

Flight

by

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A detail of a wall mounted map of Northern Europe shows the islands of Spitzbergen. A woman's hand draws an arrow from the islands, south across the North Atlantic to the area between South West Scotland and Cumbria where she adds the words "Solway Estuary" in Cyrillic script.

SUBTITLE: "Solway Estuary"

The writer is PROFESSOR BAJIC, female, 50's. Pinned around the map are photos of birds. Watching her is NATASA IVIC, a student in her early 20's, clutching an armful of files. Distant shell fire can be heard in the background. Elsewhere in the small laboratory two other STUDENTS busy themselves quietly at a bench.

PROFESSOR BAJIC

(in Bosnian)

It's one of the world's most extraordinary migrations. Twelve thousand birds all wintering on a few miles of coastline just here.

(puts coloured map pin on Solway coast)

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

And you want to find out why.

PROFESSOR BAJIC

(in Bosnian)

I want you to. Before the war we'd finished the research at the Russian observatory here...

(puts map pin in Spitzbergen)

And I'd arranged a visiting research post in the UK. They still want us to come.

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

And I'm the only one who can get out.

PROFESSOR BAJIC un-pins a postcard of a flock of barnacle geese from the edge of the board and re-pins it on the Solway Estuary.

PROFESSOR BAJIC

(in Bosnian)

True. But I'd want you to do it anyway.

A shell lands nearby and the shock wave ripples the papers on the noticeboard. PROFESSOR BAJIC puts a kind hand on NATASA's arm.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

PROFESSOR BAJIC (cont'd)
 (in Bosnian)
 Let's talk about it tomorrow.

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 I'll be here. See you then.

NATASA smiles a farewell to the other two STUDENTS and leaves. PROFESSOR BAJIC watches her go warmly then moves quietly over to the other two STUDENTS.

Suddenly the whole laboratory explodes in an intensive white blast. As the debris settles an awful carnage is revealed. PROFESSOR BAJIC's broken body lies in the foreground.

CUT TO

2 EXT. AMSTERDAM STREET - EARLY EVENING

LISA [female, 19, very vivacious] is giving a lift on her bike to a FRIEND [female, 19]. Another STUDENT [female, 20's cycles with them]. They hurtle across an old canal bridge into a small courtyard, laughing in the evening sun. The contrast with Sarajevo is cruel. Parking their bikes they rush inside.

CUT TO:

3 INT. AMSTERDAM FLAT - EARLY EVENING

LISA and her FRIEND rush noisily up the communal stairwell of a student house to a top floor flat.

ELLEN [LISA'S MOTHER](O.S.)
 (leaving phone message)
 Hi love. Mum here. I'm so looking forward to seeing you; I just wondered if you could come a day earlier. Otherwise it's so short. I know how busy you are but I've got a long weekend and... well...you know how I miss you. Please come love. I'll pay for the flight.. Lots of love.

LISA and her FRIEND burst into a bright and chaotic student attic flat. Hearing the message still being left, LISA drops her bags and rushes to the phone just picking it up as the line goes dead.

LISA
 (to phone)
 Mum... Mum?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

Only momentarily disappointed, she replaces the phone and slips back to being a carefree student.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - EVENING

The merse; a vast area of empty salt marsh and pasture riven with deep mud creeks which surrounds the Solway Estuary between England and Scotland. Against a fading sky thousands of barnacle geese rise up in a crescendo of beating wings. They fill the air with a mass of chaotic movement. The birds have been disturbed by a car, which moves slowly along an unfenced road at the edge of the merse.

FADE TO BLACK.

5 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - EVENING

A busy regional airport in Northern England. Behind the sound of the taxiing jets are heard the calm exchanges of the aircraft talking to air traffic controllers. As the jet noise fades away there is only the voice of a single air traffic controller, NEIL PEART, 40's.

NEIL (O.S.)

European two four two you are cleared to flight level one two zero. Contact Newcastle on one one eight decimal seven five.

EUROPEAN 224 (O.S.)

(through headset)

Cleared to flight level one two zero. Contact Newcastle on one one eight decimal seven five. European two four

CUT TO:

6 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CONTROL ROOM - EVENING

Coloured icons and markings appear on a radar screen, revealing a mass of ever changing information.

NEIL

Speedbird six zero seven Pennine Control. Climb flight level two eight zero. Report reaching Border.

The darkened control room is revealed with rows of glowing radar screens. The Centre is situated at the airport but controls the skies over the whole of Northern Britain.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

SPEEDBIRD 607 (O.S.)
 (female, in headset)
 Climb flight level 280. Report Border.
 Speedbird six zero seven.

Individual conversations overlap as NEIL is relieved by a colleague, CONTROLLER #1, in a seamless shift change,

NEIL
 All under control. Good leave?

CONTROLLER #1
 Great.

NEIL unplugs his headset and wends his way out. He passes a 2nd CONTROLLER, female, 20's, who waves him over.

CONTROLLER #2
 (pointing at screen)
 I've got a couple of military jets
 wanting a low level transit. I'm not keen
 but they're a bit insistent.

NEIL peers over her shoulder and checks the screen.

NEIL
 You're right. Route them over the top.
 Never be bullied by the boys in blue.

CONTROLLER #2 grins.

CONTROLLER #2
 Thanks.

Relaxed and confident, NEIL heads for the door.

CUT TO:

7 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - EVENING

Librarian ELLEN ARMSTRONG, 40s, wheels a trolley of books through the ranks of shelves. It's a vocation of love.

LISA (O.S.)
 (on answering machine)
 Hi mum. It's me. Just missed you.
 Nightmare time to come home - tons of
 work on. But I have booked the earlier
 flight - European 273 on Friday. You
 better be nice to me. Love you lots. Bye.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - EVENING

The geese are roosting en masse on the merse, quietly cackling amongst themselves. The car which had earlier disturbed them is parked off the road. Leaning against it CHRISTINE [late 30's] and RAY [late 40's] kiss gently. CHRISTINE breaks away sensitively but distracted.

CUT TO:

9 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

NEIL finds his locker in a row of identical cabinets. On the other side of the row the Centre's Senior Controller, GEOFF UNDERWOOD, late 50's, comes in and open his own locker.

NEIL

So how's that new plane of yours?

GEOFF gazes at a photo of his small aircraft on the back of his locker door.

GEOFF

Still working on the engine. Should get it flying this weekend.

NEIL puts his headset on his locker shelf and extracts a battered hardback.

NEIL

Found this for you. Might help you back into the air. Incoming.

NEIL throws the book over the lockers. GEOFF catches it.

GEOFF

Thanks.

NEIL smirks. On the other side of the locker GEOFF turns the book to read the cover. It's a 1950's Biggles annual with the leather helmeted hero in an absurd posture.

GEOFF (cont'd)

Cheeky bugger.

GEOFF throws the book in his locker.

GEOFF (cont'd)

We were going to ask you and Christine over for dinner. A week Sunday?

NEIL

Yeah. That would be great. We'd love to.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

NEIL closes his locker and walks for the exit. As he passes the end of GEOFF's locker row, he mimics flying goggles with his fingers over his eyes.

GEOFF
Bugger off.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DUSK

RAY leans against the car on the sea dyke. Near him is a sign warning "Road Liable to Tidal Flooding". He strikes a match to light a cigarette. Some distance away CHRISTINE stares away, deep in thought. Shaken from her thoughts by the striking match she looks back. RAY shoots her a conspiratorial grin but CHRISTINE fails to match his mood and turns away. RAY loses his smile and hurls the match away in frustration.

CUT TO:

11 INT. SARAJEVO FLAT - NIGHT

FX of distant shells and closer sniper fire. NATASA lovingly wraps her bird watching telescope in clothes before packing it in a worn rucksac. One hand is bandaged and her face is grazed. The room is bare and cold. Polythene sheets cover the glassless windows.

SABINA, mid 20's and NATASA's closest friend, sits out of sniper sight on the floor across the room and below the window level. She examines the now blood stained and battered postcard of the barnacle geese and looks critically at NATASA who catches her mood.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
It's not running away. It's my work. It's what she wanted.

SABINA is unimpressed.

NATASA (cont'd)
(in Bosnian)
One less mouth to feed.

SABINA snorts with derision. NATASA ignores her friend and continues packing, weighing up which of her zoology and ornithology books to take. In the end she crams them all in to a battered suitcase.

SABINA
(in Bosnian)
You're doing their job for them.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

SABINA indicates out of the window and then holds up the blood stained card.

SABINA (cont'd)
 She could have got out but she stayed.
She believed in us living together.

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 And for what?
 (nods to card in SABINA's hand)
 What's that done for your new Bosnia

SABINA
 (in Bosnian)
 Your new Bosnia. You used to believe in it too.

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 Everyone wants to get out. Wouldn't you?

A shell lands nearby. SABINA turns her head to the plastic sheeted window as it billows in and out with the shockwave. She hasn't an answer.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 (in Bosnian)
 Here. Give it to me.

SABINA crawls under the window and slides the post card across the floor to NATASA.

NATASA (cont'd)
 (in Bosnian)
 It was planned before all this. I'd have been going somewhere anyway. I'll be back.

Another shell detonates even closer.

NATASA (cont'd)
 (in Bosnian)
 It's different for you Sabina. You're the good guys. It's *my* people who are doing this. I've had enough.

NATASA looks at the card and bursts into tears of exhaustion and despair. SABINA looks at NATASA for a moment before going over to comfort her.

SABINA
 I'll come and see you off.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

They embrace intensely.

CUT TO:

12 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

NEIL lies in bed on his side, his eyes closed. From behind CHRISTINE leans over and gently kisses his cheek. NEIL is awake but wants to be asleep. CHRISTINE moves up to his ear.

CHRISTINE

Let's go out tomorrow. The estuary. The geese are back.

NEIL

I've got a game.

CHRISTINE

We never seem to be together anymore.

NEIL

You go.

CHRISTINE rolls back leaving a chasm between them and stares bleakly at the ceiling.

CHRISTINE

You haven't forgotten about the appointment on Tuesday?

NEIL gives up pretence of sleep and half turns round

NEIL

Appointment?

CHRISTINE

The clinic.

NEIL closes his eyes to shut out the question. CHRISTINE also knows the conversation is pointless.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

You're not coming are you?

NEIL turns away once more.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

I can't wait Neil. I can't wait.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. SARAJEVO STREET - DAY

NATASA runs down a street struggling with her rucsac and tripod and clutching her exit papers. Behind her follows SABINA carrying the suitcase.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

The side streets are partially blocked by skips as protection from the constant sniper fire. Behind the shelter of the first skip NATASA and SABINA pause breathlessly before facing the next exposed gap.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
It's crazy. Give me the case.

SABINA
(in Bosnian)
You can't run fast enough. Right. Go!

SABINA seizes the initiative and makes the dash to the next skip. A sniper's round hits the ground behind her. NATASA remains frozen in fear behind the first skip.

SABINA (cont'd)
(in Bosnian)
Run!

NATASA follows terrified and in tears as the sniper misses again. At the next exposed side street SABINA attempts to calm a distraught NATASA.

SABINA (cont'd)
(in Bosnian)
Only one more. There's the bus.

Ahead a group of BOSNIAN SOLDIERS are in heated dispute through a TRANSLATOR with two UN OFFICIALS as they check passengers onto a bus riddled with bullet holes. The atmosphere is tense and fearful.

NATASA composes herself and kisses SABINA. They brace themselves for the last exposed dash and break cover. Halfway across automatic gunfire replaces the single sniper shots and all hell breaks loose. A mortar explodes nearby and the BOSNIAN SOLDIERS abandon their dispute and run to the side street to return fire. As NATASA reaches the safety of their position a mortar explodes close behind her. Spinning round she sees SABINA fall, dropping the suitcase and spilling books onto road. Instinctively she runs back into the smoke and dust.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
Sabina!

BOSNIAN SOLDIER #1 instantly appreciates the danger and grabs a distraught and struggling NATASA and drags her back to safety as his colleagues head off through the smoke still obscuring where SABINA had fallen.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

At the bus departure point the UN OFFICIAL and a BOSNIAN POLICEMAN are screaming at the BUS DRIVER to go as the explosions and gunfire comes closer.

BOSNIAN SOLDIER #1 thrusts NATASA towards the UN OFFICIALS.

UN OFFICIAL #1
You going?

A sobbing NATASA is totally disoriented by the noise and the awful decision she now has to make.

BOSNIAN SOLDIER
(in Bosnian)
You'll never get back now.

Irritated and keen to get back to the front he snatches the papers from NATASA's grip and hands them to the UN OFFICIAL. NATASA paralysed by her dreadful dilemma looks back over her shoulder and is pushed sobbing onto the already moving bus by the BOSNIAN POLICEMAN.

CUT TO:

14 INT. SARAJEVO BUS - DAY

A distraught NATASA struggles in a vacant seat. The faces around her are mute and afraid. Outside the BOSNIAN POLICEMAN blows his whistle to clear the bus's path.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. FOOTBALL GROUND - DAY

FX whistle. NEIL is refereeing a Sunday league match. Two PLAYERS entwined in the penalty area angrily disentangle themselves as NEIL runs up producing a red card.

NEIL
Second offence, my friend. You're off.

PENALISED PLAYER
Bollocks. He's been doing it all the game.

NEIL is surrounded by players appealing against the decision but he is completely in control and waves them away.

CUT TO:

16 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE packs her clothes into a suitcase and closes the lid. Sitting on the bed she gazes at the phone. After a long deliberation she picks it up and slowly begins to dial.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. FOOTBALL GROUND - DAY

NEIL is in his element. From the touchline, supporters weigh in furiously with their views. As the players rearrange for the penalty NEIL's mobile rings. Fishing it from his top pocket he shouts above the continuing din.

NEIL
(into phone)
Hello?

Curiosity turns to irritation.

NEIL (cont'd)
(into phone)
What do you want? It's the middle of the game...

NEIL listens in silence. The caller hangs up. NEIL stares for a moment at the phone. Suddenly he runs off the pitch oblivious to the protests from the PLAYERS and SPECTATORS. ALAN, a linesman, approaches seeking an explanation.

ALAN
What's going on?

NEIL takes his whistle, throws it at a bewildered ALAN, and runs off towards the parked cars. His car is blocked in. He hesitates for a second in frustration and then charges off again running as fast as he can.

CUT TO:

18 INT NEIL'S HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

Christine replaces the phone on the bedside table. From the dressing table she takes an envelope branded with a "Northern Hospital Health Authority" logo. She puts it in the case and closes the lid.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. STREET NEAR NEIL'S HOUSE - DAY

NEIL still in full referee strip and boots sprints through quiet Sunday streets. He turns a corner into a steeply rising row of terraces.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

At the top of the street he sees CHRISTINE, assisted by RAY, loading suitcases into a car outside their house.

NEIL
(shouts)
Christine!

CHRISTINE and RAY turn to look at NEIL's breathless figure. There is a moment's hesitation from CHRISTINE but RAY takes the last case from her, loads it into the boot, and opens the door for her. Unperturbed by the approaching NEIL, RAY gets into the driver's side and drives off as an exhausted NEIL makes a final futile effort to catch up with the departing car.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. SARAJEVO SUBURBS - DAY

The bus hurtles down a rubble strewn side street. The DRIVER nods a warning to the two UN OFFICIALS crammed against the windscreen. It is a Serb roadblock. The bus halts and the silence is punctuated by the sound of a crying baby. 2 aggressive SERB SOLDIERS push past the impotent UN OFFICIALS and their TRANSLATOR, demanding to see the passenger's papers. Families are separated, children scream, and non-Serbs are thrown off the bus. SERB SOLDIER #1 inspects NATASA's papers and thrusts them back before turning to a BOSNIAN MOTHER sitting next to her. Her DAUGHTER, 7, stands terrified in the aisle next to her. The SERB SOLDIER #1 rips up the BOSNIAN MOTHER's papers derisively and gestures her and her DAUGHTER to get out.

The BOSNIAN MOTHER looks pleadingly to NATASA for help but NATASA avoids her gaze. The BOSNIAN MOTHER leaves clutching her terrified DAUGHTER who makes accusatory eye contact with a shamed NATASA.

The SERB SOLDIERS roughly manhandle the remaining Bosnjak passengers out and give a mock thank you to the UN officials as they leave. As the bus pulls away one of the SERB SOLDIER #2 fires his Kalashnikov, laughing. NATASA for the first time notices a bullet hole in her rucsac, screwing up her eyes to stem the tears and shut out the world.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DUSK

As if alarmed by the sound of shellfire, a vast flock of several thousand barnacle geese rise up into the air. Far above a single vapour trail indicates a distant airliner.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CAR PARK - DUSK

NEIL hurriedly weaves through the parked cars, mobile phone clutched to his ear. Behind him a radar dish turns and aircraft taxi. His stress is increased by having to shout over the sound of nearby jet engines.

NEIL
 (into phone)
 Who is he?
 (pause)
 Never heard of him... Of course I don't know where she is. That's why I'm calling you.

NEIL narrowly misses being hit by a reversing car.

NEIL (cont'd)
 (to CAR DRIVER)
 Idiot!
 (to phone)
 No. Sorry. Not you.
 (pause)
 Well you're her friend, she's bound to call you. Christ, I've got a job to do; I haven't got time to walk the streets looking for her.
 (pause)
 Yeah, well, thanks a bunch. Bye.

As NEIL ends the call he steps back to avoid another parking car which stops in front of him. The driver's window winds down. It's GEOFF.

GEOFF
 Whoah! Not like you to be late.

NEIL struggles to compose himself.

NEIL
 Traffic.

GEOFF
 You and Christine still all right for this Sunday?

NEIL
 Yeah, of course. We're looking forward to it.

NEIL waves GEOFF into the parking space and hurries on, his mind churning.

CUT TO:

23 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The CONTROLLERS calmly control dozens of converging aircraft. Their efficient commands reassure the unseen pilots far above and ensure the safety of thousands of lives.

Only NEIL appears distracted and stressed. The control strips for each aircraft in his control are piling up in front of him and he's losing track.

EUROPEAN 273 (O.S.)

(in headset)

European two seven three Brough five two.
Flight level two three zero. Request
routing via Border for the ILS approach.

NEIL

Roger European two seven three. Route via
Border approved. Descend flight level one
six five..

(fumbles and drops pen)

Correction. Disregard. Descend flight
level one six zero. Report passing two
zero zero

NEIL frantically re-orders his control strips.

EUROPEAN 273 (O.S.)

(in headset)

Approved via Border. Descend flight level
one six zero. European two seven three
wilco.

GEOFF is casting supervisory glances over the shoulders of his team. On the screen of CONTROLLER #3 two blips labelled "UA451" and "EU273" catch his attention.

GEOFF

What levels are these?

CONTROLLER #3 clicks a mouse and numbers appear next to all the moving blips. The figures for the two closing blips are 200 and 220.

GEOFF (cont'd)

They're a bit close aren't they?

CONTROLLER #3

It's pretty busy up there tonight.

GEOFF

Isn't United four five one a heavy?

CONTROLLER #3 taps a keyboard command and the word "HEAVY" appears next to UA451 on the screen.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

CONTROLLER #3

Yep. A jumbo.

GEOFF

And 273's a small regional jet from Amsterdam. And it's in the descent heading right for the wake turbulence of 451. Who's handling that sector?

CONTROLLER #3

The Ref.

GEOFF

He should know better.

CONTROLLER #3

Yellow card job?

GEOFF moves along the row to NEIL but gets waylaid by a CONTROLLER #4. NEIL meanwhile has his hands full.

NEIL

Stand-by European two seven three. United four five one say again.

UNITED 451 (O.S.)

(in headset)

United four five one heavy. Pennine five eight. Flight level two zero zero. Climbing flight level two niner zero. Border 06.

NEIL

Roger United four five one. European two seven three squawk four three four four.

EUROPEAN 273 (O.S.)

(in headset)

Four three four four. European two seven three.

On NEIL's screen the sky looks perilously crowded.

NEIL

European two seven three identified. Continue descent flight level one six zero. Report passing one niner zero.

EUROPEAN 273 (O.S.)

(in headset)

European two seven three wilco.

Another flight control slip is passed to NEIL who is taken aback by the number of aircraft in his control.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

Sweating, he desperately rearranges them to gain a sense of order. GEOFF is still dealing with CONTROLLER #4

CONTROLLER #4
Edinburgh's just closed with fog.

GEOFF
They'll all want Prestwick now to get home to their own beds.

CONTROLLER #4
They should be so lucky.

CONTROLLER #4 sets about his new task as GEOFF pats him reassuringly on the back. GEOFF now turns to NEIL who is ashen faced at his screen. His hand shakily activates his transmit switch.

NEIL
European two seven three. This is Pennine Area Control. Radio and squawk negative. Please confirm your position and flight level.

GEOFF instantly takes in the seriousness of the situation. He grabs a spare headset and plugs it in, leaning in over NEIL's shoulder.

NEIL (cont'd)
European two seven three. Do you read? Over. European two seven three do you read? Over.

GEOFF switches his headset to a different frequency and grabs the European 273 control slip. It's an emergency. While NEIL continues to call the silent plane, GEOFF alerts the emergency services.

GEOFF
ARCC this is Pennine Area Control. We have lost primary radar and SSR contact with European 273...
(looks at control slip)
... an Embraer 145, from Amsterdam via Alpha 1, 11 POB, last known position...

GEOFF picks up a chinagraph pencil and hands it to NEIL who is still calling the aircraft. NEIL marks a cross on the screen where he last saw the aircraft identified. A blip marked U451 HEAVY FL190 is moving slowly away from it.

GEOFF (cont'd)
...10 miles north east area radar at Great Dun Fell.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTTISH CONTROLLER

(in headset)

Roger your information Pennine Control.
No distress logged on one two one decimal
five. Notifying Boulmer search & rescue.

GEOFF takes off his headset, snatches the chinagraph from NEIL's hand and emphatically circles the word HEAVY on the United Airlines identifier on the screen. A traumatised NEIL knows the implication and continues to call the vanished aircraft, staring at the lone chinagraph cross on radar screen.

CUT TO:

24 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

An flip-over arrivals board indicates European Airways 273 from Amsterdam arriving at 19:20 as "on time".

Below, passengers wait or wheel trolleys as routine flight announcements echo round the terminal. ELLEN crosses the floor clutching just a handbag and her car keys. She glances at the information board in happy anticipation of the arriving flight. Relaxed, she makes for a news stand where she selects a paper.

Behind her the information display resets the Amsterdam arrival to "delayed" and estimated arrival time "19:40".

While paying for her paper she sees a teddy bear gift holding a "welcome" sign. It's a little corny but reflects her mood and she adds it to her purchases.

CUT TO:

25 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

GEOFF traverses the rows of controllers. The tension is racking up. He pauses briefly to whisper in the ear of CONTROLLER #2 who responds to the instruction by unplugging her headset, passing a couple of control slips to an adjacent colleague, and follows GEOFF. GEOFF substitutes the CONTROLLER #2 for NEIL. NEIL knows the drill. He follows GEOFF out of the room. CONTROLLER #2 continues NEIL's efforts.

CONTROLLER #2

European two seven three this is Pennine
control. Over.

CUT TO:

26 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

ELLEN is browsing her newspaper. She glances up at the board and sees arrival time resetting to '20:00'. ELLEN pauses before returning to her paper.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. RESCUE HELICOPTER BASE - NIGHT

A red suited PARAMEDIC climbs aboard rescue helicopter. The HELICOPTER CO-PILOT obtains his clearance.

HELICOPTER CO-PILOT

Boulmer Radio, Rescue one three one radio check with details.

BOULMER TOWER

(in headset)

Rescue one three one loud and clear. QFE niner niner six, QNH niner niner seven; wind two seventy ten.

HELICOPTER CO-PILOT

Roger Rescue one three one lifting minute three seven; four persons on board.

The helicopter disappears into the night sky.

CUT TO BLACK:

28 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

GEOFF pulls up a chair in a bare room across the table from where NEIL sits, his head in his hands.

GEOFF

Sorry mate. You know the rules.

NEIL looks up and opens his eyes.

NEIL

Any news?

GEOFF shakes his head. In front of him is a pile of three tape cartridges and a wadge of papers. He takes an official report form and sets it in front of NEIL.

GEOFF

Get it all down before your memory starts playing tricks.

NEIL

They were at least five miles apart.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

GEOFF

No problem then. Put it down. Word for word.

NEIL

You don't believe me, do you? You think I should have opened up the separation?

GEOFF looks NEIL straight in the eye.

GEOFF

Of course I believe you. That flight could've gone down for a thousand and one reasons. The turbulence behind the jumbo was probably irrelevant.

NEIL

When will they look at the radar tapes?

GEOFF

Up to the enquiry.

GEOFF picks up the tapes and makes to leave.

NEIL

Can't you have a look now?

GEOFF

Come on, Neil. You know.

NEIL nods, resigned. GEOFF looks down at the tapes in his hand, then back to NEIL.

GEOFF (cont'd)

Get writing. That's the best way to make sure what's on that...

(indicates report form)

...matches these.

(lifts up tapes)

And then you'll be in the clear. I'm sure of it.

NEIL is not reassured. GEOFF leaves closing the door. NEIL stares at the blank form as GEOFF re-opens the door and leans back in.

GEOFF (CONT'D) (cont'd)

And, hey...

NEIL looks up.

GEOFF (cont'd)

...we're all behind you.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

Having obviously failed to reassure NEIL, GEOFF leaves, shutting the door behind him. NEIL picks up the form, looks at it, and then puts it back.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. PENNINE MOORLAND - NIGHT

A helicopter searchlight tracks low over the desolate heather of a Pennine mountainside.

HELICOPTER RADAR OPERATOR

Kinloss rescue, Rescue one three one on scene at four six. Weather on scene ceiling five hundred feet visibility one. Commencing contour search.

RESCUE CO-ORDINATION CENTRE OPERATOR

(in headset)

Roger Rescue one three one.

CUT TO:

30 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

ELLEN watches as the information board resets Flight 273 to 'Delayed Indefinitely'. Beside her, a handful of people cluster round the European Airways desk. ELLEN stands back allowing a more confident MIDDLE AGED COUPLE to do the asking of a DESK ATTENDANT who is as much in the dark as they are.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

What's going on? You must know something.

DESK ATTENDANT

It may be the fog. Some of the flights have been diverted to Prestwick.

ELLEN looks nervously at her watch. She glances around the waiting group. In addition to the MIDDLE AGED COUPLE carrying a bunch of flowers, there is a COMPANY CAR DRIVER holding a cardboard sign with the name "Mr. Williams" written on it; and a YOUNG MOTHER with a baby in a pushchair.

CUT TO:

31 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

GEOFF walks along the corridor to the interview room and looks inside. NEIL has gone. On the desk lies his unwritten report.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

A helicopter searchlight tracks low and slow over an expanse of remote upland moor, but the sound is of the terminal concourse. The searchlight begins to pick out pieces of wreckage.

TERMINAL ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(over PA)

European Airways regret to announce the cancellation of Flight 273 from Amsterdam. Will all persons meeting passengers from European Airways Flight 273 from Amsterdam please make their way to the Immigration Interview Suite by International Arrivals.

CUT TO:

33 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

ELLEN's face registers escalating fear. She watches the information board line for the Amsterdam flight flipping through the complete roll of destinations before stopping at a completely blank line. Behind her ELLEN hears the MIDDLE AGED COUPLE loosing their composure with the DESK ATTENDANT.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

What do you mean, "cancelled"? Ten minutes ago it was just late.

His WIFE holds him and gasps. The DESK ATTENDANT is out of her depth.

DESK ATTENDANT

There'll be an announcement in the Immigration Suite.

ELLEN's stare freezes the DESK ATTENDANT. Mounting silent fear is broken by the phone. The DESK ATTENDANT thankfully answers it as the AIRLINE MANAGER arrives and attempts to marshall the group.

AIRLINE MANAGER

Everybody, we'd like to keep you up to date with developments. This way please.

As he attempts to lead the group away the DESK ATTENDANT calls him back to the phone. ELLEN, transfixed, watches the AIRLINE MANAGER take the call.

AIRLINE MANAGER (cont'd)

(to phone)

What do you mean? Christ, just get them out.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

The AIRLINE MANAGER thrusts the phone back to the DESK ATTENDANT and returns to lead the group away as the AIRPORT DIRECTOR and an AIRPORT OFFICIAL approach.

From a mezzanine balcony NEIL looks down on the increasingly chaotic terminal scene as the AIRPORT DIRECTOR talks urgently into his walkie talkie. At the desk ELLEN watches with increasing disorientation. The exasperated AIRLINE MANAGER takes the arm of the AIRPORT DIRECTOR

AIRLINE MANAGER (cont'd)
I need that room now.

AIRPORT DIRECTOR
Immigration were interviewing some refugees.

AIRLINE MANAGER
Refugees?

By now a couple of POLICE OFFICERS have joined the scene, clearing aside queues of obstructing trolleys and silent holiday makers. Above them NEIL descends the stairs to the terminal floor transfixed in horror at the events unfolding below.

A disoriented ELLEN stumbles over innocent holiday baggage. A WOMAN P.C. takes her arm. To ELLEN the terminal airport bustle fades. Over her mute POV the FX of helicopters and the walkie talkie conversations and commands of the rescue team at the crash site fade up.

HELICOPTER RADAR OPERATOR (O.S.)
(in headset)
Kinloss Rescue, Rescue one three one.
Aircraft debris located at fifty one zero
one three north, zero two zero six west.
No visible survivors; repeat no visible
survivors.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

As the helicopter searchlight illuminates the wreckage of Flight 273, a police Landrover arrives and a mountain rescue team begins combing the debris.

ARCC OPERATOR(O.S.)
(in headset)
Copy you Rescue one three one. Air
Accident Investigation Branch would like
to get in tonight. Proceed to rendezvous
Charlie to collect two investigators.

CUT TO:

35 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

The AIRPORT DIRECTOR leads the relatives across the terminal talking urgently into his walkie talkie.

AIRPORT DIRECTOR
Mike, it's Chris. Any news of the
counselling team?

His eyes catch the scene ahead.

AIRPORT DIRECTOR (cont'd)
Oh, Jesus Christ!

Suddenly the swing doors to the Immigration Suite swing open and another clutch of officials and immigration officers usher out a dozen BOSNIAN REFUGEES. Everyone is struggling to hold onto a mixture of badly wrapped baggage, coats, jackets and half completed forms. A translator, EMIR, male [late 20's], a REFUGEE WORKER female, [30's], and an IMMIGRATION OFFICER, male, [40's], help corral them. Hemmed in between the check in queues it is inevitable that the two groups will have to pass through each other.

NEIL finds himself in the middle of the chaos as the two groups meet. ELLEN's grip on her bag and paper tightens. Spinning around she sees the blurred staring faces. Frayed nerves, foreign languages and fear increase the confusion as the two groups collide with NEIL transfixed between them. In the chaos a figure crashes into ELLEN in the melee. It's NATASA. ELLEN spins round and sees only a blurred image as her vision fades and she faints. The WOMAN P.C. catches her as she falls while NATASA swings round as bewildered as everyone else.

As NEIL looks in horror, a terrifying wail rents the air and silences the terminal. It is the YOUNG MOTHER, overcome with hysteria grasping her pushchair for support. In her NATASA sees the screaming women from the Sarajevo bus. Beside her but unseen by NATASA, NEIL cradles his head in his hands.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. NEIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NEIL gets out from the passenger side of GEOFF's car. He reaches into his jacket pocket and hands over his accident report to GEOFF.

NEIL
Here's what happened.

GEOFF
You know I won't be able to do much from
now on?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

NEIL
It wasn't my fault.

GEOFF
I'll see you back when it's all over.

GEOFF takes the report. NEIL closes the door and as GEOFF drives away, he looks up at his darkened empty house.

CUT TO:

37 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

ELLEN is led out of the Immigration Suite by the WOMAN P.C. Her face reveals a terrible grief. The concourse floor is deserted apart from a CLEANER tracking up and down with a floor polisher. ELLEN and the WOMAN P.C. make their way slowly to the same doors that ELLEN had so optimistically entered a few hours earlier.

As they leave some other figures are revealed at the tables of a closed fast food concession on a mezzanine balcony. The IMMIGRATION OFFICER, the REFUGEE WORKER and EMIR, are interviewing NATASA. All the other tables have their chairs stacked on top. A scattering of the other refugees are asleep on nearby seats amidst their belongings.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Your application for asylum will take some time to process. And we'll need to confirm the research invitation from the University is in order to get you a temporary visa.

The REFUGEE WORKER hands over a pack of information.

REFUGEE WORKER
Hostel details and other essential information. We've quite a large Bosnian refugee population here. You'll feel quite at home.

NATASA smiles at the REFUGEE WORKER'S unintended irony. EMIR, who has been redundant up to this point given NATASA'S good English, stirs reluctantly into life as the REFUGEE WORKER and IMMIGRATION OFFICER begin packing up their impromptu office and NATASA stands to pack her papers back in her rucsac.

EMIR
(in Bosnian)
She doesn't realise you're a Serb.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
I'm not expecting it to be easy.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

It won't be. My name's Emir. I translate and work as a go-between us and the authorities.

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

My best friend was caught in a blast the day I left. How can I find out how she is?

A hardened EMIR laughs.

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

Go back and ask her.

NATASA bites back.

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

I will if I have to.

The tension rises on both side.

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

Some of us haven't heard from our families in a year; and we can't come and go like you.

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

You got out.

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

The Red Cross took me out. I was in one of your camps and probably heading for a mass grave with a bullet in my head.

NATASA edges to breaking point as the IMMIGRATION OFFICER and the REFUGEE WORKER exchange glances.

EMIR (cont'd)

(in Bosnian)

Your family fighting for the glorious Republika Serbska?

NATASA

(in Bosnian)

I have no family.

NATASA struggles to put on her unwieldy rucsac. EMIR looks at her and softens a little at her exhaustion and distress.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: (2)

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

I'm sorry. It's been a long day. The internet is your best chance. To find your friend. On the bulletin boards.

NATASA scowls and makes to leave.

REFUGEE WORKER

I'll see you at the hostel next week.
Bring that letter from the University.

Too exhausted to reply, NATASA turns and walks wearily across the empty concourse. A litter bin contains a bunch of flowers and the cardboard sign labelled "Mr. Williams". Behind her the IMMIGRATION OFFICER and the REFUGEE WORKER walk in the opposite direction with their boxes of files. EMIR pauses to watch the departing NATASA.

CUT TO:

38 INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ELLEN's hand gently pushes at the door of a bedroom. Over the subsequent images LISA's voice is heard on an answering machine.

LISA (O.S.)

(over airport buzz)

Hi Mum, it's me. I've just made it in time. You wouldn't believe the hassle. Remember, I've got a ton of work to do. You know I said I couldn't really spare the time... that's my flight they're calling... See you in a bit. Love you. Bye.

The light from the hallway falls on a photograph of her daughter, LISA, [late teens], on a chest of drawers in the room. The bed has been made and turned down. On the wall are various animal and wildlife posters. ELLEN hovers in the doorway holding the "Welcome" teddy. She enters the room and lays the teddy on the pillow, turns and leaves, closing the door behind her.

CUT TO BLACK:

39 INT. REFUGEE CENTRE STAIRS - NIGHT

NATASA wearily climbs the stairs of the refugee hostel. The landings are scattered with an occasional children's toy and washing hangs across the hallways.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

As NATASA turns up the final flight her way is blocked by three Bosnjak (Bosnian Muslim) refugees, NERMINA (female, late teens), KEMAL (male, late teens), and LEIJLA (female, early 20's, sitting on the stairs. KEMAL and NERMINA are smoking; all three stare at NATASA in hostile silence.

NATASA reaches the step below the other refugees. She attempts a reconciliatory smile at NERMINA immediately in front of her. NERMINA maintains her accusatory stare.

NERMINA
(in Bosnian)
You the Serb?

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
I'm Natasa. I'm Bosnian.

LEIJLA
(in Bosnian)
Oh yeah.

NERMINA nods to KEMAL who slowly shifts aside to allow NATASA to pass. Turning into an upper corridor NATASA finds her room and enters. Switching on the light reveals a room furnished with just the bare essentials. Outside she hears the harsh laughter of KEMAL & NERMINA. NATASA drops onto the only chair and takes in the loneliness. She massages her bandaged hand. From her bag she takes the bloodied postcard of the barnacle geese and a well handled photo of her and Sabina laughing together on holiday before the war. Drained, she places them on the battered bedside table.

FADE TO BLACK.

40 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DAWN

In the morning light the barnacle geese rise en masse from the mud flats and circle low to their feeding grounds on the salt marsh inland.

CUT TO:

41 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

MALCOLM (late 20's), a library assistant, unlocks the doors and enters. He picks up a full set of the day's broadsheets from the mat and reads a headline "11 dead in Pennine plane crash". He's shocked. Weaving his way through the maze of shelves he conducts his daily routine of switching on lights and collecting stray books while gleaning more information from the paper.

As he switches on the last lights he sees ELLEN asleep in a secluded corner.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

She's still wearing the same clothes and has retreated there to avoid the awful emptiness of her home. He looks once more at the report on the plane crash.

CUT TO:

42 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE BOARDROOM - DAY

On one side of a large boardroom table sit an investigation board of 2 women and 3 men. One of the women, 50's, wears a senior RAF uniform. The other is Dr. STANTON, 40's, a psychologist. The CHAIRMAN, male, 50's, looks directly at NEIL, who sits nervously alone facing them across a large aeronautical chart spread on the table. A microphone and turning tape recorder stand to one side of the map.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Peart, the National Air Traffic Service has been required to suspend you pending the outcome of the Air Accident Investigation Branch in accordance with UK Air Law Order 762.

The door opens and GEOFF quickly enters carrying the radar tapes.

NEIL is relieved to see GEOFF and relaxes a little. GEOFF nods at the CHAIRMAN and slides the tapes in front of the CHAIRMAN and passes him a thin official looking folder before sitting down. The CHAIRMAN removes a single sheet of paper from the folder and reads it. NEIL looks at the tapes, and then back at GEOFF, who is avoiding NEIL's eye. NEIL, unnerved by GEOFF's denial, shifts uneasily in his seat as the CHAIRMAN replaces the paper in its folder.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

We are initially directed to examine the possible contribution to the accident of the turbulence of a nearby heavy wake category aircraft, a Boeing 747, Flight United 451.

The CHAIRMAN puts his hand on the tapes as NEIL stares at them.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

So our prime concern is to discover the actual separation of European 273 and United 451 which were under your control at the time of the accident.

NEIL faces the CHAIRMAN in the eye again.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

So Mr. Peart, what horizontal separation did you intend to ensure as the planes passed each other at 22,000 feet?

The board peer up from papers and notepads as they await NEIL's reply. There's little sympathy for him. NEIL looks down at the aeronautical chart. Markers reveal the respective positions of all aircraft at the time of the accident. GEOFF is still avoiding eye contact by intently staring at the table. The CHAIRMAN repeats his question impatiently.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Well Mr. Peart, what separation would you normally give between an aircraft with a heavy wake turbulence, and a small commuter jet likely to pass through that turbulence?

NEIL

As much as practically possible over the air regulation minimum of five miles.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you.

NEIL

And I'm sure the tapes will show that's what was provided last night.

The CHAIRMAN picks up one of the tapes in one hand and the folder in the other. He looks directly at NEIL.

CHAIRMAN

Unfortunately Mr. Peart that is not the case. Initial examination of the radar tapes reveals that you did not provide the Air Regulation minimum separation of five miles.

NEIL is shocked. GEOFF shuffles uncomfortably

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

In fact you allowed horizontal separation to fall to two miles.

NEIL reels again and looks at GEOFF for confirmation, but GEOFF continues to avoid his eye and all he sees are the accusing eyes of the other board members.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Have you anything to add at this stage, Mr. Peart?

NEIL appears as though he might speak, but he's unable to find an explanation.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: (2)

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
 Air Accident will be informed of our preliminary findings. Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Meeting adjourned.

As the members leave, NEIL remains seated staring at the chart with incomprehension. GEOFF slides him a look and is relieved NEIL fails to meet his eye. Leaving the room GEOFF is collared by the CHAIRMAN.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
 (discreetly)
 You'll of course be aware that this is potentially a criminal investigation as well.

GEOFF nods resignedly and slips out of the room leaving NEIL alone, still staring at the chart.

CUT TO:

43 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

NATASA
 Excuse me. I'd like to borrow some books.

NATASA addresses MALCOLM seated behind the enquiries desk. The library is now quietly busy. Behind MALCOLM, ELLEN sits with her back to NATASA, clutching a mug. She is being watched with concern by LYNN (30's), another assistant librarian. MALCOLM is trying to play business as usual but aware of the drama behind him.

MALCOLM
 Hello. New student?

NATASA
 Very. It's my first day

MALCOLM
 You're a bit late for the start of term.

NATASA
 I've a British Council funded post in the zoology department but I had some travel problems. The secretary gave me this to give you.

MALCOLM keen to move his business away from ELLEN's trauma takes the paper and gets up to lead NATASA to another computer terminal.

MALCOLM
 Over here and we'll get you on the system.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

MALCOLM (cont'd)

We can issue you a card while you're here so you can take books out today.

NATASA

Will that give me access to the internet?

MALCOLM

Of course. The terminals are over there. They tend to be busy during the day so try in the evening.

Behind them ELLEN tries to suppress a muffled sob. NATASA looks round but MALCOLM is more interested in NATASA'S letter.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Sarajevo University. Wow. We used to go to Yugoslavia for our holidays. I guess they've stopped those flights by now, haven't they?

NATASA is incredulous.

NATASA

I expect so.

CUT TO:

44 INT/EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE STAIRS - DAY

NEIL bounds down a flight of steps in pursuit of GEOFF.

NEIL

Why didn't you warn me?

GEOFF keeps on walking. He's wound up about the possible police involvement and angry at NEIL for letting him down. He turns on NEIL.

GEOFF

Warn you? What? That one of my most experienced controllers fucked up? We're not just talking about a near miss, Neil. This is a fatal accident.

GEOFF moves off again. NEIL keeps abreast.

NEIL

It's not my fault.

GEOFF

So you keep saying. But the facts are mounting up against you.

NEIL

Well, you've certainly made up your mind.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

GEOFF

Christ, why d'you think we have rules to separate flights and keep planes out of each other's wake turbulence?

NEIL

Come on, we both know there's a built in margin of error. You can't really think it was the 747's turbulence that caused the crash.

GEOFF

I can't say. We'll have to wait for the inquiry.

By now they're outside. NEIL walks away from GEOFF. He's angry, bitter and frightened.

CUT TO:

45 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

NATASA finds the Zoology Section and then the ornithology shelves, checking the titles against a list in her hand. Still aware of a quietly sobbing ELLEN, NATASA selects two books. Unable to find the others she is looking for she heads for the enquiries desk and MALCOLM, who looks up eagerly as she approaches. But LYNN is keen to keep everyone away from ELLEN and interposes herself before NATASA can reach the desk.

LYNN

Can I help?

LYNN gently steers NATASA away.

NATASA

Thank you. I'm trying to find these books.

NATASA offers LYNN her list. As LYNN enters titles on a terminal NATASA sees the newspaper with the crash headline on the desk.

LYNN

It seems we don't hold these, but we can order them.

NATASA

Please. I once had my own copies. But I lost them.

LYNN

Well don't lose these ones or we'll charge you.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

NATASA

No. Don't worry. It was different.

LYNN busies herself with ordering the books while NATASA scans the newspaper. Behind her a WOMAN PC enters the library and is seen by LYNN.

LYNN

Excuse me.

LYNN swiftly intercepts her and sends MALCOLM to take her own place with NATASA. MALCOLM looks down NATASA's list.

MALCOLM

"Single Population Migration and Environmental Pressure". You're sort of migrating yourself aren't you?

NATASA's irritation mounts.

NATASA

It's about bird migration. I've a masters in zoology.

MALCOLM

Oh, I see. Sorry.

NATASA

And yes I am a refugee. Is that a problem?

MALCOM shoots a glance at LYNN who is now leading the WOMAN PC over to ELLEN. NATASA follows his gaze. MALCOLM turns back to NATASA.

MALCOLM

No. But you're not like the ones on the telly.

NATASA

On the what?

MALCOLM

On TV. You know. All those old women with head scarves and donkey carts.

NATASA

Sorry. I'll remember to dress up next time.

MALCOLM

I guess I watch too much telly.

MALCOLM returns to his keyboard while behind them LYNN and the WOMAN PC escort a distraught ELLEN out of the library. NATASA watches and looks back at the newspaper.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2)

MALCOLM confirms the connection, nodding to the paper in NATASA's hand.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Her daughter was on the flight.

NATASA stares sadly after the departing ELLEN & LYNN as MALCOLM returns to his screen.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Anyway these should be here in a couple of days.

Distracted, NATASA's barely hears him.

NATASA
Oh. Thanks.

CUT TO:

46 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CAR PARK - DAY

NEIL is still shaken from the inquiry meeting and his altercation with GEOFF. Sitting on his car bonnet he stares at the taxiing jets through the car park fence. Overhead the rescue helicopter clatters across the sky. NEIL watches it go and his faculties begin to focus. He sees a nearby phone box and heads for it, scanning the pages of a diary for a number.

Inside the phone box he dials and waits.

NEIL
(to phone)
Brian, it's Neil Peart...Listen mate, I need a favour...

CUT TO:

47 INT. HOSPITAL MORTUARY - DAY

ELLEN and the WOMAN P.C. wait in a long hospital corridor. ELLEN picks up a discarded newspaper. It is the same edition as MALCOLM had read in the library but ELLEN picks up on a sub-heading beneath the main title. It reads "Air Traffic Controller suspended". Before she can read it fully a door opens and a white coated DOCTOR, female, 40's, gestures to ELLEN to come in.

DOCTOR
Please do come in now Mrs. Armstrong.

The WOMAN P.C. steadies ELLEN as she enters nervously. A MORTUARY SUPERVISOR is opening a large door in a bank of refrigerated compartments along one wall. The DOCTOR closes the door behind her.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

DOCTOR (cont'd)
 When you're ready, Mrs. Armstrong. We
 need a simple confirmation of identity.
 Do you understand?

ELLEN nods and the three walk towards the MORTUARY SUPERVISOR who is pulling out a shrouded body onto a stainless steel trolley. The DOCTOR waits for ELLEN to reach the table and pulls back the sheet to reveal LISA's battered face. In shock ELLEN gasps, her legs buckling beneath her. She reaches out to the shrouded trolley for support but in her distress pulls the shroud off the body. Uncovered ELLEN sees that LISA's body is only intact from the chest upward. Her missing lower body and legs have been replaced with padding to resemble the human form beneath the shroud.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. PENNINE SUMMIT ROAD - DAY

NEIL's car winds up a twisting single track road along one side of precipitous Pennine valley. The car negotiates the last bends leading to an exposed Pennine ridge and pulls up behind a large 4WD in a remote layby. The logo and title of the Air Accident Investigations Branch covers the door.

Leaning impatiently beside the 4WD is BRIAN, 40's. He wears an AAIB logo fleece jacket. Inside are three colleagues. NEIL gets out and makes to smile a greeting but BRIAN is irritated.

BRIAN
 We're late.

BRIAN gets into the driver's seat and NEIL squeezes onto the back seat next to two AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATORS who remain silently hostile.

CUT TO:

49 INT. INVESTIGATION VEHICLE - DAY

The car pulls away.

BRIAN
 And remember if the plods don't want you,
 you get out. I'm bending the rules even
 giving you a lift.

NEIL nods. He cuts an awkward figure amongst the other occupants. He's increasingly edgy.

NEIL
 You said there are ways you'd be able to
 discount a wake turbulence breakup even
 at this stage.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

BRIAN

I said I might. If the aircraft looks as if it was in one piece when it hit the ground then it obviously didn't break up in the air.

BRAIN catches NEIL's hopeful look in his mirror.

BRIAN (cont'd)

But it'll take us a while to even work that out. And if we think it did break up in the air it could be weeks before we know why.

NEIL slumps back in his seat.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. PENNINE SUMMIT ROAD - DAY

The car crosses a small summit car park towards an impromptu police checkpoint guarding access to the crash site. Another paved road leads on to an incongruous white dome and the attendant aerials of a major radar station.

CUT TO:

51 INT. INVESTIGATION VEHICLE - DAY

Through the windscreen a tense NEIL sees a POLICEMAN wearing a hi-vis jacket waving the car to a stop before a temporary tape barrier. Traffic cones line the turning and blue "Police Accident" signs lean against nearby fences. A parked police car displays its flashing blue light.

The POLICEMAN bends down to BRIAN'S open window.

POLICEMAN

Afternoon sir. Your passes, please.

BRIAN and the INVESTIGATORS hold up their AAIB ID cards. NEIL offers his National Air Traffic Services Pass. Seeing it is not an AAIB pass the CHECK POINT POLICEMAN reaches in and takes it for a closer look.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(to NEIL)

Air Accident personnel only I'm afraid sir.

NEIL struggles to legitimise his place in the car.

NEIL

But.. I'm with..

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

BRIAN instantly cuts across him to defuse the situation.

BRIAN
 (to the POLICEMAN)
 Sorry officer. We thought the
 documentation had been sorted. We know
 the rules.
 (turns to NEIL)
 Sorry mate. We'll pick you up on the way
 back if you want.

NEIL is about to protest but BRIAN's stare cuts him dead.
 NEIL reluctantly climbs out to the relief of the other
 passengers.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. ACCIDENT SITE CHECKPOINT - DAY

The POLICEMAN holds back the tape barrier as BRIAN drives
 away up the track past a Mountain Rescue Ambulance on it's
 way down. NEIL stares tensely as the ambulance leaves and the
 POLICEMAN replaces the barrier.

NEIL looks at the flimsy tape that separates him from access
 to the crash site. He's at breaking point and grabs the tape
 barrier to lift up.

POLICEMAN
 Hey!

The POLICEMAN moves to hold NEIL back.

NEIL
 I just need to fucking get up there.

NEIL cracks. Breaking free he embarks on a mad frenzy of
 ripping the tape barrier, hurling cones into the ditch and
 kicking over the Police signs. The POLICEMAN again attempts
 unsuccessfully to restrain him. NEIL is a man possessed.

He is about to hurl a cone through the windscreen of the
 police car when he finally burns out in exhaustion. Dropping
 the cone he stands limp, head bowed. The POLICEMAN now grabs
 him bodily and walks him to the road.

POLICEMAN
 I've no idea what your fucking game is
 mate but I suggest you piss off now
 before I get you taken away.

NEIL is beaten.

NEIL
 I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

Leaving him on the road the POLICEMAN returns to reassemble his check point as he calls in on his walkie talkie. A broken NEIL shuffles back down the road transfixed by the sight of the radar dome looming above the summit. NEIL flashes back to his radar screen on the night of the crash.

CUT TO:

53 INT. ELLEN'S CAR - AIR TRAFFIC GATEHOUSE - DAY

ELLEN's eyes are caught in the rear view mirror of her parked car. She is looking at the security gates of a large official building behind her. Her eyes close. At the gate personnel enter a pedestrian gate with swipe cards while uniformed guards check arriving cars. A sign reads "National Air Traffic Services - Northern Area Control Centre". ELLEN opens the car door.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE GATEHOUSE - DAY

ELLEN approaches clutching a plastic folder. She first attempts to attract the attention of one of the GUARDS stopping cars. But he waves her in the direction of his colleague in the gatehouse.

In the gatehouse SECURITY GUARD #1 is on the phone when ELLEN knocks on the glass. Mumbling an apology into the phone, SECURITY GUARD #1 cups his hand over the receiver and slides back the window.

ELLEN

I'm making enquiries about Flight 273.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Sorry?

In ELLEN's tense state she loses fluency.

ELLEN

Yes. My daughter was on it. Lisa Armstrong. It's the plane that crashed.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Oh... I see.

SECURITY GUARD #1 realises this is going to be a long one.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)

(to phone)

Hang on for a minute can you Bob?

He returns to ELLEN.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)
Have you come to see anyone in
particular?

ELLEN produces the newspaper cutting from a file inside her
folder. She slides it towards SECURITY GUARD

ELLEN
This man, who's been suspended. I want to
see him. Is he here?

The SECURITY GUARD looks at the cutting.

SECURITY GUARD #1
I'm sorry, I can't tell you that.

At this point SECURITY GUARD #2 comes up behind ELLEN and
attracts his colleague's attention.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Got the other log?

SECURITY GUARD #1
Yeah.
(to ELLEN)
Excuse me.

As SECURITY GUARD #1 turns round to get the logbook, SECURITY
GUARD #2 peers over ELLEN's shoulder at the cutting.

SECURITY GUARD #2
That's Neil that is.

Hearing his colleagues indiscretion SECURITY GUARD #1 spins
round and admonishes him

SECURITY GUARD #1
That's confidential!
(to ELLEN)
Excuse me.

ELLEN
She died. My daughter. My only child.

SECURITY GUARD #1
I'm very sorry, but... Just a minute
please.
(to phone)
Bob I'll have to call you back.

The SECURITY GUARD puts down the phone and finally switches
to a more sensitive approach.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (CONT'D) (cont'd)
I'm really sorry but I can only let you
in here if you've got an appointment.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

Well can I speak to whoever is concerned with accidents. Somebody here must have some responsibility.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Not here, Madam. This is the National Air Traffic Service. You want the Civil Aviation Authority. It's their Air Accident Investigations Branch that deal with crashes. I'm sorry.

ELLEN takes back the cutting and replaces it in her folder. SECURITY GUARD #1 writes down a number from a list on the wall.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)

Here's their number. I hope you have some luck.

ELLEN

Thank you.

ELLEN puts the number in the folder. Her hands are now shaking and her self control begins to crack.

ELLEN (cont'd)

She was only nineteen.

SECURITY GUARD #1 is unsure of a response. But ELLEN has already turned away and is walking back to her car. Halfway, she stops to look back at the Air Traffic Control Centre. She takes in the intimidating aerials, security fences and rows of office windows.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. NEIL'S HOUSE - EVENING

A dishevelled looking NEIL returns from his day on the moors to find a police car waiting outside. As he approaches his gate the two POLICEMEN in the car get out and stand in his way. NEIL collapses exhausted on his garden wall.

NEIL

It was only a few traffic cones. I said sorry.

POLICEMAN #1

The traffic cones are another branch, sir, as is obstructing a police officer.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

POLICEMAN #1 (cont'd)
 We need you to make a statement in connection with a possible criminal investigation into the crash of European flight 273. Perhaps you could come with us, sir.

CUT TO:

56 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - EVENING

The library is almost empty. NATASA sits at a row of otherwise deserted computer terminals and is surfing through the latest reports from Sarajevo. The text is in Bosnian but the pictures of dead & injured convey the message. NATASA stifles her tears.

Nearby ELLEN is photocopying press reports of the crash. The photographs echo the images of destruction on NATASA's screen.

CUT TO:

57 INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Desperately insecure and in uncharted territory, NEIL is escorted by the two POLICEMEN along the corridor. As he is led past an open plan area he is startled then relieved to see GEOFF standing talking to a PLAIN CLOTHES POLICEMAN.

NEIL

Geoff!

GEOFF turns instinctively to the greeting but as quickly avoids NEIL's pleading expression and returns to his conversation. The PLAIN CLOTHES POLICEMAN nods to the escort to move NEIL along. Hurt and frightened by GEOFF's denial, NEIL breaks out of his hold.

NEIL (cont'd)

Geoff! What the fuck are you doing? Help me.

GEOFF, embarrassed and uncomfortable, ignores NEIL who snaps at this betrayal and breaks free of the two POLICEMEN and makes for GEOFF.

NEIL (cont'd)

You bastard! You set this up and you never told me, did you?

Oblivious to restraining hands NEIL crashes across the office but is caught and forcibly retrieved by the two POLICEMEN aided by other colleagues. Still GEOFF ignores NEIL who thrashes in utter desperation and anger. The PLAIN CLOTHES POLICEMAN nods to the escort to remove NEIL completely.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

NEIL breaks down completely as he is dragged away, his limp body wailing in total frustration.

CUT TO:

58 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - NIGHT

ELLEN is closing the library. She switches off most of the lights and makes herself a cup of tea. From behind the shelves she becomes aware of NATASA's quiet sobbing. Instinctively she pours a second cup and weaves through the shelves to discover NATASA.

ELLEN

Hello. Are you alright?

NATASA looks up with reddened eyes.

NATASA

Sorry.

ELLEN looks at the screen. The scattered bodies strike a cruel chord.

ELLEN

It's OK. I didn't come to hush you up.
Librarians are a little more human these days.

(offers the tea)

This might help.

NATASA wipes her eye, takes the tea and exchanges a grateful smile.

NATASA

Thank you.

ELLEN

I'll have to throw you out soon though.
We closed ten minutes ago.

NATASA

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

ELLEN again looks at the screen.

ELLEN

Is that home?

NATASA nods.

NATASA

My best friend was injured the day I left. I'm trying to find out how she is.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

ELLEN

Any luck?

NATASA shakes her head and wipes a tear. ELLEN's composure slips a little and she makes to leave.

ELLEN (cont'd)

Excuse me.

NATASA steadies herself.

NATASA

I'm sorry about your daughter.

ELLEN is taken aback and lost in her own thoughts for a while

ELLEN

You have your own worries.

NATASA

No it's more than that.

ELLEN looks wary.

NATASA (cont'd)

You see I should have been on that flight as well. Through Amsterdam. But at the last minute the UN booked us another way.

ELLEN sits down. Silence falls while the two women look at each other. Eventually ELLEN gets up, emotions blank.

ELLEN

Half an hour then I'm afraid I'm going to have to lock up.

CUT TO:

59 INT. POLICE CELL - NIGHT

In a bare cell NEIL sits on a fold down bench wrapped in a blanket. His shoes have been removed. He stares ahead trying to make sense of how far he has fallen.

FADE TO BLACK:

60 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

The vast horizon is punctuated by a single, small scaffolding tower, a bird hide used by researchers and ornithologists. Further out towards the mud flats a lone figure punctuates the flatness. Rucsac on her back, NATASA methodically sets out survey marker pennants in a precise grid across the merse. With a hand held GPS she places each in precise position and records the co-ordinates in her field note book.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

The joy of her work brings her the first real relief from the scars of Sarajevo.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

NEIL emerges into the light. To his surprise and anger GEOFF is in his car waiting for him.

GEOFF

I thought someone should be here for you;
I couldn't get hold of Christine. Where
do you want to go?

NEIL

As far away as possible.

They exchange a fleeting moment of friendship.

NEIL (cont'd)

Maybe the estuary. All I could think
about in there was getting out into a big
wide open space.

GEOFF

I'll drop you at the station then. I
don't think you should drive today.

As NEIL gets in he takes a last look at the police station.

NEIL

This is breaking me Geoff. It's breaking
me.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. SOLWAY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

Survey grid established, NATASA reaches the bird hide. For her it's like moving into a new flat. She climbs the ladder to the upper level. Beneath the camouflage netting draped over the scaffold poles NATASA sets out the tools of her trade, and lines up her telescope on her marker pennants starts counting the geese.

CUT TO:

63 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY RAILWAY HALT - DAY

A departing train reveals NEIL on the deserted platform. As the noise fades NEIL drinks in the space and air. Pausing only momentarily to choose a direction, he strides off across the merse.

CUT TO:

64 INT. CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY RECEPTION - DAY

A female RECEPTIONIST crosses from the back of the open plan office to a reception desk where ELLEN is waiting, folder in hand. On the reception desk is a small sign "Civil Aviation Authority". The RECEPTIONIST hands ELLEN a sheet of paper from the folder.

RECEPTIONIST

This is all the information we have at present. It's the draft schedule of dates for the enquiry.

ELLEN takes the paper and gives it a glance.

ELLEN

But this says the public report won't be released for months.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry. It's all I can give you at present.

ELLEN's angers a little with frustration.

ELLEN

I need to know so much more now. I'm her mother.

RECEPTIONIST

Perhaps you should call back. One of the senior staff might be in later. The phone numbers on the paper.

ELLEN looks the RECEPTIONIST in the eye.

ELLEN

Have you got any children?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, two.

ELLEN is not really sure why she asked the question. She looks around and gathers her determination.

ELLEN

I think I'll wait.

RECEPTIONIST

It might be a while.

ELLEN

Then perhaps you could get me a cup of tea.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. SOLWAY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

NATASA is well into her observations. Suddenly through the telescope she sees the geese suddenly rise in alarm. Panning back along the line of pennants she is staggered to see a male figure wantonly ripping up the markers and hurling them away

CUT TO:

66 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DAY

Oblivious to their ownership or purpose, NEIL hurls NATASA's flags across the merse, ranting to the skies and improbably blowing on his referee's whistle.

CUT TO:

67 EXT. SOLWAY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

With NATASA's observations rendered worthless, she rips the pages from her notebook and begins to pack her rucsac.

CUT TO:

68 INT. CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY RECEPTION - DAY

ELLEN's cup is empty. GEOFF enters from outside with a stack of files. Seeing ELLEN he confers quickly with the RECEPTIONIST and moves to introduce himself.

GEOFF

How d'you do? Geoff Underwood. National
Air Traffic Control Service.

GEOFF offers a hand which ELLEN does not accept. GEOFF awkwardly sits down.

ELLEN

I've come for some answers.

GEOFF

I'm very sorry about your daughter but I'm afraid I'm not from the Investigations Branch. I can't pretend to know exactly how you're feeling, but we're all devastated by this. Whenever an incident like this occurs... well, we all take it personally.

ELLEN bristles.

ELLEN

Incident? If you daughter died would you still call it an incident.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

GEOFF
I'm sorry. Professional jargon.

ELLEN
I'm trying to find out what happened, Mr. Underwood. But no one will tell me anything.

GEOFF nods sympathetically.

GEOFF
We're prisoners of the system as much as you. But this way we make sure nothing is missed and we can know why this...
(searching for an alternative to 'incident')
...this...

ELLEN
...tragedy, Mr. Underwood. Why my daughter died.

GEOFF bites his lip.

ELLEN (cont'd)
Why was the air traffic controller suspended?

GEOFF is increasingly uneasy.

GEOFF
It's routine.

ELLEN
But why him?

GEOFF
Because he was the last person to talk to the aircraft.

ELLEN
Was it his fault?

GEOFF
It wasn't a collision. Planes crash because of structural or mechanical failure, or pilot error.

ELLEN
But planes don't have to collide to crash.
(pause)
I do know about wake turbulence Mr. Underwood.

GEOFF is knocked off balance. ELLEN makes good her advantage.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN (cont'd)
I'd like to talk to him.

GEOFF
I'm sorry, that's impossible.
(pause)
I'm sorry. I really am.

GEOFF makes to move.

ELLEN
You know him, don't you? I think his
name's Neil.

GEOFF surprised, stands up.

GEOFF
I can't really say any more.

ELLEN stands up.

ELLEN
What if it was your child?

They face each other.

ELLEN (cont'd)
You see, in a way, he was the only one
there when she died.

GEOFF pushed hard onto the back foot offers ELLEN his card.

GEOFF
The enquiry process can get pretty
technical. Call me if you ever need a
translation. It's the best I can do.

ELLEN
I've lost my daughter.

GEOFF
I'm very, very sorry.

GEOFF picks up his files from the reception desk and with a
single glance back, weaves his way through the office behind.
ELLEN is left alone with his card.

CUT TO:

69 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY RAILWAY HALT - DAY

NATASA also sits alone. From the solitary seat of the rundown
halt the deserted location reinforces a growing loneliness.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

The sound of the approaching train lifts her. But from the opposite direction she hears the intermittent whistle blowing of the lunatic. NEIL is running in a desperate attempt to catch the train now pulling into the halt. With a glare at her approaching tormentor, NATASA hastens aboard.

To NATASA's immediate satisfaction the train moves off along the platform as NEIL appears running alongside, still blowing his referee's whistle. Then to her fury, the GUARD buzzes the train to stop, and NEIL climbs breathlessly aboard.

As the train finally moves off NEIL moves down the carriage. Since the only other two passengers apart from NATASA are asleep he gives NATASA a smile as he passes. Her returning glare takes him aback.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY RAILWAY HALT - DAY

The layout of the train seats means that NEIL and NATASA are unavoidably facing each other with a few rows of empty seats between them. NEIL, still uncomfortable from NATASA's glare attempts to avoid eye contact at all costs. But NATASA eventually flares.

NATASA

You're insane. You ruined my work.

NEIL doesn't need this conversation but NATASA does. In spite of the distance between them NATASA continues.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

The markers. They're mine. I needed them.

NEIL

I never saw you.

NATASA snorts disapproval. The GUARD asks for her ticket. NEIL watches as she hands it over and attempts conciliation.

NEIL (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

But NATASA has had enough and glares out of the window. The GUARD checks NEIL's ticket. By the time the transaction is done, NEIL too retreats to his thoughts as the train rattles across a low viaduct over the empty sands.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE GATEHOUSE - DAY

Rain drips off the security fence. NEIL, inappropriately dressed for the weather, pulls out his pass-card, swipes it though the reader at the pedestrian entrance and pushes the turnstile as routine. It doesn't move. NEIL pushes harder.

SECURITY GUARD #1 in the gatehouse has seen him and slides back his window. NEIL tries his swipe card again, but the door sticks again. He looks at his swipe card.

SECURITY GUARD #1
 Sorry Neil, your clearance has been
 suspended. Routine. You know the drill.

The SECURITY GUARD holds out his hand for the card. NEIL feels he's being stripped of his professional identity.

NEIL
 Well, hang on if it doesn't work
 anymore... I mean, what's the point?

SECURITY GUARD #1
 (shrugs)
 Regulations.

Frustrated, NEIL tries a new tack.

NEIL
 If I give you this back, can you just let
 me in?

SECURITY GUARD #1 looks at him as a teacher might regard an errant child. He holds out his waiting hand further.

SECURITY GUARD #1
 Ha'way. Don't let yourself down.

NEIL hands over the card.

NEIL
 I just wanted to see Geoff.

SECURITY GUARD #1
 I could call him for you.

Grateful for small mercies, NEIL nods.

While NEIL waits, SECURITY GUARD #1 looks up GEOFF's extension. Without taking his eyes from the directory he throws NEIL some alternative news.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)
 There's been a woman looking for you.

NEIL's mind races. The SECURITY GUARD starts to dial.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

NEIL
Who? My wife?

SECURITY GUARD #1
(into phone)
Geoff Underwood, please...
(to NEIL)
I think she's the mother of one of the
crash victims.

NEIL
Jesus. What's she want?

SECURITY GUARD #1
Apparently she read about you in the
paper. I suggested she went to the CAA.
(into phone)
Mr. Underwood? Security here, Sir. I've
got Neil Peart at the gate wanting to see
you.

GEOFF's reply causes SECURITY GUARD #1 to angle away from a
reeling NEIL.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)
(into phone)
Right you are, Sir. Thanks very much.

He replaces the receiver, and faces NEIL.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (cont'd)
Says to tell you he's sorry, but he's a
little busy, right now. He'll call you.

NEIL feels further rejected.

NEIL
Yeah right.

NEIL kept at bay like ELLEN, wanders forlornly away from the
gatehouse.

CUT TO:

72 EXT. REFUGEE CENTRE LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

At one end of a long row of washing machines NERMINA and
LEIJLA are talking animatedly as their washing spins in front
of them. At the other end a silent and tear stained NATASA
finishes loading her washer.

EMIR enters and is greeted by NERMINA & LEIJLA. They assume
he has come to see them and are surprised when he passes on
towards NATASA.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

EMIR
 (in Bosnian)
 Hi.

NATASA is still wary after his hostility at the airport.

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 Hello.

NATASA slides in the coins and the washer rumbles into life. NERMINA & LEIJLA stare from the other side of the room. Feeling awkward NATASA sits down. EMIR joins her, fully aware that his friendly approach has surprised NERMINA and LEIJLA.

EMIR
 (in Bosnian)
 I just called in to see if you got that letter. The one for Immigration.

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 Yes. It's here. I was going to drop it in tomorrow

NATASA retrieves a letter from her rucsac.

EMIR
 (in Bosnian)
 I can take it now if you like. Save you a bus fare. I need to make amends.

NATASA acknowledges EMIR's gesture with smile.

EMIR (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 (in Bosnian)
 How are things?

NATASA
 (in Bosnian)
 Living in nowhere. My best friend either dead or alive.

EMIR
 (in Bosnian)
 It's hard for all of us. I have some contacts. What's her name?

NATASA
 Sabina Kustava. She's at the University.

EMIR
 Do you still want to go back?

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (2)

NATASA looks over at NERMINA and LEIJLA, who continue to stare hard. She hasn't got an answer.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CAR PARK - DAY

ELLEN is waiting by her car. GEOFF approaches on foot as a jet roars in to land. ELLEN sees him approach but when he is about twenty yards away she turns and walks off in the opposite direction. She's angry. GEOFF has to break into a brisk walk to catch her up.

GEOFF

Ms. Armstrong?

ELLEN ignores him and continues her walk. Eventually GEOFF catches her up, breathlessly.

GEOFF (CONT'D) (cont'd)

I thought you wanted to see me?

ELLEN continues walking.

ELLEN

I do. Now you know what it feels like to be ignored.

ELLEN stops and turns to GEOFF.

ELLEN (cont'd)

I'm so angry.

GEOFF

I know. But I'm trying to help. I don't have to. I'm here now. I'm doing my best.

ELLEN

So where is the mystery man?

GEOFF

Mrs. Armstrong, please. There is something else I might be able to help with.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. FOOTBALL GROUND - DAY

The groundsman, TOM, 60's, slowly walks his white line marker around the centre circle of the deserted pitch. As he reaches the centre line he sees NEIL striding across the pitch towards him, purposefully carrying his kit bag.

TOM pauses and looks awkwardly around. He seems relieved there is no one else around but he is still uneasy.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

NEIL
How's it look, Tom?

TOM
Canny.

NEIL presses his foot into the springy turf.

NEIL
Feels perfect.

TOM looks embarrassed. NEIL takes in the empty ground.

NEIL (cont'd)
So who d'you fancy to win today?

TOM avoids NEIL's eye and looks down to his marker. But out of the corner of his eye he sees, ALAN, the linesman from the earlier game, now dressed in a referee's black strip approaching across the centre line from the opposite direction. He's carrying a marker flag.

NEIL catches TOM's gaze and spins round to see ALAN approaching, then turns to TOM for an explanation. But TOM isn't saying anything and resumes his orbit of the centre circle. ALAN approaches NEIL but it's plain he's not stopping.

ALAN
Hello, Neil. Come to watch.

NEIL is stung and spins round angrily.

NEIL
This is my game, Al.

ALAN doesn't bother to look back.

ALAN
Shouldn't have screwed up then should you.

But a furious NEIL picks this up and shouts to make himself heard by ALAN and the whole world.

NEIL
What do you know about anything?
It wasn't my fucking fault...

ALAN stops and turns round.

ALAN
Not that, Neil. We just don't need a ref who walks off the job.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (2)

ALAN stabs his flag into the ground on the centre line. NEIL crumples to his knees on the centre spot while TOM encircles him with a clean white line.

CUT TO:

75 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - NIGHT

MALCOLM strides round turning out the lights. Students are gathering their books and leaving. NATASA has also packed her bag but has remained at her desk watching ELLEN.

ELLEN wearily leafs through her research on air accidents. Nervously, NATASA approaches her.

NATASA

Hello.

ELLEN looks up and smiles weakly. There is an awkward silence. NATASA takes in the cuttings and files.

NATASA (cont'd)

Is this helping you?

ELLEN self consciously orders her research into piles

ELLEN

I don't know how I feel yet. Until I know what happened it's still unreal.

NATASA looks curious.

NATASA

What else can you do?

ELLEN

There's someone who knows.

NATASA

Who?

ELLEN

I don't know - maybe the last person to talk to the plane.

NATASA

I expect they're having a hard time as well.

ELLEN fixes NATASA with a stare.

NATASA (cont'd)

Maybe I should bring you the tea this evening.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

ELLEN
I think I need something stronger.

NATASA
We could try the Union Bar.

ELLEN
Oh I didn't mean it like that.

NATASA
Why not?

ELLEN
(laughs)
I'm not sure they'll let me in.

ELLEN switches off her desk light and rises. NATASA relaxes.

NATASA
I wasn't sure whether to talk.

ELLEN takes in NATASA's relief.

ELLEN
I can't blame you for being alive.

CUT TO:

76 INT. UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION - NIGHT

A raucous student union bop with band, lights, crowds and noise. NATASA turns away from the bar with a drink in each hand and makes for ELLEN at a table on the far side of the dance floor. Half way across she bumps into EMIR, dancing with an attractive ENGLISH STUDENT. They recognise each other with a slightly embarrassed smile. NATASA walks on but a watching ELLEN sees how EMIR looks after NATASA longer than the ENGLISH STUDENT feels is appropriate.

ELLEN
I think you've got a fan.

ELLEN nods towards EMIR talking into the ear of the ENGLISH STUDENT as the track finishes. NATASA turns back to ELLEN.

NATASA
I don't think so.

NATASA looks down at her drink but ELLEN has a clear view of the approaching EMIR behind her and raises her eyebrows.

ELLEN
(knowingly)
I do.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

EMIR's hand reaches down and takes NATASA's hand off her glass, inviting her to the dance floor. A slightly surprised NATASA looks to ELLEN for guidance.

ELLEN (cont'd)
Go on. Dance it out of your system. For me.

NATASA and EMIR leave to dance. ELLEN looks around self consciously. Unable to see NATASA through the throng she puts down her empty glass and slips away.

NATASA dances warily with EMIR.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
Do you often dance with Serbs?

EMIR
(in Bosnian)
No.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
So this is just a political statement then?

EMIR
(in Bosnian; smiles)
No.

NATASA looks quizzically at him, then turns to look for ELLEN as if for support. She sees ELLEN's empty seat.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
Look, I'm sorry but I'm supposed to be with my friend. I'd better go.

NATASA turns to leave.

EMIR
(in Bosnian)
It's OK. Another time?

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
Maybe.

CUT TO:

77 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE BOARDROOM - DAY

NEIL is being formally interviewed by DR. STANTON, the NATS psychologist. Bludgeoned by recent experiences, NEIL has retreated into himself and seethes beneath the surface.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

STANTON waits for NEIL to speak. NEIL is sweating a lot and shifts uncomfortably in his seat. The silence is acute.

STANTON jots down a note onto a file on her lap. Eventually she speaks.

STANTON

I appreciate your position Mr. Peart, but myself and the Board of Enquiry do require your co-operation at some stage.

NEIL manages a quick moment of eye contact, then looks down at his tightly gripped hands. He's angry at being examined like this and is struggling to hold his career together. STANTON waits in vain for a reply while NEIL stares at the bereavement counselling poster on the wall.

STANTON (cont'd)

Perhaps we should reconvene later in the week.

NEIL looks up.

NEIL

I'm not coming back.

STANTON

I don't have to remind you that this is a statutory interview.

NEIL

A rubber stamp on my incompetence.

STANTON

Why do you think you're acting so defensively?

NEIL

My job's on the line.

STANTON

You think you will lose it because of your actions.

NEIL

What do you think? I'm just the fall guy.

STANTON

Your line manager says you're one of the best but you seemed distracted that day.

NEIL

Things on my mind.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED: (2)

STANTON

What sort of things? Your marriage perhaps?

NEIL

Why don't you ask my line manager?

STANTON

How would you describe your marriage?

NEIL

Fine.

STANTON

How do you think your wife would describe it?

NEIL

I thought this was about me not my wife.

STANTON

So you would deny any difficulties in your marriage?

NEIL

Yes. Yes. Yes.

STANTON

Have you any children?

NEIL

No.

STANTON

Is that through choice?

NEIL

Yes.

STANTON

A mutual choice?

This is not going anywhere where NEIL want's to go. He's had enough.

NEIL

What the hell's this got to do with a plane crash?

STANTON

Your mental state is a factor we are legally obliged to assess.

NEIL's anger rises.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED: (3)

NEIL
I didn't kill those people.

STANTON
No one has ever implied you did.

NEIL finally loses it and stands up, knocking his chair over and making for his coat.

NEIL
Oh yes they do. All of you. And Underwood.

He leaves without waiting for a reply. STANTON is already writing her notes.

CUT TO:

78 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CORRIDOR - DAY

NEIL storms down the corridor and turning a corner crashes in to GEOFF.

GEOFF
Just the man.

GEOFF pulls out an envelope from his pocket.

NEIL
Oh, talking to me now are you? Well I'd hate to embarrass you so excuse me.

NEIL pushes past followed by an insisting GEOFF.

GEOFF
It's not like that.

NEIL
Fifteen years, Geoff, fifteen years, you and me. And you've thrown me to the fucking dogs.

GEOFF
Sorry. I really am. But I have to be impartial.

NEIL stops and spins round to confront GEOFF.

NEIL
I'm not asking you to break the rules, just keep me in the picture. Like a friend. You can do that, can't you

GEOFF
OK. OK.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

NEIL

So have they found the flight recorder?

GEOFF

Yeah. And AAIB are re-assembling the wreckage.

(takes a breath)

Apparently there's some evidence for a bird strike.

NEIL

What evidence?

GEOFF

Nothing conclusive. Traces of feathers and chicken nuggets in one of the engines.

NEIL grabs at the straw.

NEIL

Sounds pretty conclusive to me.

GEOFF

Hold your horses. You lost 273 at 22,000 feet. Birds don't fly that high.

NEIL

So how come one ended up in the engine?

GEOFF

Probably got hit on the way down.

NEIL's internal turmoil boils over.

NEIL

So why the fuck are you telling me?

GEOFF pauses. The silence is uncomfortable.

GEOFF

You asked.

NEIL

This is hard stuff to take, you know.

GEOFF

I do.

(pause)

Christine called me.

NEIL looks away.

GEOFF (cont'd)

She says you're having a break from each other?

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (2)

NEIL

(pause)

Yeah. It's not easy for her either. Just needs a bit of time.

GEOFF

I'm sorry.

NEIL shrugs. GEOFF hands NEIL the envelope.

GEOFF (cont'd)

This came for you.

NEIL looks at the envelope.

NEIL

It's from that woman, isn't it?

NEIL thrusts it into his own pocket and walks off leaving GEOFF standing in the corridor behind him.

CUT TO:

79 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DAY

NATASA is painstakingly retrieving and replacing her marker pennants. Behind her NEIL approaches. NATASA plots her position with a GPS and marks lines on the ground with a roll of black and yellow marker ribbon. Turning to roll out the next tape she catches sight of an approaching NEIL. NEIL indicates the empty merse and holds up his hands in mock surrender.

NEIL

I'm here to say sorry.

NATASA

I've nearly finished.

NEIL

What are you studying?

NATASA

The effect these tens of thousands migratory geese have on the habitat. And why they all choose to stick together.

NEIL sees the GPS in NATASA's hand and is impressed.

NEIL

GPS. Pretty high tech.

NATASA

For a woman, you mean.

NEIL smiles. He likes her.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

NEIL

No, not at all. I did come to help.

NATASA offers NEIL the GPS.

NATASA

Do you know how to use it?

NEIL smiles knowingly to himself and nods.

NATASA (cont'd)

Alright. If you can take this end of the tape to these co-ordinates I can secure the other end here.

A momentary frisson hits NEIL as NATASA leans in to indicate the co-ordinates on the GPS. But NATASA is oblivious and returns to her maps. Behind her NEIL walks backwards, unreeling the tape and consulting the GPS.

A moment later there's a distant and muffled shout. NATASA looks up but sees only an empty horizon. NEIL has vanished. More out of curiosity than alarm she heads in the direction she last saw NEIL, letting the tape run through her hands. Fifty metres on it disappears down into a narrow but deep muddy creek cut through the merge. NEIL is on his back like a stranded whale trying to get up from the sticky ooze. He has walked backwards into the creek. NATASA's immediate reaction is to hoot with laughter. He's still a lunatic, but this time it's hilarious. NEIL is speechless with embarrassment. She offers him her hand.

NATASA (cont'd)

I think we'll need to change your clothes.

CUT TO:

80 INT/EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

On the upper level NATASA takes her spare pair of waterproof trousers from her rucksac and drops them to the ground.

NATASA

I don't know if they'll fit.

The waterproofs descend to ground level where NEIL struggles out of his soaking trousers.

NEIL

Thanks.

NATASA

This time I think I'm the one to blame.

At this NEIL smiles to himself.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

From the top floor NATASA sneaks a look down at NEIL as he changes. She smiles and turns back to open a thermos and pour out two mugs of coffee. NEIL in her ill fitting waterproofs climbs up the ladders in his socks. NATASA watches as he arrives on her level. She laughs.

NEIL
That bad?

NEIL looks around, then attempts to salvage his dignity, offering NATASA his hand which is accepted.

NEIL (cont'd)
Neil.

NATASA
Natasa.

NEIL
Russian?

NATASA
Bosnian. Coffee?

NEIL
Thanks.

NEIL takes a sip but immediately screws up his face in distaste. NATASA laughs.

NATASA
It's how we make it at home.

NEIL
It's hard to understand what's going on there.

NATASA
Don't bother trying.

NEIL
So what... which...

NEIL searches in vain lost for a sensitive way to ask NATASA her ethnicity.

NATASA
...which side I am I on? Is that what you mean?

NEIL squirms.

NATASA (cont'd)
Well my grandparents called themselves Serb; my parents were Yugoslavian; And I... well, all I want to be is Bosnian.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

NATASA looks down at her mug. This wasn't the conversation she'd planned.

NEIL

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... to...

NATASA waves away NEIL's concern but is still unwilling to break the silence. But gradually she regains the confidence to speak out.

NATASA

When the war started, I really wanted to stay and stand up for a Bosnia where we could all live together.

NATASA looks far into the distance.

NATASA (cont'd)

But in the end I felt I was drowning in the death and destruction. There seemed no point in believing in any future. I gave up and ran away.

NEIL

At least you tried.

NATASA

Not enough.

NEIL looks puzzled.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

I couldn't even wait long enough to see whether my friend was alive or dead.

NATASA's tears begin to flow.

NATASA (cont'd)

My best friend who had risked her life to help me run away... and I walked away and left her.

NATASA collapses into her own arms in grief and exhaustion. NEIL moves awkwardly to provide a comforting embrace. In time NATASA breaks away leaving NEIL to self consciously pack up the thermos.

NEIL

We should go. There's only the one train back on a Sunday and I need some proper clothes. I don't think I'm cut out to be a zoologists assistant.

CUT TO:

81 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DAY

NEIL & NATASA walk across the sands at low tide. Empty horizons stretch in every direction. Both are deep in their own thoughts. NEIL breaks the silence.

NEIL

So why are you here, researching British geese?

NATASA laughs.

NATASA

I'm glad you came today.

NEIL

What's funny?

NATASA

They're not British geese, stupid. They're like me, just visiting.

NEIL

Refugees?

NATASA

Migrants. Seasonal. From the cold. They spend summer in the Arctic. My Professor had done years of summer work up there and asked me to get the winter data here.

NEIL

He won't be very pleased with me then.

NATASA

She. And she's dead.

NEIL is silenced.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

But the university here was still willing to sponsor me. And being a Serb I could get out. I'm really doing it for her.

NATASA catches sight of a flock of geese flying far above in a trailing 'V'. Above them higher still a vapour trail indicates the path of an airliner. NEIL is still at a loss at what to say and tries to move to what he thinks is safer ground.

NEIL

Why do they fly in a 'V'?

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

NATASA

Turbulence. Each successive bird actually gains an advantage from the wake turbulence of the one in front.

NEIL is thrust back into his numbing reality. NATASA continues unaware.

NATASA (cont'd)

They'll all be here by the end of the week. My professor was trying to find out why they migrate together. There's 25,000 of them and it would make more sense if they spread out a bit. You know, to have access to more food.

NEIL

How do they know which way to come?

NATASA

(shrugs)

Perhaps the earth's magnetic field, or the position of the stars. Probably more reliable than this.

NATASA holds up the GPS that has been fixed to her belt and smirks.

NEIL

Keep that away from me.

NATASA laughs and then points up at the vapour trail.

NATASA

It's amazing, think of all the technology that plane needs to find its way, when those geese are managing with nothing.

NEIL seeks refuge in rationality.

NEIL

I think the geese would have problems navigating at the height and speed that plane is.

NATASA

Speed certainly, but not height. Some swans migrate at 9,000 metres.

NEIL's mind races. Maybe the European 273 could have suffered a bird strike at 22,000 feet.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

They're just like planes. They make use of the high altitude winds.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: (2)

NEIL

9,000 metres, that's 30,000 feet. It's impossible.

NATASA

You underestimate the natural world. I've seen papers on it.

NEIL

Where? How could I find out?

NATASA is surprised by NEIL's sudden and over-riding interest.

NATASA

I thought you weren't cut out to be a zoologist's assistant?

NEIL struggles to play down his interest.

NEIL

No. I'm not. Not really. Just curious. I mean how do they breathe at that height?

NATASA

Not my field. But I know a couple of books that might help. Got a pen and paper.

NEIL halts and searches in his pocket for paper. All he can find is the unopened letter GEOFF has given him.

NEIL

Here. Use the back.

NATASA takes the envelope and jots down a couple of book titles, "Bird Migration & Navigation Studies" & "An Atlas of European Flyway Routes", on the back of the envelope. They resume their walk

NATASA

You might be best trying the university library. Take my card - you can say you're my research assistant. The librarian's really nice - she's a sort of friend of mine.

NEIL

Research assistant?

NATASA laughs.

NATASA

Consider it part of your training. I'll need the card back though. At the refugee centre. On Barrack Road.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: (3)

Ahead of them is the deserted railway halt and from the distance comes the sound of a train's horn.

CUT TO:

82 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

NEIL roams the shelves in vain for the books on NATASA's list. He's lost. From her desk ELLEN watches him with curiosity.

Abandoning the shelves NEIL does battle with a microfiche machine. It's a battle he soon loses. ELLEN's curiosity turns to warmth and goes to help.

ELLEN

You look a bit lost there.

NEIL wheels round holding a microfiche reel which is clearly in danger of unravelling. ELLEN stands before him with a kind smile.

ELLEN (cont'd)

Allow me.

ELLEN deftly takes the reel and places it safely on the machine. NEIL looks embarrassed.

ELLEN (cont'd)

Now how else can I help?

NEIL

Yes. I'm wondering whether you've got either of these books. I can't find them on the shelves or in this thing.

NEIL offers ELLEN her envelope, the address side facing down. ELLEN takes it and moves to a nearby terminal where she puts on her spectacles and enters in the titles. As she types she attempts to put NEIL at his ease.

ELLEN

And don't worry about the microfiche. They're an acquired art. Right. Here they are. We don't hold either. Shall I request them for you then.

NEIL

Please. If you could.

NEIL takes out NATASA's library card.

NEIL (cont'd)

I'm working with this student. She asked me to get them for her.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

ELLEN
That's fine.

ELLEN takes the card, and swipes it through the computer returning it to NEIL without reading the details.

ELLEN (cont'd)
All done. They may be here by the end of the week.

NEIL
Thanks.

He turns and leaves. ELLEN watches him with affection then turns back to the terminal where she sees NEIL's envelope, her own handwriting still faced down. Picking it up, she walks briskly to catch NEIL as he reaches the door.

ELLEN
Excuse me.

NEIL stops and looks round. ELLEN hands the envelope back to NEIL with her own writing still unseen.

ELLEN (cont'd)
It might be important.

NEIL
Thanks.

ELLEN
It's a pleasure. We'll see you in a couple of days then.

NEIL
I'll look forward to it.

NEIL pockets the envelope smiles a farewell, and turns out of the library watched warmly by ELLEN.

CUT TO:

83 INT./EXT. SARAJEVO NEWSREEL - DAY

Silent TV images of the siege of Sarajevo. Haunted faces mix with scenes of civilians running from sniper fire, and casualties littering overcrowded hospital corridors. Over the images comes the sound of a young woman crying. It's LEIJLA.

CUT TO:

84 INT. REFUGEE CENTRE DAY ROOM - NIGHT

LEIJLA is crying, holding a photo in front of her. Around her at a table in a communal day room sit EMIR, NERMINA, and KEMAL. The rest comfort her in hushed voices.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

NATASA comes through the door, telescope and tripod in hand. The group turn to see who has entered but on sight of NATASA, turn back, ignoring her completely. Only EMIR keeps his eyes on NATASA but shakes his head as she makes to approach the group. All NATASA wants to do is join in the support for LEIJLA, but she takes EMIR's hint and moves to a distant table where she sits down, back to the group and holding her head in her hands. EMIR makes the long walk to her table and bends down to talk quietly in her ear.

EMIR

(in Bosnian)

There were three hits on the university today. Leijla's cousin is still missing. Your friend isn't the only person I'm trying to trace.

NATASA can't even bear to lift her head. EMIR gently leans forward and holds NATASA's hand on the table. NATASA without moving her head looks at her hand in EMIR's. He squeezes her hand. She squeezes his.

EMIR returns to LEIJLA's table. As he is about to sit down, NEIL comes through the door carrying NATASA's waterproof trousers. Taking in both NATASA and the grieving group NEIL catches EMIR's eye.

NEIL

(nodding in NATASA's direction)

I've come to see Natasa Ivic.

EMIR waves him on. NEIL mumbles a thank you and walks quietly over as EMIR sits down, but keeping an eye on NEIL.

NEIL (cont'd)

I've brought your card, and these.

NATASA looks up, surprised to hear NEIL and a little embarrassed as he puts her waterproof trousers on the table and pulls up a chair.

NATASA

Thanks. Sorry but this isn't a very good time.

NATASA flashes a look at LEIJLA. NEIL attempts to take in the situation.

NEIL

Feels like I'm in a war zone.

NATASA

Welcome to Bosnia.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED: (2)

NEIL realising he's in the wrong place at the wrong time fumbles in his pocket for his card. Writing on the back he gives it to NATASA.

NEIL

If there's anything I can do, just call me. The home number's on the back.

NATASA turns the card over and reads the logo.

NATASA

What's NATS?

NEIL

Who I work for. Tell you another time. Coffee sometime?

NATASA smiles a goodbye to the departing NEIL without commitment. Across the room EMIR watches her closely. Behind him KEMAL also leaves with a backward glare at NATASA who has now rested her head on her arms and closed her eyes.

CUT TO:

85 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NEIL opens his front door and steps into his hallway. As he stoops to pick up some letters from the mat he hears sounds from upstairs.

NEIL

Christine!

He makes to rush up the stairs but as he reaches the bottom he looks up and sees CHRISTINE coming down. She's carrying some dresses on hangers. NEIL crumples as he realises she's only come back to collect more belongings. Deflated he stops before the bottom step. On seeing him blocking her way, CHRISTINE halts halfway and sits down on the stairs.

CHRISTINE

I've just come for the rest of my things.

NEIL looks away.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

I'm sorry about the crash and everything.

(pause)

I can't have helped.

NEIL

Well, it's true I wasn't feeling at my best. But it wasn't my fault. There's an inquiry.

(pause)

Pity there isn't one for my marriage.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

I thought it was our marriage.

NEIL

It is, and still is, as far as I'm concerned.

CHRISTINE looks surprised.

CHRISTINE

I've left, Neil. It's over. Don't you want to know why?

NEIL

Yes. Very much.

CHRISTINE

Well that's why.

NEIL looks quizzically at her.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

That's why. You see you don't even know why. That's why I left, because you'd given up listening to me. You'd already gone. You were the one who left first.

NEIL

What do you mean?

CHRISTINE

You've been leaving me for your work, for your shifts, for your football, for years. I used to cry out to you to remember me. I wanted to scream at you, hey, look at me; I'm here. You made me feel invisible.

NEIL

We could've talked about it.

CHRISTINE

When? At half time? When you got in from your shift at two in the morning? You couldn't even be bothered to make our IVF appointment.

CHRISTINE gets up.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

Most men are supposed to know when their wives are having an affair. You never noticed.

CHRISTINE resumes her move downstairs.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

When it started I just saw it as a way of bringing you back to me. But you didn't notice and it's more than that now. I want children, Neil.

NEIL

Don't you love me?

CHRISTINE has no answer. She is crying. NEIL goes to her but she twists out of his embrace.

CHRISTINE

No.

NEIL

Why not?

CHRISTINE

Because it's for you, like it always is, and never for me.

NEIL

I don't understand.

CHRISTINE

Oh, yes you do. How many people at Air Traffic know I walked out that day?

NEIL

No one. I haven't told...

CHRISTINE

(interrupts)

Exactly.

NEIL looks sheepish.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

Of course not. You know as well as I do that if they find out you were under stress they'll come down on you like a ton of bricks.

NEIL

Did you tell Geoff?

CHRISTINE

Only because he rang about the dinner.

NEIL

Why?

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (3)

CHRISTINE

Because it's time the games ended. I'm leaving you and all you really care about is how it affects your job. Everything on your terms. Nothing for me. Well I can't do it any more

CHRISTINE picks up her case and walks out the door. NEIL is rooted to the spot. Numbed, he walks into the sitting room. On the mantelpiece lies the still unopened envelope GEOFF had given him. NEIL takes it down and removes the letter inside and begins reading it.

ELLEN

(voice over)

Dear Sir. I'm sorry to have to write to you in these circumstances, but my daughter died in the air crash last week and after grief and loss my overriding need is to try to understand what happened.

CUT TO:

86 EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

As NEIL reads on, his mind focuses on the reality of the crash and investigation. A helicopter lifts a large section of mangled wreckage from the moorland. Safety jacketed and helmeted inspectors sift smaller items and the site is marked off with the same tape used by NATASA on the estuary.

ELLEN

(voice over)

No one will tell me anything until the enquiry is over which I believe may be several months away. I understand you were on duty at the time of the crash. Anything you know will help me immeasurably in trying to come to terms with Lisa's death. I wonder if we might meet. I would be so grateful. Yours sincerely, Ellen Armstrong.

CUT TO:

87 INT. REFUGEE CENTRE LANDING - NIGHT

NATASA wearily walks from the top landing to her room. But instead of sanctuary she finds hate. The door to her room is ajar and scrawled on it is the word "Chetnik" ["Serb"]. Fearfully she enters to find her few belongings cruelly strewn around the room. Her research notes are ripped up and on the floor the bloodstained postcard and her picture of Sabina lie torn and scattered.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

Silently distraught NATASA kneels to collect the pieces of Sabina's photograph. As she stands up she becomes aware of a presence behind her. In the doorway is EMIR. He takes in the graffiti, the destruction, and NATASA's fragile state.

Moving closer EMIR gently takes the pieces of torn photograph from NATASA and shuffling SABINA's image to the top turns it towards her.

EMIR
(in Bosnian)
It's OK. She's alive. Superficial
shrapnel wounds only.

NATASA folds exhausted into his already enveloping arms. For a while he continues to look at the desecration of her room before gently kissing her forehead. She buries herself in him for an age, drawing on his support. Eventually she looks at him through her tears and briefly returns his smile. This time EMIR finds her lips. After a moment's kiss, NATASA collapses into EMIR's shoulder. The increasing strength of their embrace begins an awakening in NATASA. This time it is she who finds EMIR's lips. This time the kiss is long.

CUT TO:

88 INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

ELLEN is struggling to keep her daily routine together and managing her library with an exaggerated confidence. Malcolm and LYNN are on edge waiting for the crash.

Emerging from an aisle with a handful of books ELLEN almost collides with an awkward NEIL looking for assistance.

ELLEN
(smiling)
Ah. My birdman.

NEIL
Am I in luck?

ELLEN
You are.

ELLEN leads NEIL over to her desk where she puts down the ATC books and gestures for NEIL to join her. She fishes out the bird books and collects the paperwork.

ELLEN (cont'd)
I just need a receipt signature and your
name and address here for each title.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

ELLEN hands NEIL a pen and indicates two forms on the desk. As NEIL bends down to sign it he notices a copy of the CAA "Manual of Air Traffic Services Part 1" next to them on the desk. Beside it are three other official Air Traffic Manuals. Intrigued and concerned NEIL continues filling in the form.

NEIL
(indicates air traffic manuals)
You don't teach air traffic control here
do you?

ELLEN
No. They're for me.

NEIL
For you?

ELLEN takes in NEIL's sudden edge.

ELLEN
Librarians will read anything. It's our
obsession with knowledge.

As NEIL completes the forms he straightens up and notices for the first time the name plate on the desk. It reads "ELLEN ARMSTRONG SENIOR LIBRARIAN". Realisation crashes in. Paralysed he stares speechless at ELLEN.

ELLEN slowly reaches out and takes the forms from NEIL's shaking hand and reads them. Now it is her turn to do the staring.

ELLEN (cont'd)
Neil Peart. Neil.

NEIL averts his eyes, still mute with horror.

ELLEN (cont'd)
You never replied.

NEIL
I'm sorry but I can't... there are rules
and... I'm not... I'm really very sorry.

ELLEN
My daughter is dead and you didn't reply.

NEIL turns to go but stops and turns back with a parting shot.

NEIL
It wasn't my fault. Please believe me.

For a moment they stay locked in each other's gaze. NEIL breaks first. ELLEN stares after him tears welling. She turns back to her desk but the veneer of self control is gone.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN clutches out for support on the nearest desk and knocking over several piles of books and a desk lamp as she faints. STUDENTS look up from their studies as LYNN & MALCOLM make her comfortable on the floor.

CUT TO:

89 INT. REFUGEE CENTRE STAIRS - DAY

NATASA is coming down the stairs with all her belongings. She's leaving. On a landing she smiles weakly at a LITTLE GIRL playing, but who stares back blankly. Below her NERMINA, LEIJLA and KEMAL noisily climb the stairs, ducking beneath the washing. As they pass, NATASA studiously avoids their gaze. NERMINA, LEIJLA and KEMAL recognise her pain and anguish and their chatter stops. They catch each other's eye in guilt not triumph.

NATASA heads on down to be confronted by EMIR coming in the bottom doors. EMIR takes in her averted gaze and looks up to NERMINA, LEIJLA and KEMAL watching from above.

EMIR

Do you have somewhere to go?

NATASA nods.

EMIR (cont'd)

Call me.

EMIR kisses NATASA and strokes her face, before moving to hold open the door for her. Closing it after her he looks up to the surprised faces above.

CUT TO:

90 EXT. FOOTBALL GROUND - DAY

NEIL is alone in the stand. The ground is deserted apart from TOM marking white lines. High above a jet leaves a vapour trail across the sky. The voices in his head fall silent. NEIL pulls out his mobile and dials a number. It answers.

NEIL

Brian? ...it's Neil. Look I'm sorry about last week... I know... But I need to come and see you... to Talk about birds... yes... Thank you.. I promise I'll behave.

CUT TO:

91 EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - DAY

ELLEN draws up outside her house. She's exhausted. She turns to look at the house. NATASA sits on the wall, rucsac and suitcase at her feet. ELLEN smiles.

CUT TO:

92 INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - DAY

ELLEN
He came to the library.

NATASA
What did he say?

ELLEN
Nothing really. He wouldn't stay.
(pause)
Another time perhaps.

ELLEN pours the tea watched by a thoughtful NATASA.

ELLEN (cont'd)
For a moment I felt we were both victims.

NATASA
You liked him?

ELLEN gives a momentary and distant smile.

ELLEN
And then his manager called. He's arranged a visit.

NATASA
To the crash site?

ELLEN
Not exactly. Will you come with me?

NATASA
Of course.

CUT TO:

93 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION OFFICE FARNBOROUGH - DAY

In a small technical office NEIL is in conversation with BRIAN. BRIAN hands NEIL a distorted turbine blade from a jet engine. NEIL puts down the ornithology books which he has been holding and takes it.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

BRIAN

That's a blade from the primary turbine of the port engine. It's typical of what we associate with a bird strike. And this...

(hands NEIL a mangled feather)

...is what we found down stream in the secondary compressors.

NEIL holds the feather up to get a closer look.

NEIL

But how can you tell whether it was the bird strike or wake turbulence that actually caused the crash?

BRIAN

Well at the moment we can't. What we're trying to do is work out the order of events. In other words did this...

(holds up blade)

...happen before or after the fatal damage to the aircraft's control surfaces?

NEIL puts down the feather and rubs his eyes in tiredness.

BRIAN (cont'd)

Sorry Neil. We have to finish the jigsaw first. Come and have a look at how things are getting on.

BRIAN opens a door in the office and offers NEIL entry to the vast hanger behind.

CUT TO:

94 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

NEIL is braced for the sight which greets him. The cavernous interior is a silent mortuary of crashed aircraft. Some are still recognisable as whole but buckled aircraft. Others are formed from individually shapeless pieces of wreckage, painstakingly reassembled on scaffold frames to reveal their original outline. The fuselage of the Lockerbie jumbo stands like a giant jigsaw along one side. A handful of white overalled TECHNICIANS busy themselves quietly in various locations.

BRIAN leads NEIL though the maze in silence.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

ELLEN looks out of a taxi's rear window. The cab is parked in front of a large imposing hangar. In the front seat GEOFF turns round to where ELLEN sits next to NATASA.

GEOFF

Now please remember Mrs. Armstrong this is not normal procedure. I've pulled in a lot of favours to bring you here but I believe it may help.

GEOFF gets out of the front seat and opens the door for ELLEN. NATASA follows her, and stands beside ELLEN locking her arm into ELLEN's. The AAIB director, JOHN WHITCOMBE, approaches across the tarmac. GEOFF pays the TAXI DRIVER and then turns to greet JOHN.

GEOFF (cont'd)

John.

They shake hands as GEOFF orchestrates the introductions.

GEOFF (cont'd)

John Whitcombe, Ellen Armstrong. And this is Natasa...

NATASA

Ivic.

JOHN

How do you do?

JOHN hands out clip on security passes to GEOFF and ELLEN.

JOHN (cont'd)

Welcome to Air Accident Investigation.

(turns to NATASA)

I'm sorry Ms. Ivic, I hadn't realised you were coming. You'll need to fill in some paperwork at the office as we go in.

(turns to the group as a whole)

Now, if you'll all follow me.

The group walk across the now empty tarmac to the unmarked hangar in silence. JOHN and GEOFF are tense. ELLEN is oblivious to everything but the hangar.

CUT TO:

96 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

NEIL is staring at the assembled wreckage of Flight 273, the feather in one hand.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

BRIAN hands NEIL the bent blade and steps into the wreckage to point out some additional technical evidence. Faced with the reality of the crash NEIL barely listens.

BRIAN

But of course the indication of initial impact is often obscured by the subsequent impact fractures, not to mention the thermal distortion of any post impact fire...

Into the silence of NEIL's thoughts comes the sound of voices. NEIL turns and sees GEOFF, ELLEN & JOHN enter the hangar from the opposite side. NEIL watches, frozen to the spot, while BRIAN drones on.

BRIAN (cont'd)

...which actually there was none of in this case. Nevertheless we'll run an ultrasound scan of both sets of blades to determine the impact profile.

CUT TO:

97 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

JOHN seeks to reassure ELLEN's obvious concern.

JOHN

We never forget that these are human tragedies as well as engineering jigsaws. Our engineers treat their work with great respect. It's one reason we tend to keep our work out of the public eye.

ELLEN is only half listening. The group walk slowly through the hangar. ELLEN takes in the quiet, almost reverent, professionalism of the TECHNICIANS. GEOFF gives her an enquiring glance. ELLEN nods back an acknowledgement that she's OK and that the process is helping.

CUT TO:

98 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

NEIL realises he will soon be visible to the group. He looks in turn at the feather, the wreckage, and ELLEN.

NEIL

(urgent)

Sorry Brian - is there a back way out of this place?

BRIAN looks at NEIL in surprise. NEIL looks back over his shoulder to check ELLEN's progress and then with a pleading look on his face returns to BRIAN.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

BRIAN

Over here.
 (beat)
 Let me.

BRIAN retrieves the turbine and feather from an increasingly tense NEIL. They wend a discreet exit and as BRIAN holds open the door NEIL glances back briefly to reassure himself that he has not been seen by GEOFF or ELLEN. BRIAN closes the door behind him.

But NEIL's hurried departure has been seen by NATASA, now wearing a security pass and standing by the main entrance. She stares in astonishment. From her pocket NATASA pulls out NEIL's card, and turns it to the printed side. She reads the print - "NATS". Putting the card away she walks to catch up with GEOFF and ELLEN. Arriving at GEOFF's side she whispers so as not to distract a silent ELLEN.

NATASA

What is NATS?

GEOFF

National Air Traffic Service. You know,
 what I do.

As GEOFF moves on, NATASA looks back to where she saw NEIL. He's gone but she's not going to let him off that easily and hurries after him unseen by the rest of her party.

CUT TO:

99 EXT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

NEIL is hurrying across the open concrete apron. Behind him a furious NATASA is gaining ground. Hearing her footsteps NEIL spins startled. NATASA is on him prodding his chest roughly in anger and frustration.

NATASA

I know who you are.

NEIL is speechless as he struggles to put the jigsaw together.

NATASA (cont'd)

You're the one. You have to talk to her.
 You were there.

NEIL makes to speak but doesn't get a chance.

NATASA (cont'd)

She wants to know what happened.

NEIL

I don't know. It might have been a bird.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

NATASA

See her, Neil. Tell her what you know.

NEIL opens his eyes and turns to NATASA. He knows he can no longer deny the one question that won't go away.

NEIL

And what if *I* am responsible?

She considers her answer carefully.

NATASA

Then it is even more important.

(looks NEIL in the eye)

You owe it to her. You have to help her.

It may help you as well.

NEIL

How come you know so much?

NATASA

I wish I didn't.

NEIL looks at NATASA. No one else has ever focused him to the point quite like this.

NATASA (cont'd)

Don't run away Neil. It doesn't work. I know.

NEIL looks past NATASA to the hangar. He can't do it. Avoiding NATASA's insistent gaze he turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

100 INT. AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION HANGAR FARNBOROUGH - DAY

ELLEN and GEOFF stand at the edge of a cleared area where two INVESTIGATORS are gently laying out pieces of unrecognisable wreckage on the floor in the approximate shape of a small aircraft.

JOHN

It may look an impossible task but my colleagues here are exceptionally skilled.

ELLEN walks forward to where two twisted seats lie waiting to be placed in the jigsaw. JOHN shoots GEOFF a glance. He doesn't want any emotional outbursts. GEOFF indicates that ELLEN is in control. ELLEN sinks to her knees and touches the seat as NATASA arrives behind her with a comforting hand.

CUT TO:

101 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In a living room prepared for redecoration with furniture covered in dust sheets, NEIL is slumped asleep in an armchair. On the television a news report from Sarajevo shows the horror of another shelling.

NEWSCASTER

(voice over)

In Sarajevo today 8 civilians, mostly women and children were killed in a mortar attack on a market area. UN officials said the most likely source of the shelling was Serbian positions looking down on the city from the surrounding hills.

CUT TO:

102 INT. EMIR'S FLAT - NIGHT

EMIR and NATASA make love with intense tenderness and gentleness.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

(voice over)

Meanwhile at the UN, Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegovic condemned both the killing and Western reluctance to intervene to save civilian life. But he added that his aim was still independence for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and reminded journalists that his administration included Serbs and Croats, as well as Bosnian Muslims. Our reporter Alan Little, reports from Sarajevo.

ALAN LITTLE (O.S)

(voice over)

[actual archive news report reflecting sectarian nature of the conflict and the terrible deprivations of those trapped in Sarajevo]

CUT TO:

103 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE - MORNING

NEIL is asleep in the armchair. He is woken by the phone.

NEIL

(to phone)

Yes?

The caller's message shocks him into action.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

NEIL (cont'd)
 (to phone)
 But you said you were staying with her?
 (pause)
 I'll meet you there in ten minutes.

CUT TO:

104 INT. ELLEN'S CAR - PENNINE SUMMIT - DAY

ELLEN wakes in her car opposite the now deserted check point. The radar dome looms on the horizon beneath a darkening sky. Still clutching her photo of LISA and the airport teddy ELLEN summons herself for the hardest journey of all.

CUT TO:

105 INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - DAY

NATASA unlocks the front door and enters the house. She calls out.

NATASA
 Ellen?

No reply. NEIL hesitates on the doorstep but then gingerly enters. IN the kitchen NEIL sees some holiday snaps of ELLEN and LISA on a pin board. He stares at the one of LISA, so full of life. Taking it down it he sinks into a kitchen chair, staring at her laughing face. NATASA comes down the stairs and enters the kitchen.

NATASA (cont'd) *
 I don't think she even slept here.

NATASA glances around the kitchen and spies the empty photo frame on the worktop. She picks it up, mind racing.

NATASA (CONT'D) (cont'd) *
 Oh no.

NEIL looks up at her, his eyes welling with tears. He looks back at the photo and NATASA follows his gaze.

NEIL
 I should have seen her last night.

NATASA
 She needs you now more than ever. Where did you say the plane crashed?

CUT TO:

106 EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

It is raining, and the wind and mist make for a bleak picture. A drawn and exhausted ELLEN walks in awe across the site carrying the bunch of flowers and the teddy. All the wreckage has been removed but warning tape and official looking markers outline the site. The ground has been churned into a mud bath by vehicles and feet. As the sky above darkens, ELLEN sways unsteadily as she drinks in the atmosphere.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. PENNINE SUMMIT - DAY

NEIL's car winds up the twisting single track road and stops in the small summit car park. His headlights pierce the rain. It is the site of his confrontation with the police but the checkpoint is long gone. Peering over the steering wheel he catches sight of a car in the lay-by opposite the gated track.

NEIL

Is that hers?

NATASA

Oh god I hope we can find her.

NATASA and NEIL exchange looks. NEIL is chastened. He pulls up to the police tape barring the track. Pulling on jackets NEIL and NATASA leave the car. NATASA grabs her rucsac. Ducking under the warning tape they set off up the track.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

The wind and rain have increased in intensity. Days of emotional exhaustion have taken their physical toll on ELLEN. Drenched with the rain she is in the first stages of hypothermia. Around her the tapes flap in the wind but a calm is descending on ELLEN. Fully in control, she lays the flowers on the ground in the centre of the churned up site. Then sinking first to her knees, and then into a foetal position she clutches the teddy to her heart. She closes her eyes making no attempt to shield herself from the elements which she knows will take away her life.

ELLEN

Lisa.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. PENNINE MOORLAND - DUSK

Conditions are serious. NATASA calls out ELLEN's name and attempts to follow the muddy track across the moorland. Nearby and disoriented in swirling mist, NEIL slips into a small gully. NATASA helps him out of the rut, real and metaphorical.

NATASA

Come on. She needs us.

In a brief moment, hands still clasped with NATASA, NEIL is jolted back into the capable self he was before his life collapsed. His eyes take in the worldly capability of NATASA's rain soaked face, then move to the rucsac on her shoulder.

NEIL

You got that GPS in there?

For the first time NATASA sees the real NEIL; alive and in control. She breaks into a smile, kisses him on his surprised lips and swings the rucsac off her back in a single movement. As she delves for the GPS, NEIL takes out his mobile phone, dials a number and waits impatiently for an answer.

NEIL (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Come on.... come on... Geoff? ..It's Neil. This is a Mayday.... Don't ask. Trust me. I need the coordinates for the 273 crash site and I think you need to put Search & Rescue on standby. It's your friend, Mrs. Armstrong.

(Pause as he listens to GEOFF)

You got it in one. Good man Geoff.

NEIL checks NATASA is ready with the GPS.

NEIL (cont'd)

OK mate, fire away..

(pause as NEIL listens to GEOFF
and then repeats his figures)

..north fifty five, twenty six, thirty eight...

(pause)

...west zero zero two, zero two, thirty eight.

NATASA enters the coordinates into the GPS. She gives NEIL the thumbs up. NEIL covers the mouthpiece to speak to NATASA.

NEIL (cont'd)

How long?

NATASA punches a few keys.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

NATASA
Twenty minutes?

NEIL returns to his phone call.

NEIL
Twenty minutes. Thanks mate. I owe you.

NEIL ends the call. NATASA now holds a small compass next to the GPS. She finds the correct direction and they set off together across the heather.

CUT TO:

110 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CONTROL ROOM - DUSK

CONTROLLER #2 spins round on her chair with information for GEOFF at his desk behind her.

CONTROLLER #2
ARCC have Rescue one three one on
standby.

GEOFF looks off to a file in his in tray. It is labelled "Neil Peart. Civil Aviation Authority. Post Incident Psychological Assessment Report".

GEOFF
(decisive)
Ask them to scramble.

CONTROLLER #2 looks a question.

GEOFF (cont'd)
I'm backing Neil.

CUT TO:

111 EXT. CRASH SITE - DUSK

NATASA and NEIL stumble into the crash site, brushing aside the yellow and black marker tape. NATASA shouts into the storm.

NATASA
Ellen.

NEIL's torch finds a single flower. He picks it up and scans the ground for other signs. More flowers lead him to ELLEN's prostrate and muddled form clutching the teddy. He yells to NATASA.

NEIL
Here.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

Together they kneel beside her and roll her over. She's unconscious and drenched. NEIL checks her pulse and breathing.

NEIL (cont'd)
It'll be hypothermia. We need to get her out of the wind and wet. Get her legs into your pack.

NATASA empties her pack and gently uses it to shelter ELLEN's legs. As NEIL strips off his waterproof jacket and his sweater he hears the sound of the approaching helicopter.

NEIL (cont'd)
(to himself)
Nice one Geoff.

Together they exchange ELLEN's wet coat for NEIL's dry clothes. NEIL shivers as he wraps himself in the soaking coat.

NATASA
What about you?

NEIL
Don't worry about me

NATASA looks across at NEIL.

NATASA
I do. I care about you both.

NEIL and NATASA exchange a silence. NATASA strokes ELLEN's mud covered face.

CUT TO:

112 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CONTROL ROOM - DUSK

A radar ident marked Rescue 131 edges across a green display screen. The pilot radios a report to the CONTROLLER.

HELICOPTER PILOT (O.S.)
(in headset)
Control this is Rescue one three one. On site and preparing for medevac.

CONTROLLER #2
Roger rescue one three one. Infirmary notified. Report upload and departure.

CONTROLLER #2 turns to GEOFF expecting him to be at his desk. Instead GEOFF is standing right behind her, listening in on a spare headset.

CUT TO:

113 EXT. CRASH SITE - DUSK

As NATASA's hand strokes ELLEN's cheeks her eyes open shakily. She looks up into NEIL's face.

ELLEN

(weakly)

You wont run away on me now, will you?

NEIL shakes his head.

NEIL

No. No more running, Mrs. Armstrong. Not from you. And not from myself.

He steadies himself.

NEIL (cont'd)

I did make a mistake that night. And so I have to accept it could have been me who killed your daughter. And I need you to know that.

ELLEN stares at him, slowly making all the connections. NEIL waits. She nods.

ELLEN

(weakly)

I so hope it wasn't you. I couldn't bear any more hurt. But if you are responsible you will have my forgiveness. I owe it to Lisa.

Her eyes close and NEIL leans forward to wrap his jacket more closely around her. He has tears in his eyes. NATASA puts out a comforting arm then gently lays some of the flowers and the teddy neatly on the ground. Above them the thump of approaching rotor blades grows to a crescendo and the helicopter's landing lights emerge from the storm.

CUT TO:

114 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - MORNING

The sunlit calm of the next morning. ELLEN lies asleep in a bed in a small ward. The flowers rescued by NATASA have been arranged in a vase.

NEIL watches the scene from the busy corridor. He deliberately takes an envelope from his jacket pocket and turns it over thoughtfully in his hand. As if resolving a doubt, he puts it back in his pocket and sets off down the corridor.

CUT TO:

115 INT. REFUGEE CENTRE DAY ROOM - DAY

NERMINA, LEIJLA, KEMAL and several other REFUGEES sit joking at a table.

NATASA enters carrying her rucsac and suitcase. Conversations falter and eyes follow her.

Putting her luggage down NATASA pours herself a coffee from a communal urn. There is complete silence. NATASA has underestimated her physical and emotional exhaustion. She starts to shake; the plastic cup cracks in her grip and scalding coffee spills onto her hand. NATASA hurls the cup to ground.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
Fuck!

Picking up her case NATASA moves to an empty table and sits down with her back to the group.

NERMINA and LEIJLA exchange glances. LEIJLA picks up an empty cup and fills it at the urn. She walks over and places the coffee next to NATASA. NATASA meets NERMINA's eyes and acknowledges the gesture with a smile. LEIJLA returns the moment and goes back to her friends.

One by one the remaining REFUGEES return to their conversations.

CUT TO:

116 INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

NEIL is clearing his locker. He throws some old magazines in a nearby litter bin, while a set of air traffic maps and manuals and the "Biggles" book are stacked in a cardboard box. Lastly NEIL takes out his headset. It represents his career as an air traffic controller. He puts it carefully in the box and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

117 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

ELLEN is sitting on her bed, dressed and ready to leave hospital. A NURSE takes a final pulse. NATASA stands by holding ELLEN's bag. The NURSE finishes her count.

NURSE
You'll do. But just hang on for Sister
before you actually go.

ELLEN
Thank you. You've been so kind.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

The NURSE smiles and leaves. ELLEN turns to NATASA.

ELLEN (cont'd)
You really shouldn't be seeing me home
you know. I'm sure Emir's got better
plans.

NATASA
He can wait an hour or so.

ELLEN
(mischievously)
But can you?

NATASA loses her sparkle.

NATASA
I'll have to.

ELLEN looks curious.

NATASA (cont'd)
I'm going back. To Sarajevo.
(pause)
And to Sabina.

ELLEN reaches out a hand to NATASA.

NATASA (cont'd)
She was right. By running away I'm part
of the problem. It's not about living
together here. It's about living together
back home. I have to go back to be with
her.

ELLEN
And Emir?

NATASA
He'd never get through the Serb lines and
he's needed here for the others who can't
go back.

ELLEN
But one day?

NATASA
(smiles)
One day. Perhaps.

ELLEN reaches out a kindly hand.

ELLEN
Now let's find Sister and go. You've got
a date.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED: (2)

NATASA hands ELLEN her jacket.

NATASA
And so have you.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE CAR PARK - DAY

NEIL puts the cardboard box into the boot of his car. He slams the lid shut, and moves round towards the driver's side. GEOFF is standing in front of the car with the letter NEIL had been holding at the hospital. He offers it back to NEIL.

GEOFF
Here. I don't want it.

NEIL opens his car door.

NEIL
I mean it Geoff. Keep it.

GEOFF
It wasn't your fault.

NEIL stops.

GEOFF (cont'd)
You were right. The investigation's confirmed it. It was nothing to do with wake turbulence. A bird strike at 22,000 feet caused total hydraulic failure and disabled the primary controls. It's official.
(holds up letter)
No resignation needed.

GEOFF shoves NEIL's resignation letter into NEIL's pocket.

NEIL
I still broke the rules.

GEOFF
A disciplinary matter. Not a resignation one.

NEIL
It's over, Geoff.

NEIL pulls out the resignation letter and hands it back to GEOFF.

NEIL (cont'd)
It could have been my fault. People are dead. I can't do this anymore.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

GEOFF
You're part of the team.

NEIL
(shakes head)
There are other teams now.

NEIL gets into the car.

GEOFF
So I'll still see you later?

NEIL nods. He smiles, starts his car and drives away.

CUT TO:

119 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY BIRD OBSERVATION HIDE - DAY

EMIR is helping NATASA to clear the hide. He holds open her battered rucsac as she fills it with rolls of marker tape and notepads. When it is full EMIR closes the rucsac, noticing for the first time a bullet hole. He looks at NATASA who has already noticed his observation.

NATASA
(in Bosnian)
I have to go.

EMIR finishes fastening the rucsac as NATASA slings her tripod over her shoulder and moves to him. They embrace.

NATASA kisses him gently.

EMIR
(in Bosnian)
Wait for me.

Tears streaming NATASA throws her arms around his neck. She hasn't an answer.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. PENNINE SUMMIT - DAY

NEIL stands alone on a large summit boulder, staring across at the brooding presence of the radar dome.

A car is winding its way up the road to the summit. NEIL watches it park next to his own car on the radar site car park. GEOFF and ELLEN get out. Together they see NEIL. GEOFF nods an encouragement to ELLEN who responds with a smile of thanks. Alone she walks towards NEIL. GEOFF watches for a short while, before getting back behind the wheel and returning down the fell.

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

ELLEN stops at the base of the summit boulder. They look at each other, their lives now irrevocably changed and intertwined. ELLEN holds a hand to NEIL who helps her up on the summit where their hands and eyes remain linked. ELLEN puts her other hand on NEIL's.

They have to move on and maybe, just maybe, it is a journey they can make together.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. SOLWAY ESTUARY - DAY

A strand of black and yellow marker tape flutters on some reeds.

Behind it 10,000 geese lift into the air in a riot of flapping wings.

CREDITS

ENDS