

G L I T C H

by Daryl Henry

Fade In:

EXT. COASTAL MAINE - MORNING

Granite headlands, cool sea. Trees recoiling in the wind. Lighthouses, old, still working. A few boats, fewer people.

SUPERIMPOSE: *July 17, 1996*

EXT. BOOTHBAY HARBOR - MORNING

The town awakening. A misty panorama of pine trees, lobster traps stacked on wooden docks, fishing boats rising on the tide.

EXT. BEACHFRONT COTTAGE - MORNING

A restored fisherman's shanty with weathered shingles and a moss-covered roof. Tidy. Flowers on the porch.

INT. BEACHFRONT COTTAGE - MORNING

Tall, slender DARLA MICHAEL HENK, wearing a US Navy nomex flight suit, her copper-colored hair still wet from the shower, pushes back from a half-eaten breakfast.

Pale, she carries her dishes to the chipped porcelain sink, stops, begins to shiver. Bends over, throws up.

Gasping. Afraid to release her grip on the countertop and reach for a paper towel to wipe her chin.

DARLA

Steady as she goes, Lieutenant. Just another goddamn missile test.

She splashes water on her face, reflects, starts rinsing out the sink, leaves it till later. Heads for the door.

EXT. BRUNSWICK NAVAL AIR STATION - MIDDAY

A few foggy miles north of Portland, Maine. Not much activity. One airplane warming up: a radomed TURBOPROP-- a Lockheed Electra tranformed into a Navy P-3 ORION. Windowless, a flying radar station.

INT. NAS READY ROOM - MIDDAY

Lieutenant Junior Grade Darla Henk, pay phone to her ear, looks out across the tarmac toward the Orion.

DARLA

(into phone)

There's going to be just too many damn airliners, Bobby.

EXT. SUNDECK - MOUNTAIN CABIN - MIDDAY (INTERCUT W/ABOVE)

Overlooking Bonner's Ferry, Idaho. BOBBY HENK, his booted feet up on the log railing, holds a cordless phone between unshaven chin and thinning hair.

BOBBY

They'll be lit up like fireflies, sis.
You won't have any trouble staying clear.

DARLA

Didn't that Iranian airliner show up on
your screen, too?

Bobby reaches for his coffee mug, takes a swallow.

BOBBY

The USS Vincennes was in a war zone.
You'll be within sight of the lights of
Manhattan.

Darla stares out at the Orion.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Stay loose, kid. Your target will be
skimming the waves, well below any
civilians.

(beat)

You still there?

DARLA

Yeah. Thanks. Later, okay.

A dark-eyed, dark-skinned woman exits the cabin, puts her arm around Bobby. To BECKY, his Tahitian wife, Bobby says:

BOBBY

She's scared.

EXT. BRUNSWICK NAVAL AIR STATION - MIDDAY

A Navy pickup stops at the edge of the tarmac. Darla jumps out the passenger side and swings aboard the Orion. The door slams, the engines rev.

END OF THE RUNWAY

The turboprop zooms toward us, takes off, up and over and gone.

EXT. US NAVY ORION - LATE AFTERNOON

Orbiting at 20,000 feet, a few miles off the coast. To the west, orange clouds layer the horizon behind the Hamptons. Directly beneath, darkness gathers over a glass-smooth sea.

INT. US NAVY ORION - LATE

Darla on the edge of her bucket seat at her duty station in the darkened Missile-Targeting center. Determined, sweating,

(CONTINUED)

concentrating on her radar console. In a long line behind her, other OPERATORS, all male. No signs of concern there. She turns back to her console and its three prominent switches:

INSERT: SWITCHES-- Labeled *Acquire*, *Designate* and *Transfer*, the last one fire-engine red.

Darla adjusts her boom mic, rests her right hand on the edge of the console, watches it tremble.

Studying her from the cockpit doorway is the Radar Supervisor, Lieutenant Commander NEIL OTTNEY. Vain, confident, a Stanford grad. He approaches, places his hand on her shoulder-- technically a court-martial offence. But Darla is preoccupied.

DARLA

Testing this damn thing out in the ocean
is one thing. Testing it downtown is
another.

OTTNEY

It's got to work inshore as well as off,
Lieutenant.

(beat)

I like your nail polish.

Darla looks down at her non-spec vermilion nails.

OTTNEY

Your brother was aboard the Vincennes,
right?

She nods.

OTTNEY (CONT'D)

If they'd had eyes in the sky they
might've identified that Airbus in time.

DARLA

It'd be okay if we were just eyes.
(to her switches)

We're also pointing the gun.

OTTNEY

You're qualified, Lieutenant. There's
nobody better.

She looks at his hand on her shoulder, then up.

DARLA

Yes, sir.

He removes his hand, continues down the aisle.