

Robert Wise  
The Filmmakers Group

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THE HINDENBURG

Second Draft Screenplay

by

Nelson Gidding

Based on the book by

Michael M. Mooney

THE HINDENBURG

FADE IN

1 SMALL SCREEN BLACK AND WHITE: 1

UNIVERSAL TRADEMARK

accompanied by newsreel theme music.

2 A NEWSREEL HEADLINE - BLACK AND WHITE 2

ZEPPELIN HINDENBURG TO BEGIN  
SECOND TRANSATLANTIC SEASON

3 EXT. A NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY - STOCK 3

An anti-Nazi demonstration takes place in the street.

NEWSREEL VOICE

The Hindenburg is coming again --  
that's what all the excitement is  
about. The pride of Germany is due  
here on the morning of May 6.

4 CLOSE ON WINDOW DISPLAY 4

Camera briefly explores a window display guarded by a policeman. (See Appendix #1) No representations of the Hindenburg herself are shown.

NEWSREEL VOICE

During the 1937 season the giant  
airship is scheduled to make 18  
round trips from Frankfurt to  
Lakehurst, New Jersey.

5 FAST MONTAGE - OLD DRAWINGS, LITHOGRAPHS, ETC. 5

starting with the Montgolfier balloon.

NEWSREEL VOICE

A hundred and fifty years ago two  
Frenchmen, the Montgolfier brothers,  
made the first controlled flight in  
a hot-air balloon.

## 6 FAST MONTAGE PRESENTS EARLY DIRIGIBLES 6

using the same style. (See Appendix #2.)

## NEWSREEL VOICE

Soon the discovery of hydrogen put the birds in competition with a steam-propelled banana, an eighty-foot cigar, several flying bolognas, and a tremendous lemon seed operating on gravity and gall.

## 7 MONTAGE OF COUNT ZEPPELIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS 7

Old photos and film (stock) of the Count and his early Zeppelins: Schwaben, Viktoria Luise, Hansa, Sachsen, Bodensee.

## NEWSREEL VOICE

At the turn of the century, Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin flew a 400-foot sausage powered by two marine engines for twenty miles. After this triumph, Germany gave full support to the old Count. He and his young associate, Dr. Hugo Eckener, founded the world's first passenger airline.

## 8 SEQUENCE OF LZ 126 8

Stock film showing her overseas flight, delivery on American soil, her landing on an aircraft carrier, and her flight over the Panama Canal.

## NEWSREEL VOICE

In 1924 the Zeppelin Company built the LZ 126 for the U.S. Navy. Rechristened the Los Angeles, she made air history under her brilliant commander, Charles E. Rosendahl. But no other country has equalled Germany's phenomenal success in the field of lighter-than-air transportation.

## 9 SEQUENCE OF GRAF ZEPPELIN - STOCK 9

showing her voyages to South America, her trip around the world, etc.

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

NEWSREEL VOICE

For ten years the old Graf Zeppelin has flown over a million miles and carried 13,000 passengers without the slightest injury to a single one.

10 SEQUENCE OF HINDENBURG UNDER CONSTRUCTION

10

at Friedrichshafen. In addition to stock film, this material will include drawings, plans, cross-sections, etc., making clear the various features of the Zeppelin.

NEWSREEL VOICE

Now the Zeppelin Company and German genius have created the airship supreme, the Hindenburg. She is the climax of man's dream to conquer the air, the new Queen of the Skies.

A final B&W photo shows the great airship in her hangar in the last stages of construction. As main title music swells....

MATCH DISSOLVE TO

11 WIDE SCREEN COLOR - THE HINDENBURG AND HANGAR - DAY - MATTE

11

The above photo now comes to life showing the dirigible in all her color and glory. In the f.g. the sun strikes the huge black swastikas on her tail.

MAIN TITLE FADES IN OVER:

T H E H I N D E N B U R G

11-A INT. THE EMPTY HULL OF THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE

11-A

Credits continue over. The interior suggests a cathedral-like vastness. Aluminum arches, girders, webs of wire soar upwards to the vaulted fabric roof. An initial gas cell starts to inflate.

12 EXT. HINDENBURG AND SKY - DAY - MINIATURE

12

An awesome sight, she turns gracefully in the sky. During and after the abbreviated credits that follow, the sky turns dreamlike. The Hindenburg recedes, begins to disappear into mist, until there is only empty sky. Music continues over....

13 EXT. A MIDWESTERN CITY - DAY - VIEW SHOT

13

A title flashes on: MILWAUKEE, APRIL 17, 1937.

14 INT. A HOUSE - BIG CLOSEUP - KATHIE RAUCH 14

A middle-aged woman, she looks down as if writing.

15 INSERT - THE LETTER 15

in German. Two words at the end of the line Kathie finishes are plain enough: "Zeppelin Hindenburg...."

16 EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY - LONG SHOT 16

17 EXT. AN IMPOSING RESIDENCE - DAY - FULL SHOT 17

A title: GERMAN EMBASSY, APRIL 21, 1937.

18 INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE - DAY - CLOSE ON THE RAUCH LETTER 18

held in a man's hand.

19 ANGLE ON GERMAN AMBASSADOR LUTHER 19

A small, white-haired, old-world diplomat in spats, he shows the letter to his First Secretary.

FIRST SECRETARY

(unimpressed)

The Embassy got hundreds of letters like that last year, Mr. Ambassador. Mostly from cranks. The new season's beginning, naturally we can expect more of the same.

LUTHER

(worriedly)

Mrs. Rauch's letter is different. It's specific. She spells out how and where the Zeppelin will be destroyed.

(tapping letter)

A time bomb over American territory.

SHOCK CUT TO

20 GROUND-TO-AIR SHOT - A JU 87 "STUKA" DIVE BOMBER 20

diving toward earth, its propeller-driven siren screaming.

21 EXT. A TEMPLEHOF AIRFIELD - DAY - MATTE 21

A title: BERLIN, APRIL 30, 1937.

The Stuka lands, taxis to the flight line. The engine is cut.

22 FULL ON COLONEL FRANZ KESSLER 22

In flying helmet, white silk scarf and three-quarter length coat, he climbs from the cockpit. Kessler, in his forties, is seemingly all meat and stone with a strong, grim face.

23 NEW ANGLE 23

A Luftwaffe General and Colonel jump from a command car and embrace him warmly.

GENERAL

(grinning)

Showing us how you do it in Spain?

KESSLER

(with an edge)

I don't do much flying there.

COLONEL

Good to have you back, Franz. We heard they're giving you a Knight's Cross to your Iron Cross.

KESSLER

For writing up dossiers, I suppose.  
(significantly)

Half the time about our own people.

(low; taking

General aside)

They're turning us into a Gestapo, Karl. I want you to get me out of Intelligence. Give me back my old Reconnaissance command.

GENERAL

(uncomfortably)

That might not be so easy, Franz.

KESSLER

Why not? All you have to do is sign the order.

GENERAL

(evasively)

You've been brought back for a slight problem we've inherited.

Kessler looks at him, frowning.

24 EXT. AN IMPOSING BUILDING ON THE WILHELMPLATZ - DAY 24

A title: MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA

Eyes down, he reads the Rauch letter.

A VOICE

Furthermore, Colonel Kessler, that letter confirms our own suspicions that there's a plot to sabotage the LZ 129 on this flight.

Angle widens to include Goebbels watching Kessler astutely from behind his big desk.

KESSLER

(returning letter)

Then obviously, Dr. Goebbels, the sane thing to do is cancel the flight until the Gestapo uncovers the plot.

GOEBBELS

Sane, perhaps, but weak. The propaganda value of the LZ 129 is highly important.

KESSLER

Well, from a military standpoint she's a flying dinosaur.

GOEBBELS

(annoyed)

Colonel, the LZ 129 is a world symbol of Nazi power. You should be honored you've been chosen to guard her safety.

KESSLER

My field is the estimation of enemy air operations. It's not espionage.

GOEBBELS

A Zeppelin ride should be a vacation compared to Spain. You're being -- loaned, shall we say, to the LZ 129 as the officer in complete charge of security for this trip. You'll have the power to arrest suspects or do anything you think necessary. But quietly, discreetly, or it might appear we have internal opposition.

KESSLER

And you're afraid it could strengthen the Resistance Movement.

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

25

GOEBBELS

(sharply)

There is no resistance movement,  
Colonel.

KESSLER

That's reassuring to hear from the  
Minister of Propaganda.

GOEBBELS

(eyeing him; rising)

I mustn't keep you from your next  
appointment.

(walking to door)

Let's hope you'll change your  
opinion of our 'flying dinosaur.'

KESSLER

Perhaps I will -- unless there's  
an egg hatching in her.

26

INT. A ROOM AT SS HEADQUARTERS - DAY - CLOSE ON A BOMB

26

Black-uniformed Gestapo Major Hufschmidt moves past the bomb.

HUFSCHMIDT

(pointing)

A bellows bomb detonated by atmos-  
pheric pressure. Found on the Graf  
Zeppelin.

Angle widens to include Kessler behind Hufschmidt. Below  
street level, the room resembles a small museum. Hufschmidt  
conducts Kessler past a display of time bombs.

HUFSCHMIDT

...A radio bomb discovered on  
Himmler's plane...A chemical fuse  
bomb from the hold of the steamship  
Bremen...A clockwork incendiary,  
small but could easily ignite  
hydrogen....

KESSLER

I've only seen one smaller. A  
British device with a silent acid  
fuse. Blew up a locomotive in the  
station.

HUFSCHMIDT

(turning to a diagram)

The Hindenburg's being searched twice  
a day from stem to stern. I guaran-  
tee you'll board a clean ship.

CONTINUED



26

CONTINUED

26

HUF'SCHMIDT (Cont'd)

(facing him)

But what happens on the flight is  
your responsibility, Colonel.

KESSLER

Also an honor, I've been told.

HUF'SCHMIDT

(handing him a  
leather notebook)

This is a dossier we've prepared on  
your fellow passengers and crew.  
You'll find it useful.

KESSLER

(perusing notebook)

Ninety-seven people.

HUF'SCHMIDT

Including you, Colonel.

KESSLER

Well then, only ninety-six to worry  
about. That makes it simpler.

27

EXT. A BUSINESS STREET - FRANKFURT - DAY

27

A title: FRANKFURT  
THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY, MAY 1, 1937

A man and a woman approach and stop at the door.

28

CLOSER ON BUILDING ENTRANCE

28

Kessler, now in civilian clothes, kisses his attractive  
brunette good-bye and enters the building.

29

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY - DAY

29

Captain Ernst Lehmann and Dr. Hugo Eckener, both in civilian  
clothes, read the Rauch letter as Kessler faces them. Lehmann,  
fifty-one, is a quietly forceful man of short, stocky build.  
Eckener, sixty-eight, a goateed visionary, is the greatest  
living pioneer of lighter-than-air transportation.

30

CLOSER ANGLE

30

With a glint of anger, Lehmann tosses down the letter.

CONTINUED

LEHMANN

The Hindenburg is scheduled to leave in two days, Colonel. Why did your Gestapo wait till now to show us this?

ECKENER

It's inexcusable that our passengers have to make other travel arrangements this late.

KESSLER

The flight hasn't been cancelled.

LEHMANN

Not cancelled?

(gesturing at letter)

I thought -- Why are you here?

KESSLER

I'll be aboard as a Special Security Officer. I want you with me, Captain Lehmann, as a Senior Airship Observer.

LEHMANN

You may have to work with the Gestapo, Colonel, but I don't.

KESSLER

Dr. Eckener, you built the Hindenburg. Don't you want to protect your interests?

ECKENER

I've protected them for forty years by taking no risks.

LEHMANN

Even if I wanted to go, you'd never be able to clear it. Dr. Eckener and I are out of favor at the Chancellery.

ECKENER

I refused to name the Hindenburg after the Austrian Corporal.

LEHMANN

Captain Pruss, the new commander, is an excellent airshipman -- and a good Nazi.

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED - 2

30

LEHMANN (Cont'd)

(returning letter)

Don't embarrass yourself by requesting me, Colonel. There's no way they'd allow it.

KESSLER

(pocketing letter)

There's a way. I'll see you at the airfield Monday.

Lehmann and Eckener look at him.

31 INT. THE HELDENKELLER - NIGHT - FULL SHOT

31

A title: FRANKFURT AIRFIELD, SUNDAY, MAY 2, 1937

In this dimly lit, smoky rathskeller near the airfield, some of the crew, their wives and girlfriends are having a farewell party around tables pushed together: Chief Rigger Knorr, a squat, long-armed man of fifty with a homely sympathetic face; Frau Knorr, his broad-beamed, narrow-minded wife; Stewardess Imhof, a martinet; compact, tough Elevatorman Felber; Second Rigger Neuhaus, a country boy; rugged Mechanic Ludecke; Helmsman Frenkel, meticulous in dress and manner.

First Rigger Eric Boerth and Freda Halle, a busty, handsome blonde a few years older than Boerth, behave openly as lovers. Boerth is a youthful man with a determined face, close-cropped hair and a tall athletic build. He is a mixture of extreme competence, readiness to serve and tight-lipped superiority -- a character more complex than he himself realizes.

CHIEF RIGGER KNORR

—Stupid. SS men crawling all over our ship morning till night. Dirt from their shoes.

FIRST RIGGER BOERTH

If we put an elephant in the hull they couldn't find it.

ELEVATORMAN FELBER

They weren't looking for an elephant.

SECOND RIGGER NEUHAUS

Did you see Eric when the SS dog barked? He jumped ten feet and the dog bit him in the brains -- here.

(points to backside)

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED

31

BOERTH

(joining laughter)

Better than being bitten by the SS.

He playfully bites Freda on the neck.

32 ANGLE ON KESSLER

32

In civilian clothes (always from now on) he sits at a side table with the slender brunette, Eleanore, his wife. She stares at a garish calendar-art oil painting of the Hindenburg on the wall. He touches her hand comfortingly.

ELEANORE

You should've refused to go on that Wagnerian whale.

KESSLER

Ssh.

(lightly; glancing  
off)

The crew might think I'm Jonah.

ELEANORE

I can't bear it...Alfred, then Spain, and now this...

(urgently)

We're not far from Switzerland, Franz. I was walking along the river today and thinking that if we could only ---

KESSLER

No.

ELEANORE

You despise what you're doing now.

KESSLER

What would you have me do in Switzerland? What would I tell them -- Yesterday I was a Colonel in the German Air Force...? It would be different if we were Jews or pacifists, or even Communists.

ELEANORE

We must get away, Franz. While we're still young enough to pick up the pieces.

KESSLER

I can't. I'd be a deserter.

CONTINUED

32

CONTINUED

32

KESSLER (Cont'd)

(gripping her hand)

Listen, Eleanore. I talked to Karl. He said he'll try to get me back my old group. We'd live in the south, far from Berlin.

ELEANORE

(touching his face)

Poor Franz. They even make your dreams lie to you.

She looks at him with compassion and turns away. He focuses his attention on the noisy airshipmen.

33

ANGLE ON CREW TABLE - FAVORING BOERTH AND FREDA

33

Boerth and Ludecke, arms interlocked and holding two-liter steins, engage in a chug-a-lug contest. The other crewmen pound the table counting to ten. Freda pushes down Boerth's stein.

FREDA

You'll be drunk, Eric.

LUDECKE

We'll be dry for two days on board, woman.

FREDA

(tender and sexy)

Please, Eric. Not tonight.

Boerth kisses her long and hard. The others start an even more uproarious countdown.

STEWARDESS IMHOF

(pulling them  
apart)

Behave yourselves. You act like gypsies.

Frau Knorr nods agreement and glares at the lovers. Now uncomfortable, Freda whispers to Boerth. He rises and starts out with her, carrying his stein.

BOERTH

(hoisting stein)

Good night, good night.

(a bow to Imhof)

We're going to bed, Stewardess.  
We'll ring if we need anything.

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

33

Much laughter and rolling of eyes. Draining his beer as he goes, Boerth bumps Kessler's table.

BOERTH

Excuse me, I'm just a poor gypsy.

Kessler nods pleasantly. Boerth follows Freda out.

34 ANGLE ON CREW TABLE

34

FRAU KNORR

Freda Halle is a loose woman. They say she works for foreigners, some French bank in Frankfurt.

FELBER

(coming alert)

We should report it.

KNORR

Women's gossip. We're all loyal Germans. Besides, Eric's no fool. Enough, now.

(rising for

a toast)

I drink to the one I love.

(as his Frau

preens)

The Hindenburg!

Amid laughter and cheers, they all rise. Mechanic Ludecke starts singing the "Horst Wessel Song" and the others join in.

35 TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND ELEANORE

35

Shuddering, she releases his hand.

ELEANORE

That song is going to make me sick.

36 EXT. HANGAR AND HINDENBURG - NIGHT - LOCATION AND MATTE

36

A low-key atmospheric vista of the giant airship at rest in the hangar. Lit from the inside, she casts an eerie green glow through her translucent belly. At a hundred feet up, her curving flanks disappear into heavy shadow. SS soldiers with police dogs stand guard around the sleeping phantom. The strains of the "Horst Wessel Song" carry over...Kessler and his pale dark lady appear among the grotesque shapes of equipment on the perimeter. They stare at the vast apparition and she gropes for his hand.

SHOCK CUT TO

37 CLOSEUP - THE BOMB WITH WORKS EXPOSED (SEE APPENDIX #3) 37

Held in a hand, it is a rectangle about 2" wide and 5" long with complicated wheels and tiny gears. It is being tested. In utter silence the black timer needle revolves. When it reaches the detonation point, it stops with a click.

INSTANTLY CUT TO

38 EXT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - LOCATION AND MINIATURE 38

shooting toward hangar past the Hindenburg now outside at the mooring mast. People, the Company transport busses, equipment, are dwarfed by the giant airship and her nest. Soldiers patrol the area, some holding leashed dogs. Occasionally they warn back spectators. A uniformed brass band pumps away on the apron, while a troop of Hitler Youth forms up beside it.

A title: MONDAY, MAY 3, 1937

39 INSERT - HANGAR CLOCK 39

showing 6:30. Below the clock is posted in German and English:

Departure Frankfurt - 8:00 P.M. May 3  
Arrival Lakehurst - 6:00 A.M. May 6

40 INT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - WIDE ANGLE 40

An atmosphere of intense activity and excitement...Baggage being delivered and freight moved out...uniformed Zeppelin Company officials bustling back and forth...well-wishers chattering with passengers....

41 OMITTED 41

42 ANGLE ON BAGGAGE SECTION 42

SS men make the passengers uneasy with an almost microscopic inspection of their baggage.

TOURISTY TYPE.

(in Tyrolean hat)

What's going on? Something wrong?

SWEET-FACED OLD LADY

I'm not smuggling anything, I promise.

SS MAN

Standard procedure for Zeppelins.

43 ANGLE ON KESSLER 43

on the fringe, appraising his fellow passengers.

Reed and Bess Channing sip champagne with Hattie, a handsome woman of sixty-odd who has brought a bon voyage basket with champagne and caviar. Reed Channing, mid-forties, relaxed, urbane, is impeccably groomed. His wife Bess, forty, is southern, uninhibited, warm and basically genteel. She pours champagne into an ashtray for her Dalmation.

HATTIE

(Texas accent)

I wish you'd forget this Zeppelin crap and come on over to the Coronation. Quacky's rented a Duke's palace or somethin' outside London.

BESS

Not us, Hattie. Reed's show starts rehearsals the twelfth.

CHANNING

Anyway British quarantine won't let Heidi into the country.

HATTIE

You should've had children instead of dogs.

Channing and Bess exchange a look. Bess gives him a nod.

CHANNING

(twinkling)

The evil spell's been lifted. Bess is pregnant.

HATTIE

At your age?

BESS

(nodding)

Finally.

CHANNING

But no rooftop announcements just yet. We don't want to push our luck.

HATTIE

(hugging her)

Oh, Bess....



44-B THE IMMIGRATION DESK

44-B

Under the supervision of SS officers, passengers are checked through Immigration. As each passenger is cleared, his passport is given to Watch Officer Dimmler who places it in a strongbox. The passenger is then body-searched by Chief Steward Kirsch or Steward Macher, with Stewardess Imhof attending to the ladies in a small curtained booth. All matches and lighters are removed and placed in bags labelled with the passengers' names.

44-C ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS VON SCHARNWITZ

44-C

Elegant in a striking white cape, she hands the Immigration official her passport. A woman of great style and breeding with a finely chiseled face, the Countess is a classic beauty.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

(studying passport)

How long will you be away from us,  
Countess?

He eyes a Gestapo Major who glides over.

COUNTESS

(a charming smile)

Until I get homesick, I suppose.

GESTAPO MAJOR

(uncharmed; taking  
passport)

What is the purpose of your trip?

COUNTESS

To visit my daughter at school in  
Boston.

44-D CLOSE ON KESSLER

44-D

He registers interest in this.

44-E TWO SHOT - THE COUNTESS AND GESTAPO MAJOR

44-E

GESTAPO MAJOR

Where will you be staying?

COUNTESS

With friends. Mr. and Mrs. Alden  
Winthrop.

GESTAPO MAJOR

In Boston?

CONTINUED

44-E CONTINUED

44-E

COUNTESS

Yes -- and their place on Cape Cod.

GESTAPO MAJOR

What does he do, his occupation?

COUNTESS

(with an edge)

He's with the Winthrop First National Bank and I can assure you, Major, he's not the doorman.

44-F CLOSE ON KESSLER

44-F

smiling at the Countess' answer and the Major's reaction.

A PAGE BOY'S VOICE

Mr. Edward Douglas....

Kessler turns.

45 ANGLE ON PAGE BOY

45

carrying a cablegram.

PAGE BOY

Mr. Douglas....

Douglas, a trim, prematurely gray man, intercepts the cable. As he reads it Kessler drifts closer, trying for a casual squint at the text, but Douglas promptly stuffs the cable in his pocket. He looks at the hangar clock and carefully sets his Patek Philippe. Kessler checks his own Luftwaffe chronometer and smiles at Douglas.

KESSLER

Seems we'll get off a little late.

DOUGLAS

Yeah, what's the holdup?

(moving to

Immigration Desk)

Let's get this show on the road.

Kessler gets in line behind Douglas. At the head of the line, flashbulbs are discovered on Otto Vogel. Suave, attractive, Vogel maintains a smiling presence. Kirsch turns the bulbs over to the Gestapo Major. Vogel shrugs it off.

CONTINUED

45

CONTINUED

45

GESTAPO MAJOR

The official photographer should  
know better.

As Douglas is searched by Macher, Kessler steps up to Kirsch.  
The Gestapo Major beckons Kessler through without a search.

GESTAPO MAJOR

Not required for you, Colonel.

KESSLER

(handing him lighter)

It should be.

46

ANGLE ON ALBERT BRESLAU

46

A prosperous American executive, he shepherds his family of  
four into line: wife Mildred, overdressed and a social climber;  
his pretty, somewhat scatterbrained eighteen-year-old daughter  
Irene; his two mischievous boys, Paul, ten, and Peter, eight.  
Breslau, holding five passports and fidgety Peter's hand,  
drops the passports. Kessler helps him gather them up.

KESSLER

(returning passports)

Your name is familiar, Mr. Breslau.  
Do you have relatives in Germany?

BRESLAU

Many friends and associates, but no  
relatives.

MILDRED

You might have, Albert.

— (to Kessler)

I'm sure our name once had a 'von'.  
Von Breslau. Prussian nobility.

KESSLER

Ah, that's where I heard it.

BRESLAU

(kidding wife)

Too bad, Mildred. The 'von' doesn't  
count when you're born in the States.

PAUL

We all were.

PETER

Me too.

CONTINUED

46 CONTINUED

46

KESSLER  
(tousling their heads)  
Couple of cowboys.

47 ANGLE ON PAJETTA AND NAPIER

47

They move toward the line into the transit area. British Major Earl Napier, 31, is turned out in the high style of a Guards Officer -- brush moustache, bowler, and regimental tie. His American companion, Emilio Pajetta, is a crusty old curmudgeon. Using a cane, he hobbles along on Napier's arm.

KESSLER  
(joining them)  
Handsome cane, sir. May I see it?

PAJETTA  
You wouldn't admire it so much, mister, if you were crippled.

KESSLER  
I don't intend to be.  
(to an official)  
Tape the end of Mr. Pajetta's cane and return it to him, please.

NAPIER  
I say, you must be the special security chap. Good thing too.  
(glancing off)  
Ruddy blimp's filled with hydrogen.

KESSLER  
(gravely)  
I'll make a note of that.  
(moving off)  
Thank you.

PAJETTA  
(to Napier)  
They call that dumb Dutchman a security man?

COMPANY OFFICIAL  
(taking the cane)  
The tape is for your own safety, sir. The steel tip could strike sparks.

48 ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS VON SCHARMWITZ

48

Arguing with SS inspectors by her six Vuitton suitcases and large wardrobe trunk, she is the last one at the baggage tables.

CONTINUED

48 CONTINUED

48

COUNTESS

I'd expect more courtesy on a cattle boat. Now you just do as you're told.

KESSLER

May I help, Countess?

COUNTESS

Ah, Colonel Kessler. I thought I recognized you. These people insist on going through my entire trunk before putting it on board. Will you talk to them, please?

KESSLER

Certainly.

(to SS men)

Open it, search it, strip the lining, remove the metal corners. If you run out of time, ship it to the Countess on the Bremen.

The SS men smile and fall to work, opening the trunk and piling her gowns, lingerie, etc. on the counter.

COUNTESS

(coolly but without rancor)

Not very gallant, was it, Colonel? The German Air Force isn't at all what it used to be -- but then I suppose nothing is these days.

KESSLER

Nothing.

49 ANGLE ON HINDENBURG - LOCATION AND MATTE

49

The gangway, a double staircase, lowers from her belly. Passengers in the transit area shuffle forward. The guard dogs o.s. erupt in alarmed barking. Heads swivel.

50 EXT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - LONG SHOT - MATTE

50

A man with a suitcase and a package runs from a taxi toward the hangar, pursued by SS men with dogs. He laughs, sets down the suitcase, and comically attempts to pet the savage dogs, throwing in Nazi salutes and a goose step.

51 CLOSE ANGLE

51

Kessler and the Gestapo Major hurry to him.

CONTINUED

MAJOR

Your papers, please.

The man holds up a magazine with his picture on an inside page, captioned with his name, Joe Spah. The picture shows him climbing a towering lamp post in his drunk act at the circus. Wiry, energetic, Spah, thirty, is a comic acrobat who aspires to better things. He comes on strong, but underneath the brashness is a decent, naively sincere man. With his gift for pantomime, there is about him, as with many clowns, an overall air of pathos.

SPAH

(a sleight-of-  
hand trick)

Here's my passport and ticket all  
in order.

(to SS man)

Just throw the bag on the Zep, son.

Kessler glances at the package which the Major takes and rips open: a Dresden doll. The Major inspects it, lifts the skirt.

SPAH

(imitating a doll)

Goodie, goodie, wanna play doctor?

KESSLER

Why not?

(to Major)

Give the doll a thorough examination  
-- and the suitcase.

Behind a crate she fusses with a run in her stocking. A young man in Zeppelin Company uniform approaches, extending a clipboard and a pen.

YOUNG MAN

Will Miss Breslau please write down  
her correct weight?

IRENE

I did. A hundred and six.

YOUNG MAN

(low)

Keep the pen. A present from  
relatives in Germany. But not a  
word to your father till you've  
sailed. He'll understand.

CONTINUED

52

CONTINUED

52

IRENE

But we don't have any relatives in Germany.

Without answering, the young official hurries off.

53

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - LATE DAY - MATTE

53

The band on the apron switches to a Wagnerian air. The Hitler Youth troop snaps to attention. Captains Pruss and Lehmann approach the Zeppelin at a brisk pace.

54

CLOSE ANGLE

54

Pruss is a big, bluff man with the heartiness and solemnity necessary to have both the affection and respect of his crew. Spotting Kessler, Pruss gestures to him.

PRUSS

Colonel Kessler, board with us.

(as he joins them)

Did you know we have the pleasure of Captain Lehmann for this voyage?

LEHMANN

(quickly)

Just as an observer, Captain.

PRUSS

And as a diplomat.

LEHMANN

(eyeing Kessler)

It seems someone has arranged for me to go to Washington to try and get us helium.

Kessler gazes back with a faint smile.

KESSLER

I wish we had it this trip.

The three men start up the gangway.

55

ANOTHER ANGLE - MATTE

55

Now the passengers are escorted to the ship. The Countess is accompanied by Chief Radio Officer Willy Speck who carries an armful of clothing from her defrocked wardrobe trunk.

CONTINUED

- 55 CONTINUED 55
- A stocky man in his thirties, he has a coarsely handsome face. The Channings follow behind their dog, carried in her case by Steward Kirsch. Pajetta, the tip of his cane now swathed in white tape, hobbles along on Napier's arm.
- 56 ANGLE ON GANGWAY - STAIRCASE 56
- The vanguard of passengers mounts into the world of the Zeppelin.
- 57 INT. HINDENBURG - STAIRS AND FOYER - LATE DAY 57
- The passengers fan out, some to their cabins, others to go exploring. Several, among them Douglas, pause by the bust of von Hindenburg in the foyer. On the wall above are three clocks: the ship's clock showing 7:10; Berlin time the same; New York time 2:10 (P.M.). Below the clocks on the port side is a bulletin board, and to the starboard a large map of the voyage route with a little swastika pin-flag marking the Zeppelin's position.
- 58 INT. THE MAIN LOUNGE ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY 58
- Passengers gaze around. The walls bear a huge Mercator projection of the world depicting sea voyages (Columbus, Magellan, etc.), the Atlantic crossing of the U.S. Airship Los Angeles, and the around-the-world flight of the Graf Zeppelin. An aluminum baby grand stands in a corner. Spah strikes a note on it and goes into a hornpipe dance. Several people laugh.
- 59 INT. THE DINING ROOM ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY 59
- Mildred Breslau, followed by her two boys, surveys the room. Fifty feet long, it is a restaurant of luxury and refinement, with paintings of airship travel. Mildred, however, zeroes in on the china, turning it over to see the brand.
- 60 INT. WRITING ROOM ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY 60
- Writing tables, mail chute, ship's library...The sweet-faced old lady looks around surreptitiously, then steals a sheaf of stationery. As a loudspeaker blares, she jumps.

## LOUDSPEAKER

Will Mrs. Eleanore Kessler please  
come to the gangway.



61 EXT. GANGWAY STAIRS - LATE DAY - MATTE 61

Kessler forces his way down against the passengers still boarding. The band plays relentlessly.

62 ANGLE ON ELEANORE 62

Escorted from the crush behind the guards, she runs to her husband. They kiss in the shadow of the ship.

KESLER

(an urgent whisper)

I had to see you again.

ELEANORE

(clinging to him)

Yes.

KESLER

I think you should do what you said  
...about going to Switzerland.

ELEANORE

(glancing at  
Youth Troop)

Not without you.

His eyes follow hers and cloud.

KESLER

All right. I'll be home in six days.  
Then we'll see.

They exchange a long, loving look. Embracing her hurriedly, he runs up the gangway which then withdraws into the ship.

63 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - STEERING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON GONDOLA CLOCK 63

which reads 8:18. Pull back to Pruss who turns from the clock.

PRUSS

Up ship!

Watch Officer Dimmler, Chief Engineer Sauter, Helmsman Frenkel, Elevatorman Felber snap to their posts.

PRUSS

(to Lehmann; gruffly)

Don't just stand there like an ob-  
server. Make yourself useful --  
Captain.

CONTINUED

- 63 CONTINUED 63
- LEHMANN  
(smiling)  
Thanks, Captain.
- Pleased and happy, he busies himself checking instruments.
- 64 OMITTED 64
- 65 EXT. HINDENBURG AND HANGAR - NIGHT - LOCATION AND MINIATURE 65
- Men on the mooring mast start to disconnect the nose cone.
- 66 INT. NOSE CONE - NIGHT - FAVORING BOERTH 66
- His face against a window, Boerth stands on the long staircase leading to the riggers' shelf where Chief Knorr and Second Rigger Neuhaus disconnect the nose cone from inside.
- KNORR  
Eric -- lend a hand. You act like  
this is your first trip.
- 67 BOERTH'S POINT OF VIEW TOWARD GROUND 67
- Freda Halle regards Boerth with a calm, unwavering gaze.
- 68 REVERSE ANGLE - CLOSE ON BOERTH 68
- He stares at Freda for a long beat, then turns away.
- 69 CLOSE ON FREDA 69
- visibly moved. She hurries off, glancing back once.
- 70 EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE AND MATTE 70
- Searchlights playing onto her sides, she noses from the mast. Mooring lines are cast off.
- 71 INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - NIGHT - CLOSE ON KESSLER 71
- Troubled, he peers down, shading his eyes from the beams.
- 72 HIS POINT OF VIEW - ELEANORE KESSLER ON THE GROUND 72
- She stares back and waves half-heartedly. With his wife at the center, the world slowly recedes.

73 CLOSE ANGLE ON KESSLER AT OBSERVATION WINDOW

73

He hangs on to his wife with his eyes. A hand claps his shoulder.

A VOICE

Colonel Kessler. Did you know we're cabin mates?

Angle widens as Kessler turns to find Vogel.

KESSLER

Are we?

VOGEL

Yes, I feel honored. I hope the Colonel doesn't mind sharing quarters with me.

KESSLER

Delighted.

But his face doesn't show it.

74 EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE AND MATTE

74

Set adazzle by the searchlights, the Hindenburg floats upwards, silent as a cloud. The engines start with a roar.

75 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - NIGHT

75

Navigator von Bauer hands a weather map to Pruss who frowns at it.

PRUSS

Weather over the Channel.

LEHMANN

(dipping in)

If we fly the north side of the storm, the pressure pattern will simply push us over England.

PRUSS

(shaking his head)

The British don't want us over their chimney pots. They'll complain to the Foreign Office.

LEHMANN

The Foreign Office isn't aboard.

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED

75

PRUSS

(firmly)

I'll do the worrying this trip,  
Ernst. We'll stay on course and  
try to outrun the storm.

76 EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - LONG SHOT - MINIATURE AND MATTE

76

As she sails west, the searchlights hold the swastikas on her  
tail. The searchlights cut off. Darkness....

77 EXT. HANGAR AND LANDING MAST AT LAKEHURST - DAY - MATTE

77

A lonely sailor outlines a huge landing circle around the  
deserted mast with a marker used for tennis courts.

A title: LAKEHURST NAVAL AIR STATION, MAY 3, 2:28 P.M.

78 INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY - ROSENDAHL'S OFFICE

78

At his desk the Commandant of the Naval Air Station, salty,  
astute Commander Charles E. Rosendahl -- the foremost devel-  
oper of American lighter-than-air -- reads The Literary  
Digest.

79 ANGLE ON DOOR

79

Knocking on the door nameplate as he comes, Rosendahl's Exec.,  
Lt. Henry Truscott, young, jaunty with a hair-line moustache,  
hustles in.

TRUSCOTT

She's on her way, sir.

(delivering a cable)

Left Frankfurt ten minutes ago,  
8:18 by their clock.

ROSENDAHL

(reading cable)

Now we sweat, Hank.

TRUSCOTT

Yeah...till 6 A.M. Thursday.

ROSENDAHL

(picking up Digest)

Listen to this: 'No voyager on  
the Hindenburg need fear fire  
within the ship, etc., etc.'

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED

79

ROSENDAHL (Cont'd)

(rises, tossing  
down the Digest)Same magazine that predicted Landon  
would beat Roosevelt in thirty-two  
states.

TRUSCOTT

That's why I read Ballyhoo --  
exclusively.

ROSENDAHL

(circling)

Every time she puts in here it's  
like opening a Pandora's box.

(beat)

A booby-trapped Pandora's box.

(pausing at model of  
airship Los Angeles)Remember what happened last time we  
took this one up?

80 CLOSE ON MODEL

80

TRUSCOTT'S VOICE

Yeah...If we hadn't had helium,  
we wouldn't be here.

81 EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE

81

She looms past camera, silvery and immense.

82 INT. HULL OF AIRSHIP - NIGHT.

82

A figure on the lower catwalk is all but lost in the dim  
tunnel through the depths of the interior. Inside the hull  
the resemblance is closer to a mine far down in the earth  
than to a mighty skyborne ship floating effortlessly above  
it. Only in the narrow separations between the sixteen  
massive gas cells are there glimpses of the arches, girders,  
webs of wire that hold the vast structure together.

83 CLOSE ON KESSLER

83

moving on the lower catwalk. Surveying the complexity of  
this enormous maze, he comes to a stop.

84 ANOTHER ANGLE

84

Boerth, carrying a handling-line and tackle, appears from a  
hidden recess and moves noiselessly down the catwalk. Blocked,  
his taps Kessler on the back.

CONTINUED

84 CONTINUED

84

BOERTH

Have you found it, sir?

KESSLER

(turning)

Found what?

BOERTH

(looking him  
in eye)

There are no secrets on Zeppelins.

KESSLER

(staring back)

Let's hope not.

Now he makes room for Boerth to pass and watches him disappear into dimness.

85 INT. DINING SALOON - NIGHT

85

As Chief Steward Kirsch and Stewardess Imhoff set the tables to lively music over the speakers, Spah enters.

SPAH

When do we eat?

KIRSCH

A light supper will be served at ten, sir.

SPAH

It's important you put me at Mr. Reed Channing's table. I've been checking on his dog.

KIRSCH

You shouldn't have been back there, Mr. Spah. It's against regulations.

SPAH

(tipping him)

So don't say anything. Okay, friend?

Kirsch nods and pockets the money. Stewardess Imhof looks after Spah narrowly.

86 INT. THE LOUNGE ON "A" DECK - NIGHT

86

Kessler and Vogel enter. Passing them, Irene joins her parents at a table.

87

CLOSE ON TABLE

87

IRENE

(eagerly)

Daddy, I've been waiting to tell you. A young man at the airfield gave me this.

(producing pen)

He told me not to ---

BRESLAU

(with dismay)

Where'd you get that?

IRENE

I'm trying to tell you, Daddy ---

BRESLAU

(taking pen)

Give it to me, dumpling.

MILDRED

Your father's right, Irene. You shouldn't accept gifts from strange men.

IRENE

Oh Mother....

88

ANGLE ON KESSLER AND VOGEL

88

Kessler has been watching Irene and her father.

VOGEL

(following his gaze)

She's a pretty little thing. With only 4000 miles to go, I'd better meet her.

DOUGLAS

(from promenade)

4100.

KESSLER

Excuse me?

DOUGLAS

We've got 4100 miles to go.

KESSLER

Right.

(pointing to windows)

Holland.

CONTINUED

88

CONTINUED

88

KESSLER (Cont'd)  
 (glancing at watch)  
 Nine minutes late, or do you make  
 it ten, Mr. Douglas?

Douglas gives him an odd look. Kessler scrutinizes him.

89

ANGLE ON THE Breslau TABLE

89

VOGEL  
 (approaching; with  
 a bow)  
 Otto Vogel, the ship's photographer.  
 May I borrow the charming young  
 lady tomorrow as a model?

IRENE  
 Hey, that's smooth.

BRESLAU  
 (rising)  
 I'm going to have a smoke.

KESSLER  
 I'll join you.

MILDRED  
 (as others leave)  
 Tell me, Mr. Vogel, is there any-  
 body worthwhile on board? I still  
 say the French Line has the best  
 society.

90

ANGLE ON DOOR TO BAR-SMOKING ROOM - "B" DECK

90

Kessler waits for Breslau to pass through the revolving door  
 which serves as an airlock to the pressurized area on the  
 other side.

91

INT. BAR-SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT

91

Breslau emerges first into a small alcove with a stand-up bar.  
 Bartender Balla opens a second normal door to admit him to the  
 smoking room proper.

BRESLAU  
 (as he goes)  
 Thanks. A beer, please.

The smoking room, attended by Chief Bar Steward Schulz, has  
 only one lighter, the automobile type, centrally located in

CONTINUED



91

CONTINUED

91

a wall. Pajetta blows on the lighter and makes a vain attempt to ignite his stogie. The Countess fills an elegant miniature pipe from a small silver box.

COUNTESS

(leaning forward)

When you're quite through with it,  
may I, Mr. Pajetta?

PAJETTA

(peevisly passing it)

One damn lighter -- it's hell on  
cigar smokers.

COUNTESS

(applying lighter  
to her little pipe)

Filthy habit, cigars.

Pajetta sniffs, eyes the Countess, and glances significantly at Napier who also recognizes the aroma from the little pipe. Kessler enters and surveys the smoking room.

COUNTESS

(tipping pipe at him)

Join me, Colonel? Goering adores  
it.

He shakes his head.

92

ANGLE ON STEWARD SCHULZ

92

opening door to alcove, pointing.

SCHULZ

Right in here on the bar. The pen  
stood upright for more than two  
hours. That's how steady the  
Hindenburg flies.

Bartender Baila sets a beer in front of Breslau. In b.g. Vogel enters. Osborne, an Ivy-leaguer wearing a college blazer and puffing a carved meerschaum pipe, pretends to play solitaire while girding himself to approach the Countess.

NAPIER

Let's have a go at it ourselves,  
shall we?

(looking around)

Who has a pen?

CONTINUED

92

CONTINUED

92

Napier sees the pen in Breslau's breast pocket.

NAPIER

(lifting Breslau's pen)

D'you mind, old boy?

BRESLAU

(jolted)

Yes...I need my pen.

93

CLOSE ON KESSLER

93

narrowly watching Breslau.

NAPIER'S VOICE

Not for a few minutes, surely.

94

ANOTHER ANGLE FROM BAR-ALCOVE

94

as Napier moves to the bar and stands the pen on it, others gather around.

NAPIER

Fifty quid the bally pen'll be  
toppled in less than an hour.

BRESLAU

(reaching for pen)

This is nonsense.

Hobbling over, Pajetta hooks his cane onto Breslau's arm.

PAJETTA

You haven't finished your beer yet,  
sir.

(to Napier)

I'll take that bet.

NAPIER

Righto. Anyone else? Osborne?  
(indicating blazer  
crest)

You'll defend the honor of old Eli,  
won't you?

OSBORNE

(Harvard accent)

It's Harvard.

CONTINUED

NAPIER

A hundred, did you say? The gentleman from Yale bets a hundred dollars.

OSBORNE

I didn't say that. I ---

He clams up as the Countess laughs and drifts over languidly.

COUNTESS

What shall we bet, Colonel? The honor of the Third Reich also hangs in the balance.

KESSLER

(closely observing pen)

On such a thin thread?

COUNTESS

Five hundred marks it stands eight hours.

(teasing)

Will you watch it through the night with me, Colonel?

BRESLAU

(reaching to pen)

I told you I need it.

Kessler grabs the pen and moves swiftly behind the bar.

KESSLER

Sorry, all bets are off.

He drops the pen into the bar sink and opens it carefully under water. He looks, pauses, takes the pen from the water and puts it in his pocket. The bettors screened off by the bar regard him in mystification. Coming from behind the bar, Kessler grasps Breslau by the arm.

KESSLER

Mr. Breslau, please come with me.

BRESLAU

What in hell's going on?

Kessler hustles him through the door lock.

Kessler shakes four diamonds from inside the pen onto the writing table. Breslau sits on the bed....

CONTINUED

95

CONTINUED

95

BRESLAU

...When they came to me, I refused to do it. They brought it to my daughter anyhow. She didn't know what it was; neither did my wife.

KESSLER

Are your relatives Jews?

BRESLAU

(rising)

Damn you, yes! My grandmother was a Jew. Look here, Colonel. I import a lot of German surgical instruments. You can bet the manufacturers won't be so sensitive about my grandmother's background.

KESSLER

Mrs. Milstein.

BRESLAU

Yes. They wanted me to sell the diamonds so they could get out of Germany. Does their name have to be part of it now? You know what could happen to them.

Kessler shrugs, puts the pen in his pocket.

KESSLER

(handing him diamonds,  
poker-faced)

Just make sure you declare these to U. S. Customs.

(tapping his pocket)

I'm keeping the pen for the Gestapo museum.

Kessler leaves. Thunder rumbles outside the ship.

96

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MATTE

96

As she flies through a darkening sky, there's a flash of lightning in the distance.

97

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE AND DINING SALOON - NIGHT

97

Lightning, followed by more thunder, slashes past frightened passengers at the observation windows.

CONTINUED

97

CONTINUED

97

Others hurry from tables in the dining saloon where a late supper is being served. Rain, sounding like surf, belts down on the linen outer skin. Steward Macher closes a window near Mildred and Irene Breslau.

98

ANGLE ON CHANNINGS' TABLE IN DINING SALOON

98

Joe Spah occupies a third place at their table for two.

SPAH

Yeah, when I saw your dog it was doing good.

BESS

That was real kind, Joe.

Channing pours champagne for Bess, goes to fill Joe's glass.

SPAH

(turning over glass)

Never touch the stuff.

Nearby lightning flares, followed instantly by a crash of thunder. Flinching, Channing spills some wine. Spah thrusts his hand into a napkin, deftly fashions it into a puppet and mops up the wine.

CHANNING

(filling own glass)

It looks like our moment of truth has come.

SPAH

(making puppet speak)

So okay, Mr. Channing. I'm gonna tell you the truth about Joe. He bribed the guy to be at your table. He's a big admirer. But that's not the real reason.

(without puppet now;  
earnestly)

The real reason is I'd like to be in your new show, Mr. Channing. I'm working on this new act. A Zep act. Real sophisticated. Perfect for a show like yours.

BESS

(transfixed by storm)

Sugar, next time let's take the Titanic.

CONTINUED

98

CONTINUED

98

They can almost hear the next jagged bolt sizzle past, and this time the crash of thunder shakes the ship.

99

OMITTED

99

100

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - NIGHT

100

Rips of lightning outside the darkened gondola elongate the black figures of the men and distort their faces.

LEHMANN

(pointing)

Over there, Max. See it? An opening in the storm.

PRUSS

(to Helmsman)

Alter course 30 degrees right, Frenkel. Head for that light spot.

PRUSS

(to Chief Sauter)

Forward engines to half.

(aside to Lehmann)

We'd better slow down in this turbulence. That's how your American friends lost all their ships.

101

OMITTED

101

102

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MATTE

102

She sails on to clear skies and starlight.

103

INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT

103

Kessler on the lower bunk studies the dossier supplied him by the SS. Vogel finishes brushing his teeth.

VOGEL

That pen incident -- it's obvious you're looking for a bomb.

Kessler stares at him coldly.

VOGEL

(climbing into upper)

Only obvious to me, that is. I knew he was the kind for diamonds, not bombs.

CONTINUED

103

CONTINUED

103

VOGEL (Cont'd)

(stretching out)

I could've told you Breslau is a Jew. All the characteristics: brachycephalic skull, heavy lower jaw, kinky hair, skin ---

KESSLER

Breslau happens to be just one-quarter Jewish.

Vogel snorts. Kessler turns a page of the dossier.

KESSLER

Only in Berlin is everyone so pure. The world is mongrelized, Vogel. We have all shapes of heads to choose from here. Can your x-ray eyes see inside them?

104

INT. SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT

104

Napier, Pajetta, Osborne, and a business man play cards. The tape is missing from the tip of Pajetta's cane.

KESSLER'S VOICE

Major Napier, for one, who has no traceable income, but makes frequent trips on luxury liners. A good way to pick up information from important people. Why suddenly the Hindenburg? His big earlobes make me think he's a British spy.

VOGEL'S VOICE

There's no need for sarcasm, Colonel.

105

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - NIGHT

105

Douglas paces the empty deck.

VOGEL'S VOICE

May I humbly suggest that Mr. Edward Douglas also bears watching? So very afraid we'll arrive late.

KESSLER'S VOICE

He's head of the foreign branch of an advertising company in Berlin. Their big account is pharmaceuticals.

CONTINUED

105

CONTINUED

105

## KESSLER'S VOICE (Cont'd)

But he collected information from German plants that supply parts for the Hindenburg.

Douglas swings into the foyer, stops at the progress map and studies it worriedly.

## VOGEL'S VOICE

America prepares for war, too.

## KESSLER'S VOICE

He was Naval Intelligence during the last one. Stayed abroad. Went into advertising. But he's careful not to advertise his business this trip.

## VOGEL'S VOICE

Joe Spah is just the opposite. He'd do anything to get his name in the paper.

106

INT. SPAH'S CABIN - NIGHT

106

Spah does a backbend from the upper bunk and picks up an object from the floor. The Japanese diplomat in the lower stares at him. Upside down, Spah hands him the horn-rims he's retrieved. The Japanese smiles and bows. Spah bows back, drops all the way and stands on his head.

## KESSLER'S VOICE

He's just a clown.

## VOGEL'S VOICE

A clown who refused to perform for the Fuehrer to be on this flight. Also he spent a week in Moscow. To see the Russian circus -- he says. You can't deny Spah has an unfriendly attitude.

## KESSLER'S VOICE

A lot of people fail to see all our endearing qualities.

## VOGEL'S VOICE

Which are well displayed in the Countess. How do you happen to know her?

107

OMITTED

107



108 INT. A PASSAGEWAY FORWARD - NIGHT

108

The Countess moves warily. She is looking for a certain door.

KESSLER'S VOICE

Her husband and I were members of the same flying club in the days before the Luftwaffe. He was killed in a crash and she went back to her family estate. Haven't seen her in years.

VOGEL'S VOICE

Ah, a rich widow with an estate.

KESSLER'S VOICE

Yes, she's from a very distinguished North Baltic family. A von Reugen from Peenemunde.

VOGEL'S VOICE

Peenemunde? At the mouth of the Oder?

KESSLER'S VOICE

Right. She owns half the island.

The Countess finds the door she wants, opens it cautiously. Radio Officer Speck sits at the equipment, manicuring his nails.

VOGEL'S VOICE.

Not any more. Peenemunde's just been taken over by Weapons Research. Some big new development in rockets. If she knows what's going on there, it's risky letting her out of the country.

Speck senses something, turns. At first he looks surprised, then delighted. He beckons her in.

KESSLER'S VOICE

I'd say it was risky for the ship's photographer to step out of line with the Countess.

Speck carefully checks the passageway.

VOGEL'S VOICE

Maybe so, but if I were you, Kessler, I'd find out just how much she really knows before I let her off this ship.

The door closes.

CONTINUED

108 CONTINUED

108

KESSLER'S VOICE

(annoyed)

I intend to. But you stay away  
from her.

109 INT. CREW'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

109

As Boerth looks on, Cabin Boy Flakus plays checkers with grimy  
Mechanic Ludecke. Boerth stops young Flakus from making a bad  
move, shows him a good one. Ludecke protests angrily.

VOGEL'S VOICE

(a sarcastic click-  
ing sound, then)

Fine with me. Tomorrow this photog-  
rapher might take some pictures of  
the crew. Find out what the common  
people are thinking.

KESSLER'S VOICE

They say the rigger Eric Boerth has  
a mistress who works in the Berlin  
branch of a French bank.

110 INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT

110

VOGEL

(sitting up)

Where did you hear that?

KESSLER

I also hear she's been around.  
Boerth's not the first. Her name  
is Freda Halle.

VOGEL

I understand Boerth's a good man,  
a Hitler Youth troop leader.

(beat)

By the way, am I a suspect, too?

KESSLER

You? You're my staunch ally, my  
teammate, my good right arm -- the  
Gestapo.

VOGEL

Ridiculous. Where'd you get such  
an idea?

CONTINUED

110

CONTINUED

110

KESSLER

(holding up dossier)

Detailed information about everyone but Otto Vogel. All it says about him is 'official Hindenburg photographer.'

VOGEL

(smugly)

Gestapo sources of information are really excellent.

KESSLER

Maybe not quite so good as you think.  
(raising dossier)

This fails to mention that Colonel Kessler doesn't like Gestapo methods, doesn't use them and --

(tossing notebook  
into his bunk)

I don't want you operating behind my back.

Vogel leans against the linen wall, staring hard at him. Kessler yawns and stretches out on his bunk.

KESSLER

That's why we're cabin-mates.

CUT TO

111

CLOSEUP - THE BOMB

111

held in the same hand, but behind it now is the throb of the ship's engines establishing beyond all doubt that the bomb is aboard the Hindenburg.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

112 EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - THE STATE DEPARTMENT - DAY 112

A title: U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT, TUESDAY, MAY 4, 9 A.M.

113 INT. THE UNDERSECRETARY'S OFFICE - DAY 113

UNDERSECRETARY HANFORD

I'm sorry, Dr. Luther. I hate to think Captain Lehmann will be wasting his time here.

LUTHER

(handing him

Rauch letter)

Well, perhaps this at least will persuade State to arrange the appointments for him.

HANFORD

(as he reads)

You know how Congress feels about helium. They're afraid Chancellor Hitler would use it for military ---

He stops and finishes the letter with rising concern.

HANFORD

Good lord, Dr. Luther, what's been done about this?

LUTHER

Everything possible to guarantee the safety of the airship. But the chief danger to the Hindenberg is America's monopoly of helium. If anything happens, Mr. Hanford, the catastrophe could be blamed on your country.

CUT TO

114 EXT. THE HINDENBERG - DAY - MINIATURE 114

Sparkling in the sunlight, she cruises above a calm Atlantic.

115 INT. FOYER - DAY - CLOSE ON MAP OF ROUTE 115

Cabin Boy Flakus advances the little flag to a point 200 miles off the Irish coast.

116 INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

116

Entering, Kessler hesitates as he sees the 2nd Radio Officer with Speck.

KESSLER

Mr. Lessing, would you wait outside a moment, please?

LESSING

Certainly, Colonel.

With a sidewise glance at Speck, he leaves.

KESSLER

Get this message off to Gestapo Headquarters, Berlin. Attention Hufschmidt.

(dictating to Speck)

Send results of Freda Halle surveillance so far. Also run check on Halle lovers before Boerth -- signed Kessler.

(as Speck finishes typing)

Destroy that when it's sent and record the message by code number.

SPECK

Yessir.

He begins tapping out the message on the wireless key.

117 INT. HULL - DAY - CLOSE ON NAVIGATOR'S PERCH

117

On a platform above the middle catwalk, von Bauer shoots sunlines through the plexiglass bubble in the skin.

118 ANGLE STRAIGHT DOWN VENTILATOR SHAFT

118

Sunlight filters through the fabric skin into the shaft. Steward Kirsch, followed by Channing, appears on the lower catwalk below the shaft.

119 MOVING SHOT - CHANNING AND KIRSCH ON LOWER CATWALK

119

CHANNING

We don't like the dog so far away. Suppose something happens?

CONTINUED

119 CONTINUED

119

KIRSCH

Impossible, Mr. Channing. Your dog is traveling first class as good as the passengers.

The sound of excited barking comes from a freight room aft.

KIRSCH

See? She agrees.

A VOICE

Kirsch!

Kirsch, with a pained expression, stops abruptly.

120 ANOTHER ANGLE

120

Kessler bears down on them.

KESSLER

What are you doing taking a passenger into the ship's interior?

CHANNING

Just a minute, Colonel. When we bought our tickets we were told we could visit our dog.

KESSLER

That may be, Mr. Channing, but the ship's interior is now off limits to passengers.

(hard at Kirsch)

No matter how much anyone tips.

(gesturing Channing forward)

Now please....

As Channing starts off, the dog o.s. barks loudly.

CHANNING

(whirling)

Damn it, I'm going to see my dog.

He stumbles trying to get past Kessler who steadies him.

KESSLER

Passengers are barred for their own safety.

(pointing down)

Take a look, Mr. Channing. If you fell, you'd go right through into the sea.

Channing, still furious, glances down.

121 INT. OFFICERS' MESS - DAY - CLOSEUP - PRUSS

121

PRUSS

Last year passengers were permitted inside the hull, but not this voyage.

Pull back to the Channings who confront Pruss with Kessler beside him.

CHANNING

(angrily)

Typical. You're running the ship like a concentration camp.

PRUSS

I agree that I am running this ship.

BESS

You can go to hell. No, I take it back. That would be better than Germany is today.

KESSLER

I'm curious, Mr. and Mrs. Channing. Why would people like yourselves take the Hindenburg?

CHANNING

(heatedly)

If you must know, only because my wife ---

Bess stops him with a look.

CHANNING

...My wife gets seasick on boats.

KESSLER

(smiling at Bess)

The Zeppelin Company couldn't have a better recommendation.

PRUSS

I'll assign the cabin boy to visit your dog every watch and report back to you. Fair enough?

KESSLER

(smiling)

Now let's talk about the arrangements for your concert, Mr. Channing.

CONTINUED

121 CONTINUED

121

CHANNING

D'you really think I'll go through  
with it now?

PRUSS

I announced the concert. I'm sure  
you won't disappoint us.

CHANNING

(pauses; an edge)

Okay. You're the captain. You  
want a concert --

(spreading  
his hands)

-- there'll be a concert.

122 INSERT - A MESSAGE FORM

122

handwritten: "HAWKS TWO BEHIND EARLY STANZAS STOP HOW MUCH  
CUSHION DOWN SHARKS NINTH ADVISE."

LEHMANN'S VOICE

It's obviously in some private  
code.

123 INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

123

Lehmann, Kessler and Speck puzzle over the message.

KESSLER

In any case it requires an answer  
which we'll see before Douglas.  
That gives us an advantage.

LEHMANN

True.

(to Speck)

Go ahead and send it.

124 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE

124

as she is swallowed up in heavy fog.

125 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

125

The gondola is shrouded in the grey gloom of the fog.

CONTINUED



125 CONTINUED

125

PRUSS

(to Elevatorman)

Take her down below the fog layer,  
Hans.

LEHMANN

But no lower than 100 feet.

126 INT. KESSLER - VOGEL CABIN AND PASSAGEWAY - DAY

126

Kessler pulls on a sweater and goes into the passageway. He stops, sniffs, zeros in on a door he throws open.

127 INT. THE COUNTESS' CABIN - DAY

127

In elegant deshabelle at the writing desk, she applies a gold lighter to her odd little pipe.

COUNTESS

(between puffs)

By all means, come right in, Franz.

KESSLER

Where'd you get that lighter?

COUNTESS

From our hot-blooded radio operator.

KESSLER

Give it to me, Countess.

Twisting away, she sits on the settee (bed made up for day).

KESSLER

(extending his palm)

Behave Ursula. You know it's  
dangerous.

COUNTESS

(lolling back)

Franz, I've learned the new game.  
Breaking all the rules. It's much  
more fun for people like us than  
the butchers and shoe clerks in  
their Brown shirts. Because, you  
see, we made the rules.

KESSLER

(grasping her  
wrist)

I made this one.

CONTINUED

127 CONTINUED

127

He pries open her fingers and takes the lighter.

COUNTESS

(a weary sigh)

Go ahead. Take it.

(gesturing)

Help yourself to anything else.  
That's the official policy, isn't  
it?

(shrugging)

They've already taken my house  
and my land.

KESSLER

So I heard. A great sacrifice.  
It was most generous of you.

COUNTESS

Generous? I screamed bloody murder.  
Good God, if I told you  
what they're doing at Peenemunde,  
Franz ---

KESSLER

(grasping her shoulders)

You don't know, Ursula. No one  
does. If they thought you did, you  
wouldn't be allowed to leave the  
country. Listen to me. Without  
any questions asked or answered,  
you made a great sacrifice for  
the Fatherland.

(hard emphasis)

Do you understand?

She stares at him, then slowly nods.

KESSLER

(releasing her gently)

Good.

COUNTESS

(a deliberate transformation)

Why anyone would want that  
wretched island, I'll never know.  
Did I tell you, Franz, that I've  
finally gotten rid of it?

(picking up picture  
of her daughter)

Trudi will be delighted, too.  
She's growing up rather nicely,  
I think. She'll be at the air-  
field. Perhaps you'll see her.

CONTINUED

127 CONTINUED - 2

127

KESSLER

Beautiful child.

(looking up)

I heard you say she's at school in Boston. That's marvelous.

COUNTESS

Yes, and doing very well there.

It's a school for the deaf, you know. The best, I'm told. Trudi's learned to speak now and lip-read.

This summer we'll ---

Suddenly she gasps and drops the picture. The cabin has turned an eerie blue.

128 INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY

128

The whole ship glows the same eerie blue. The passengers at tea on the banquettes look in terror at sparks dancing off their fingers. People come running from their cabins and the lounge. Kessler hurries onto the promenade with the Countess who has the white cape over her shoulders.

129 KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW

129

Pajetta and Napier rush from the lounge. Spotting Kessler, Pajetta remembers he's crippled, pulls up short and leans heavily on his cane.

130 CLOSE ON KESSLER

130

having seen and well-noted Pajetta's sudden agility.

131 ANGLE TOWARD OCEAN A HUNDRED FEET BELOW

131

becoming visible as the Zeppelin descends through the fog.

\* EXCITED VOICES OVER

We're on fire...It's crashing...I smell gas...Harold!

132 FULL ON PROMENADE

132

The sparks stop and the blue glow fades. Lehmann, smiling reassurance, appears on deck.

CONTINUED

LEHMANN

Please. Don't be upset. You've just been treated to a harmless display of St. Elmo's fire.

EXCITED VOICES

What's that?...I know gas when I smell it....

LEHMANN

(chuckling)

No, no, no. As the ship came through the fog, we accumulated an electrical charge -- like a child shuffling his shoes across a carpet. But we're in no danger of conducting the electricity, since we're at an altitude of one hundred feet.

Kessler curiously watches Pajetta limping off with Napier.

Drawing her cape around her, she contemplates the sea through an open window. Kessler stops beside her.

COUNTESS

Marvelous sensation on an airship... floating...timeless....

Kessler inconspicuously tosses the lighter in his hand, then drops it into the sea. She looks at him mischievously.

KESSLER

Do you still play cards, Ursula?

COUNTESS

(flatly)

Why?

KESSLER

Major Napier and Pajetta. They pique my professional curiosity.

COUNTESS

I've been propositioned frequently, but this is the first time I've been recruited by the Luftwaffe. That is what you're doing, isn't it, Franz?

CONTINUED

133 CONTINUED

133

KESSLER

Yes...with apologies.

COUNTESS

(laughing)

I'll give you ten percent of my winnings. If you remember, I'm good at games of chance.

KESSLER

You're in the right place.

COUNTESS

(a puzzled look)

Now that's an odd thing to say.

134 INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

134

rearranged for Channing's concert...crowded. Unoccupied reserved seats for the Captain are in the front row. Some off-duty crewmen, including Boerth, congregate on the promenade decks. Many passengers are in evening dress. At the piano, Channing waits for the beautifully gowned Countess to find a seat. Men pop up all over, offering their places, but she settles in splendid isolation in the Captain's row. Channing starts to play.

135 TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND VOGEL

135

At the back, Kessler nods to Vogel. They quietly slip out.

136 FULL ON LOUNGE

136

Channing plays a medley of show tunes written by others.

137 INT. SPAH'S CABIN - NIGHT

137

Vogel searches through Spah's suitcase. He finds a gun, inspects it...a toy gun...Another doll. He pulls off the head looking inside. Nothing but stuffing. He jams the head back, sticks the doll in the suitcase and closes it hurriedly with some force. A paper flutters off the writing table. He picks it up.

138 INSERT - THE PAPER

138

It bears a sketch of the interior of the Hindenburg's stern.

139

INT. DOUGLAS' CABIN - NIGHT

139

From the wardrobe Kessler pulls an attache case embossed with Douglas' name. Locked. Excited, Vogel comes in.

VOGEL

(hands paper  
to Kessler)

Spah made this sketch of the ship's interior.

(self-satisfied)

Now what do you think of your pet clown?

KESSLER

He's shown us where to look for his next trick.

(handing him case)

See if you can open this.

VOGEL

(disdainfully)

Standard combination.

Holding the lock to his ear he opens it expertly by using his sense of touch and hearing.

VOGEL

Simple for a man who knows his job.

KESSLER

Mine didn't require picking locks.

They go through the contents but find only business letters and layouts for toothpaste ads.

KESSLER

Douglas got rid of that airport cable fast.

(closing case)

We'll have to wait for the answer to the one he sent.

VOGEL

(glancing at watch)

How long is this concert going to last?

KESSLER

No telling, but I asked the Captain to arrive fifteen minutes late.

140 INT. CABIN OF NAPIER AND PAJETTA - CLOSE ON A STRANGE DEVICE 140

made of two cardboard discs fastened together with a brass split pin. The top disc, inscribed with numerals, has a window. As the lower disc is rotated, words appear in the window: "Operation K"... "Passage"... "Raid"... "Mr. Chandu."

VOGEL'S VOICE

A coding device.

Pull back to Kessler and Vogel studying the device beside an open backgammon board containing assorted currency.

KESSLER

I've never seen one like it.

VOGEL

Luftwaffe Intelligence has been too busy sunning themselves in Spain.

He turns the disc until "Operation K" appears in the window.

KESSLER

What do you think that stands for, Vogel -- Operation Kraut, Knockwurst, or Kosher?

Kessler takes the device, returns it to the backgammon board.

VOGEL

What more do you need to arrest Napier and Pajetta?

KESSLER

My orders are to move quietly. Besides, when you surface a spy and he doesn't know it, you can use him to your own advantage.

VOGEL

(a tight smile)  
You go to your church, I'll go to mine -- or should I say synagogue, Colonel?

KESSLER

Some day, Vogel, all that nastiness inside your gut is going to back up and choke you.

141 INT. THE LOUNGE - NIGHT - FAVORING NAPIER AND PAJETTA 141

Channing plays the score from Babes In Arms. Pajetta, despite Napier's arm digs, fights a losing battle to stay awake.

- 142 CLOSE ON CHANNING 142  
He switches abruptly to a lively version of "Come, Josephine In My Flying Machine," segueing into "Bei Mir Bist du Schoen."
- 143 ANGLE ON CAPTAIN PRUSS 143  
With several officers, he enters and goes to his front row seats. The audience applauds Pruss who bows a jovial acknowledgment and sits beside the Countess.
- 144 ANGLE TOWARD BACK OF ROOM 144  
Kessler appears with Vogel.  
VOGEL  
That's the latest big hit in America -- naturally.
- 145 ANGLE ON CHANNING 145  
He beckons the crew members on the decks forward.  
CHANNING  
With your permission, Captain.  
Pruss nods graciously and the men move closer.  
CHANNING  
(to audience)  
For the first time in public I'm going to play a number from my upcoming show. Mr. Joe Spah has kindly agreed to take part in our little entertainment.  
(pointedly)  
I hope you like it, Captain.  
As Spah comes from his seat, a ripple of excitement goes through the audience.
- 146 ANGLE ON CHANNING AND SPAH 146  
Channing plays and now sings the lyrics in his pleasant non-professional voice. The words purport to be in praise of Nazis and their good works. But what Spah dances and pantomimes is a sendup of the Nazis. Producing props by sleight-of-hand, he turns himself into Hitler, a dive-bomber, an Aryan maiden, a goose-stepping Brown Shirt, etc., all performing actions the opposite of what Channing's kindly words describe.



- 147 INTERCUTS ON AUDIENCE 147  
At first there is confused silence, then an undercurrent of whispering. After awhile a few people giggle nervously.
- 148 ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS 148  
Seated beside the Captain, she has her hand to her mouth trying desperately to suppress her laughter.
- 149 CLOSE ON DOUGLAS 149  
He throws back his head and laughs outright. Others near him now relax and laugh.
- 150 ANGLE ON KESSLER AND VOGEL 150  
As Kessler's smile widens, Vogel's scowl deepens. Kessler catches himself and glances off toward the crew members. Many are displeased or bewildered.
- 151 KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW - CREW ON PROMENADE - FAVORING BOERTH 151  
Boerth is smiling. His eyes meet Kessler's.
- 152 CLOSEUP - KESSLER 152  
He regards Boerth with a slight lift of his brows.
- 153 ANGLE ON THE CAPTAIN'S PARTY - FAVORING COUNTESS 153  
She gives way to her laughter, wiping her eyes. Several officers also laugh out of politeness. Pruss freezes them with a look and stands. His officers rise with him. Pruss steps to the piano and gently lowers the cover to stop Channing's playing.
- 154 ANGLE ON SPAH 154  
halting in mid-act and looking back to see what's happened to the music. When he absorbs the situation, he turns himself into an SS motorcyclist complete with swastikas on the tail. Propelled by his own engine noises, he zooms off.

- 155 CLOSE ON PRUSS AND CHANNING 155
- PRUSS  
(with an edge)  
Thank you so much, Mr. Channing.  
Unfortunately your humor is not the  
same as ours. Good night, sir.
- 156 FULL ON ROOM - FAVORING BESS 156
- She comes to Channing, sticks a flower in his buttonhole, kisses him. In the Captain's wake, the audience quickly exits.
- 157 ANGLE PAST KESSLER AND VOGEL 157
- As Channing leaves with his wife on his arm he bows cordially to them. Kessler, smiling faintly, watches them go.
- VOGEL  
You were amused.
- KESSLER  
Relieved. There's nothing explosive  
in words and music.
- 158 INT. STERN VENTILATOR SHAFT - NIGHT - STRAIGHT DOWN SHOT 158
- Muffled in shadow, a crewman climbs up the shaft. Only as he nears camera can Boerth be recognized.
- 159 REVERSE UP ANGLE 159
- Boerth peers up the shaft to the top, inspecting it closely, then turns and disappears down the tunnel-like catwalk.
- 160 ANGLE DOWN SHAFT TO LOWER CATWALK 160
- A figure appears on the catwalk below. As he turns his face upwards to survey the length of the shaft, the heavily shadowed features are seen to be Kessler's.
- 161 and 162 OMITTED 161 and 162
- 163 MIDDLE CATWALK - HEAD ON SHOT 163
- Boerth approaches on the catwalk. He stops, looks around carefully, feels gas cells 2 and 3 for pressure. He pauses, checks one bag again and comes to a decision.

- 164 ANOTHER ANGLE 164  
Climbing along the ropes between gas cells 2 and 3, sometimes half hidden among the folds which he examines, Boerth works his way abeam to the framework where the starboard horizontal stabilizer joins the hull.
- 165 INT. BOTTOM OF LOWER FIN - NIGHT 165  
A figure comes down the stairs into the brooding, complexly structured area at the lowest point in the ship. Groping a moment, Kessler hits a light switch.
- 166 INT. NARROW SPACE BETWEEN GAS CELLS 2 AND 3 - NIGHT 166  
The effect of the light here is like a sudden illumination of a weird seascape on the ocean floor.
- 167 ANGLE ON BOERTH 167  
Startled, flecked with light, he steps back. His foot comes down on a tension wire.
- 168 CLOSE ON WIRE 168  
As Boerth's foot leaves it, the wire breaks, lashing back into the horizontal stabilizer and cutting the fabric skin.
- 169 INT. LOWER FIN - CLOSE DOWN ANGLE ON KESSLER 169  
He hears something, looks up sharply, strains to one side.
- 170 KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW - ALMOST STRAIGHT UP 170  
He can dimly make out a figure scrambling from the ropes onto the middle catwalk, then quickly disappearing forward.
- 171 ANGLE ON KESSLER 171  
Pan with him as he goes quickly up the stairs.
- 172 ANGLE ON MIDDLE CATWALK 172  
As Boerth forces himself to a leisurely stop between cells 3 and 4 and looks down the narrow space.

172-A BOERTH'S POINT OF VIEW

172-A

From his restricted vantage point he sees Kessler approaching the top of the stairs from the fin.

172-B CLOSER ON BOERTH

172-B

peering down, he recognizes the Colonel with a sardonic smile.

172-C CLOSER ON KESSLER

172-C

mounting the stairs, trying to recognize the figure above him.

172-D KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW

172-D

The figure starts to climb down toward him on the ropes.

173 EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - CLOSE ON STARBOARD STABILIZER

173

The small tear in the fabric with the snapped wire protruding widens slightly.

173-A ANGLE ON LOWER CATWALK

173-A

as Boerth drops into frame and turns to face Kessler.

KESSLER

(a beat)

It's you, Boerth. What the devil were you doing?

BOERTH

Routine inspection, Colonel.

KESSLER

Inspecting what?

BOERTH

I was checking gas valves, sir. A rigger's duty.

173-B TIGHT TWO SHOT

173-B

Studying Boerth, Kessler nods to himself. Boerth meets his long stare coolly.

BOERTH

(finally)

Anything I can help you with, sir?

CONTINUED

173-B CONTINUED

173-I

Kessler regards Boerth thoughtfully. The only sound is the drumming of the diesels.

KESSLER

(probing)

I understand you were a Hitler Youth troop leader.

BOERTH

Yes, sir.

KESSLER

But you haven't been active for the last two years.

BOERTH

Only because of the Hindenburg, sir. I helped build her at Friderichshafen, then last year made all ten trips.

Kessler nods ironically.

BOERTH

If that's all, sir, I'll carry on with my duties.

Pan Boerth as he moves down the steps to the bottom of the stern.

173-C ANGLE ON KESSLER

173-C

He starts to go, hesitates, turns.

KESSLER

Boerth.

173-D KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW ON BOERTH

173-I

at the bottom of the stairs. Boerth stops, looks back.

173-E CLOSE ON KESSLER

173-I

KESSLER

(softly)

I wonder what you were really doing, Boerth.

173-F CLOSE ON BOERTH

173-I

deadpan.

CONTINUED

173-F CONTINUED

173-E

BOERTH

My duty, sir.

He flips off the light switch and becomes a dark shadow among darker ones.

173-G LOW ANGLE TOWARD KESSLER

173-C

silhouetted at the top of the stairs. He turns abruptly and moves away on the lower catwalk.

174 OMITTED

174

175 EXT. A HOUSE ON A SUBURBAN AMERICAN STREET - DAY

175

Two men ring the doorbell and wait, hats in hand.

A title: MILWAUKEE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 6:45 A.M.

Kathie Rauch in a bathrobe opens the door. Three cats scurry out. The men show credentials.

FIRST AGENT

We're from the FBI, Mrs. Rauch.  
We'd like to talk to you.

KATHIE

G-men? Oh, lordy, lordy. You're  
sure you have the right party?

SECOND AGENT

(pushing in)

Yes ma'am.

176 INT. RAUCH LIVING ROOM - DAY

176

Kathie, a cat on her lap, sits in a rocker. The two agents stand on either side.

FIRST AGENT

(showing letter)

Then you confirm that this is your  
letter in your own handwriting to  
the German Ambassador?

KATHIE

I certainly do. And everything in  
it will happen just like I say.  
Tomorrow the Zeppelin will fly  
over New York City and blow up. I  
know it for a fact.

CONTINUED

176 CONTINUED

176

## SECOND AGENT

How do you know it, Mrs. Rauch?

## KATHIE

Because two weeks ago I saw it in a vision clear as crystal. I'm clairvoyant and I'm never wrong. Just ask any of the neighbors.

(agents react)

I also predict Bette Davis will play the part of Scarlett O'Hara in the movie, and the Duke of Windsor will never marry Mrs. Simpson....

177 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - LONG SHOT - MINIATURE

177

Scudding clouds...the ocean below rough and spuming.

178 CLOSEUP OF TEAR IN OUTER SKIN OF STABILIZER - DAY

178

The stiff wind whips the inch-long tag of linen.

179 INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

179

With Kessler at his shoulder, Speck finishes taking down a message coming from the wireless in dots-and-dashes, and swings toward the typewriter.

## KESSLER

Just read it from the shorthand.

## SPECK

'Checking information that former lover of Freda Halle was killed fighting for leftists in Spain -- signed, Hufschmidt.'

Kessler lifts the paper from Speck and tears it up.

## KESSLER

Send this to Hufschmidt.

(dictating)

Interrogate Freda Halle about bomb. Have several suspects but no evidence -- signed, Kessler.

180 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ON STABILIZER

180

The tear, whipped by the strong wind, widens a fraction.

181 INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY 181  
At a window the businessman peers through binoculars.

182 BINOCULAR SHOT - DISTANT ICEBERGS 182  
BUSINESSMAN'S VOICE  
Brrr...Icebergs....

183 ANGLE ON VOGEL 183  
lowering his camera as people hurry to the windows.  
VOGEL  
Too far away to photograph.  
Near him Irene poses. He winks and snaps her picture.

184 OMITTED 184

185 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ON STABILIZER 185  
Lashed by the wind, the tear extends another few inches.

186 INT. THE LOUNGE - DAY - ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS 186  
At the piano, she plays a Chopin waltz with deep feeling.  
KESSLER  
(dipping in)  
You play beautifully but I wish  
you were playing cards.  
COUNTESS  
Three this afternoon.  
She closes her eyes and lets the music flow through her.  
Kessler stands quietly watching her.

187 INT. LOWER FIN - DAY 187  
Boerth and Flakus play with the dog, Heidi.  
FLAKUS  
You wouldn't say anything about  
me taking her down here, would you?  
BOERTH  
Hell, I've been doing it since we  
left.

CONTINUED



187

CONTINUED

187

FLAKUS

(grinning)

What do you call this kind of dog?

BOERTH

She's a Dalmatian. They used to follow behind carriages, didn't you girl? They need a lot of exercise.

From o.s. there's a ripping noise and a staccato sound like violently flapping sails. The dog bolts. Flakus dashes after her shouting.

188

ANGLE ON BOERTH

188

Reacting to the noise, he hurriedly starts to ascend the framework of the fin toward the sound. He stops dead, staring up.

189

BOERTH'S POINT OF VIEW - NARROW SPACE BETWEEN CELLS 2 AND 3

189

He sees a play of light and shadow as though in conjunction with the heavy tattoo beating on the stern of the ship.

190

ANGLE ON BOERTH

190

He scrambles higher in the fin for a better look.

190-A

CLOSE SHOT - A GREAT GASH IN THE SKIN OF THE STABILIZER

190-A

seen through the framework where stabilizer joins hull.

190-B

ANGLE ON BOERTH

190-B

scrambling instantly over to the nearest phone station on the middle catwalk, snatching up the receiver.

191

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - FAVORING STABILIZER

191

Shreds from the open wound flap in the gale-force wind.

192

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

192

The wheel jerks in Helmsman Frenkel's grip. Instantly a second man joins his mate to hold it steady. Watch Officer Dimmler spins from the phone to the Captain.

CONTINUED

192

CONTINUED

192

DIMMLER

Skin on starboard stabilizer ripped loose, sir.

PRUSS

(instantly)

Nose up one degree, engines three and four idle, forward engines a quarter speed.

(to Lehmann)

You handle the repairs, Lehmann. I'll stay on the bridge.

Lehmann hurries out as Engineer Sauter rings the order on the engine telegraph.

193

INT. HULL - LOWER CATWALK - ANGLE ON FLAKUS

193

wildly chasing the dog. Playing a game, Heidi doubles back, dodges to get past Flakus, and falls.

194

INT. UPPER FIN - DAY

194

Held by ropes, Riggers Knorr and Boerth start up the girders to a hatch. The heavy flapping sound of the shreds flogging the ship continues. Felber and Ludecke, the anchormen for the rope, ascend behind the riggers and stop below the hatch, lashing themselves to girders. Third Rigger Neuhaus arrives with a new section of fabric.

194-A

LONG DOWN SHOT TO BOTTOM OF STERN

194-

With Kessler beside him, Lehmann is on the phone at the emergency steering station here. His voice is lost in the pounding noise and whistling rush of air through the ripped skin.

195

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

195

Grunting and sweating, the elevatorman and helmsman whip their wheels one way, then the other to keep the ship stable. Pruss hangs up the phone, turns to Sauter.

PRUSS

Forward engines a quarter ahead, aft engines idle.

Sauter relays the order on the engine telegraph.

CONTINUED

195

CONTINUED

195

DIMMLER

(at altimeter)

Captain, we're losing altitude.

PRUSS

Cold air hitting the gas bags.  
The hydrogen loses lift.

SAUTER

More power, sir?

PRUSS

No. The riggers would be swept  
overboard by the wind. What's the  
altitude now?

DIMMLER

906 feet, sir.

PRUSS

Rate of descent?

DIMMLER

Thirty feet a minute.

PRUSS

That gives them about twenty-five  
minutes.

196

EXT. HATCH IN UPPER FIN - DAY

196

In the open hatch, Boerth drops a rope ladder to the stabilizer below. Caught in the wind, the ladder angles aftwards.

197

INT. UPPER FIN - DAY

197

Boerth checks to make sure the upper end of the ladder, tied down by Knorr beside him, is securely fastened to the hatch framework.

198

EXT. HATCH AND LADDER - DAY

198

As the ladder straightens a moment, Boerth emerges and starts down it. With no one to anchor the bottom of the ladder, it sways back dangerously during Boerth's descent.

199

EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

199

With his weight Boerth steadies the ladder as Knorr descends.

199-A ANOTHER ANGLE ON STABILIZER

199-A

Moving along a beam beneath the skin, hitched together by the safety rope, they crawl forward to the tear. A flailing shred snaps Knorr viciously across the eyes. He grunts. Momentarily blinded, he starts to slide off, pulling Boerth with him.

199-B INT. UPPER FIN - ANGLE ON LUDECKE AND FELBER

199-B

They brace themselves and haul in on the safety rope.

200 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

200

Boerth and Knorr, held by the rope, work their way back.

200-A INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

200-A

DIMMLER

Altitude eight hundred feet.

Pruss, strolling, nods and stops.

PRUSS

Can't risk going below three hundred.

201 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY - SHOOTING FORWARD PAST RIGGERS - MATTE 201

The length of the giant Zeppelin stretches beyond them. On their hands and knees, buffeted by the wind, they cut away the wildly flapping shreds with their riggers' knives.

202 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

202

DIMMLER

(droning)

Altitude seven hundred feet, now losing forty-five feet a minute.

PRUSS

Aft engines to half.

Sauter hesitates. Pruss looks at him.

PRUSS

A little more breeze won't blow them away, Sauter. We'll gain some lift -- and a couple of minutes.

(briskly)

Aft engines half speed.

Sauter jumps to relay the order on the engine telegraph.

203 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY - ANGLE FROM NOSE TOWARD TAIL - MATTE 203

along the great length of the ship. The loose shreds have been cut away, the exposed ends of the skin sewn tight. Appearing no bigger than flies, the riggers crawl to the ladder and, standing, grip it to steady themselves.

204 ANGLE TOWARD HATCH 204

The riggers receive the bundle of new fabric lowered on a rope. They start to unfasten the bundle. Lehmann's head pops from the hatch.

LEHMANN

(through megaphone)

You've only got about fifteen minutes.

From o.s. comes the sound of the aft engines accelerating, providing more thrust into the wind. The section of fabric billows in the riggers' hands, almost tearing free.

205 ANOTHER ANGLE 205

They fight the flapping fabric onto the exposed stabilizer ribs and lie on top of the fabric to keep it in place.

KNORR

(shouting)

Eric, you sew, you're the fastest.

Boerth gets to his knees. Knorr remains prone on the fabric. Boerth goes to work with his heavy sailmaker's needle and palm. Hampered by the rope, he cuts himself free from Knorr. Knorr, still tied to the safety rope, shakes his head grimly.

206 INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY 206

Passengers at the windows enthusiastically take photos.

207 THEIR POINT OF VIEW - THE ICEBERGS 207

off the port side.

VOICES OVER

Gorgeous...

This is worth the whole trip...

What exposure are you using, Mr.

Shimura?

208 ANGLE ON PROMENADE 208

The Breslau boys play hopscotch. The sweet-faced old lady with a Brownie camera turns graciously to Kirsch.

CONTINUED

208 CONTINUED

208

SWEET-FACED OLD LADY  
It's all right to tell the Captain  
he can go on now, Kirsch. We have  
all the pictures we want.

209 OMITTED

209

210 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE

210

At five hundred feet, hovering into the wind, she sinks  
gradually toward the icebergs and the white-capped sea.

211 ANOTHER ANGLE - STARBOARD STABLIZIER

211

Most of the new skin has been fastened into place. The two  
riggers sew frantically, working their way down the tear.

KNORR

(one eye closed)

Go back before you swim back, Eric.  
We'll finish.

BOERTH

You go back, take care of your eye.

212 INT. HULL - AT FRAMEWORK WHERE STABLIZER JOINS HULL

212

Lehmann looks through the framework at the tear where outside  
on the stablizer the riggers work. Kessler is crouched be-  
side him examining something. The play of light and shadow  
indicates the progress of the workers o.s. above as well as  
the unfastened end of new skin beating loudly in the wind.

213 CLOSE ON KESSLER

213

still crouched and examining what he holds in his hand -- the  
fragment of snapped tension wire attached to the turnbuckle.  
Thoughtful, troubled, he rises, looking o.s. toward the tear.

214 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY - CLOSE ON ALTIMETER

214

at four hundred feet. Pull back to Pruss beside it.

PRUSS

Stand by, Sauter. When we're down  
to 300, I want aft engines to full  
speed.

(picking up phone)

Get the riggers inside.

215 EXT. THE STABILIZER - DAY - SHOOTING TOWARD HATCH 215

The riggers have reached the end of the gash. Only the base end remains to be sewn down.

LEHMANN'S VOICE  
(through megaphone)

Knorr.....

He looks up quickly.

216 and 217 OMITTED 216 and 217

218 CLOSE ON LEHMANN IN HATCH OPENING 218

He gestures the men back, points o.s., and pantomimes to indicate the propellers are going to speed up.

219 ANGLE ON RIGGERS 219

Knorr starts for the ladder Boerth continues to sew desperately. Knorr grabs his arm.

BOERTH  
(shaking him off)  
It's not closed.

Knorr looks desperately from Boerth to the rope ladder slapping and swaying beneath the hatch. Lehmann tugs urgently on the safety rope to which Knorr alone is tied.

KNORR  
(yelling)  
Eric!

Boerth hesitates, then crawls off with Knorr to the ladder. Boerth anchors it and Knorr starts up.

220 and 221 OMITTED 220 and 221

222 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY 222

Dimmler turns from the phone to Pruss at the altimeter.

DIMMLER  
One rigger still outside, Captain.  
Boerth.

Pruss gives no sign of having heard.

- 223 CLOSE ON ALTIMETER 223  
The needle wavers a fraction above 300 feet.  
DIMMLER'S VOICE  
Captain...Boerth is still ---
- 224 CLOSEUP - PRUSS 224  
eyes on the altimeter.  
PRUSS  
(curtly)  
I heard you, Dimmler.
- 225 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY 225  
Boerth has returned to the tear and is sewing down the base end. His hands move quicker than the eye.
- 226 CLOSE ON BOERTH 226  
He completes his last stitches, cuts the line, ties it off, and turns to crawl to the swaying ladder.
- 227 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY 227  
Eyes riveted on Pruss, the men wait tensely. Pruss looks up from the altimeter and pauses.  
PRUSS  
Aft engines full ahead, nose up.
- 228 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY 228  
In a half-crouch Boerth reaches the ladder and struggles part way up. Then with a roar from the engines o.s. the ship plows into the wind. As the surge of air hits Boerth, he is blown backwards on the ladder. The ship tilts up. Boerth can only hang on for his life, and that barely.
- 229 ANGLE ON HATCH 229  
Straining out the hatch, Knorr and Neuhaus, held by men below them, haul up on the ladder until Boerth is close enough to grab and pull inside.



230 INT. BOTTOM OF THE STERN - DAY 230

In contrast to the glaring light topside it is dark and cave-like. Alone and unobserved, Flakus climbs laboriously up from the ship's bottom, the squirming dog under his arm.

231 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE 231

With engines at full speed the ship drives forward and up.

232 EXT. THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY - DAY 232

A title: FRANKFURT 4:05 P.M.

A black Mercedes pulls up to the clearly marked no-parking zone in front of the building. A policeman points to the red curb and gestures the car to move on.

233 INT. TICKET OFFICE OF THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY - DAY 233

A clerk guides Freda Halle to a large wall map of the Hindenburg's route. A swastika pin flag marks the ship's progress.

CLERK

She's about 7 hours late, but I assure you, Madam, there's no need to worry.

(pointing)

She's right here, 100 miles off the coast of Newfoundland.

FREDA

Then they won't be landing until tomorrow afternoon.

CLERK

(ushering her out)

Come back in the morning. We'll know better then.

He opens the door.

FREDA

Thank you so much.

CLERK

(bowing, smiling)

A pleasure.

As she leaves his smile fades. He nods to the street.

234 EXT. ZEPPELIN COMPANY - DAY 234

Freda emerges. Two men instantly converge on her and whisk her into the Mercedes at the curb. The car pulls out emitting the doleful wails of the Gestapo siren. People in the street, including the policeman, look the other way.

235 INSERT - A RADIOGRAM 235

SHARKS ON THIRD AND RUNNING STOP SQUEEZE IS ON signed HAWKS.

Sound: a knock on the door.

KESSLER'S VOICE

Come in.

236 EXT. RADIO ROOM - DAY - SHOOTING PAST KIRSCH 236

as he opens the door and enters. Speck, tuning in an R. Strauss opera, is behind Kessler who seals a message in an envelope. Kirsch closes the door, blocking camera.

237 INT. READING AND WRITING ROOM - DAY 237

Ed Douglas tries to read. His leg jiggles nervously. Kirsch enters with Kessler behind him. Kessler peruses a wall display of Zeppelin stamps for sale. Kirsch gives Douglas his radiogram. Douglas absorbs the message, then moves to a desk, takes an RCA form, and starts to write a reply.

KIRSCH

I'll wait and take it to the radio room for you, Mr. Douglas.

DOUGLAS

(writing)

No thanks. I'll do it myself.

KIRSCH

But sir, passengers aren't allowed ---

DOUGLAS

(tipping him)

I know. Here's my special pass.

238 INT. FOYER - DAY - CLOSE ON BULLETIN BOARD NOTICE 238

in German and English: NEW TIME OF ARRIVAL LAKEHURST -  
3:05 P.M., MAY 6.

239 ANGLE ON DOUGLAS

239

stopping to read the notice. Upset, he changes something on his RCA form. From behind, Kessler takes Douglas by the arm. Douglas starts.

KESSLER

I'd like to see you, Mr. Douglas.

DOUGLAS

How about a drink later?

Kessler tightens his grip and steers him down the passageway.

KESSLER

Now.

DOUGLAS

The hell you say.

Kessler pulls the message from his hand, opens Douglas' cabin door, and pushes him inside.

240 INT. DOUGLAS' CABIN - DAY - CLOSE ON MESSAGE

240

The unsent message is not in code: HAVE FAST CAR MEET ME LAKEHURST 3 PM RUNNING LATE TIMING CLOSE signed HAWKS.

241 ANGLE ON KESSLER AND DOUGLAS

241

KESSLER

(looking up)

You'd better tell me about this, Mr. Douglas.

(reaching in pocket)

And while you're at it also explain these in code.

DOUGLAS

I don't have to explain a damn thing to you. Get out.

Kessler's answer is to lock the door. Douglas glances uneasily at his watch.

KESSLER

Set it back to Frankfurt time, Douglas. That's where a fast police car will be meeting you in---

(glancing at watch)

roughly ninety-four hours -- barring accidents, of course.

CONTINUED

241 CONTINUED

241

Measuring him, Douglas decides on another approach.

DOUGLAS

Okay, I'll tell you, Kessler -- but you gotta let me send that message, It may mean the difference.

KESSLER

To what?

DOUGLAS

To pulling off the biggest deal of my life. Right now I'm in a race to beat my competitor into New York.

KESSLER

Who?

DOUGLAS

Fred Seemans, head of Seemans & Poelzig. He's on the Queen Mary. He left a day and a half before us. In the messages we call his outfit the Sharks, mine the Hawks.

KESSLER

(half-smiling)

By sea and by air and both carnivorous.

DOUGLAS

You get the drift. Tomorrow it'll be announced that GMC has acquired the Opel Motor Company. The advertising account will be up for grabs. The outfit getting there first will have the jump. That's the honest-to-God truth. Now maybe you'll tell me what you're so jumpy about, Kessler.

KESSLER

To find out if there is a Fred Seemans aboard the Queen Mary.

242 EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY - AN OLD MUNICIPAL BUILDING 242

A title: NEW YORK CITY POLICE HEADQUARTERS, 4:15 P.M.

243 INT. A SMALL PANELLED OFFICE - DAY 243

A uniformed Police Captain working at his desk calls out in response to a knock:

CONTINUED

CAPTAIN

Yeah.

As the door opens the inscription on it can be read: "Captain B.F. Farley, Special Intelligence." A slim, serious Plain-clothesman hustles in.

CAPTAIN

Three hours. Where you been, Baker?  
All you had to do was phone the  
steamship line.

BAKER

(opening note-  
book)

That was the easy part, Captain.  
(reading)

The individual Frederick Seemans  
is on board the Queen Mary occupy-  
ing Suite 312 First Class C Deck.

(looking up)

It's the other that took the time.  
(reading)

Operation K, Passage, Raid.  
Mr. Chandu. You know who they are?

CAPTAIN

You're going to tell me any day now,  
aren't you, Baker?

BAKER

Horses.

CAPTAIN

What?

BAKER

It had me stumped so I contacted  
the FBI. Was my face red. Those  
are all names of race horses. Now  
why would a German on a Zeppelin  
ask us about the ponies?

CAPTAIN

You got me. Maybe he's heard New  
York cops make book. Maybe he thinks  
he'll sneak over to Monmouth and win  
a bundle.

BAKER

Yeah, it's near Lakehurst.

(consulting  
notes)

Two of the nags are running there  
tomorrow -- Operation K and Mr. Chandu.

CONTINUED

243 CONTINUED - 2

243

CAPTAIN

Well, send him the odds. That's what the guy probably wants.

244 CLOSE ON ANOTHER DOOR

244

The frosted glass is marked: "ALIEN SQUAD, Lt. A. Lombardi." Behind the glass, the shadow of a man can be seen and his voice faintly heard.

245 INT. ALIEN SQUAD ROOM - DAY

245

Lt. Lombardi stands in front of a blackboard marked with assignments to steamships, among them the Queen Mary. Lombardi addresses two men: Detective Moore, a spare six-footer, and his bullet-headed partner, Grunberger.

LOMBARDI

You boys are going out to beautiful Jersey by special request of the State Department. This time they got a Luftwaffe colonel aboard, name of Kessler. Big wheel in Intelligence.

MOORE

Coming to land a coupla espionage agents, maybe.

LOMBARDI

Don't you experts let any damn Nazis slip into the country.

GRUNBERGER

The blimp better not get too low over them Jersey woods. Full of moonshiners. They'll shoot at any big-ass bird flying over their stills.

LOMBARDI

The T-men are also sending up a special customs squad from Philadelphia. Byrnes Duncan will be with them.

MOORE

Duncan's from the Bureau of Explosives.

CONTINUED

- 245 CONTINUED 245
- GRUNBERGER
- Thanks a lot. Now we get the picture.
- 246 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE 246
- showing red port and green starboard lights, a white light on the stern and a luminous glow in the control gondola. The lights on the promenade wink out.
- 247 MONTAGE 247
- A) RADIO ROOM
- Kessler waiting.
- B) SMOKING ROOM
- Napier, Pajetta, the Countess, Osborne, and the Japanese diplomat in a poker game.
- C) CLOSEUP OF THE BOMB
- in the same hand as before. The saboteur's eye lowers to an inch of it, inspecting the infernally compact mechanism.
- 248 INT. CAPTAIN LEHMANN'S CABIN - NIGHT 248
- As Kessler enters, Lehmann looks up from a set of blueprints. A coffee pot and two demitasses are on the table.
- LEHMANN
- I thought you might find some time to relax now that the famous Rauch letter turns out to be from a crank.  
(pouring coffee as  
Kessler sits)  
The Gestapo often exaggerates their information.
- A moment -- then Kessler lifts the blueprints.
- KESSLER
- You building this?
- LEHMANN
- Yes. My own design for a house in Zeppelinheim, a new village near the airfield. We're hoping

CONTINUED

LEHMANN (Cont'd)

a lot of our airship families will settle there.

A knock...Lessing enters with a radiogram.

LESSING

For you, Colonel.

He delivers it and leaves. Kessler opens the envelope. His face tightens as he reads the message.

KESSLER

From the Gestapo. Boerth's woman has been arrested. She's confessed her ex-lover was killed fighting with the leftists in Spain.

LEHMANN

In the hands of the Gestapo anyone can be forced to confess anything.

KESSLER

And in bed with his mistress, Boerth could have been talked into a plot.

LEHMANN

What plot, Colonel? A crank letter has been made into a matter of State. The purpose of exaggerating the bomb scare was to get helium. I went along with that.

KESSLER

There are other sources of information.

LEHMANN

Perhaps no more valid than the letter.

KESSLER

I'm no believer in the occult, like our Mrs. Rauch, but I tell you, Captain, I have an uneasy sense of disaster. It's almost as though a bomb were ticking inside me.

LEHMANN

It's a constant feeling with some people in Germany these days.

CONTINUED



LEHMANN (Cont'd)

A decent man like you, Colonel, with a wife -- probably raising a family -- have you never had this feeling before?

The wall of Kessler's impenetrability cracks. Beneath his surface calm can now be glimpsed a man of iron will forced to live between the opposites of his personal creed and the State Philosophy. Lehmann's question draws a bitter response.

KESSLER

Raising a family. My only son was killed three months ago working for the 'New Order.' And believe me I'm not much better...working with the Gestapo...while their spy lies in the bed above me.

Lehmann grimaces and shakes his head.

LEHMANN

What's happening to people like us? I've given my life to Zeppelins. For the sake of our company I even dropped political pamphlets last year from this ship. Where does it stop?

KESSLER

(shaking head)

I've been in the Air Force since the World War. When the Versailles Treaty abolished it, I worked with Goering and the others to build a secret one.

LEHMANN

I remember those days. You people trained in gliders.

KESSLER

Yes, all over Germany. Most of the time at night. I was proud when Hitler brought the new Luftwaffe into the open. But I wasn't proud last week after Guernica --

(derisively)

-- a little Basque village, a few hundred peasants; three thousand bombs dropped on them. The town was wiped out the first ten minutes -- but we kept it up three hours -- just for the practice.

CONTINUED

248 CONTINUED - 3

248

LEHMANN

You were there?

KESSLER

Chief of Intelligence.

LEHMANN

That's how one wins the Knight's  
Cross in peacetime.

KESSLER

Peacetime....

LEHMANN

(breaking the moment)

Well, now we have two heroes aboard.  
Boerth did valiant service to the  
Hindenburg today. He doesn't seem  
like the man to destroy the ship.

KESSLER

He does to me. He's just the man  
I'd choose for a dangerous mission.  
Bold, tough, cool.

LEHMANN

(slight smile)

You have those qualities in common  
with him. You're both good men.

KESSLER

I must get to know him better.

(handing Lehmann  
radiogram)

Please show this to Pruss.

(standing)

And thanks for the coffee. Good  
night, Captain.

(pauses)

I hope you get your house built.

249 INT. HULL - NIGHT - NOSE CONE

249

Dark, silent...Boerth checks mooring lines. Kessler ascends  
the stairs and joins Boerth on the narrow shelf in the nose  
cone. Boerth regards him quizzically.

KESSLER

Freda Halle has been arrested.

Boerth stiffens, but instantly recovers his easy manner.

CONTINUED

BOERTH  
Traffic violation?

KESSLER  
No. By the Gestapo.

BOERTH  
(contemptuously)  
Because she works for foreigners?

KESSLER  
Because I think she works with you.

BOERTH  
She lives with me.

KESSLER  
She's admitted your predecessor was  
killed fighting for the leftists in  
Spain.

BOERTH  
So?

KESSLER  
If she knows about the bomb, they'll  
make her confess that too.

BOERTH  
What bomb?

KESSLER  
Where is it, Boerth? They'll be  
working on Freda until you tell me.

BOERTH  
You filth.

KESSLER  
No worse than the filth who wants  
to blow up 97 people. But you  
won't have the chance. I'm locking  
you up.

(gripping his arm)  
You're under arrest.

BOERTH  
(deadly quiet)  
Kessler, get your hands off.

KESSLER  
Let's go.  
(jerks his arm)

CONTINUED

249 CONTINUED - 2

249

BOERTH

Get your hands off or I'll blow it up now. You can't stop it. I can do it any second.

A cold, hard ring of truth and conviction in Boerth's voice makes Kessler hesitate; then Boerth whirls to face him and, almost pleading, blurts out:

BOERTH

Don't force me, damn it. Kessler, I need your help.

Kessler, amazed, relaxes his grip.

250 INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

250

Semi-darkness...His face tinted by the green luminescence from the radio dials, Speck copies down a message coming off the short wave in dots-and-dashes. As Lessing enters, Speck puts the message in an envelope and seals it carefully.

SPECK

For Kessler. Get it to him immediately.

LESSING

(leaving)

He's hard to find. He prowls all over the ship.

251 INT. HULL - NIGHT - UP ANGLE TOWARD NOSE CONE

251

A hushed voice is wafted along among the whispering flow of air currents in the dim interior.

252 CLOSE ON KESSLER AND BOERTH

252

They sit muffled in shadow on the edge of the riggers' shelf.

BOERTH.

(low)

This ship is the Nazis' greatest propaganda weapon.

KESSLER

And you patched her up today to make your own propaganda. No good if she just tumbled into the sea. No politics in an act of God, eh?

CONTINUED

252 CONTINUED

252

BOERTH

No survivors either. But that's not how I plan to do it.

(pause)

She'll blow up at the mooring mast in Lakehurst tomorrow. Before she turns around.

KESSLER

A hydrogen airship? It's cold-blooded murder.

BOERTH

The Luftwaffe in Spain was cold-blooded murder. But that was just practice for Hitler.

KESSLER

(sardonically)

And you people think you can save the world by blowing up the Hindenburg.

BOERTH

It's a place to start.

(passionately)

It will prove there is a Resistance. Decent Germans will get the courage to join us. And no one has to be killed -- if you help me. You're the key to how ---

Abruptly Boerth stops and points down. Gesturing silence, he rises and starts to coil rope.

253 DOWN ANGLE

253

Radio Officer Lessing appears in the dimness below.

LESSING

Boerth? Is that Colonel Kessler with you? I have a message for him.

254 CLOSE TWO SHOT

254

Boerth shoots Kessler a look. Kessler holds him with a non-committal stare, then calls down:

KESSLER

Coming.

255 ANGLE ON KESSLER 255  
He quickly descends the curving stairs and takes the message from Lessing on the lower catwalk. He opens the envelope.

256 TIGHT ON KESSLER 256  
as he reads the message: FREDA HALLE DEAD STOP SHOT WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE signed HUFSCHMIDT.  
Kessler's eyes close an instant. He takes a deep breath, then looks back at Boerth.

257 ANGLE ON BOERTH 257  
From far above, he stares down at Kessler.

258 CLOSE ON KESSLER 258  
His face filled with pity, he moves slowly down the catwalk, folding the message smaller and smaller in his hands.

259 INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT 259  
Vogel, in a dress shirt before the mirror, applies cologne to his face. Kessler enters, pauses.

VOGEL  
Have a date with my little Jewish model. I'm curious to try one before they're all gone.

KESSLER  
Cologne won't help you.

VOGEL  
(erupting)  
Why didn't you arrest Boerth? Pruss showed me the message.

KESSLER  
I don't take orders from Hufschmidt or you.  
(controlling himself)  
I'm still looking for a bomb. Arresting Boerth won't keep it from going off.

VOGEL  
It will, dammit, if you make him talk.

CONTINUED

259 CONTINUED

259

KESSLER

Your thumbscrews didn't make Freda Halle talk --

(witheringly)

-- before she was 'shot while trying to escape.'

VOGEL

That was the mistake of some stupid guard, and you're making a worse one. Arrest Boerth, Douglas, Spah -- all of them. Stop dragging your feet.

KESSLER

Brilliant, Vogel. The Hindenburg will come into Lakehurst like a prison ship. I can see the headline: ANTI-NAZI PLOT ON ZEP.

VOGEL

(putting  
on jacket)

There are ways of keeping it quiet. If it offends your delicacy, Kessler, let me handle it for you.

KESSLER

You just do what you're told. I'll handle Boerth. You watch Napier and Spah -- and, of course, your little model.

VOGEL

(opening door)

I'll also be watching you.

KESSLER

Fine. But who'll be watching you?

Vogel turns in the doorway with an odd smile.

VOGEL

\* I'm really disappointed, Colonel. We thought surely after the splendid example of your own son, you'd ---

Kessler lunges, grabs Vogel by the shirt-front and slams him against the wall. Vogel is too startled to do anything but suck air. At the appearance of Flakus gathering shoes from the passageway, Kessler releases Vogel. Kessler looks at his hands as though they were covered with slime, pushes Vogel out and closes the door.

260 CLOSE ON KESSLER

260

He stands at the door thinking. He turns off the overhead light and puts on the small reading lamp by his bed. But instead of lying down he grips the edge of the upper bunk, much like a man in a cell holding the bars.

After a moment he turns slowly, as though there were someone behind him. And there is; in the mirror of the darkened room.

He stares at the other face, his own, for a long time, hoping it will send the answer back.

SLOW FADE OUT



FADE IN

261 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY

261

A title: THURSDAY, MAY 6, 9:35 A.M.

Evidence of recent rain...A Navy car with Commander Rosendahl and Lt. Truscott in the rear splashes past two railroad cars on a siding: a tanker crudely chalked "HINDENBURG"; a flat car containing gas cylinders and lettered in red "HYDROGEN".

262 ANGLE ON WEATHER EMPLACEMENT IN FRONT OF HANGAR

262

Nearing this facility (a platform twenty feet high), the car turns toward the vast dirigible hangar. The wind direction and velocity are electrically displayed on a sign atop the emplacement: WIND SW 12 KTS -- GUSTS 20 KTS. A blinker, unactivated, projects above the sign. Next to the sign is a large clock that changes every five seconds: 9:35:45. Also an anemometer and a steam whistle. There's a puff of smoke from the sign and the gusts reading goes out.

263 INT. HANGAR - DAY -- WAITING ROOM SECTION

263

Some thirty men, including Zeppelin Company officers, New Jersey Police, U.S. Customs and Immigration officials, reporters, and Detectives Moore and Grunberger, organize themselves for the arrival of the Hindenburg.

264 ANGLE FEATURING ROSENDAHL

264

appearing with Truscott in the open hangar doors.

ROSENDAHL

New time of arrival 5 P.M. You reporters can go back to the gin-mills. I'll ask the police and security men to stay, though.

As some of the men leave, Truscott distributes lists.

TRUSCOTT

Get 'em while they're hot -- who wants the passenger list?

265 ANGLE ON MOORE AND GRUNBERGER

265

studying the list.

MOORE

Here's a pair -- Napier and Pajetta.

CONTINUED

265

CONTINUED

265

ROSENDAHL

You know them, Sergeant?

MOORE

Sure do. The 'Major' and Emilio  
'the Cane.' They're boatmen --  
card sharks -- usually work the  
luxury liners.

GRUNBERGER

Real characters.

Rosendahl gives a short laugh. A small worried Man approaches.

SMALL MAN

I'm supposed to check the copper  
tubing on the airship, sir. Are  
those guys kidding about a bomb?

ROSENDAHL

(to a trio of  
reporters)

Very funny..

266

EXT. OCEAN - DAY - SHADOW AND RAINBOWS - MATTE

266

Two concentric rainbows, perfect circles, frame the  
Hindenburg's shadow on the sea.

PETER'S VOICE

Hey, look!

267

INT. PROMENADE DECK - DAY - CLOSE ON THE TWO BRESLAU BOYS

267

gaping. Kirsch pauses behind them.

KIRSCH

Ah, yes. Rainbows like that are  
very common in airship travel.

PAUL

Hey, Dad. D'ya see it?

Breslau joins his boys at the window.

PETER

(loftily)

It's nothin', Dad. Rainbows like  
that are very common in airship  
travel.

268 INT. HULL - DAY - ANGLE ON LOWER CATWALK 268

Kessler moves along it, searching for someone -- or something. First looking fore and aft, he goes purposefully to a spot along the catwalk, glances up, signals with his head and continues aft.

269 ANGLE ON BOERTH 269

Climbing down through the ventilator shaft to the middle catwalk, he follows Kessler. Before descending into the tail fin, he checks behind him.

270 INT. LOWER FIN - DAY 270

Kessler waits in this murky area beneath the belly of the ship. Boerth comes down the stairs.

BOERTH

(eagerly)

Are you with me?

KESSLER

You're headed for tragedy.

271 CLOSE TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND BOERTH 271

BOERTH

(angry, disappointed)

There's no time for that. This ship and I only have six and a half hours left.

KESSLER

And Freda Halle is the first victim.

BOERTH

(staring)

The Gestapo?

KESSLER

Killed trying to escape. They say.

Boerth turns away. Pause...He slams a girder. Again.

KESSLER

Boerth.

Something in the quietness of Kessler's voice gives Boerth pause.

CONTINUED

271

CONTINUED

271

KESSLER

I know, Boerth. I lost my boy in March -- my only child.

Boerth, his back still turned, waits.

272

BIG CLOSEUP - KESSLER

272

sad and furious at the same time.

KESSLER

He was in the Hitler Youth. Fifteen years old. They went out for some fun one night. Paint slogans on a synagogue. Alfred was on the roof. He slipped and fell. His neck was broken.

273

CLOSE TWO SHOT - FAVORING BOERTH

273

BOERTH

Your son died for Hitler. Damn it, isn't that enough for you?

KESSLER

(evenly)

Plenty. I don't need ninety-seven more dead on this ship.

BOERTH

I don't want anyone to die. Why do you think I'm asking your help?

KESSLER

Help? To blow up the Zeppelin.

BOERTH

(passionately)

And, everything she stands for. I told you, it will happen at the mooring mast. No one aboard. My God, that's the last thing I want. Ask Commander Rosendahl for Marines to cordon off the ship. Keep everyone at least fifty yards away.

KESSLER

I would have to see the bomb first, know how it works.

BOERTH

No. You still have a wife at home. The less you know the better.

CONTINUED

273

CONTINUED

273

KESSLER

I have to see it. Too much can go wrong.

BOERTH

You just see that the ship's empty. No one near it. Now what time do I set the bomb for?

Kessler looks at him, then away. Silence.

BOERTH

All right, Kessler. I'll do it without you.

KESSLER

(gazing up)

The ship lands at five...Passengers all off by 5:30. Another half-hour to unload freight and mail. Liberty party leaves at 6:30...Remaining crew eat at the Naval Station Mess... Rosendahl's dinner party for officers at 7:00. Anyone standing watch I'll evacuate. I'll say U.S. Customs search -- something. No supplies, fuel, gas will be loaded till after eight.

He pauses, focusing on Boerth.

BOERTH

What time?

KESSLER

You'll leave with the liberty party. Disappear into New York.

BOERTH

I'm staying aboard.

KESSLER

That can't help Freda now.

BOERTH

(hard)

In the last few seconds I'm sending out a radio signal that it's no accident.

KESSLER

(pause; then)

7:30.

He turns abruptly and goes up the stairs from the tail.

274  
and  
275

OMITTED

274  
and  
275

276

INT. SMOKING ROOM - DAY

276

The Countess plays poker with Napier, Pajetta and Osborne. The stakes on the table are high and the men are tense. The Countess coolly sips a champagne cocktail.

OSBORNE  
(folding hand)

Out.

PAJETTA

Check.

COUNTESS

Raise.

Pajetta frowns, glances at Napier, then laughs, jiggling his cane.

PAJETTA  
Oho, the lady's out for blood.

COUNTESS  
I use it to polish my nails.

Showing him her fingers, she rests them on top of his cane.

277

LOW ANGLE AT TABLE

277

As Pajetta's cane is grounded, the Countess' elegant spike heel takes up the tapping sound.

278

ANGLE ON NAPIER

278

confused. At the sound of another few taps his expression clears.

NAPIER  
(to Countess)  
See you and raise you.

PAJETTA  
Re-raise and call. Let's have the  
showdown, Major.

NAPIER  
(showing cards)  
Three of a kind.

CONTINUED

278 CONTINUED

278

PAJETTA

(showing cards)

Full house.

(chuckling)

I'm only sorry this isn't strip  
poker, Countess.

COUNTESS

(dryly)

You'd be looking for a fig leaf.  
Straight flush.

Pajetta blinks at the high hand, then glares at her and Napier as she rakes in the money. Napier wipes his brow with a handkerchief from his sleeve.

NAPIER

(shuffling cards)

Ah, well. Once more to the breach,  
dear friends.

279 FULL ON ROOM

279

as Kessler enters and stands, surveying the game. The  
Countess catches his eye and indicates Pajetta.

(X)

280 CLOSE ON KESSLER

280

observing Pajetta closely. Vogel emerges from the door "lock"  
and slides up to Kessler.

VOGEL

(low)

Spah's been in the hull again. The  
stewardess found this in his cabin.

He shows Kessler a sketch pad.

281 POINT OF VIEW ON SKETCH PAD

281

There are three drawings of the interior, the last a sketch of  
the complex structure at the stern with a figure swinging from  
a girder.

KESSLER'S VOICE

Our clown is working for someone  
else, I think. Someone who needs  
these.

282 CLOSE TWO-SHOT - KESSLER AND VOGEL

282

VOGEL

Who?

KESSLER

That's the man I want you to find,  
Otto. But after we take care of  
these two.

283 ANGLE PAST KESSLER AND VOGEL

283

Kessler glances significantly at Pajetta and gives Vogel the  
nod. Vogel moves up behind Pajetta and lifts the cane.

VOGEL

What happened to the tape, Mr.  
Pajetta?

PAJETTA

Since when have you become the  
local house dick?

KESSLER

(straight-faced)

I deputized him. Until we land you  
and Major Napier will be confined  
to your cabin.

VOGEL

(grasping Pajetta)

Come along.

NAPIER

(appalled)

What about the game?

KESSLER

You can play hearts with Mr. Pajetta  
in the cabin.

PAJETTA

(reaching for  
pot)

Hold your horses.

COUNTESS

(showing a  
full house)

I believe the pot is mine.  
(a sweet smile)

May I send a bottle of champagne to  
your cabin?

CONTINUED



283 CONTINUED

283

PAJETTA

Madam, what you can do with your champagne, I cannot say in the presence of gentlemen.

He limps off.

284 CLOSE ON KESSLER AND THE COUNTESS

284

Taking his arm, she guides him to the bar.

COUNTESS

You're forgiven, dear Franz. I've made enough to send fifty trunks over on the Bremen.

KESSLER

How'd you do it?

The Countess, taking out her little pipe, glides off to get the lighter. Kessler holds it for her.

COUNTESS

(between puffs)

They cheat at cards. I believe that's how they make their living.

KESSLER

The cane?

COUNTESS

Yes. Pajetta taps signals with it.

KESSLER

And you still won?

The Countess points to her well-shod feet with the small pipe and taps a spike heel on the floor.

COUNTESS

I scrambled their signals. Your ten percent is worth a dozen cases of champagne. Shall we start drinking them up?

KESSLER

Better send them to me. I'll celebrate my return home with a bath in champagne.

CONTINUED

284 CONTINUED

284

COUNTESS

I'd love to join you, but --  
(suddenly serious)  
I'm not going back, Franz.

KESSLER

I know.  
(faint smile)  
Who tries to take a wardrobe trunk  
on a Zeppelin?

COUNTESS

Sweet, darling Franz. It's all so  
depressing.  
(offering pipe)  
This helps a little.

KESSLER

It's not what I need at the moment,  
thanks.

COUNTESS

(kissing his cheek)  
Old stone face.

285 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - ANGLE ON ROSENDAHL'S NAVY CAR - MATTE 285

crossing the ramp over the narrow-gauge railroad tracks  
surrounding the landing mast. In the lee of the mast, a few  
men taking cover from the raw weather hustle back to work.

286 EXT. BASE OF MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON ROSENDAHL 286

Emerging from the car, he calls up to the top of the mast:

ROSENDAHL

Kirby, check over your procedures  
for a high landing. Pruss just  
messed he's going to try one.

287 ANGLE PAST ROSENDAHL TO ENSIGN KIRBY AT TOP OF MAST 287

The pink-cheeked young officer shouts back against the wind.

(X)

KIRBY

Pruss is nuts. An electric front's  
moving in.

CONTINUED

- 287 CONTINUED 287
- ROSENDAHL  
(looking off;  
wincing)  
Well, he's going to try it. Kirby,  
when she's hooked up crank her nose  
down into the cup real easy. Just  
keep thinking: seven million cubic  
feet of hydrogen on the end of our  
fishing pole.
- 288 EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE 288  
A title: 3:45 P.M. The Hindenburg sails over Manhattan.
- 289 INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY 289  
Excited passengers pick out landmarks. A shout from Douglas  
startles people around him -- Kessler, the Countess, others.
- DOUGLAS  
My God, the Queen!  
(to Kessler)  
I've had it.
- KESSLER  
Not necessarily. We'll be at  
Lakehurst by five. She's just  
picking up her tugs.
- 290 EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY - MATTE 290  
The Queen Mary and other ships salute the Zeppelin with  
whistle blasts.
- 291 INT. THE HULL - DAY 291  
Boerth moves down the middle catwalk. Half-full at the end  
of the voyage, the gas bags sag and billow, their bottoms  
hanging in folds.
- 292 CLOSE ON BOERTH 292  
checking the valves on Gas Cell IV. After cautiously surveying  
the lower catwalk, he climbs down the netting around the bag.
- 293 ANOTHER ANGLE 293  
as Boerth stops at a drooping fold. He swiftly cuts the gas  
bag with his rigger's knife. Then he detaches the handle from  
the blade and slides up a panel on the now separate handle.

294 INSERT - THE MECHANISM OF THE BOMB 294

The explosive device is in the handle. The inner works have been exposed twice before, and must now be recognizable. (See Appendix #3.) Boerth's knife point sets the red detonation needle at 7:30 and the black timer needle is started on its inexorable journey.

295 CLOSE ON BOERTH 295

He closes the panel on the detached knife handle (the bomb) and hooks the device into the opening of the gas bag. His nervous fingers drop the detached blade. Appalled, he looks down.

296 POINT OF VIEW 296

No one in sight -- but neither is the tell-tale knife blade.

297 CLOSE ON BOERTH 297

He feverishly sews up the slit in the gas bag and starts stitching a patch over it.

298 DOWN ANGLE ON KNORR 298

coming along the middle catwalk.

299 CLOSE ON BOERTH 299

He finishes stitching the patch over the incision, fans away the small amount of gas that escaped, starts down to look for his knife blade.

KNORR'S VOICE

Boerth. What's there?

Startled, Boerth almost slips, recovers and jumps like a cat.

300 ANGLE FAVORING KNORR 300

on the lower catwalk as Boerth lands beside him.

KNORR

Found something, Eric?

CONTINUED

300 CONTINUED

300

BOERTH

(pointing up)

A leak coming from a worn spot.  
Must've started to rub when the  
outer skin ripped. I've patched  
it. I'm sure it's secure.

Boerth tensely watches Knorr who covers his black eye and  
studies the gas bag. Knorr nods and starts back.

KNORR

Come on. The chef's got sandwiches.

301 INSERT - THE KNIFE BLADE

301

wedged and hidden in the catwalk. First Knorr's crepe-soled  
shoes, and then Boerth's, pass over it.

302 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

302

As Rosendahl hurries inside, the ship's clock over the entrance  
shows 4:15.

303 INT. ROSENDAHL'S OFFICE - DAY

303

Truscott follows Rosendahl inside and takes his trench coat.

ROSENDAHL

(disgusted)

Colonel Belsma refused to let us  
have the detachment of Marines.

TRUSCOTT

Did you tell him the score?

ROSENDAHL

Belsma knows the score. We had a  
real set-to. He calls her a flying  
crematorium -- doesn't want his  
men near her.

(pacing)

Damn, I hope Washington gives  
Lehmann that helium.

304 OMITTED

304

305 INT. HINDENBURG - CREW'S QUARTERS - DAY

305

Ludecke brings in Boerth and Neuhaus. Kessler, Vogel and Lehmann wait for them.

LEHMANN

We want to see your knives.

Neuhaus promptly takes his knife from the sheath at his waist and shows it. Boerth shoots Kessler a quizzical look but makes no move to lift up his knife.

VOGEL

We want to see your knife, Eric.

KESSLER

(showing detached  
blade)

Ludecke found this in the hull a few minutes ago.

Taking his time, Boerth gives his knife to Lehmann who examines it. Boerth flicks another look at Kessler. Each is made uneasy of the other by this new development.

306 ANGLE ON KNORR

306

He comes from the shower with a towel draped around his waist.

KNORR

Please excuse my appearance, Captain.

LEHMANN

We'd like to see your knife, Chief.

Knorr turns promptly to his bunk to pick up his knife on top of his clothes. He swears; the sheath is empty.

KNORR

(searching)

I had it when I took off my clothes.  
Somebody must've borrowed it.

KESSLER

(showing detached  
blade)

Is this it, Knorr?

Knorr looks briefly at both sides of the blade.

KNORR

No.

CONTINUED

306 CONTINUED

306

VOGEL

Can you prove it?

KNORR

(conversationally)

Well, the guard on my knife has a nick from that fight in Shanghai when we went around the world on the Graf -- remember, Captain? -- and there's a scratch on the blade from when my boy took it to go ---

VOGEL

(to Kessler)

Arrest him. Question all of them.

Knorr turns to Lehmann in amazement and drops his towel.

KNORR

Arrest me, Captain? Because my knife was borrowed?

A bosun's whistle shrills o.s. Men pile from the bunks and move out to their stations. Lehmann picks up the towel and hands it to Knorr.

LEHMANN

Get dressed and go to your landing station, Chief..

(to Boerth and Neuhaus)

You men, too.

(to Kessler)

Enough of this stupid business. I trust the men in the Zeppelin family.

Kessler nods. Vogel, eyeing Kessler, lifts the knife blade from Kessler's hand and exits. As he exchanges a pointed look with Boerth, Kessler moves out.

307 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - WEATHER EMPLACEMENT

307

Wind SW to 16 KTS -- gusts (no reading). The clock shows 5:15:25. Now two Navy technicians try to repair the blank gusts section. One of the men points o.s.

308 EXT. THE HINDENBURG AND AIRFIELD - DAY - MATTE

308

Approaching the field, she appears out of dark clouds. Lightning flashes, followed by distant thunder. Carnival atmosphere outside the fence. Cars arriving...vendors selling Eskimo pies, hot dogs, pennants and long balloons marked "Hindenburg"... People crowd the fence, standing on car tops.

308-A ANGLE ON TRUDI VON SCHARNWITZ

308-A

Unmistakable in a white cape that is an exact copy of her mother's, she cranes out the window of a taxi. Beside her are two nuns from her school. As the taxi presses toward the main gate o.s., the nuns tug her back inside.

309 EXT. LANDING MAST - DAY

309

By the field phone at the base of the mast, Rosendahl and Truscott watch the Hindenburg o.s. A strong gust hits them.

ROSENDAHL

That was at least 25 knots.

(turning toward  
weather sign)

Hell, they're only showing surface  
winds. Where's gusts?

TRUSCOTT

They can't get it fixed, sir.

ROSENDAHL

(grabbing phone)

Flash red, dammit, flash red.

310 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

310

The blinker above the sign flashes red. The clock shows  
5:08:35. The repair men climb down.

311 INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CONTROL GONDOLA

311

DIMMLER

Signal red, Captain.

PRUSS

(behind him)

Thank you kindly. I thought it was  
a Christmas tree.

(to Lessing at phone)

Send this to Rosendahl: Riding  
out weather. Shall delay landing  
until further notice from NAL.  
Looking forward to dinner. Pruss.

312 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE

312

She grows smaller and disappears into the stormy sky.

313 OMITTED

313



314 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE

314

The Jersey coast...A threatening sky, lightning, distant thunder.

314-A INT. LOUNGE - DAY

314-A

COUNTESS

(staring at Kirsch)

This is absurd.

Passengers are queued up at a table where Kirsch returns their passports and issues landing cards to be filled in.

KIRSCH.

Yes, m'am. I'm sure it's only a technicality that will be straightened out before we land.

COUNTESS

(heatedly)

Give me back my passport this instant, Kirsch.

She riffles through the passports on the table.

KIRSCH

It isn't here, Countess. It's been picked up.

TOURISTY TYPE

(chuckling)

Same thing happened to a friend of mine in Italy. You wouldn't believe the reason they gave him. They said ---

Stunned, the Countess brushes past him.

314-B INT. STAIRS AND FOYER ON "A" DECK

314-B

Coming up the stairs, Kessler moves down the passageway. Upset, the Countess hurries into the foyer.

COUNTESS

Franz....

314-C ANGLE ON KESSLER

314-C

turning in the passageway. The Countess rushes up to him.

COUNTESS

They've picked up my passport.

CONTINUED

314-C CONTINUED

314-C

KESSLER

On whose orders?

COUNTESS

(distraught)

Yours, maybe. Who else knows about  
Peenemunde? You ---

He claps his hand over her mouth. As he does so, his eyes slide off.

314-D HIS ANGLE - STEWARDESS IMHOF

314-D

emerging from an open cabin and dumping a pile of bed linen in the passageway. She looks at them askance.

314-E CLOSE TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND THE COUNTESS

314-E

He forms a smile, slides his hand to her cheek and pats it.

KESSLER

It's only a little storm, Countess.  
In an hour you'll be laughing about  
this with your daughter. In fact,  
I'm going to escort you off the ship  
personally to be sure I meet her.  
Go back on deck and enjoy the  
Captain's champagne.

(significantly)

All right?

The Countess clasps his hand with both of hers for a moment, then goes up the stairs. His eyes follow her worriedly for an instant before he starts away, glancing at his watch.

314-F INSERT WATCH - 5:55

314-F

315  
thru OMITTED  
317

315  
thru  
317

318 INT. BOW - DAY - ANGLE ON BOERTH

318

Deeply concerned, Boerth stares out a window in the nose. He checks his watch.

319 INSERT WATCH: 6:00

319

320 CLOSE ON BOERTH

320

Coming to a decision, he swings around and pulls up short.

321 ANGLE ON VOGEL AND LUDECKE

321

approaching Boerth in the confines of the nose.

VOGEL

(pointing)

Let me see that knife.

BOERTH

You've seen it.

(pushing past)

I'm busy.

They grab him. Ludecke twists Boerth's arm behind his back. Vogel pulls the knife from the sheath.

VOGEL

This is Knorr's knife, isn't it?

BOERTH

The hell it is.

VOGEL

(showing him)

A nick on the guard, long scratch on the blade, just like Knorr said. You stole it from him when you broke your own. What were you doing?

BOERTH

It's my knife.

VOGEL

You're lying.

They start to force him down the stairs.

BOERTH

(struggling)

You can't arrest me without Kessler.

VOGEL

Watch.

Boerth grunts as Ludecke increases pressure on the hammerlock. Then Boerth relaxes and lets himself be dragged down the stairs.

BOERTH

Vogel, you Gestapo idiot, you're making the mistake of your life.

322 INT. STEERING ROOM - DAY

322

Pruss strolls around. Kessler enters and joins him.

KESSLER

Captain, some of the passengers are getting nervous. About how long will it be before we land?

PRUSS

Whenever Naval Air at Lakehurst give us the green light.

KESSLER

(insistently)  
When do you estimate that will be?

PRUSS

(stopping; annoyed)  
You can tell the passengers we'll land when conditions are right and not a minute sooner.

He strolls off. Kessler looks urgently at the ship's clock.

323 HIS POINT OF VIEW

323

The clock at 6:18.

324 ANGLE ON ELEVATOR MAN FELBER

324

FELBER

(singing out)  
Three degrees light in the bow and tail heavy.

PRUSS

Use a one degree up angle at the mast.

LEHMANN

(hands on elevator wheel)  
She doesn't feel right, Max. It could be a soft bag. The aft cells took a beating when the skin ripped.

PRUSS

She's tail-heavy because wind drove the rain aft. The moisture will evaporate in a few minutes.

CONTINUED

324 CONTINUED

324

KESSLER

(to Pruss)

Once we're over the field, how long will it be before the passengers are actually off the ship?

Pruss looks at him in exasperation. Kessler forces a smile.

KESSLER

The passengers are sure to ask.

PRUSS

(curtly)

A high landing takes fifteen minutes. Allow another twenty to disembark passengers.

Kessler hesitates, then:

KESSLER

I understand the Countess' passport is being held.

PRUSS

(pained)

Rotten. Vogel said it was a matter of internal security.

KESSLER

Vogel took it?

PRUSS

(flaring)

What in hell's the matter with you, Kessler? I assume you know what's going on in your own department.

KESSLER

(bitterly)

Yes, sir, I do.

He hurries out.

325 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - WEATHER EMPLACEMENT

325

The sign reads: WIND SW 12 KTS -- GUSTS (no reading). In front of the sign two civilian technicians, resigned to failure, pack up their tools to leave. The clock shows 7:00:05. Near the clock, the steam whistle blasts one long and two short. The technicians jump and hold their ears.

326 EXT. THE AIRFIELD - DAY - WIDE ANGLE 326

Soggy Navy and civilian linesmen come running toward the mast.

327 QUICK SHOTS OF: 327  
thru 327  
331 Newsreel men climbing to cameras on the hoods of cars... 331

People emerging from the hangar: Detectives Moore and Grunberger, Customs and Immigration men, Zeppelin Company officials, etc.

332 OMITTED 332  
and 332  
333 333

334 ANGLE ON BOSUN HOBAN 334

A hulking airshipman, Hoban booms orders through a megaphone to details manning equipment on the tracks. (See Appendix #4.)

HOBAN

Get the lead out, Cieselwicz!  
Two men each on the capstan cars...  
Jackson, if the wind shifts, your  
linesmen hold 'er steady till the  
main wire lets down.

335 ANGLE PAST MAST TOWARD HINDENBURG - MATTE 335

In the distance she can now be seen approaching.

HOBAN'S VOICE

You man, the civilian, you're out  
of position.

336 INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - AFT ON MIDDLE CATWALK 336

Lehmann, Knorr and Neuhaus inspect Gas Cell IV. At a half-run, Kessler comes down the catwalk.

KESSLER

(calling out)

Boerth.

KNORR

I want him too. Lazy bum's probably  
asleep in the nose cone.

Kessler turns and hustles back, looking at his watch.

337 INSERT WATCH: 7:06. 337

km #02075 110

338 ANGLE ON LEHMANN 338

He leans down from the catwalk and tugs on the loose-hanging folds of Gas Cell IV. The patch on the bag becomes visible.

LEHMANN

What's that?

KNORR

A worn place we patched, but I'm sure it's secure.

LEHMANN

All right, but let's have a man watch this gas bag until we're on the ground.

339 INT. NOSE CONE - DAY 339

Kessler vaults up the stairs to the platform in the nose cone.

KESSLER

Boerth!

No answer. The nose cone is empty. Kessler checks his watch and hurriedly exits.

340 EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY - DOWN-SHOT FROM HANGAR ROOF - MATTE 340

The white dots of Navy linesmen mixed with civilians extend in two rows from the mast.

341 EXT. THE LANDING MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON ROSENDAHL 341

He talks into the phone at the foot of the mast.

ROSENDAHL

Send to Dekka: Recommend landing now; ground crew ready.

342 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY 342

The blinker flashes green. The clock is at 7:09:35.

343 INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - THE CONTROL GONDOLA 343

PRUSS

(to Lessing at phone)

Reply to NAL: Proceeding to land. Will be late for dinner. Apologies to Madame, signed Pruss.

CONTINUED

343 CONTINUED

343

LEHMANN  
(hurrying in)  
I'm uneasy about Cell IV, Max.  
Might have to make a major repair  
before going back.

PRUSS  
We'll see.  
(picking up phone)  
Landing stations.

ELEVATORMAN FELBER  
(singing out)  
Two degrees light in the bow and  
tail-heavy.

PRUSS  
(into phone)  
Twelve men from the off-watch into  
the bow.

344 INT. BOW AND NOSE CONE - DAY - ANGLE ON

344

The bosun's whistle sounds through the interior. Kessler  
fights his way through the men coming up the stairs.

KESSLER  
Anyone seen Boerth?

MEN  
No...No, sir...No, Colonel.

LUDECKE  
No, sir. He should be here.

345 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE

345

She swings wide over the hangar.

346 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY - DOWN ANGLE

346

featuring clock at 7:11:05. Sign reads: WIND W 14 KTS --  
GUSTS (no reading).

347 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

347

LEHMANN  
(at window)  
Wind's shifted to the west.

CONTINUED



347 CONTINUED

347

PRUSS

Gusts?

LEHMANN

No reading on gusts.

PRUSS

No wonder they lose all their  
airships.

(pauses, then)

Hard rudder to port, aft engines  
astern.

348 EXT. THE LANDING MAST - DAY - MATTE AND MINIATURE

348

The Hindenburg drifts slowly forward, swinging to the left.

HOBAN

(in f.g.; bellowing)

Line up with 'er, knuckleheads.  
She'll keep her nose in the wind.

The ground crew shift position accordingly.

349 INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CREW'S QUARTERS

349

Two off-duty men play chess.

1ST CHESSPLAYER

You know who gets liberty? I'll  
tell you who. Party members,  
that's who.

KESSLER

(hurrying in)

Where's Boerth?

2ND CHESSPLAYER

His landing station's in the nose.

Kessler swears under his breath, glances at his watch.

350 INSERT WATCH: 7:13.

350

351 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE AND MINIATURE

351

She mashes in toward the mast some five hundred yards away.  
Abruptly water ballast dumps from her underbelly.

- 352 CLOSE ON A NEWSREEL CAMERAMAN 352  
shooting from atop his car and getting drenched.
- 353 ANGLE ON LINESMEN 353  
A wave of laughter rises from them.
- 353-A ANGLE ON TRUDI 353-A  
Standing in her white cape between the two nuns in front of the hangar, she laughs and jumps up and down with excitement.
- 354 INT. HULL - DAY - THE LOWER CATWALK 354  
Kessler, moving under tremendous tension, opens the canvas curtains to the freight compartments off the catwalk.
- 355 ANGLE PAST KESSLER 355  
The first compartment is filled with spare parts -- no Boerth. Kessler lunges to the next compartment.
- 356 HIS POINT OF VIEW INTO COMPARTMENT 356  
The mail room...a man sorting sacks. Not Boerth.
- 357 ANGLE ON KESSLER 357  
Moving on, he checks his watch.
- 358 INSERT WATCH: 7:16. 358
- 359 INT. THE BOW - DAY - FEATURING STAIRS 359  
Twelve off-watch men, including von Bauer and Chef Mueller, each stand on a step of the arcing staircase.
- 360 ANGLE ON KNORR IN THE NOSE 360  
He presses his headset as he relays orders.

KNORR

Stand by for starboard line drop.

- 360-A INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - FAVORING DIMMLER 360-  
as he hits a switch on a control panel.
- 361 INT. BOW - DOWN ANGLE ON LUDECKE 361  
standing by a huge pile of coiled rope on a closed hatch.  
The hatch opens, the rope drops.
- 362 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE AND MINIATURE 362  
Her starboard landing line smacks onto the wet sandy ground.  
The ship hangs motionless one hundred feet above and two  
hundred yards short of the mast. The port line drops.
- 363 ANGLE ON LINESMEN 363  
Several linesmen break ranks, grab the ropes, connect them  
to larger guy lines which in turn are hauled toward the two  
cars on the circular tracks.
- 364 ANGLE ON ROSENDAHL AND TRUSCOTT 364  
watching from the foot of the mast. The clock on the weather  
sign in the b.g. shows 7:17:45.
- TRUSCOTT  
Beautiful. Level as a board.  
Pruss is showing us how.
- ROSENDAHL  
This high landing's not Lehmann's  
idea, I'll guarantee that.
- 365 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ON BOW - MINIATURE 365  
A steel cable begins winding down from the nose.
- 366 INT. THE HULL - DAY - STERN END OF LOWER CATWALK 366  
Kessler reaches the last few freight rooms. He flings open  
the canvas curtain across a room entrance.
- 367 ANGLE PAST KESSLER - TWO BIG X-RAY MACHINES 367  
in slatted crates fill the room -- no Boerth. He plunges on  
to the next room, rips aside the curtain, and bursts into:

368 INT. THE FREIGHT ROOM - DAY 368

Vogel spins around. A badly mauled Boerth lies next to the dog in her wicker cage. His arms are tied behind his back, his eyes closed, his mouth bleeding, his face a mass of cuts. The dog is frantic, scratching at the bars.

369 ANGLE ON KESSLER 369

looking murderously from Boerth to the dog to:

370 VOGEL 370

holding both the handleless knife and Knorr's stolen knife. He steps between Kessler and Boerth, gesturing with Knorr's knife.

VOGEL

Out, Kessler. I've taken over.

Kessler lunges. Vogel thrusts with the knife, slashing Kessler's outstretched arm. Almost at the same time Vogel brings up the handleless knife, nicking Kessler's cheek. Kessler smashes him on the jaw. The knives go flying and Vogel drops.

371 CLOSE ON KESSLER 371

Without a second look at Vogel, he squats beside Boerth and shakes him gently.

KESSLER

Boerth.

No reaction. Kessler glances at his watch, shakes him harder.

KESSLER

(tremendous urgency)

Boerth, it's Kessler.

Boerth opens his swollen eyes.

KESSLER

For God's sake, Boerth, it's 7:20.  
Where's the bomb?

BOERTH

(half-conscious)

Not my knife....

Kessler picks up Knorr's knife nearby, cuts Boerth's ropes.

CONTINUED

371 CONTINUED

371

KESSLER

There's less than ten minutes left.  
They'll all die. Where's the  
bomb, Boerth?

BOERTH

(very groggy)  
Repair...patch...patch...four.

Kessler looks from him to the knife, eyes widening slightly.

372 INT. THE CHANNINGS' CABIN - DAY

372

Bess Channing talks to Flakus who stands in the doorway.

BESS

...Make sure the dog is unloaded  
as soon as we land.  
(tipping him)  
Here's a little extra for you.  
You've been a doll.

FLAKUS

(leaving money  
on desk; exiting)  
Thanks anyway, Mrs. Channing. I  
like dogs.

373 ANOTHER ANGLE

373

Reed packs a suitcase on the settee while Spah tries to show  
him a sketch.

SPAH

It's the set for my Zeppelin act.  
I had better ones, but they disappeared  
from my cabin. Somebody's trying to  
steal my act, that's how good it is.

CHANNING

(clearing throat)  
Joe, I have to be honest with you.  
It isn't right for my show.

SPAH

(crestfallen)  
You don't go for it, huh?

CHANNING

Sorry.

CONTINUED

SPAH

Yeah...

(leaving)

Well, I guess it's good enough for the circus, anyway.

CHANNING

(extending a drawing)

Joe, you forgot this one.

SPAH

(taking it)

It's just a drawing I made of that goofy rainbow for my kids.

BESS

(interested)

How many children do you have?

SPAH

Three. One seven, one four and a baby boy who's gonna be an acrobat. Believe you me we got circus enough at home.

BESS

(pause)

Reed, I'd like to see Joe's act.

CHANNING

(looking at her)

Then we'll have to give Joe an audition next week, won't we, little mother?

BESS

That's right, sugar.

SPAH

That's great. D'you mean it?

(impulsively handing her drawing)

Here, Mrs. Channing. You take this home to your kids. A souvenir of the trip.

374 EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - A SHACK AT EDGE OF AIRFIELD

374

Radio Announcer Herb Morrison, a slight middle-aged man with a dry mid-western accent, talks into a mike, watching the Hindenburg o.s. His nearby station wagon is marked: WLS CHICAGO, "THE PRAIRIE FARMER STATION." His engineer watches from the doorway of the shack.

CONTINUED

374 CONTINUED

374

MORRISON

The ship is standing still now --  
everything seems remarkably still.

375 HIS POINT OF VIEW - THE HINDENBURG - MATTE

375

almost motionless near the mast.

MORRISON'S VOICE

She hovers just short of the mast,  
waiting for her nose cone to be  
connected up. A great floating  
palace....

376 CLOSE ON MORRISON

376

MORRISON

It's 7:22 Eastern Standard Time and  
the great lady is twelve hours late.

377 INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - SMOKING ROOM

377

Douglas is drunk, a nearly empty pitcher of martinis at hand.

SCHULZ

Please, Mr. Douglas, you have to  
leave now. I'm closing up.

DOUGLAS

(X)

So we're finally landing. That  
calls for a drink.

(filling glass)

I shoulda taken a rowboat.

377-A INT. LOUNGE - DAY

377-1

With everyone on the promenade decks now, the lounge is empty  
except for Kirsch. At the table he puts papers in a brief  
case and starts to leave. The Countess catches him.

COUNTESS

Kirsch. In all that nonsense I  
forgot to fill out a landing card.

KIRSCH

See, it was just like I told you,  
Countess. I knew you'd get back  
your passport.

CONTINUED

377-A CONTINUED

377-

COUNTESS

Colonel Kessler is taking care of it.

KIRSCH

(digging out papers)

Here we are -- and this one is the  
customs form.

378 INT. THE HULL - DAY - MIDDLE CATWALK - AFT

378

Neuhaus stands in front of Gas Cell IV. Engineer Sauter,  
appears on the stairs from the fin.

SAUTER

(shouting)

We've got a jammed cable. Bear a  
hand.

Neuhaus runs down the stairs.

379 REVERSE ANGLE - KESSLER

379

Gripping the knife, Kessler scrambles up a ladder to the  
middle catwalk. He jumps to the rope netting surrounding  
gas bag IV.

380 CLOSE ANGLE ON KESSLER

380

He works his way around the drooping folds, pulling them open  
for a better view. He darts a look at his watch.

381 INSERT WATCH: 7:23

381

382 DOWN ANGLE PAST - KESSLER

382

He tugs on a loose fold and finds what he's looking for -- the  
repair patch. He climbs a few feet lower and slashes it  
open with the knife.

383 TIGHT ON KESSLER

383

He feels inside the slit, grimaces, and pulls out the lethal  
device -- the knife handle bomb. It takes him a few seconds  
to discover how to slide up the panel. With inward terror  
but steady hands, he probes into the mechanism.



- 384 BIG CLOSEUP - THE EXPOSED WORKS OF THE BOMB 384  
His finger carefully moves the red detonation needle forward from 7:30.
- 385 CLOSEUP - KESSLER 385  
relieved. He checks his watch.
- 386 INSERT WATCH: 7:24 386
- 387 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY 387  
The wind reading on the weather sign jumps from SW 11 KTS to 16, the gusts section always remaining dark. The clock changes from 7:24:55 to 7:25:00.
- 388 and 389 OMITTED 388 and 389
- 390 INT. HULL - DAY - CLOSE ON KESSLER AT GAS BAG 390  
Examining the bomb in his hand, he slides the cover panel closed and compares the two handles. He grimaces in admiration. Only now do his hands tremble slightly. He sees something from the corner of his eye -- and turns.
- 391 DOWN ANGLE - TOWARD LOWER CATWALK 391  
Vogel, slack-jawed, his mouth bloody, comes along the catwalk -- and stops.
- 392 CLOSEUP - KESSLER 392  
exchanging a long hard look with Vogel. Kessler, finally recognized for what he truly is, and in all rather pleased to have it so, almost smiles.
- 393 CLOSEUP - VOGEL 393  
The shock of recognition on his face turns to something far grimmer.
- 394 CLOSE ON KESSLER 394  
Suddenly the bomb in Kessler's hand goes off with a flash and a pop, followed by a noise -- a whoomph -- like the lighting of a big kitchen gas range.

395 ANGLE TOWARD KESSLER. 395

The initial three-foot diameter of a brilliant flare inside the cell is remarkably well-defined. It blossoms. Kessler, as though suspended in space, appears at the center of the ball of flame.

396 QUICK CUTS OF KESSLER 396

A. FULL FIGURE as though surrounded by sunrise.

B. CLOSE ON HIS FACE registering astonishment.

C. CLOSEUP: HIS EYES reflecting a dazzle of colors and a range of emotions.

E X P L O S I O N

The sound has the quality of enormous muffled force.

397 KESSLER AND THE ENTIRE GAS CELL IV 397

disappear.

398 ANGLE ON VOGEL 398

hurled backwards. Molten aluminum, sizzling wires, burning fabric fill the air.

399 EXT. SHACK AT EDGE OF AIRFIELD - DAY 399

Morrison, surrounded by a gaggle of radio fans, moves forward from the shack as he talks into the mike.

MORRISON

The sun is striking the windows of the observation deck and sparkling like glittering jewels. This great floating palace --

(long beat)

Oh, oh, oh!

400 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK 400

A plume of flame bursts from the top of the ship.

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

401 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY 401

The ship gives a lurch. Lehmann, turning from the instruments, looks quizzically at Pruss by the window.

CONTINUED

- 401 CONTINUED 401  
PRUSS  
(wonder, then  
wrath)  
No...no!
- 402 EXT. AIRFIELD - DOWN SHOT 402  
A red glow spreads on the ground; people stare up transfixed.
- 403 ANGLE ON WEATHER EMPLACEMENT 403  
tinged red. The clock shows 7:25:05.
- 404 EXT. TOP OF MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON KIRBY 404  
atop the mast, bawling through a megaphone:  
KIRBY  
Run....
- 405 DOWN ANGLE ON LINESMEN 405  
In the brightening glare, some of the linesmen bolt.  
BOSUN HOBAN  
(foghorn voice)  
Stand fast!
- 406 ANGLE ON ROSENDAHL 406  
running toward ship o.s.  
ROSENDAHL  
Get the people out of there.  
(pointing back)  
Fire extinguishers.
- 407 INT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - "A" DECK PROMENADE 407  
Passengers crowd the observation windows: Breslau; Irene, wearing white gloves and holding a picture hat; the two boys in Buster Brown suits; the sweet-faced old lady carrying a carpetbag; and others. With a muffled thump the ship shudders and tilts sharply aft. The passengers are tumbled down the slanted deck, piling on top of each other, shouting, screaming, the dining salon furniture crashing into them.

- 408 CLOSE ON SWEET-FACED OLD LADY' 408  
as the contents of her carpetbag spill out -- stationery,  
Hindenburg towel, silverware, etc.
- 409 ANGLE ON IRENE, BRESLAU AND TWO BOYS 409  
pinned to a banquette. Breslau crawls from the struggling  
mass.
- BRESLAU  
Stay with the boys, Irene.
- 410 INT. SMOKING ROOM - DAY - ANGLE ON DOUGLAS 410  
Clutching his glass, he sprawls on the slanted floor.
- DOUGLAS  
(thickly)  
Some landing.
- SCHULZ' VOICE  
Fire....
- Douglas tries to get to his feet but is too drunk. He falls  
back.
- 411 and 412 OMITTED 411 and 412
- 413 EXT. LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - WIDE ANGLE - SHOOTING DOWN 413  
Sailors and civilians scatter wildly. People, cars, the mast,  
the ground, light up in the glow.
- 414 INT. PASSAGEWAY AND STAIRS ON "A" DECK - DAY 414  
Stewardess Imhof runs with a pile of bedclothes in her arms.  
Channing and Bess dash from their cabin. They are blocked by  
a wall of flame erupting on the staircase. Channing grabs a  
blanket from Imhof who stands rigid, staring.
- 415 INT. THE BOW - DAY 415  
Fire funnels through the interior. The flames spurt as from  
a blowtorch toward:
- 416 THE NOSE CONE CREW 416  
high on the rigger's shelf. Two men dive out a window in the  
nose. Chief Knorr hoists himself up onto a girder.

417 DOWN ANGLE ON STAIRS

417

With the bow pointing higher and higher, the twelve men on the steep stairs can't hold their footing. They hang on to overhead hand grips and dangle like partridges over a barbecue pit -- Ludecke, Chef Mueller, Navigator von Baurer, others. One by one they start to let go.

418 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

418

The clock reads: 7:25:10. The steam whistle blasts out an emergency signal: two long and two short (throughout the sequence it continues in b.g.).

419 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

419

A monstrous torch against the sky....

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

420 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

420

Dimmler, gaping out the windows, moves to a panel of switches.

PRUSS

(stopping him)

Don't drop ballast. Let the stern fall...give them a chance to get out back there.

421 INT. THE TAIL - DAY

421

The top of the cavernous fin is a ceiling of flame. Neuhaus pulls open a hatch in the floor, hangs from the rim and drops.

422 OMITTED

422

423 INT. OFFICERS' MESS - DAY

423

Speck kicks at the window. Nothing. The Countess, in her white cape, carrying a vanity case, rushes in. She bashes the isinglass with the case. The window goes out but the case bursts open, spilling jewelry. She has difficulty climbing out.

COUNTESS

Help me, Speck.

Speck pushes her aside and plunges out the window. She watches him fall, her eyes widening in horror.

- 424 HER POINT OF VIEW TOWARD GROUND 424  
Sixty feet below Speck lies spread-eagled on a funeral pyre. In the b.g. a photographer keeps clicking away.
- 425 ANGLE ON COUNTESS 425  
Sparks fly through the window. She backs away. Pulling the hood of her cape over her head, she runs out.
- 426 EXT. THE LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - SHOOTING DOWN 426  
Sounds of horror everywhere...a phantasmagoria of action.
- 427 OMITTED 427
- 428 INT. AN OBSERVATION WINDOW OPPOSITE WRITING ROOM - DAY 428  
Breslau struggles to open the window. Beside him Mildred sobs hysterically. The writing room behind them is in flames. He gets the window open.
- BRESLAU  
Jump, Mildred.
- MILDRED  
(recoiling)  
I can't, I can't.
- He grabs her, slaps her, forces her back to the window.
- BRESLAU  
It's your only chance, Mildred.  
Jump.
- Paralyzed with fear, she holds on to the window. He pushes her out. The window slams shut behind her. He tries to open it again but can't. Flames roar out from the waiting room and engulf him.
- 429 EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK 429  
Her flaming stern is almost to the ground, her bow hundreds of feet in the air...Figures catapult from her.
- MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO
- 430 INT. SHOWER ROOM ON "B" DECK - DAY 430  
Cabin Boy Flakus lunges into the passengers' shower room, into the shower, turns it on. No water...Flames leap into the room. Frantically he pulls the shower door shut. Overcome by heat, he slides to the floor which collapses. He drops from sight.

- 430-A GROUND BENEATH SHIP - DAY - ANGLE ON FLAKUS 430-A  
stunned on the ground. O.s. above a water tank bursts, delug-  
ing him. Revived, he scrambles clear of the flaming wreck.
- 431 INT. THE "KENNEL" FREIGHT ROOM - DAY 431  
Boerth crawls through smoke to the wicker cage and releases the  
frantically barking dog. Flames break through the wall. The  
floor gives way.
- 432 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY 432  
Under a swirl of sparks, the clock shows 7:25:15.
- 433 EXT. THE LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - STOCK 433  
The ship's stern crashes on the edge of the mooring circle.  
MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO
- 434 INT. "B" PASSAGEWAY - DAY 434  
Arm in arm, Pajetta, Napier and the Countess move along the  
slanted passage through smoke and occasional flame. Napier  
hugs the backgammon board. Pajetta taps exploringly with his  
cane at the obscured floor. A cracking sound...The smoke  
partially clears. Before them the debarkation stairway, burned  
from its fitting, falls into place on the ground. Unsurprised  
by this stroke of luck, Napier gestures "after you" to the  
Countess. He and Pajetta hurry behind her down the stairs.
- 435 EXT. LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - CLOSE ON ROSENDAHL 435  
advancing on the ship's glowing skeleton with a fire extin-  
guisher. The intense heat forces him back.
- 436 ANGLE PAST ROSENDAHL 436  
A figure darts from the wreckage only to be knocked down by  
a tongue of flame. Helplessly Rosendahl watches the man get  
up, stagger a few feet, and fall. Then he crawls desperately  
a few more feet, wilts, and lies still. Rosendahl forces him-  
self within range of the victim, sprays the extinguisher in  
front of him sending up black smoke.
- 437 ANOTHER ANGLE 437  
The man struggles up and runs through the smoke to Rosendahl  
who grabs him and guides him to a sailor.

CONTINUED

437 CONTINUED

437

ROSENDAHL

Take care of him. He can't talk.  
His jaw looks broken.

As the sailor helps the man off he turns: Vogel.

438 ANGLE ON REED AND BESS CHANNING

438

Below the burning ship, the blanket around them, they are trapped in a circle of debris. A heat-warped frame in front of them suddenly curves away at the center. Channing jumps through it, reaches back and pulls Bess out. Enveloped in black oil clouds, he lets go of her to pry open white-hot wires with his bare hands.

439 ANOTHER ANGLE

439

Channing turns, tucks her arm under his, and runs with her.

440 CLOSE TWO-SHOT

440

as they come to a stop safely beyond the inferno. Sobbing, she goes into his arms. His hands on her back are badly burned.

441  
and  
442

OMITTED

441  
and  
442

443 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - ANGLE ON IRENE, PAUL AND PETER

443

Twenty feet above the ground, Irene and her brothers stand in a gaping hole in the ship's side (which was part of "A" deck). Sparks and burning linen swirl around them. Still wearing the white gloves, Irene clutches her hat. Lt. Truscott and Bosun Hoban rush up beneath them.

TRUSCOTT

Jump, baby, jump.

HOBAN

C'mon, boys.

Irene's hat ignites. She screams and jumps with her clothes on fire. Truscott catches her. Beating out her clothes, he drags her to safe ground. Some of her hair has been burned off, but she is otherwise unhurt.

444 ANGLE ON HOBAN AND BRESLAU BOYS

444

HOBAN

You're scared.

CONTINUED



444 CONTINUED

444

HOBAN (Cont'd)  
(pretending to go)  
Two yellow-bellies.

Paul jumps. Catching him, Hoban throws the boy like the hammer at a track meet. The ship's side crumbles and Peter drops to the ground. Hoban dives after him, picks him up and makes a broken field run to safety. Nearby, Paul dazedly gets up.

445 ANGLE ON BOERTH

445

beneath the Zeppelin, pinned down by blackened beams across his legs, watching...He lies back, closes his eyes, unable to bear more. Abruptly, he disappears under a flaming mass of molten metal.

446 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

446

As the steam whistle blasts away, the clock shows 7:25:20. The wind reading suddenly goes out. Simultaneously the gust section activates, showing 24 KTS.

447 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

447

The bow strikes ground, and bounces up again into the sky.

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

448 EXT. BEHIND LANDING MAST - DAY - ANGLE ON NEWSREEL MEN

448

Atop their cars they swing their cameras on the same point.

449 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ANGLE ON SPAH ON THE BOW

449

With one arm Spah hangs onto a window ledge, pulling off his smouldering coat with the other. The ledge begins to buckle.

450 SPAH'S ANGLE TOWARD GROUND

450

a hundred feet below.

451 CLOSE ON SPAH

451

The partially wound-down mooring cable at the nose swings by like a pendulum. The window ledge collapses into a V about to break in two. The mooring cable sweeps back. Spah grabs it.

- 452 NEW ANGLE ON SPAH 452  
 riding the cable in space. He slides down the swaying fifty-foot length and hangs there watching the ground come up. From a height of ten yards, he lets go.
- 453 CLOSE ON SPAH 453  
 as he lands with his feet under him and his knees bent. When he hits, he rolls over, jumps up and runs from beneath the flaming derelict, dusting his hands.
- 454 ANOTHER ANGLE - SPAH'S FAMILY 454  
 Running to him are two small kids and his wife carrying a baby. Spah opens his arms and gathers them in.
- 455 EXT. UNDERCARRIAGE OF CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY 455  
 The big landing wheel hits the sand. Fried and smoking, the rubber tire squashes.
- 456 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY 456  
 Lehmann and Pruss are alone in it. The back end of the gondola is wide open, burned away.
- PRUSS  
 (as she hits)  
 Now.
- 457 EXT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY - ANGLE ON PRUSS AND LEHMANN 457  
 As they fling themselves to the ground, wreckage from the disintegrating gondola crashes around them. Pruss runs through the glowing metal.
- 458 ANOTHER ANGLE ON PRUSS 458  
 He stops and waits for Lehmann. Pruss, his face scorched and black with smoke, is shaken and bewildered. Lehmann's stocky figure comes out of the flames. He appears calm -- almost remote -- and apparently unhurt. Rosendahl hurries up.
- ROSENDAHL AND PRUSS  
 (at the same time)  
 What caused it, Ernst?...What was it, Ernst?

459 ANGLE FAVORING LEHMANN

459

He takes each by the arm, turning his back on the wreckage as though to start a quiet chat. He goes a few steps between his two friends and pitches forward on his face. His back looks as if it had been burned by an acetylene torch.

460 EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

460

The clock reads 7:25:25 and changes to 7:25:30.

461 EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY - ANGLE ON NAPIER, PAJETTA, AND COUNTESS 461

stumbling away from disaster. Escorted between the two men, the Countess lowers the hood of her charred and smoking cape, peering around for her daughter. Napier and Pajetta, singed like a couple of scarecrows caught in a cornfield fire, still clutch backgammon board and cane. Napier spots someone o.s. and nudges Pajetta. They veer off, leaving the Countess flat.

COUNTESS

(astonished; calling)

Wait...Thank you.

462 ANGLE ON DETECTIVES MOORE AND GRUNBERGER

462

descending on Napier and Pajetta.

MOORE

(warmly)

Major, Emilio...I was afraid your luck had run out.

GRUNBERGER

It's a miracle anyone's alive.

Pajetta tries to keep his scorched cane out of sight.

NAPIER

(hiding back-  
gammon board)

Decent of you chaps to come down to meet us.

MOORE

(amazed at their  
cool)

By damn...Get outa here. Take care of yourselves.

(starting off)

Grunberger, I'm putting out a five-two-nine.

Napier and Pajetta hustle away.

463 CLOSE ON COUNTESS. 463

watching them a moment, then turning to stare bleakly at:

464 THE WRECK OF THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK 464

The Zeppelin is now completely down, hydrogen consumed, sending up black clouds -- a stripped, glowing skeleton.

465 ANGLE ON COUNTESS 465

numb, her face a mask. With a shudder she pulls her tattered cape around her and moves away, anxiously scanning the bystanders.

465-A ANGLE ON TRUDI 465-A

frantic, nearly out of her mind, darting this way, then that. She stops, buries her face in her hands and sobs.

465-B CLOSE ON COUNTESS 465-B

as she sees her daughter; reacting.

465-C ANOTHER ANGLE - INCLUDING COUNTESS AND TRUDI 465-C

The Countess runs toward her, shouting.

COUNTESS

Trudi, Trudi...my darling. It's mother.

The sobbing child, unable to hear, doesn't move or look up. Reaching her, the Countess throws her arms around her.

466 CLOSE ON BOW 466

where the last section of fabric remains. Letter by letter, the flames quickly devour the name HINDENBURG. The shriek of the steam whistle o.s. stops. In abrupt silence:

LONGER FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

467 EXT. THE REMAINS OF THE HINDENBURG - ANOTHER DAY - MATTE 467

A brilliant morning...A cordon of Marines is stationed around the carcass of the Hindenburg. A group of investigative officers, including Detectives Moore and Grunberger, sift through the rubble.

468 EXT. BASE OF LANDING MAST - DAY - ANGLE ON SEVEN MEN

468

in conference at the landing mast. They are German Ambassador Luther, a Luftwaffe General, a USAAF General, a Dept. of Commerce Official, Dr. Eckener, Commander Rosendahl, and Captain Pruss, his head, neck and one hand in bandages.

469 CLOSE ANGLE ON INVESTIGATORS

469

among the rubble. They pry open the ship's tin strongbox and discover it contains only ashes. They continue to prowl. Grunberger finds a shard of china bearing the Zeppelin crest, and slips it into his pocket.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

Thirteen passengers, twenty-two members of the crew, and one Navy linesman dead.

(a beat)

-- On May 12, the day of the Coronation in London, the United States Department of Commerce began a thorough investigation of the Hindenburg disaster. For three weeks a Board of Inquiry heard testimony from all qualified witnesses. The twenty-three surviving passengers had no real information to communicate. The thirty-nine surviving crew members added little more.

A murmur, as though coming from a great distance -- faint, eerie, indecipherable except for a few words -- can be detected under the Narrator's voice.

## MURMUR

...what a sight...thrilling...  
marvelous...dropping ropes....

470 EXT. AIRFIELD AND SHACK - DAY

470

The camera, exploring to find the source of the scarcely audible voice, hovers at the shack in b.g. where Radio Announcer Morrison recorded the tragedy. But the shack and sandy expanse are deserted.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

Marshall Goering and Dr. Goebbels had ordered what amounted to perjury at Lakehurst. The New Reich could not admit that a Resistance -- much less a single saboteur -- had brought down the great symbol of Nazi power.

471 ANGLE ON LUTHER, OFFICIAL, TWO GENERALS, ECKENER, PRUSS, 471  
ROSENDAHL

getting into Navy and Dept. of Commerce cars and driving off.

The voice from nowhere (heard under Narrator's Voice above) builds a little. Whole phrases can now be distinguished.

UNKNOWN VOICE

...Riding majestically toward us  
like some great feather...standing  
still now...landing ropes picked  
up...begins to unwind from the nose....

Camera tilts up flaring into the sun. Nothing except an azure blue sky and puffy clouds.

CUT TO

472 EXT. THE SCENE OF THE DISASTER - ANOTHER DAY 472

Different now...The bones have been picked bare. Only flotsam, ashes and dust are left. The last of the fractured aluminum structure -- most of it no bigger than kindling size -- has been loaded onto a scrap metal truck which drives away.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

The U.S. Department of Commerce thought it best to avoid an international incident.

Now the unknown voice -- Morrison's voice -- comes in quite distinctly under the Narrator.

MORRISON'S VOICE

She's coming toward us, and toward the mooring mast.

Camera tilts up to the sky. Music sneaks in. And another sound -- a faint, distant throbbing....

NARRATOR'S VOICE.

As a result, the final report of the Board states: 'Four possible theories have been advanced for the Hindenburg disaster which resulted in the death of thirty-six persons.'

A contour begins to materialize in the sky...ghostly...a ghost ship (miniature). The music, the throb of diesels, Morrison's voice blend....

CONTINUED

472 CONTINUED

472

## MORRISON'S VOICE

The sun is striking the windows of the observation deck and sparkling like glittering jewels. This great floating palace ---

The ghost ship takes on definition, becoming the Hindenburg.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

'...to wit: Structural failure; electrostatic conduction; St. Elmo's fire; sabotage. None has been proven.'

The great silver Zeppelin looms larger.

473 A SUBLIMINAL FLASH SHOT

473

The Hindenburg bursting into flame.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

'We must conclude, therefore, that it was an Act of God.'

474 ANGLE TOWARD SKY - MINIATURE

474

The ship bears down on camera, her engines reverberating louder and louder....

## MORRISON'S VOICE

(shouting)

Oh, oh, oh! It's burst into flames...Get this, Charlie -- Get this, Charlie. Get out of the way please.

(wailing)

Oh my this is terrible. Oh my ---

The Hindenburg thunders toward camera, the illustrious name gleaming on her bow.

## MORRISON'S VOICE

(almost screaming)

It's flashing, flashing terrible. This is terrible. This is one of the worst catastrophes in the world.

475 CLOSER ON HINDENBURG - MINIATURE

475

Her huge silver bulk, long as a skyborne train, flows past, the boom of her engines shaking the earth.

CONTINUED

475 CONTINUED

475

## MORRISON'S VOICE

(wailing)

Oh the humanity and all the passengers. I -- I -- folks. Folks, I'm going to have to stop a moment. I can't go on.

But the Hindenburg, now indestructible as dreams, imagination, or the spirit of adventure, sails on past camera.

476 REVERSE ANGLE.

476

On the Hindenburg as she sails gracefully away, diminishing in the distance.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

The fate of the Hindenburg meant the end of the hydrogen flight. But the Zeppelins promised an era of huge merchant airships now just over the horizon.

By now the Hindenburg is gone. The sky is limitless...Theme music builds to:

THE END



APPENDIX

1. WINDOW DISPLAY

containing a map of the Hindenburg's route marked by a ribbon extended over a big globe; a travel poster bearing the legend "2-1/2 Days to Europe;" an oversize ticket with the price of the fare beneath it: "One-Way \$450.00 -- Round Trip \$810.00 (double occupancy);" an arrangement of scenic photos taken from the Zeppelin and marked "Wonders of the Hindenburg Flight;" an enlarged facsimile of a menu and a wine list labeled "Luxury Hotel Life in the Air;" etc.

2. OPTICAL MONTAGE

is composed of such contraptions as the Montgolfier balloon (1783); Giffard's steam-propelled gas bag (1852); Wolfert's dirigible; Lebaudy's triple cylindroid hull; Andrews' Aereon (1866); Renard's electrical airship (1884); Schwartz' rigid monster; the Santos-Dumont dirigibles (1898-1904); as well as flash shots of illustrations from the works of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Sci-Fi magazines and Tom Swift's Wonderful Flying Machine.

3. The works of the bomb feature two small needles: a red detonation needle which remains stationary when set, and the black timer needle which revolves, bringing the bomb to the point of detonation.

4. On the narrow gauge circular RR tracks around the mast there are three small flat cars equipped with capstan winches. The guy lines dropped from the dirigible will be tied to wiring lines and then hooked to the capstans.