each of the pilots contends with the intensity in their own way. Training was nothing compared to this. They are all feeling it - Rooster most of all.

His wing clips tree tops as he banks at 6 Gs.

ROOSTER (TO SELF)

Too low... too fast...

A257

INT. F-18S INTERCUT

A257

MAVERICK

You with me, Phoenix?

PHOENIX

Don't wait for me.

BOB

(looking at clock)

[Two minutes] to target.

FANBOY

(looking at clock)

We're falling behind, Payback.
Increase speed to five hundred knots.

PAYBACK'S POV of Rooster in front of him.

PAYBACK

Rooster, do you copy? We're falling behind. We gotta move.

Rooster in his cockpit, eyes focused, sweat beading, breathing shallow, slashing through the canyon as fast as he can go. And it isn't fast enough.

(CONTINUED)

A257 CONTINUED:

A257

ON MAVERICK, hearing:

PAYBACK (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
Rooster, *do you copy?*

MAVERICK (TO SELF)
Come on, kid. Don't think. Just do.

BOB
[Ninety seconds] to target.

ORANGE ROUTE

MAVERICK
Bob, do you have visual on Rooster?

Bob looks back for a visual.

BOB
Negative.

B257 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING** B257

The satellite image of Maverick's teams shows the formation is breaking up, with two planes lagging further and further behind.

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
Dagger 3 is falling behind. /
Dagger 3 is disengaging from the
attack team.

[NOTE: The following is optional. A simple edit can show the airfield with routine activity and:]

COMMS-CREW TECH 1
[20/30/60/90] seconds to tomahawk
impact.

ALARM.

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
We have movement. Ground crews are
on alert.

CLOSE ON: The satellite image of an enemy airfield we've seen many times - the unmistakable deltas of newer fifth gen planes amidst older F-14s and F-16s. Only this time the image is live. We see people moving on the ground. Running.

(CONTINUED)

B257 CONTINUED:

B257

WARLOCK
(to Cyclone)
The enemy is scrambling (towards)
their jets.

CLOSE ON Hondo, quietly nervous for his friend.

HONDO
Come on, Rooster.

C257 INT. ROOSTER'S F-18

C257

Rooster is struggling to hold it together.

BOB
[One minute] to target.

PAYBACK (ON RADIO)
Rooster, Mav's getting away.

ROOSTER
We're okay. We're okay

ORANGE ROUTE

PAYBACK
We're not okay. We're way behind.
You gotta go.

CLOSE ON: Rooster's hand on the throttle, unable to push it
any harder.

A275 EXT. ENEMY AIRFIELD - MORNING

A275

Watching from a short distance as SILHOUETTED AIR CREWS
scramble to prep F-14 Tomcats for takeoff.

Then the first Tomahawk missile impacts, decimating a hangar.

275 INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING

275

Everyone on edge, all eyes on the screens where the Enemy
Airfield VANISHES in a series of heat blooms.

COMMS-CREW TECH 1
Impact, enemy runways destroyed.

(CONTINUED)

275 CONTINUED:

275

CYCLONE
(eyes on screen)
All right. Hit your target and come home.

AA278 **EXT. SKIES/INT. F-18S INTERCUT - MORNING**

AA278

Rooster and Payback are lagging further and further behind.

MAVERICK
Phoenix, move up to welded wing.
Stand by for pop-up strike...

BOB
Air-to-ground check complete. Laser
code verified 1688. Master-arm to
go.

FANBOY
Verified 1688. Master arm to go.

Beneath their plane, a FLIR Targeting Pod rotates, angling
its laser lens towards the target, then:

An alarm flashes on FANBOY'S PANEL.

FANBOY (CONT'D)
Shit, deadeye. Targeting pod
malfunction.

MAVERICK
You have exactly thirty seconds to
get it working. We're counting on
you, Fanboy.

As Fanboy works the problem:

FANBOY
Shit, shit, shit...

ORANGE ROUTE

A278 **EXT. SKIES - MORNING**

A278

Lethal looking fifth generation fighter aircraft streak
across the heavens, in the flesh and on the hunt.

B278 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THOEDORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING** B278

ALARM. On another screen, two bandits are headed for Maverick and his team.

AIR CONTROL OFFICER (OVER RADIO)/COMM
TECH 2

We're picking up bandits inbound,
strength 2, X miles east of
bullseye.

CYCLONE
Where the hell did they come from?

WARLOCK
Long range patrol?

HONDO
Come on. Move it or lose it,
Rooster.

AA278 **INT. MAVERICK'S F18**

AA278

AIR CONTROL OFFICER (ON RADIO)
Dagger, Comanche. Contact, two
bandits, 30 miles north of
bullseye, targeting you.

MAVERICK
Dammit. Time to intercept?

AIR CONTROL OFFICER
[One minute.]

Maverick looks at his clock.

MAVERICK
Rooster, we're tight on time if we
want to outrun those bandits. Where
are you?

AB278 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18**

AB278

Rooster is sweating, straining through the turns, hand frozen on the throttle.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)
Rooster, do you copy?

AC278 **EXT. PAYBACK/FANBOY F-18**

AC278

The targeting pod jutters, stabilizes.

B278 **INT. F-18S INTERCUT - MORNING**

B278

FANBOY

I GOT IT. Targeting pod is on line.

PAYBACK

It won't make a difference if we don't step on it. *Rooster, bandits are inbound. Come on.*

PHOENIX

COME ON, ROOSTER.

MAVERICK (TO SELF)

Now or never, Rooster...

CLOSE ON ROOSTER, breathing tight, blinking sweat from his eyes. All sound falls away. Radio chatter, his engines.

And finally...

ROOSTER (TO SELF)

Talk to me, dad.

Rooster pushes the throttle.

Payback watches as Rooster pulls away. He pushes his own throttle, but Rooster is still increasing his speed.

Rooster has crosses over to another place, his flying on instinct, focused in a way we've never seen.

Now Payback is struggling to keep up.

PAYBACK

Jesus, Rooster. Not so fast.

ROOSTER

Take welded wing, Payback.

MAVERICK (TO SELF)

That's it kid, push it.

BOB

Target in ten seconds.

C278 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

C278

All eyes are watching those two bogies on course to intercept.

Comms-crew Tech 2 spots that Rooster has caught up.

 COMMS-CREW TECH 2
Dagger 3 is re-engaging. /
Dagger 3 is re-engaging with the
attack team.

D278 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18**

D278

Rooster comes around a bend and sees Maverick and Phoenix's planes up ahead.

 ROOSTER
Dagger One and Two, I have visual.
We're on your six.

E278 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 - ORANGE/PURPLE POP BOWL LOCATION**78

 MAVERICK
You're just in time. Let's deliver
the mail and go home. Phoenix, we
are popping in three, two, one-

Maverick and Phoenix's F-18s roll inverted and crest a mountain, dropping into a valley.

278 **INT. F-18 - PHOENIX/BOB - MORNING - PURPLE ROUTE**

278

 BOB
Dagger-2, targeting... Stand by.

 PHOENIX
You can do this, Bob.

Phoenix holds their arc steady, as Bob works the FLIR...

 MAVERICK
Come on, Bob.

 BOB
Got it. I got it. CAPTURED.

A279 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18**

A279

TONE.

(CONTINUED)

A279 CONTINUED:

A279

MAVERICK

Target acquired, bombs away.

Maverick releases.

B279 **EXT. UNDER MAVERICK'S F-18**

B279

Two super bunker busters drops from the wings of Mavericks F-18, fins adjusting as they acquire laser guidance.

C279 **EXT. SKIES/INT. MAV/PHOENIX F-18'S**

C279

CLOSE ON: Maverick snaps the safety paddle on his stick and pulls back as far as he can.

BLUE ROUTE

Maverick and Phoenix both wrench jets into a body-smashing climb - excessive Gs. Only this time it's for keeps as a mountain face is coming up fast.

MAVERICK

HOLD THAT TARGET, BOB.

CLOSE ON PHOENIX, her face straining.

Bob struggles against the Gs to keep the laser on target.

CLOSE ON: Maverick's G meter as it climbs toward, then past, 7.5 Gs...

BOB'S POV - the world becomes pixilated, tunnel vision creeping in as he grays out. We've seen it before.

He bears down, squeezing blood into his head to stay conscious.

D279 **EXT. VALLEY BASIN - MORNING**

D279

Maverick's bunker buster hits home.

E279 **INT. PHOENIX'S F-18 - BLUE ROUTE**

E279

Phoenix is pulling back as hard as she can as:

BOB

IMPACT. IMPACT.

(CONTINUED)

CHERRY 11.25.19 - OFFICIAL 134.
E279 CONTINUED: E279

The target is obscured by a massive plume of smoke.

F279 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT** F279

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
DIRECT HIT. DIRECT HIT.

Far from relief in the room, the tension only increases.

WARLOCK
That's miracle number one...

CYCLONE
And now they're in coffin corner.

AG279 **EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE** AG279

CLOSE ON A radar control SAM array. Two F18's climbing skyward in the distance beyond.

The array comes automatically to life, swivels and FIRES.

G279 **INT/EXT. MAV/PHOENIX/BOB F-18S INTERCUT - POP BOWL LOCATION**
ALARM

MAVERICK
SMOKE IN THE AIR. GET LOW, GET LOW.

Maverick and Phoenix bank hard and fire countermeasures - flares filling the air as SAMs streak toward them.

H279 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - MORNING - ORANGE ROUTE** H279

ROOSTER (INTO RADIO)
Payback, popping in three... two... one.

I279 **EXT. SKIES ABOVE VALLEY - MORNING - ORANGE/PURPLE ROUTE** I279

Rooster and Payback crest the mountaintop just as Maverick and Phoenix did as:

J279 **INT/EXT. MAV/PHOENIX/BOB F-18S INTERCUT** J279

Maverick and Phoenix fly for their lives, dodging missiles as they race for the valley below.

279 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - MORNING - PURPLE ROUTE** 279

Rooster rolls in, putting nose on target, a scorching 45' dive...

281 **INT./EXT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - DIVING - MORNING PURPLE ROUTE** 281

 ROOSTER
Fanboy. Where's my laser?

 FANBOY
Targeting... Seconds away.

Rooster's hurtling headlong, altimeter dropping 6000, 5000...

 ROOSTER
Come on, come on.

ANGLE ON: The FLIR on the belly of their plane fails.

 FANBOY
SHIT. DEADEYE, DEADEYE. OUR LASER'S
GONE. STANDBY.

The target is coming up fast, Rooster blinks away the sweat in his eyes.

 ROOSTER
We're out of time.

 FANBOY
I'M WORKING ON IT. STAND BY.

 ROOSTER
NO TIME. PULL OUT.

 PAYBACK
ROOSTER, WAIT-

 ROOSTER (TO HIMSELF)
Great balls of fire.

Rooster lets his bunkers buster fly before releasing the safety and yanking back on the stick, trying to keep from face planting into a mountain.

284 **EXT. FACILITY SITE - MORNING - PURPLE ROUTE** 284

The Bunker Busters vanish into the cloud left by Maverick's bombs. An agonizing stillness follows.

AA286 INT/EXT. MAV/PHOENIX/BOB F-18S INTERCUT

AA286

Maverick and Phoenix are fighting for their lives, ALARMS BLARING, SAMs everywhere.

286 EXT. TARGET VALLEY/INT. ROOSTER'S JET - BLUE ROUTE

286

Rooster BATTLES his jet, climbing, climbing, with Payback right beside him as the belly of Rooster's jet brushes snow off of tree tops and into the blue.

ROOSTER POV: He's graying out.

A FAMILIAR ALARM SOUNDS. A SAM IS COMING RIGHT FOR HIM.

287 EXT. FACILITY SITE - MORNING

287

Just as a RIPPLING SUBTERRANEAN EXPLOSION heaves the earth and the underground facility IMPLODES on itself.

A289 INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - MORNING

A289

Hangman sits in his waiting bird, listening to the game on the radio.

COMMS-CREW TECH 2 (ON RADIO)
BULLSEYE, BULLSEYE. BULLSEYE.

288 INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING

288

COMMS-CREW TECH 1
Satellite imagery confirms target destroyed.

Muted reactions from all in the room.

WARLOCK
Miracle number two.

But Cyclone is listening to the radio - pilots breathing, shouting, straining, cursing. It's hell.

CYCLONE
Now get out of there.

HONDO squeezes his fist tightly, feeling something crack. He opens his hand to see the crystal of his stopwatch is crushed, the second hand frozen. And omen.

AA290 **INT. ROOSTER/PAYBACK FANBOY F18S**

AA290

Their turn to dodge and weave, firing counter-measures, straining, cursing, grunting, breathing heavy in their cockpits, working to outmaneuver the agile, angry missiles.

Rooster GASPS for breath as his vision returns. Another alarm.

ROOSTER
SHIT. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.

PAYBACK
GOTTA GET LOW. GOTTA GET LOW.

Another alarm, another missile, as:

ROOSTER
I'M OUT OF FLARES.

He looks back and to his right, sees the missile coming. He's a goner, until:

ANOTHER F18 fills his sight picture.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
MAVERICK, NO-

A290 **INT. MAVERICK'S F-18 (OLD SC B289) - POP BOWL LOCATION**A290

Maverick releases flares, but he's too late. And he knows it.

The missile SLAMS into Maverick's engine. A FIREBALL SHREDS the splintering rear of the jet.

B295 **INT. ROOSTER'S F-18 - MORNING - RED ROUTE**

B295

ROOSTER
MAVERICK.

C295 **EXT. SKIES OVER TARGET VALLEY - MORNING - RED ROUTE**

C295

Phoenix and Payback SOAR HIGHER, seeing Mav's FLAMING PLANE veer off course below.

PHOENIX (OVER RADIO)
Dagger 1's hit.

INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - RED ROUTE295

I repeat, Dagger 1 is hit. He's going down.

CLOSE ON Hondo, reflecting on his last moment with Mav.

AF295

The SAM arrays go still.

BF295

He's gone, Rooster.

WE HAVE TO CIRCLE BACK.

F295

Launch search and rescue-

(CONTINUED)

F295 CONTINUED:

F295

CYCLONE

Negative. Not with those bandits in the air. We're not losing anyone else.

HONDO

But Maverick-

CYCLONE

He knew the risk.
(to Comms)
Get 'em home now.

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

Dagger, you are not to engage.
Repeat, do not engage.

G295 INT. F-18S - INTERCUT

G295

COMMS-CREW TECH 2 (ON RADIO)

Dagger Two. Return to carrier.
Acknowledge.

PAYBACK

Rooster, those bandits are closing.
We can-not go back.

ROOSTER

COMANCHE, PICTURE.

COMMAND

Dagger, Comanche, bandits 30 east.
Hot on you. Flow west to evade.

PHOENIX

Rooster... He's gone.

And off of Rooster's eyes we CUT TO:

295 EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING

295

A SCORCHED PARACHUTE drapes the ragged ice... as ANGLE REVEALS Maverick lies sprawled, still clipped in, alive.

At the distant RUMBLING of the facility implosion, he stirs, coughs, tastes blood in his mouth. He looks down, sees his radio is shattered.

He hears the sound of distant helicopter, growing louder, realizes he's out in the open.

He has to move. He scrambled to detach his chute.

A296 **EXT. SKIES - MORNING**

A296

A MENACING HIND HELICOPTER, a venerable cold-war relic that will never die, bristling with guns and rockets.

B296 **EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING**

B296

Maverick is running with nowhere to go - the barren trees providing little cover. He's a sitting duck.

The Hind comes into view and her .50 cal rotary cannon opens fire, CHEWING INTO the ice and trees and snow with a HELLSTORM OF LEAD. The angle is bad and the hind has to come around, buying Maverick precious seconds.

He reaches a GNARLED FALLEN TREE at lake's edge. He tries to wedge himself behind it, if only to hide. Nothing out here will stop that cannon.

Over Maverick, the Hind wheels slowly around, searching for him. It's only a matter of time.

C296 **EXT. HIND POV - MORNING**

C296

CREW POV of the ground below. No sign of Maverick. But they'll find him soon enough.

297 **EXT. EDGE OF FROZEN LAKE - MORNING**

297

Maverick stays pressed behind the tree as the Hind approaches, flies overhead.

A298 **EXT. HIND POV - MORNING**

A298

CREW POV over the barrel of the cannon. There's Maverick. Exposed. Done for.

A HELMETED CREWMAN - his face hidden from us - swivels the gun patiently. HIS HAND CHARGES THE GUN.

B298 **EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING**

B298

Maverick isn't dying on his back. He leaps up, runs, as a stream of hot red tracers shred the log and follow him like a laser pointer, gaining on him until:

BOOM. The Hind explodes in mid air.

Maverick stops in his tracks. What the-

(CONTINUED)

B298 CONTINUED:

B298

An F-18 streaks past.

MAVERICK

No...

298 INT./EXT. ROOSTER'S F-18

298

Rooster banks, looking down. He can see Mav's chute, but not Mav. Then an ALARM BLARES.

ROOSTER

Oh shit.

A299 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - MORNING

A299

A radar guided missile launcher, it's silhouette familiar to us by now, swivels around and lets fly with a SAM, traveling at MACH 5.

B299 EXT. SKIES OVER MOUNTAINS - MORNING

B299

Rooster throws flares, tries to evade, but he too is doomed.
IMPACT.

C299 INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT

C299

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

Dagger two is hit.

Cyclone pounds a fist on the panel.

D299 INT. PHOENIX'S F-18

D299

Phoenix waits to hear her friend's voice in vain.

COMMS-CREW TECH 2

Dagger two, come in. Dagger Two, do you copy?

E299 INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - MORNING

E299

The shock on his face as he hears:

COMMS-CREW TECH 2

Dagger Two, come in...

Hangman hits his comm.

(CONTINUED)

E299 CONTINUED:

E299

HANGMAN

Dagger spare request permission to
launch and fly air cover.

A painfully long wait.

COMMS-CREW TECH 2

Negative, spare...

Hangman hangs his head.

299 **EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING**

299

Scrambling out of the rubble, Maverick sees Rooster's F-18 ON
FIRE and trailing heavy smoke, as Rooster EJECTS.

His jet vanishes behind the ridge before slamming into the
ground, sending up a plume of BLACK SMOKE.

Maverick immediately starts running, tracking the path of
Rooster's parachute...

302 **EXT. FORESTED BASE OF RIDGE - MORNING**

302

Gripped with panic, Maverick sprints through the trees,
seeing Rooster's chute disappear among them...

303 **EXT. FOREST CLEARING - MORNING**

303

He emerges in a patch of clearing where Rooster's on his
knees, burying his parachute, still recovering from a brutal
landing. Both men are pretty banged up, exhausted, but
relieved to see one another.

MAVERICK

You all right?

ROOSTER

I'll manage.

Then Maverick shoves him.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

What the hell?

MAVERICK

What are you doing here?

ROOSTER

What am I *doing* here?

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

You think I took that SAM so you could end up down here with me? You should be back on the carrier by now.

ROOSTER

I saved your *life*.

MAVERICK

I saved your life. That was the whole *point*. WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU EVEN *THINKING*?

ROOSTER

YOU TOLD ME NOT TO THINK.

Whatever Maverick's next words were, they hang in his throat. The lesson he's been teaching has at long last landed.

MAVERICK

Hey... It's good to see you.

ROOSTER

It's good to see you, too... So what's the plan?

MAVERICK

What does your training tell you?

ROOSTER

Really? We're in class now?

Maverick waits. Rooster sighs.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

I ping my ESAT, stay hidden till dark, then make for the extraction point.

MAVERICK

Where's the extraction point?

ROOSTER

(gestures)

That way. Seven, eight hours on foot.

(thinks)

Even if our ride *is* waiting, we'll freeze to death before we get there. That's if the enemy doesn't find us first... We're not going to the extraction point.

(CONTINUED)

303 CONTINUED: (2)

303

MAVERICK

No, we are not going to the
extraction point.

ROOSTER

Then where are we going?

304 **EXT. FOREST RIDGE - HOSTILE COUNTRY - LATER - MORNING** 304

A distant THUP-THUP of ENEMY HELICOPTERS...

SCOPE POV: Chaos and the fog of war. The airstrip's runways
are cratered, hangars collapsed. ENEMY BASE TROOPS are
scattered trying to put out fires...

Mav sweeps the area with his scope, then looks at Rooster.

ROOSTER

You're not serious.

But Maverick's look says he is.

305 **EXT. ENEMY AIRSTRIP - MINUTES LATER - MORNING** 305

Mav slinks along a thicket of trees by a perimeter fence.
Near them, a FUEL DEPOT burns out of control, spewing heavy
black smoke over the area, covering it in a THICK HAZE.

Mav uses his scope to take another look...

He hands him the scope, nods him in the right direction...

SCOPE POV: An open-ended CEMENT AIRCRAFT BUNKER, where an F-
14 TOMCAT sits. Clearly prepped for flight, loaded with
missiles, and with support equipment still hooked up.

ROOSTER

You've gotta be shittin' me.

Mav shrugs.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

An F14?

MAVERICK

I shot down three migs in one of
those.

ROOSTER

When was that? World War I? We
don't even know if that bag'a ass
can fly.

(CONTINUED)

305 CONTINUED:

305

MAVERICK
Let's find out.

Mav heads off, leaving Rooster to contemplate:

ROOSTER
(to himself)
You came back for him, dumbass.

And he follows.

306 **EXT. AIRCRAFT BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING**

306

Chaos all around in the aftermath of the missile strike.
Maverick and Rooster walk briskly toward the plane, praying
no one will notice.

A307 **INT. AIRCRAFT BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING**

A307

The jet has a START-CART the size of a dumpster, attached via
a large power cable and huge forced-air induction hose.

Maverick inspects the start cart. Hopes. He pushes the button
and it growls to life. Thank God.

307 **EXT. AIRCRAFT BUNKER - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING**

307

Geared up with harnesses and masks, Mav waves Rooster to the
Start-Cart.

MAVERICK
Ok, let me see. Okay.
(shows signal)
When I give you the signal for air,
here, flip this switch 'til the
needle gets to 120.
When I start the engine, you're
gonna shut this off, you're gonna
pull all the pins. You're gonna
disconnect everything.

Maverick goes for the plane. Rooster lingers.

ROOSTER
Mav, wait...There's something I
need to tell you.

MAVERICK
Tell me later.

*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

ROOSTER *
There may not be a later. *

Mav waits anxiously. *

ROOSTER (CONT'D) *
You were right. *

MAVERICK *
About what? *

ROOSTER *
About the academy. You were right *
to pull my papers. I wasn't ready. *

MAVERICK (ALT) *
Well you're ready now. *

ROOSTER *
Thank you for saving my life. *

ROOSTER (ALT) (CONT'D) *
Either way, thank you for saving my *
life. *

MAVERICK *
I haven't saved it yet. *
(points to the cart) *
Remember what I told you. *

And he rushes for the plane. *

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Once I'm up, stow the ladder.

ROOSTER
Yeah.

Maverick climbs the ladder, hops in the driver's seat, closes
the forward step and reorients himself to the cockpit as
Rooster closes the ladder.

MAVERICK
Okay. Wow. It's been a minute, huh
Mav?

Rooster pulls the CHOCK BLOCKS from the wheels and then runs
to the start cart.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Okay, okay.... Fuel. Battery.

Maverick gives Rooster the air signal. Rooster flips switch.

(CONTINUED)

ROOSTER
(watches dial)
C'mon, c'mon.

It gets to 120 and Rooster gives the thumbs up.

Maverick starts the engine. It sputters, fails to start.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
That's not good.

MAVERICK
Come on.

ROOSTER
Come on. Come on. Come on.

MAVERICK
Come on sweetheart. Come on.

Enemy truck drives by the hangar.

ROOSTER
Mav, let's go. Come on.

Mav hits the start button again. The engine whines slowly to life.

MAVERICK
This could actually work.

Rooster rushes to unhook the start cart from the plane.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)
Let's go, let's go.

Rooster scrambles up the onto the F14 and into the cockpit.
Rooster looks at the cockpit instruments.

ROOSTER
My God, this thing is so old.

Maverick pushes forward on the throttle.

MAVERICK
Canopy.

Rooster buckles up.

ROOSTER
Clear.

The jets exits the hangar. The canopy closes.

308

EXT. ENEMY AIRSTRIP - MORNING

308

Maverick looks at cockpit instruments. Maverick applies the brakes.

ROOSTER

We're stopping. Why are we stopping, Mav?

MAVERICK

Just give me a second. Give me a second.

Rooster spots an enemy tank coming towards them.

ROOSTER

Uh Mav. There's a guy on a tank. Big gun. Staring at us.

MAVERICK

Yep.

The tank passes them and Rooster looks down as he salutes.

Maverick switches to engage the WINGS. The wings expand.

ROOSTER

Both runways are cratered, Mav.
ALT: Are both runways crated, Mav?
ALT: It looks like both runways are cratered, Mav.

MAVERICK

Yeah.

ROOSTER

Mav, this is a taxiway. A very short taxiway.

MAVERICK

Uh huh. Yeah.

ROOSTER

How we gonna get this bag'a ass in the air?

MAVERICK

Just hang on.

Maverick pushes on the throttle. The afterburners go on full.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Cause this bag'a ass is about to go ballistic.

(CONTINUED)

308

CONTINUED:

308

The jet begins to accelerate down the runway.

ROOSTER

Holy shit.

MAVERICK

(under breath)

C'mon, c'mon.

Mav squeezes every ounce of lift from the plane

The F-14 soars into the air.

309

EXT./INT. F-14 - MORNING

309

CLOSE ON: Rooster's ESAT on his harness.

Rooster thinks a beat and activates it.

310

INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING

310

A new alarm sounds.

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

Sir. We're receiving a signal from
Rooster's ESAT... But there seems
to be a malfunction...

WARLOCK

Have you lost him?

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

No, sir. Signal is strong, but...

CYCLONE

But what?

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

But... He's supersonic.

Everyone trades confounded looks, confused. Cyclone and Warlock move to look at the screen. Sure enough, a dot representing Rooster is hauling ass toward the sea.

WARLOCK

He's airborne.

CYCLONE

In what?

(CONTINUED)

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
Sir, overwatch reports an F-14
Tomcat is airborne and on course
for our position.

Warlock and Cyclone share a look.

WARLOCK
It can't be-

The both look at the dot on the screen. Hondo stifles a
knowing smile.

CYCLONE
Maverick...

HONDO
He's still alive.

Warlock almost smiles, until:

COMMS-CREW TECH 2
Sir, overwatch is reporting two
fifth gen fighters on course to
intercept that F 14.

Warlock and Cyclone share a new look this one of grim
certainty.

CYCLONE
God help them.

Rooster surveys the back seat in frustration, no idea what's
what or what to do. There's a big circular RIO DISPLAY in
front of him, but it's dark.

MAVERICK
Rooster. Get us in touch with the
boat.

Rooster toggles the radio.

ROOSTER
I'm working on it. Everything's
dead back here. What do I do? Talk
me through this.

MAVERICK
First, the radio. Throw the UHF two
circuit breaker.

(CONTINUED)

Rooster looks.

ROOSTER

There's three hundred breakers back here, anything more specific?

MAVERICK

I dunno, that was your dad's department.

ROOSTER

Alright, I'll figure it out.

Rooster starts toggling breakers, then sees:

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

MAV, FIVE O'CLOCK LOW, TALLY TWO.

(alt)

MAV, TALLY TWO, FIVE O'CLOCK LOW.

Maverick looks and, to his horror, sees TWO FIFTH GEN FIGHTER approaching.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

What do we do?

MAVERICK

What do you mean what do we do?
Those are fifth gen fighters. We're in a fifty year old aircraft.

The planes close into an escort formation.

ROOSTER

Well here they come.

MAVERICK

Just be cool. If they knew who we were we'd be dead already. Masks on.

They scramble to put on their masks. The lead enemy plane pulls along side.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

Remember, we're on the same team.
Just wave and smile. Wave and smile.

Rooster and Mav wave. Maverick signals, points to his ear and gives a thumbs down. "Radio out."

The enemy pilot signals.

(CONTINUED)

ROOSTER *
What's that mean? *

MAVERICK *
I have no idea. *

The pilot signals something else. *

ROOSTER *
What's that? *

MAVERICK *
Nope. I don't know what that one is *
either. *

Rooster watches the second plane drop back. *

ROOSTER *
His wingman is moving into a *
weapon's envelope. *

MAVERICK *
If anything happens, grab those *
rings above your head. You see *
them? That's the ejection handle. *

ROOSTER *
Bull. Shit. The chutes in this *
thing were probably packed in the *
late eighties. *

MAVERICK *
You have a point. *
(alt) *
Good point. *

ROOSTER *
How fast is this thing? *

MAVERICK *
Very fast. *

ROOSTER *
We're ten minutes from the carrier. *
Can we outrun these guys? *

MAVERICK *
We can't outrun missiles and guns. *
(alt) *
We can't outrun missiles and *
bullets. *

ROOSTER *
Then it's a dogfight. *

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

In an F-14. Against fifth gen
fighters.

ROOSTER

It's not the plane, it's the pilot.

And that stops Mav cold. The pilot in the other plane signals
again.

MAVERICK

Rooster...

ROOSTER

You'd take 'em on if I wasn't here.
(alt)
Go after 'em.

MAVERICK

But you are here.

ROOSTER

You're Pete Maverick Mitchell, god
dammit. You shot down three MIGs in
one's these. You can do this. Now
take us home.

Maverick grips the stick and throttle, unsure of what to do.
The enemy pilot begins to distance himself.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

Come on, Mav. Don't think. Just do.

MAVERICK (ALT)

Tell me the second you see smoke in
the air.

MAVERICK (ALT) (CONT'D)

Whatever you do, don't touch the
flares.

STAGE 1 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)**SET #1: VR202 (SKY) - CHINA MOA**

Maverick pulls a hard right while opening fire at the Fifth
Gen in a pre-emptive attack, ripping open the left engine and
sending it into a descent.

(CONTINUED)

ROOSTER

Nice, nice, nice.

The second Fifth Gen is surprised. Mav continues to move. The Fifth Gen recovers and launches a heat-seeking missile.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

SMOKE IN THE AIR. SMOKE IN THE AIR,
MAV.

Maverick dives down towards the smoking Fifth Gen and breaks left directly in front of it. The missile heading for them diverts to the higher temp Fifth Gen destroying it in a colossal explosion as the F-14 narrowly misses the blast.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

Nice, Mav, nice. SPLASH ONE. SPLASH
ONE.

The Fifth Gen pilot shakes his head, angry.

END STAGE 1 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)

AA313 INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING AA313

COMMS-CREW TECH 1

Sir, overwatch reports the F-14 has
engaged. One bandit is down.

Reactions from the room - a few men even cheer. But not
Cyclone, Warlock or Hondo.

BB313 EXT. SKIES/INT. F-14

BB313

STAGE 2 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)

SET #1: VR202 (SKY) - CHINA MOA

The Fifth Gen drops into frame, fires another missile. The F-14 is in a dive.

ROOSTER

He's on us, he's on us.
Here comes another one.
SMOKE IN THE AIR. SMOKE IN THE AIR.

MAVERICK

HIT THE FLARES. HIT THE FLARES.

(CONTINUED)

BB313 CONTINUED:

BB313

Maverick pulls the emergency wing deploy lever, immediately deploying the F-14's wing spread sending the F-14 into a neck-breaking vertical climb.

Rooster shoots off the flares and the missile detonates just below the F-14 as they pull upwards.

Maverick uses their energy to roll inverted, back into burner, pulling down and around on the Fifth Gen putting it in their target. Mav fires the sidewinder. Missile lock. A moment of celebration, they're going to get a splash two.

ROOSTER

We got him. We got him. We got him.

(alt)

You got him. You got him. You got him.

END STAGE 2 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)

CC313 EXT. SKIES

CC313

STAGE 3 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)

SET #1: VR202 (SKY) - CHINA MOA

The Fifth Gen pulls a maneuver that we've never seen before: It uses its thrust vectors to fly vertical and then in a close-range LOOP AROUND THE MISSILE.

DD313 INT. F-14/EXT. SKIES INTERCUT

DD313

Whip pan to Rooster and Maverick who have never seen such a move.

ROOSTER

HOLY SHIT.

(alt)

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

(alt)

DID YOU SEE THAT?

(alt)

Oh my god. We're gonna die. We're gonna die.

(alt)

HOLY SHIT. WE'RE DEAD.

(alt)

Oh, we're in trouble Mav. We're in trouble.

(alt)

(CONTINUED)

Oh shit, do some of that pilot
shit.

They fly by the Fifth Gen so it's behind them again.

END STAGE 3 - ABOVE MOUNTAINS (GREEN WITH SNOW)

STAGE 4 - GREEN CANYON

SET #2: VR202 (CANYON) - MIDDLE FORK FEATHER RIVER

Maverick pushes for the advantage again.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Yeah, do some of that pilot shit,
Mav.

Maverick flies upwards then splits the throttle pushing the F-14 into a pirouette at full power.

The F-14 comes down behind the Fifth Gen and Maverick fires a missile.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Yeah, get him, get him.

Missile lock. Again, it looks like they've got him.

The Fifth Gen releases flares in a firework display of defense that takes out the missile.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Oh shit, shit. This isn't good.
(alt)
This guy is good.

END STAGE 4 - GREEN CANYON

STAGE 5 - GREEN CANYON

SET: MIDDLE FORK FEATHER RIVER

Maverick pursues the Fifth Gen as it dives down into a canyon.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
We're out of missiles, Mav. Go to
guns.
(alt)
Out of missiles, going to guns.

MAVERICK
Going to guns.

EE313 INT. CANYON

EE313

In a close-range weaving dogfight chase Maverick fires GUNS at the Fifth Gen.

ROOSTER

Come on, you got him.

(alt)

You got him Mav.

(alt)

Watch the wall, watch the wall.

(alt)

Side of the mountain, side of the mountain.

(alt)

Wall-wall-wall.

MAVERICK

I see it. I see it.

(alt)

I know, I got it, I got it.

The Fifth Gen evades, pulling severe G's around the bends, working like crazy.

Mav's rounds keep missing as the Fifth Gen continues to slice through the canyon. Mav hustles to keep up and get the Fifth jet in his target.

Mav and Rooster struggle against the G-forces, no G-suits to aid them, huffing breaths to ward off a blackout.

Mav's rounds are almost at zero. He knows he's down to his last attack. The Fifth Gen continues to weave in and out of their target, in and out.

Mav focuses in and fires his last bullets. He HITS the Fifth Gen with all of them. It descends and explodes as it crashes into the ground.

A313 INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING A313

Everyone reacts to the radio call that comes through:

MAVERICK (OVER RADIO)

Rough Rider, this is uh...

Ghostrider. We have repossessed an enemy Tomcat. Splash two bandits.

We are inbound, tracking south.

Hold your fire.

END STAGE 5 - GREEN CANYON

(CONTINUED)

A313 CONTINUED:

A313

Cyclone and Warlock share a look, stunned. Hondo smiles.

HONDO

That crazy motherfu-

B313 EXT. SKIES - MORNING

B313

STAGE 6 - GREEN CANYON TO OCEAN**SET #2: VR202 (CANYON) - TBD**

The F-14 roars into frame transitioning from mountains to the ocean below.

END STAGE 6 - GREEN CANYON TO OCEAN

313 INT. F-14 - CONTINUOUS - MORNING

313

STAGE 7 - OCEAN**SET #3: PISMO BEACH (OPTION 1) OR SAN CLEMENTE (OPTION 2)**

MAVERICK

We can't outrun this guy. We have
to eject.

ROOSTER

MAV-

MAVERICK

We need altitude. Pull that
ejection handle the second I tell
you-

ROOSTER

MAV, WAIT-

MAVERICK

THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.

Mav pulls back on the stick. As they climb:

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

EJECT, EJECT, EJECT.

Rooster grabs the handle. Nothing happens.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

ROOSTER, EJECT.

(CONTINUED)

ROOSTER
IT'S NOT WORKING.

*

*

And Maverick realizes they're doomed.

*

END STAGE 7 - OCEAN

STAGE 8 - OCEAN

SET #3: PISMO BEACH (OPTION 1) OR SAN CLEMENTE (OPTION 2)

The Fifth Gen flies right past them canopy to canopy, spinning upwards and diving back down on them.

Maverick weaves in hard cuts back n' forth to evade as the Fifth Gen fires bullets in a streak across the ocean.

Gunfire finally hits the F-14 as it flies low across the water. Mav keeps pulling hard right.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
We got no more flares, Mav. What
you got?
(alt)
Mav, we can't shake him, we can't
shake him anymore.

Maverick does the only thing he can do and pulls up hard to escape the Fifth Gen, but the Fifth Gen follows.

Another MISSILE LOCK. The sound of doom.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
He's got a missile lock, he's got a
missile lock, Mav.
(alt)
What have we got, Mav?

MAVERICK
We got nothing.
(alt)
I'm sorry, Rooster.
(alt)
I'm sorry Goose.

The Fifth Gen's missile appears from its belly.

And suddenly the Fifth Gen jet EXPLODES along with its missile. An F-18 streaks out from the shrapnel and smoke.

END STAGE 8 - OCEAN

314 **INT. HANGMAN'S F-18 - MORNING**

314

Hangman smiles.

HANGMAN

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, this is your savior speaking. Please fasten your seatbelts, return your tray tables to their upright and locked position and prepare for landing.

315 **INT. F-14 - MORNING**

315

STAGE 9 - OCEAN

SET #3: PISMO BEACH (OPTION 1) OR SAN CLEMENTE (OPTION 2)

As he pulls along side.

ROOSTER

Hey, Hangman... you look good.

HANGMAN

I am good, Rooster. I'm very good.

Maverick and Rooster watch as Hangman's F-18 CIRCLES back, doing a hotshot twirl of the wings, a victory roll.

END STAGE 9 - OCEAN

316 **INT. COMMAND CENTER - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING**

316

All eyes are on the horizon. Two planes inbound. As Cyclone and Warlock are leaving the room:

CYCLONE

Get Hangman down first. Maverick may burn the deck.

CLOSE ON: Hondo, realizing. Without a word, he runs from the command center.

317 **EXT. DECK - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING**

317

Hondo emerges on the deck where the crew is awaiting Hangman's arrival. Emergency crews are standing by.

(CONTINUED)

317 CONTINUED:

317

HONDO

The minute Hangman touches down,
pull the trip wires and have the
barricade stanchions ready.

The crew just stare at him.

HONDO (CONT'D)

HE DOESN'T HAVE A GODDAMN TAILHOOK.

The crew realizes and scrambles.

318 INT. BRIDGE - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING

318

Cyclone, Warlock and OFFICERS stand in the BRIDGE, BINOCS UP,
watching as Hangman's F-18 comes in for a landing.

CLOSE ON: His tail hook snagging the arrest cable, his plane
jerking to a stop.

The Deck Crew rush in to clear the way for Maverick.

A ballet of precise emergency response. Hundreds of SAILORS
work to remove Trap-Wires and raise Barricade Stanchions,
lift up a 15-foot-high NYLON BARRICADE, stretching a massive
net across the width of the landing deck.

The F-14 circles.

A320 INT. BRIDGE/F-14 - MORNING

A320

And in this moment of supreme tension, Maverick gets a little
glimmer in his eye. One we've seen before.

MAVERICK

Rough Rider, Ghost rider here.
We are requesting a tower fly-by.

Cyclone and Warlock share a look. Is this a joke?

B320 INT. F-14

B320

ROOSTER

What? Now?

MAVERICK

Could be the last one.

ROOSTER

You can't be serious.

(CONTINUED)

B320 CONTINUED:

B320

MAVERICK

You keep saying that, but it
doesn't change much.

(into radio)

Rough Rider, I say again-

C320 INT. BRIDGE - MORNING

C320

Cyclone has the radio now.

CYCLONE

Ghostrider, this is Cyclone. Put
that bird on the deck now.

MAVERICK (ON RADIO)

-odswor- -strider- -adio

D320 INT. F-14

D320

Maverick is smiling, speaking in broken jibbering.

MAVERICK

-aking up. Do -oo -ead?

320 INT. BRIDGE - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING

320

CYCLONE

Does he even want to land?

WARLOCK

He asked permission. That's
progress.

Cyclone sighs, nods begrudgingly to the Comm Tech who,
despite everything, has to grin a little as:

LSO

Ghostrider, pattern is clear, you
are cleared for flyby.

A321 INT. F-14

A321

MAVERICK

Huh. That's a first.

Rooster knocks his helmet repeatedly on the canopy.

ROOSTER

Why did I bother saving your ass?

B321 **INT. BRIDGE - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING** B321

Maverick blazes by the tower at high speed, rocking the tower. Cyclone shakes his head.

C321 **EXT./INT. F-14 - NEARING USS THEODORE R - MORNING** C321

Mav's working the stick and feathering the throttle.

He lowers the landing gear. A new light comes on.

MAVERICK

Shit.

ROOSTER

What? What more shit could there possibly be?

MAVERICK

No nose gear.

Rooster looks at the carrier, then out at the sea.

ROOSTER

What say we just eject?

MAVERICK

There's a good chance the chutes we have on were packed in the late eighties, but sure. Go for it.

ROOSTER

I think I'll stay with the plane.

MAVERICK

Just as bad, really.

ROOSTER

You can do this.

MAVERICK

I appreciate your confidence.

321 **EXT. DECK - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING**

LSO

One mile. Call the ball.

MAVERICK

Ghostrider. Ball. No hook. No nose gear.

(CONTINUED)

321 CONTINUED:

321

And an engine fails.

ROOSTER

Please tell me that wasn't an engine.

MAVERICK

Correction... ball, no hook, no nose gear... single engine.

ROOSTER

Of course it was an engine.

LSO

A little power.... Come left... Easy with it...

The deck of the Roosevelt now approaching rapidly... as it slips beneath the NOSE of the jet.

LSO (CONT'D)

CUT, CUT, CUT.

The engine cuts out and everything goes SILENT.

322 **EXT. DECK - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING**

322

As the battered Tomcat SMASHES DOWN, sliding across the deck on its nose, SHOWERING SPARKS, SPEWING SMOKE, until it SLAMS INTO THE NYLON NET, ripping it forwards before snapping to a violent halt. Finally. Safe home.

323 **EXT. DECK - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING**

323

EMERGENCY CREWS rush the jet as Mav and Rooster climb out. Maverick and Rooster check on each other.

MAVERICK

You ok?

ROOSTER

Yeah.

Phoenix, Bob, Payback, Fanboy and Hondo all come rushing.

Maverick and Hondo reunite.

MAVERICK

You think you can fix it?

HONDO

Easy.

(CONTINUED)

Then other SAILORS arrive, mobbing them.

Maverick gazes up to Vultures Row, spying Cyclone and Warlock. Cyclone gives him a simple, grateful nod.

Rooster turns to see Hangman arriving. His face mock-falls:

HANGMAN

Well shit... you're alive.

They shake hands. That's enough.

ROOSTER

Chalked yourself another kill.

Hangman smiles.

HANGMAN

That makes two.

Phoenix steps in.

PHOENIX

Maverick has five. Makes him an ace.

And Hangman's smile fades. Just a bit. Rooster turns, looking for Maverick in the crowd. Finds him, pushes toward him.

ROOSTER

Captain Mitchell... Captain Mitchell, SIR.

Maverick turns, come face to face with Mav.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

Sir, I-

And Maverick grabs him before he can say another word, pulls him close. Rooster is not sure what to do for a moment. Then he hugs him back.

MAVERICK

Thanks for saving my life.

ROOSTER

It's what my dad would've done.

And as the two men embrace, shutting out the rest of the world we PULL BACK TO:

324 **EXT. DECK - USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - MORNING**

324

Filled with jubilant SAILORS, the whole ship celebrates the mission's return. Maverick joins Rooster and Hangman, sharing laughter and embraces. All of them, allies at last.

A327 **EXT. HARD DECK - LATE AFTERNOON**

A327

To establish.

B327 **INT. HARD DECK - LATE AFTERNOON**

B327

The place is quiet. Almost deserted.

Maverick enters, expecting to find Penny, surprised to find A BARTENDER, JIMMY. Off Maverick's expression:

TIME CUT:

Maverick at the bar now.

BARTENDER JIMMY

Hey Mav.

MAVERICK

Is Penny here?

BARTENDER JIMMY

Took Amelia sailing.

MAVERICK

Gone? Where?

BARTENDER JIMMY

Wherever they felt like, she said.

MAVERICK

Did she say when she'd be back.

BARTENDER JIMMY

I'm guessing whenever she feels like.

Maverick nods. He looks around the bar, heads for the door. With nowhere else to go, he goes:

327

INT./EXT. MAVERICK'S HANGAR - DAY - DAYS LATER

327

Where Maverick holds a photo of the moment on the Roosevelt with Rooster and the others, adding it to his wall of memories, medals, accomplishments - a life well-lived, if somewhat incomplete.

Among the pictures is one of Goose and Maverick in the bloom of their youth - their whole lives ahead of them.

Maverick steps back, takes in the space - the P-51, the airstream, the bikes...

The sound of a car OS. He turns in time to see it coming to a stop. The door opens and out climbs Rooster. From the passenger door emerges Phoenix.

Emerging from the back is Amelia and, finally Penny.

She takes in the sight of the hangar - along with everyone else - clearly a place they have never seen before.

CLOSE ON: Mav and Penny as they meet by the P-51.

PENNY

I heard you were looking for me.

Maverick nods. A confession.

MAVERICK

Good trip?

PENNY

Great. You?

MAVERICK

I could tell you, but...

PENNY

Forget I asked.

They both smile. After a beat.

MAVERICK

I missed you.

PENNY

I know.

They kiss.

ALTS

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

(re hangar)

Whatta'ya think?

PENNY

It's... very you.

(ALT)

It's just like I pictured.

(ALT)

I'm still taking it in.

(ALT)

You know..? It works.

END ALTS

TIME CUT as Phoenix holds two model planes, demonstrating air-to-air combat to a very interested Amelia.

As Maverick walks Penny around the other lady in his life - the P-51.

As Rooster looks over Maverick's workspace, the pictures of Maverick and Ice, of Maverick and Goose, of Rooster as a boy... Topped off by Maverick and Rooster on the carrier.

Rooster turns, looks at the make-shift family taking shape in this makeshift home...

And he smiles.

As the sound of a roaring engine takes us to:

Penny snugly in the back seat, Maverick at the controls.

MAVERICK

How're you doing back there?

PENNY

I'm amazed something this old can still fly.

MAVERICK

C'mon, don't say old. It's vintage. One more time, if anything goes wrong and it probably won't. But if it does, I'll just open the canopy-

PENNY

Uh huh.

(CONTINUED)

MAVERICK

When that's gone, you just undo
your seatbelt-

PENNY

Right...

MAVERICK

I'll roll her over and dump you
out.

PENNY

You know this isn't working on me.

MAVERICK

Just remember to pull that handle
on your parachute.

PENNY

Pete-

MAVERICK

Penny-

PENNY

Will you ever grow up?

MAVERICK

Some day...

And that glimmer comes to his eye.

MAVERICK (CONT'D)

But not today.

And he yanks the stick hard.

And the plane banks away from us with Penny screaming,
laughing.

But mostly screaming.

MAVERICK

JIBE-HO.

BLACK