

TITLES over a BLACK SCREEN as we hear the thoughts of the protagonist ALBERT NEIL as he ponders something UNSEEN.

ALBERT (V.O.)
Good gracious, look at her shine!
Those curves... and that hard body...

1. EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

ALBERT, JAMES and WALTER stand together and gaze at something off screen.

ALBERT
Isn't she beautiful?

JAMES
I'll bet she's fun.

WALTER
I wonder how long I'd last before I made some terrible mistake.

ALBERT
'Just get the hang of it, she'll purr like a kitten.

JAMES
Glad I'm not a rock star, though. Or country for that matter. Ever counted how many died in those things?

NEW ANGLE:

WE SEE that what he is talking about is a small, single-engine, low-wing Piper Warrior.

ALBERT (V.O.)
God, I wish my life could be as smooth and shiny as the surface of that plane.

OPENING TITLES

2. INT. SMALL AIRPORT / LOBBY

LYLE, the older, jovial airport manager, rushes up to ALBERT as he walks in the door.

LYLE
Albert! News flash! We got a new instructor coming onboard. Figured you could use some help.

ALBERT

Um, actually, Lyle, I'm kind of not getting the flight time I need now and I think DALE and TOM would say the same.

LYLE

Dale and Tom are each taking their vacations soon. It's bad timing because university students are using our facilities the next few weeks while theirs are being renovated. Trust me, with Dale and Tom gone and more students coming, you'll have all the flight time you and TONYA can handle.

ALBERT

Tonya? You mean you hired a flight instructor and it's a...

TONYA (O.S.)

Woman.

At the sound of her voice, Albert jumps and looks back.

TONYA LYNN, an attractive brunette, walks over and stops before LYLE and ALBERT.

TONYA

And for future reference, I'm a her, not an it.

LYLE

Albert, I want you to meet Tonya Lynn, our new instructor. Tonya, meet Albert Neil, our youngest instructor to date before you. Taught the boy myself. He ain't much on the social graces, but he can land any plane out there in any kind of weather, which is about all that counts around here.

ALBERT

(a bit embarrassed)
Hi. Nice to meet you.

TONYA

So how old are you?

ALBERT
(in a bit of a daze)
Five...

Albert notices Tonya's eyes widening as she's about to laugh and corrects himself.

ALBERT
25, I mean. Yeah, that's right. I think.

TONYA
24.

ALBERT
Sorry about... a moment ago.

TONYA
Don't worry. I get it all the time.

LYLE
I think I'll leave you two alone
- go to the lounge for the rest
of my break. Top Gun is probably
on again.

EXIT LYLE:

Albert clears his throat and tries to "start over" as they walk (for some inexplicable reason) down a hallway.

TONYA
I guess it's not everyday you
guys see a woman pilot instructor
around here, huh?

ALBERT
No, not really.

TONYA
Are we going to work well
together Albert Neil?

Tonya sees he's a little turned on by her use of his full name and takes advantage.

TONYA
(smiles)
I thought so.

Tonya starts to walk away.

TONYA

And if you're real nice to me,
I'll help you out on the social
graces.

Albert looks like he's starting to take that statement as a come-on, then realizes the insult in it and tempers his reaction a bit.

3. INT. SMALL AIRPORT / THE PILOTS LOUNGE

ALBERT and WALTER are talking while Albert is having lunch. Walter is a little more easy-going than Albert is and maybe a little smarter, but for whatever reason, he tolerates Albert's grumbling with minimal huff and sarcasm.

ALBERT

It's over. It's all over. I've
officially lost a fourth of my
income to someone that shaves
their legs at least once a week.

WALTER

This has absolutely nothing to do
with me.

Albert keeps rambling.

ALBERT

She's sarcastic, she's arrogant,
assertive...

WALTER

'Been reading the dictionary,
have we?

ALBERT

THIS is what I trained for.
Yeah, this is what my dad went in
debt to get me my certificates
for - to be pushed into part-time
hell in the only job I love by...

Walter interrupts...

WALTER

A woman... Yeah, yeah, yeah, but
I'm not here to share in your
sexism. You actually have
something I want.

ALBERT

Sorry, I can't get you a date with her. Besides, your girlfriend wouldn't like it.

WALTER

Magic cards.

ALBERT

Do you 'wanna play or are you just strapped for cash and wanna sell 'em?

WALTER

Never mind that. Can I get them?

ALBERT

If you wanna go to Michigan to see my cousin, sure.
'Sold 'em to him a few weeks back when I was up with my parents.

(beat)

Nobody around anymore to play 'em with except you, and even you aren't around most the time.

WALTER

Natasha takes up a lot of my time.

ALBERT

Thrilling... Anything else?

WALTER

'Drop me off at the drive-in tomorrow night?

ALBERT

Why?

WALTER

Natasha is picking me up there for our date and I didn't want to leave my car.

ALBERT

Leave it, man! If it gets stolen or something, you could cash in on the insurance and buy one under ten years old.

WALTER

Funny... Will you or not?

ALBERT
Yeah, sure.

WALTER
Great. I'll e-mail you on the time.

Walter stands up to leave.

WALTER
I gotta get going. See 'ya.

EXIT WALTER...

ALBERT rolls his eyes as he continues eating his lunch. He sits there finishing his lunch while we hear his thoughts.

4. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / OFFICE

ALBERT walks into one of the empty offices to get the weather from the computer and finds TONYA already using it.

ALBERT
What's the forecast?

TONYA
There's kind of a low ceiling.
I think my student can handle it,
but we'll see. She may decide to
cancel, I don't know.

ALBERT
Are all your students girls?

TONYA
Are all your students boys?

Albert sees the trap and doesn't answer.

TONYA
No. So far, I only have one
student and she's a woman.

Albert takes a seat in a chair behind hers.

ALBERT
Is it just me, or have we gotten off to a bad
start?

Tonya turns to face Albert.

TONYA
What do you think?

ALBERT

Never mind. Are you going to tell me the rest of the forecast or can I get on there and get it myself?

(beat)

Or are you done getting it all yet?

TONYA

There's a front moving in. Like there should be, like there always is.

ALBERT

What kind of front?

TONYA

A storm front. Lots of high pressure. Masses of hot and cold air moving towards each other and colliding.

ALBERT

Not good?

TONYA

Unless you like a lot of bumping.

ALBERT

Hot and cold, huh? Opposites attract, don't they?

Albert smiles, thinking he's finally successfully flirted with her and that she is flirting back. Mostly, he thinks there's a *chance*.

TONYA

Only among air masses.

Albert watches as Tonya smiles at her own comeback, gets out of the chair and confidently leaves the room.

5. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / PILOTS' LOUNGE

ALBERT sits around with LYLE and two other male instructors, DALE and TOM, chatting. Lyle is currently in stitches over Albert's dilemma with Tonya.

LYLE

Face it, Al. Your butt is whooped.

ALBERT

Only where wit is concerned, my friend. In the air?

Albert nods and smiles confidently.

TOM

I wouldn't mind so much except for that sour tongue of hers. It's as if she LOOKS for opportunities to tear someone down.

DALE

I know what you mean, but I gotta admit, Tom. I've seen her doing stall routines and she's pretty good.

ALBERT

Why? Because she recovered?

Albert laughs.

DALE

Oh, joy... Al's trademark dry wit has returned.

TOM

Now, now, Albert has a point, Dale.

DALE

Tom, what did I tell you about impersonating my mother?

LYLE

Okay, okay, that's enough.

ALBERT

(directly to Lyle)
And what about you?

DALE

Yeah, Lyle! What'd she do to get you to hire her, huh?

TOM

(to all but Lyle, jokingly)
Lyle just rearranged the set of criteria for passing the initial flight evaluation. A little here, a little there. Nothing really under the table or anything...

Dale, Tom and Albert laugh as Lyle starts to defend himself.

LYLE

Yeah? So what if I did? She passed the evaluation, and I'm the only one in the room qualified to make that assessment. I've been through the ropes, guys. I've been divorced twice and have a grown daughter. Face it, fellas, you're looking at someone whose put in his hours and can do touch-and-go's drunk and blindfolded with one hand tied behind his back.

DALE

Excuse me, but are we still talking about flying here?

Lyle gets up out of the chair.

LYLE

Now if you gentlemen will allow, I'm going to the men's room.

EXIT LYLE

TOM

Drunk and blindfolded with one hand tied behind his back?

DALE

'Makes you wonder where the other hand is.

The guys laugh, but unbeknownst to them, Tonya has been standing in the doorway and they just now notice with mild embarrassment.

Dale looks up at her and stops smiling right away, as do the others, who think they have to say something, but can't.

TONYA

You gentlemen need a life.

With that, Tonya turns to walk away.

With a quick glance at the others, though, Dale jumps up and follows her. Albert watches as Dale stops her in the doorway and the two talk, though the other two guys in the room can't seem to hear the conversation very well.

DALE

Hey... Hey, were you listening to that?

TONYA

(sarcastic)

I'm sorry, did you want me to?

DALE

We were just kidding around.

TONYA

Hey, don't apologize. I'm here to do my job. The only people's opinions I care about are Lyle's and my students'. If the rest of you don't like me being here, then you know where you can shove it.

With that, Tonya makes an about face and leaves.

Lyle walks up to Dale, who is still standing in the doorway.

LYLE

(patting Dale on the shoulder)

Nice try, slick. You've got the stall down, but I'd work on the recovery if I were you.

EXIT LYLE:

Dale just walks back into the lounge with the other two.

6. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / OFFICE

TONYA is sitting at the computer desk doing nothing and looking introspective if not just plain sad.

Albert crosses into the doorway and looks inside at her.

ALBERT

'You all right?

TONYA

(without looking back)

Yeah. I'd just like to be left alone.

Albert hesitates at the doorway a moment, then leaves.

7. EXT. DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

ALBERT and WALTER are sitting at a drive-in waiting on Walter's girlfriend to pick him up.

WALTER

Thanks for driving me, Al. I didn't really want to leave my car out here while Natasha was driving us around.

ALBERT

No problem.

WALTER

So how's the newcomer?

ALBERT

Pissed.

WALTER

Need I ask why?

ALBERT

She heard some of the guys in there today talking about her, making jokes about LYLE hiring a female for once and...

WALTER

And wondering if he hired her for her skills in aviation or something else, right?

ALBERT

No, not really...

(beat)

Lyle is nuts. All three of us have been asking him for more flight time, even if it's transporting planes to get fixed or something. But he insists on doing that stuff himself and says hope for more students. Now, with a student shortage, he hires this woman on as an extra full time instructor while the rest of us are just barely making it. I'm probably going to need a second income myself before too long if things don't pick up. Tom and Dale do what maintenance work they're allowed to on the side. It's crazy.

WALTER

'Reminds me of what my dad always said. The two biggest sources of man's problems are women and money.

ALBERT
No kidding...

WALTER (CONTD.)
But try doing without either one,
and life just ain't worth living
no more.

Albert gives Walter an odd look as if asking what he means.

WALTER
Pops could get a bit melodramatic
at times.

Just then, light from headlights crosses their path.

WALTER
That's her. 'See 'ya in a few hours, man.

ALBERT
Yeah...

EXIT WALTER

Albert just sits in the car and thinks for a moment.

FADE OUT:

8. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / CLASSROOM

ALBERT is filling out paperwork on one of the long tables when he hears TONYA's voice off-screen.

TONYA (O.S.)
(talking to a student)
Well, you did well today!

Albert perks up and listens.

A MALE STUDENT'S VOICE answers her.

MALE STUDENT (O.S.)
Why, thank you. No doubt your
presence helped.

Curious, Albert smiles and leaves the room to see what's going on..

9. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

ALBERT enters the MAIN LOBBY where TONYA and her student BARRY are coming in from a lesson. Albert is shocked when he notices it's the same guy in the

parking lot, and again, they're kissing.

A moment later, Tonya notices Albert over the man's shoulder and seems surprised... and worried.

10. INT. LYLE'S OFFICE

ALBERT is talking to LYLE about what he saw.

LYLE

Ridiculous. Whatever else she is, TONYA's also one of the most professional instructors I've worked with.

ALBERT

Why would I lie about this?

LYLE

To get back at her. You guys have resented her since the day she walked through the door.

ALBERT

Yeah, because she's taking all our flight time when we barely have any students left!

LYLE

Look, I didn't see it, so what could I do?

ALBERT

You don't think her judgment about a person's flying abilities could be... skewered if she had romantic feelings for him?

Lyle sighs in resignation to the point.

ALBERT

I thought so.

LYLE

But again, Al, I didn't see it, and I don't think it's very professional for you to be telling me.

ALBERT

No? Then who should tell you?

LYLE

Tonya, if anyone. That's who.

ALBERT

Then for her sake and the student's,
I hope she does.

EXIT ALBERT

11. EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / PARKING LOT - DAY

ALBERT is about to leave when TONYA comes over to him.

TONYA

Hi, Albert.

ALBERT

Oh, hi.

TONYA

Listen, can we talk?

ALBERT

About what?

TONYA

I know you saw us. I also know
you went to LYLE. He told me
about your concerns.

(beat)

To be honest, I don't blame you,
'ya know. I'd probably do the
same thing. You're a good pilot
and you care about safety and
integrity. The thing is, BARRY is
a good pilot. He's already mostly
done with his instrument
training. I'm just helping him
finish it off

ALBERT

I still think it's a bad idea,
especially if you and he are
romantic. Are you?

Tonya just lowers her head a moment in embarrassment.

ALBERT

Reconsider training him.

TONYA

But I told you, I'm just helping..

ALBERT

You're just helping him finish his instrument training, I heard you. Reconsider... please. For his sake and yours.

Tonya glares at him angrily.

TONYA

You're not my boss, Albert.

ALBERT

No, and I never would be.

Finished securing the plane, Albert leaves without saying another word.

12. INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL / PILOT'S LOUNGE

ALBERT is talking with DALE.

ALBERT

It's not funny, Dale.

DALE

No, I agree. I'd be jealous, too.

ALBERT

It's not about that.

DALE

Sure it is. Look, a few years ago, I did the same thing with my ex-girlfriend. Yeah, you get a little blind-sighted by affection, but if you really like the person, you're not going to let them do something you think they can't do safely. Besides, man, it's not your problem. You get too involved in other people's issues. You can really tear yourself up that way worrying about it.

ALBERT

'You think it was a mistake going to Lyle?

DALE

Well, for all the good it did, I don't know.

ALBERT

That's not an answer, Dale.

DALE

I don't know, Albert. If she came out and confronted you about it, I'm sure she did Lyle. Worry about it if you want to. I've got a vacation coming up and TONYA LYNN is going to be the last thing on my mind.

ALBERT

Now I am jealous.

Albert smiles and Dale laughs.

13. INT. SMALL AIRPORT / PILOTS LOUNGE

ALBERT is doing paperwork while JAMES watches television. After a moment, Albert looks up, a bit annoyed.

ALBERT

Okay, James, remind me why you're here again except to watch television?

JAMES

What? I was just waiting 'til you were done, Bert. I thought you were working.

ALBERT

I am.

JAMES

You know, it's great you and LYLE give Walter and I pretty free run of the place, but it can be kind of boring sometimes. I figured maybe you wanted to go bowling or something after work.

ALBERT

I think I'll pass today. Thank you.

JAMES

You? Pass up bowling?

(beat)

Well, okay. Whatever you want.

ALBERT

James, do you understand women? Wait... No, for a moment I thought you were Walter. I'm sorry I asked.

JAMES

'Ya know, Bert, lately I've just been wondering if women understand me. You know, me, as a man, whether or not this whole gender misunderstanding thing goes both ways.

It seems Albert would probably laugh at this any other time, but he doesn't. Instead, he looks up from his paperwork and kind of looks right past James, as if suddenly engrossed in thought. This lasts a few moments and James gets curious.

JAMES

Um, Bert, are you okay, man?

ALBERT

Yeah... man, I'm fine. And come to think of it, it probably does.

JAMES

What does? What is it?

ALBERT

The gender thing... Battle of the sexes. We don't understand women. Maybe they don't understand us.

JAMES

Okay, now the conversation's starting to sound like something out of an after-school special. I just wanted to know if you'd go bowling.

To James' mild surprise, Albert smiles and puts his paperwork down beside him on the seat.

ALBERT

Actually, James, I think I will.

Then, Albert stands up and starts walking to the door.

It's a moment before James realizes that Albert is walking out.

JAMES

What? You mean now? I thought you still had a while to go before getting off work?

ALBERT

I'm off work.

Albert is now out of the room and James scurries out behind him. We hear them off screen.

JAMES

Is your shift up already?

ALBERT

Nope.

JAMES

And you're not worried about getting fired for this.

ALBERT

Nope.

JAMES

Albert, are you sure you're mentally well enough right now to go bowling? Because that's really not my game. I just go because you do.

14. EXT. AIRPORT - AFTERNOON / CONTINUOUS

ALBERT and JAMES walk out to their CARS.

ALBERT

Okay, what is it going to be? Separate cars, or my car, because I am NOT riding when you're driving.

JAMES

At least my car doesn't smell like week-old McDonalds' French fries.

ALBERT

Hey, my car does not smell like McDonald's French fries.

(beat)

I only eat at Burger King.

JAMES

You know what you ought to do, Bert? Convert your car into a drive-thru itself. Stick a microphone in your gas tank and speakers on your rear-view mirror and take orders while you're stuck in traffic jams.

ALBERT

Well, I guess you'd know, seeing as how you'd actually be crazy enough to try it.

TONYA (O.S.)

Try what?

Albert and James are startled as Tonya walks up to them.

James looks at Tonya and smiles.

JAMES

Hi, there.

ALBERT

(to Tonya)

You know, my car is good for more than just a place to have wasted discussions. You should see the back seat.

JAMES

Yeah, just be careful not to drown in the cola stains.

ALBERT

(to James)

Shut-up, or I'll make you pay for your own lane.

JAMES

(to Tonya)

Do you like bowling?

TONYA

Maybe another time. I'm still working.

ALBERT

Do you have another student or is it just the same one again?

Tonya gives Albert a knowing and resentful look.

ALBERT

Okay, well, tell BARRY I said hi.
James, we're taking my car, so
get in.

James does as Albert requests.

Albert and Tonya remain outside the car for
a moment.

TONYA

I'm sorry, Albert. I didn't want
this job to cause trouble.

Albert thinks for a moment before
responding.

ALBERT

It's not your fault. Lyle's been
trying to make his ex-wife
jealous for years.

TONYA

Why do you insist on being
deliberately hurtful to me?

ALBERT

I'm sorry.
(beat)
We have to go. We'll talk about
this again some other time.

Tonya just glares at Albert as he gets in his car. She
stands there and watches even as they pull away.

FADE-OUT on the expression of mixed feelings on Tonya's
face.