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:

UNIVERSAL TRADEMARK

accompanied by newsreel theme music.

2
A NEWSREEL HEADLINE - BLACK AND WHITE

ZEPPELIN HINDENBURG TO BEGIN
SECOND TRANSATLANTIC SEASON

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

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

Camera briefly explores a window display guarded by a police-
man. (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.

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.
FAST MONTAGE PRESENTS EARLY DIRIGIBLES

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.

MONTAGE OF COUNT ZEPPELIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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.

SEQUENCE OF LZ 126

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.

SEQUENCE OF GRAF ZEPPELIN - STOCK

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

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.

SEQUENCE OF HINDENBURG UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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

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

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:

THE HINDENBURG

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

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.

EXT. HINDENBURG AND SKY - DAY - MINIATURE

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....

EXT. A MIDWESTERN CITY - DAY - VIEW SHOT

A title flashes on: MILWAUKEE, APRIL 17, 1937.
INT. A HOUSE - BIG CLOSEUP - KATHIE RAUCH

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

INSERT - THE LETTER

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

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

EXT. AN IMPOSING RESIDENCE - DAY - FULL SHOT

A title: GERMAN EMBASSY, APRIL 21, 1937.

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

held in a man's hand.

ANGLE ON GERMAN AMBASSADOR LUTHER

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

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

diving toward earth, its propeller-driven siren screaming.

EXT. A TEMPLEHOF AIRFIELD - DAY - MATTE

A title: BERLIN, APRIL 30, 1937.
The Stuka lands, taxis to the flight line. The engine is cut.
FULL ON COLONEL FRANZ KESSLER

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.

NEW ANGLE

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.

EXT. AN IMPOSING BUILDING ON THE WILHELMPLATZ - DAY

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
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.

INT. A ROOM AT SS HEADQUARTERS - DAY - CLOSE ON A BOMB
Black-uniformed Gestapo Major Hufschmidt moves past the bomb.

HUFSCmidt
(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.

HUFSCmidt
...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.

HUFSCmidt
(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
HUFSCHMIDT (Cont'd)
(facing him)
But what happens on the flight is your responsibility, Colonel.

KESSLER
Also an honor, I've been told.

HUFSCHMIDT
(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.

HUFSCHMIDT
Including you, Colonel.

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

EXT. A BUSINESS STREET - FRANKFURT - DAY
A title: FRANKFURT
THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY, MAY 1, 1937
A man and a woman approach and stop at the door.

CLOSER ON BUILDING ENTRANCE

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

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY - DAY

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.

CLOSER ANGLE

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
CONTINUED - 2

LEHMANN (Cont'd)
(returning letter)
Don't embarrass yourself by request-
ing 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.

INT. THE HELENKELLER - NIGHT - FULL SHOT

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 Elevormann Felber; Second
Rigger Neuhaus, a country boy; rugged Mechanic Ludecke; Helms-
man 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.

ELEVORMANN 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
CONTINUED

BOERTH
(joining laughter)
Better than being bitten by the SS.

He playfully bites Freda on the neck.

ANGLE ON KESSLER

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
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.

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
CONTINUED

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.

ANGLE ON CREW TABLE

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.

TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND ELEANORE

Shuddering, she releases his hand.

ELEANORE

That song is going to make me sick.

EXT. HANGAR AND HINDEBURG - NIGHT - LOCATION AND MATTE

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

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

EXT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - LOCATION AND MINIATURE

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

INSERT - HANGAR CLOCK

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

INT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - WIDE ANGLE

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....

OMITTED

ANGLE ON BAGGAGE SECTION

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.

ANGLE ON KESSLER

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-A**
**ANGLE ON KESSLER**
shifting his attention to:
44-B THE IMMIGRATION DESK

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

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

He registers interest in this.

44-E TWO SHOT - THE COUNTESS AND GESTAPO MAJOR

GESTAPO MAJOR
Where will you be staying?

COUNTESS
With friends. Mr. and Mrs. Alden Winthrop.

GESTAPO MAJOR
In Boston?

CONTINUED
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.

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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

A PAGE BOY'S VOICE

Mr. Edward Douglas....

Kessler turns.

ANGLE ON PAGE BOY

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
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.

ANGLE ON ALBERT BRESLAU

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
KESSLER
(tousling their heads)
Couple of cowboys.

ANGLE ON PAJETTA AND NAPIER

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 cur-
mudgeon. 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.

ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS VON SCHARMWITZ

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

CONTINUED
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.

ANGEL ON HINDENBURG - LOCATION AND MATTE

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.

EXT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - LONG SHOT - MATTE

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.

CLOSE ANGLE

Kessler and the Gestapo Major hurry to him.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

INT. HANGAR - LATE DAY - ANGLE ON IRENE BRESLAU

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
IRENE

But we don't have any relatives in Germany.

Without answering, the young official hurries off.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - LATE DAY - MATTE

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.

CLOSE ANGLE

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MATTE

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
CONTINUED
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.

ANGLE ON GANGWAY - STAIRCASE
The vanguard of passengers mounts into the world of the Zeppelin.

INT. HINDENBURG - STAIRS AND FOYER - LATE DAY
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.

INT. THE MAIN LOUNGE ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY
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.

INT. THE DINING ROOM ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY
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.

INT. WRITING ROOM ON "A" DECK - LATE DAY
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.
EXT. GANGWAY STAIRS - LATE DAY - MATTE

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

ANGLE ON ELEANORE

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

KESSLER
(an urgent whisper)
I had to see you again.

ELEANORE
(clinging to him)
Yes.

KESSLER
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.

KESSLER
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.

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

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 observer. Make yourself useful -- Captain.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

LEHMANN

(smiling)

Thanks, Captain.

Pleased and happy, he busies himself checking instruments.

OMITTED

EXT. HINDENBURG AND HANGAR - NIGHT - LOCATION AND MINIATURE

Men on the mooring mast start to disconnect the nose cone.

INT. NOSE CONE - NIGHT - FAVORING BOERTH

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.

BOERTH'S POINT OF VIEW TOWARD GROUND

Freda Halle regards Boerth with a calm, unwavering gaze.

REVERSE ANGLE - CLOSE ON BOERTH

He stares at Freda for a long beat, then turns away.

CLOSE ON FREDA

visibly moved. She hurries off, glancing back once.

EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE AND MATTE

Searchlights playing onto her sides, she noses from the mast. Mooring lines are cast off.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - NIGHT - CLOSE ON KESSLER

Troubled, he peers down, shading his eyes from the beams.

HIS POINT OF VIEW - ELEANORE KESSLER ON THE GROUND

She stares back and waves half-heartedly. With his wife at the center, the world slowly recedes.
CLOSE ANGLE ON KESSLER AT OBSERVATION WINDOW

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.

EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE AND MATTE

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

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - NIGHT

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
CONTINUED

PRUSS

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

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

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

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

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.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY - ROSENDAHL'S OFFICE

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

ANGLE ON DOOR

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 Frankfurth 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
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?

CLOSE ON MODEL

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

EXT. HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE
She looms past camera, silvery and immense.

INT. HULL OF AIRSHIP - NIGHT.
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.

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

ANOTHER ANGLE
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
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.

**INT. DINING SALOON - NIGHT**

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.

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

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

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
CONTINUED

KESSLER (Cont'd)

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


ANGLE ON THE BRESLAU TABLE

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 anybody worthwhile on board? I still say the French Line has the best society.

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

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

INT. BAR-SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT

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
CONTINUED

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
(peevishly 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.

ANGLE ON STEWARD SCHULZ
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
\textit{Hindenburg} flies.

Bartender Balla 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
CONTINUED

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.

CLOSE ON KESSLER
narrowly watching Breslau.

NAPIER'S VOICE
Not for a few minutes, surely.

ANOTHER ANGLE FROM BAR-ALCOVE
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.

INT. BRESLAU CABIN - NIGHT

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

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MATTE
As she flies through a darkening sky, there's a flash of lightning in the distance.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE AND DINING SALOON - NIGHT
Lightning, followed by more thunder, slashes past frightened passengers at the observation windows.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

ANGLE ON CHANNINGS' TABLE IN DINING SALOON

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
CONTINUED

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

OMITTED

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - NIGHT

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.

OMITTED

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MATTE

She sails on to clear skies and starlight.

INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT

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
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?

INT. SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT

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.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - NIGHT

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

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.

INT. SPAH'S CABIN - NIGHT

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?
INT. A PASSAGEWAY FORWARD - NIGHT

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
KESSLER'S VOICE
(annoyed)
I intend to. But you stay away from her.

INT. CREW'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

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 clicking sound, then)
Fine with me. Tomorrow this photographer 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.

INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT

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?
KESSLER
(holding up dossier)
Detailed information about everyone
but Otto Vogel. All it says about
him is 'official Hindenburg photog-
rapher.'

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

CLOSEUP - THE BOMB

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

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

113    INT. THE UNDERSECRETARY'S OFFICE - DAY

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

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

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

Cabin Boy Flakus advances the little flag to a point 200 miles off the Irish coast.
INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

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.

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

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

ANGLE STRAIGHT DOWN VENTILATOR SHAFT

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

MOVING SHOT - CHANNING AND KIRŚCH ON LOWER CATWALK

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

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Kessler bears down on them.

KESSLER
What are you doing taking a pas-
senger into the ship's interior?

CHANING
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.

CHANING

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

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
CONTINUED

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 --
(spreadling his hands)
-- there'll be a concert.

INSERT - A MESSAGE FORM

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

LEHMANN'S VOICE
It's obviously in some private code.

INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

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.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE

as she is swallowed up in heavy fog.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

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

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

PRUSS
(to Elevatorman)
Take her down below the fog layer,
Hans.

LEHMANN
But no lower than 100 feet.

INT. KESSLER - VOGEL CABIN AND PASSAGEWAY - DAY

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

INT. THE COUNTESS' CABIN - DAY

In elegant deshabille 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
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 transforma-

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-

CONTINUED
CONTINUED - 2

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.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY

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.

KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW

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

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

ANGLE TOWARD OCEAN A HUNDRED FEET BELOW

becoming visible as the Zeppelin descends through the fog.

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

FULL ON PROMENADE

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.

ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS

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

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.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

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.

TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND VOGEL

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

FULL ON LOUNGE

Channing plays a medley of show tunes written by others.

INT. SPAH'S CABIN - NIGHT

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.

INSERT - THE PAPER

It bears a sketch of the interior of the Hindenburg's stern.
INT. DOUGLAS' CABIN - NIGHT

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.
(handling 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.
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.

INT. THE LOUNGE - NIGHT - FAVORING NAPIER AND PAJETTA
Channing plays the score from Babes In Arms. Pajetta, despite Napier's arm digs, fights a losing battle to stay awake.
CLOSE ON CHANNING

He switches abruptly to a lively version of "Come, Josephine In My Flying Machine," segueing into "Bei Mir Bist du Schoen."

ANGLE ON CAPTAIN PRUSS

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.

ANGLE TOWARD BACK OF ROOM

Kessler appears with Vogel.

VOGEL

That's the latest big hit in America -- naturally.

ANGLE ON CHANNING

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.

ANGLE ON CHANNING AND SPAH

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.
INTERCUTS ON AUDIENCE

At first there is confused silence, then an undercurrent of whispering. After awhile a few people giggle nervously.

ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS

Seated beside the Captain, she has her hand to her mouth trying desperately to suppress her laughter.

CLOSE ON DOUGLAS

He throws back his head and laughs outright. Others near him now relax and laugh.

ANGLE ON KESSLER AND VOGEL

As Kessler's smile widens, Vogel's scowl deepens. Kessler catches himself and glances off toward the crew members. Many are displeased or bewildered.

KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW - CREW ON PROMENADE - FAVORING BOERTH

Boerth is smiling. His eyes meet Kessler's.

CLOSEUP - KESSLER

He regards Boerth with a slight lift of his brows.

ANGLE ON THE CAPTAIN'S PARTY - FAVORING COUNTESS

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.

ANGLE ON SPAH

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.
CLOSE ON PRUSS AND CHANNING

PRUSS
(with an edge)
Thank you so much, Mr. Channing. Unfortunately your humor is not the same as ours. Good night, sir.

FULL ON ROOM - FAVORING BESS

She comes to Channing, sticks a flower in his buttonhole, kisses him. In the Captain's wake, the audience quickly exits.

ANGLE PAST KESSLER AND VOGEL

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.

INT. STERN VENTILATOR SHAFT - NIGHT - STRAIGHT DOWN SHOT

Muffled in shadow, a crewman climbs up the shaft. Only as he nears camera can Boerth be recognized.

REVERSE UP ANGLE

Boerth peers up the shaft to the top, inspecting it closely, then turns and disappears down the tunnel-like catwalk.

ANGLE DOWN SHAFT TO LOWER CATWALK

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.

and OMITTED

MIDDLE CATWALK - HEAD ON SHOT

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

Climbing along the ropes between gas cells 2 and 3, sometimes half hidden among the folds which he examines, Boerth works his way abreast to the framework where the starboard horizontal stabilizer joins the hull.

165 INT. BOTTOM OF LOWER FIN - NIGHT

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

The effect of the light here is like a sudden illumination of a weird seascape on the ocean floor.

167 ANGLE ON BOERTH

Startled, flecked with light, he steps back. His foot comes down on a tension wire.

168 CLOSE ON WIRE

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

He hears something, looks up sharply, strains to one side.

170 KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW - ALMOST STRAIGHT UP

He can dimly make out a figure scrambling from the ropes onto the middle catwalk, then quickly disappearing forward.

171 ANGLE ON KESSLER

Pan with him as he goes quickly up the stairs.

172 ANGLE ON MIDDLE CATWALK

As Boerth forces himself to a leisurely stop between cells 3 and 4 and looks down the narrow space.
From his restricted vantage point he sees Kessler approaching the top of the stairs from the fin.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

(finally)
Anything I can help you with, sir?

CONTINUED
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

He starts to go, hesitates, turns.

KESSLER
Boerth.

173-D KESSLER'S POINT OF VIEW ON BOERTH

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

173-E CLOSE ON KESSLER

KESSLER
(softly)
I wonder what you were really doing, Boerth.

173-F CLOSE ON BOERTH

deadpan.
173-F CONTINUED

BOERTH

My duty, sir.

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

173-G LOW ANGLE TOWARD KESSLER

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

174 OMITTED

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

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

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
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....

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - LONG SHOT - MINIATURE
Scudding clouds...the ocean below rough and spuming.

CLOSEUP OF TEAR IN OUTER SKIN OF STABILIZER - DAY
The stiff wind whips the inch-long tag of linen.

INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY
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.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ON STABILIZER
The tear, whipped by the strong wind, widens a fraction.
INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY
At a window the businessman peers through binoculars.

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

ANGLE ON VOGEL
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.

OMITTED

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

INT. THE LOUNGE - DAY - ANGLE ON THE COUNTESS
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.

INT. LOWER FIN - DAY
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
(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.

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

BOERTH'S POINT OF VIEW - NARROW SPACE BETWEEN CELLS 2 AND 3
He sees a play of light and shadow as though in conjunction with the heavy tattoo beating on the stern of the ship.

ANGLE ON BOERTH
He scrambles higher in the fin for a better look.

CLOSE SHOT - A GREAT GASH IN THE SKIN OF THE STABILIZER seen through the framework where stabilizer joins hull.

ANGLE ON BOERTH
scrambling instantly over to the nearest phone station on the middle catwalk, snatchng up the receiver.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - FAVORING STABILIZER
Shreds from the open wound flap in the gale-force wind.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY
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

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.

INT. HULL - LOWER CATWALK - ANGLE ON FLAKUS

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

INT. UPPER FIN - DAY

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.

LONG DOWN SHOT TO BOTTOM OF Stern

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.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

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

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.

EXT. HATCH IN UPPER FIN - DAY

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

INT. UPPER FIN - DAY

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

EXT. HATCH AND LADDER - DAY

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.

EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

With his weight Boerth steadies the ladder as Knorr descends.
199-A ANOTHER ANGLE ON STABILIZER

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

They brace themselves and haul in on the safety rope.

200 EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

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

200-A INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

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

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

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

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.

ANGLE TOWARD HATCH

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE

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.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY

Passengers at the windows enthusiastically take photos.

THEIR POINT OF VIEW - THE ICEBERGS

off the port side.

VOICES OVER

Gorgeous...
This is worth the whole trip...
What exposure are you using, Mr. Shimura?

ANGLE ON PROMENADE

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

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

OMITTED

EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE

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

ANOTHER ANGLE - STARBOARD STABILIZER

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.

INT. HULL - AT FRAMEWORK WHERE STABILIZER JOINS HULL

Lehmann looks through the framework at the tear where outside
on the stabilizer 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.

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY - CLOSE ON ALTIMETER

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.
EXT. THE STABILIZER - DAY - SHOOTING TOWARD HATCH

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.

CLOSE ON LEHMANN IN HATCH OPENING

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

ANGLE ON RIGGERS

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.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

Dimmler turns from the phone to Pruss at the altimeter.

DIMMLER
One rigger still outside, Captain.
Boerth.

Pruss gives no sign of having heard.
CLOSE ON ALTIMETER

The needle wavers a fraction above 300 feet.

DIMMLER'S VOICE
Captain...Boerth is still ---

CLOSEUP - PRUSS

eyes on the altimeter.

PRUSS
(curtly)
I heard you, Dimmler.

EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

Boerth has returned to the tear and is sewing down the base end. His hands move quicker than the eye.

CLOSE ON BOERTH

He completes his last stitches, cuts the line, ties it off, and turns to crawl to the swaying ladder.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

Eyes riveted on Pruss, the men wait tensely. Pruss looks up from the altimeter and pauses.

PRUSS
Aft engines full ahead, nose up.

EXT. STABILIZER - DAY

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.

ANGLE ON HATCH

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.
INT. BOTTOM OF THE Stern – DAY

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.

EXT. HINDENBURG – DAY – MINIATURE

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

EXT. THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY – DAY

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.

INT. TICKET OFFICE OF THE ZEPPELIN COMPANY – DAY

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.
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.

**INSERT - A RADIOGRAM**

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

Sound: a knock on the door.

**KESSLER'S VOICE**

Come in.

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

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.

**INT. READING AND WRITING ROOM - DAY**

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.

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

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

Now.

KESSLER
The hell you say.

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

INT. DOUGLAS' CABIN - DAY - CLOSE ON MESSAGE

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

ANGLE ON KESSLER AND DOUGLAS

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
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.

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

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

INT. A SMALL PANELLED OFFICE - DAY

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

CONTINUED
CAPTAIN

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 notebook)
That was the easy part, Captain. (reading)
The individual Frederick Seemans is on board the Queen Mary occupying 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.
CAPTAIN
Well, send him the odds. That's what the guy probably wants.

CLOSE ON ANOTHER DOOR
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.

INT. ALIEN SQUAD ROOM - DAY
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.
Thanks a lot. Now we get the picture.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - NIGHT - MINIATURE

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.

MONTAGE

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.

INT. CAPTAIN LEHMANN'S CABIN - NIGHT

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
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 in-
formation.

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.
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.
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.

INT. HULL - NIGHT - NOSE CONE

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.
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
CONTINUED - 2

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.

INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

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.

INT. HULL - NIGHT - UP ANGLE TOWARD NOSE CONE

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

CLOSE ON KESSLER AND BOERTH

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
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 Hindenberg.

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

DOWN ANGLE
Radio Officer Lessing appears in the dimness below.

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

CLOSE TWO SHOT
Boертh shoots Kessler a look. Kessler holds him with a non-committal stare, then calls down:

KESSLER
Coming.
ANGLE ON KESSLER

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

TIGHT ON KESSLER

as he reads the message: FREDA HALLE DEAD STOP SHOT WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE signed HUFSCMDT.

Kessler's eyes close an instant. He takes a deep breath, then looks back at Boerth.

ANGLE ON BOERTH

From far above, he stares down at Kessler.

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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

INT. CABIN OF KESSLER AND VOGEL - NIGHT

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
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.
CLOSE ON KESSLER

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

EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY

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".

ANGLE ON WEATHER EMPLACEMENT IN FRONT OF HANGAR

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.

INT. HANGAR - DAY - WAITING ROOM SECTION

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.

ANGLE FEATURING ROSENDAHL

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?

ANGLE ON MOORE AND GRUNBERGER

studying the list.

MOORE

Here's a pair -- Napier and Pajetta.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY - SHADOW AND RAINBOWS - MATTE

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

PETER'S VOICE
Hey, look!

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

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.
INT. HULL - DAY - ANGLE ON LOWER CATWALK

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.

ANGLE ON BOERTH

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

INT. LOWER FIN - DAY

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.

CLOSE TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND BOERTH.

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
CONTINUED

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

Boerth, his back still turned, waits.

BIG CLOSEUP - KESSLER

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.

CLOSE TWO SHOT - FAVORING BOERTH

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.
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.
INT. SMOKING ROOM - DAY

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.

LOW ANGLE AT TABLE

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

ANGLE ON NAPIER

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
CONTINUED

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.

FULL ON ROOM

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

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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.

POINT OF VIEW ON SKETCH PAD

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.
CLOSE TWO-SHOT - KESSLER AND VOGEL

VOGEL

Who?

KESSLER

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

ANGLE PAST KESSLER AND VOGEL

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
CONTINUED

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

He limps off.

CLOSE ON KESSLER AND THE COUNTESS

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
CONTINUED

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.

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

EXT. BASE OF MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON ROSENDAHL
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 messaged he's going to try one.

ANGLE PAST ROSENDAHL TO ENSIGN KIRBY AT TOP OF MAST
The pink-cheeked young officer shouts back against the wind.

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

CONTINUED
ROENDAHL

(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.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE

A title: 3:45 P.M. The Hindenburg sails over Manhattan.

INT. "A" DECK PROMENADE - DAY

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.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY - MATTE

The Queen Mary and other ships salute the Zeppelin with whistle blasts.

INT. THE HULL - DAY

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.

CLOSE ON BOERTH

checking the valves on Gas Cell IV. After cautiously surveying the lower catwalk, he climbs down the netting around the bag.

ANOTHER ANGLE

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.
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.

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.

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

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

coming along the middle catwalk.

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.

Boerth. What's there?

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

on the lower catwalk as Boerth lands beside him.

Found something, Eric?
300 CONTINUED

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

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

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

303 INT. ROSENDAHL'S OFFICE - DAY

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.
INT. HINDENBURG - CREW'S QUARTERS - DAY

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.

ANGLE ON KNORR

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
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.

EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - WEATHER EMPLACEMENT

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.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG AND AIRFIELD - DAY - MATTE

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

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

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

ROSEDAHL
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.

ROSEDAHL
(grabbing phone)
Flash red, dammnit, flash red.

310  EXT. WEATHEREMPLACEMENT - DAY

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

311  INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CONTROL GONDOLA

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

She grows smaller and disappears into the stormy sky.

313  OMITTED
EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE

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

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

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 rifflles 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.

INT. STAIRS AND FOYER ON "A" DECK

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

COUNTESS
Franz....

ANGLE ON KESSLER

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

COUNTESS
They've picked up my passport.

CONTINUED
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.

HIS ANGLE - STEWARDESS IMHOF

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

CLOSE TWO SHOT - KESSLER AND THE COUNTESS

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.

INSERT WATCH - 5:55

thru

OMITTED

INT. BOW - DAY - ANGLE ON BOERTH

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

INSERT WATCH: 6:00
Coming to a decision, he swings around and pulls up short.

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.
INT. STEERING ROOM - DAY

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.

HIS POINT OF VIEW

The clock at 6:18.

ANGLE ON ELEVATOR MAN FELBER

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
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
(curly)
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.

EXT. LAKEHURST - DAY - WEATHER EMMPLACEMEN

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.
EXT. THE AIRFIELD - DAY - WIDE ANGLE

Soggy Navy and civilian linesmen come running toward the mast.

QUICK SHOTS OF:

Newsreel men climbing to cameras on the hoods of cars...
People emerging from the hangar: Detectives Moore and Grunberger, Customs and Immigration men, Zeppelin Company officials, etc.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON BOSUN HOBAN

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.

ANGLE PAST MAST TOWARD HINDENBURG - MATTE

In the distance she can now be seen approaching.

HOBAN'S VOICE

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

INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - AFT ON MIDDLE CATWALK

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.
ANGLE ON LEHMANN

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.

INT. NOSE CONE - DAY

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.

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

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

EXT. THE LANDING MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON ROENDAHL

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

ROENDAHL

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

EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

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

INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - THE CONTROL GONDOLA

PRUS(\textsuperscript{\textregistered})

(to Lessing at phone)

Reply to NAL: Proceeding to land.

Will be late for dinner. Apologies to Madame, signed Pruss.

CONTINUED
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.

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

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

INT. BOW AND NOSE CONE - DAY - ANGLE ON

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.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MINIATURE AND MATTE
She swings wide over the hangar.

EXT. WEATHER EMLACEMENT - DAY - DOWN ANGLE
featuring clock at 7:11:05. Sign reads: WIND W 14 KTS --
GUSTS (no reading).

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

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

CONTINUED
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 346

LEHMANN

Gusts?

No reading on gusts.

PRUSS

No wonder they lose all their airships.

(pauses, then)

Hard rudder to port, aft engines astern.

EXT. THE LANDING MAST - DAY - MATTE AND MINIATURE

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.

INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CREW'S QUARTERS

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.

INSERT WATCH: 7:13.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - MATTE AND MINIATURE

She mushes in toward the mast some five hundred yards away. Abruptly water ballast dumps from her underbelly.
CLOSE ON A NEWSREEL CAMERAMAN
shooting from atop his car and getting drenched.

ANGLE ON LINESMEN
A wave of laughter rises from them.

ANGLE ON TRUDI
Standing in her white cape between the two nuns in front of
the hangar, she laughs and jumps up and down with excitement.

INT. HULL - DAY - THE LOWER CATWALK
Kessler, moving under tremendous tension, opens the canvas
curtains to the freight compartments off the catwalk.

ANGLE PAST KESSLER
The first compartment is filled with spare parts -- no Boerth.
Kessler lunges to the next compartment.

HIS POINT OF VIEW INTO COMPARTMENT
The mail room...a man sorting sacks. Not Boerth.

ANGLE ON KESSLER
Moving on, he checks his watch.

INSERT WATCH: 7:16.

INT. THE BOW - DAY - FEATURING STAIRS
Twelve off-watch men, including von Bauer and Chef Mueller,
each stand on a step of the arcing staircase.

ANGLE ON KNORR IN THE NOSE
He presses his headset as he relays orders.

KNORR
Stand by for starboard line drop.
360-A INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - FAVORING DIMMLER

as he hits a switch on a control panel.

361 INT. BOW - DOWN ANGLE ON LUDECKE

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

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

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 ROENSEDAHL AND TRUSCOTT

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.

ROENSEDAHL

This high landing's not Lehmann's idea, I'll guarantee that.

365 EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ON BOW - MINIATURE

A steel cable begins winding down from the 'nose.'

366 INT. THE HULL - DAY - Stern END OF LOWER CATWALK

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

in slatted crates fill the room -- no Boerth. He plunges on to the next room, rips aside the curtain, and bursts into:
INT. THE FREIGHT ROOM - DAY

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.

ANGLE ON KESSLER

looking murderously from Boerth to the dog to:

VOGEL

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.

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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
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.

INT. THE CHANNINGS' CABIN - DAY

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE

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
(extend a drawing)
Joe, you forgot this one.

SPAH
(taking it)
It's just a drawing I made of that goofy rainbow for my kids.

BE cores
(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.

BE cores
(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?

BE cores
That's right, sugar.

SPA H
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.

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

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

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

HIS POINT OF VIEW - THE HINDENBURG - MATTE
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....

CLOSE ON MORRISON

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

INT. HINDENBURG - DAY - SMOKING ROOM
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
So we're finally landing. That
calls for a drink.
(filling glass)
I shoulda taken a rowboat.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

382
DOWN ANGLE PAST - KESSLER

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

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.
BIG CLOSEUP - THE EXPOSED WORKS OF THE BOMB

His finger carefully moves the red detonation needle forward from 7:30.

CLOSEUP - KESSLER

relieved. He checks his watch.

INSERT WATCH: 7:24

EXT. WEATHER EMBLACEMENT - DAY

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.

OMITTED

INT. HULL - DAY - CLOSE ON KESSLER AT GAS BAG

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.

DOWN ANGLE - TOWARD LOWER CATWALK

Vogel, slack-jawed, his mouth bloody, comes along the catwalk -- and stops.

CLOSEUP - KESSLER

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.

CLOSEUP - VOGEL

The shock of recognition on his face turns to something far grimmer.

CLOSE ON KESSLER

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.

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

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.

EXPLOSION

The sound has the quality of enormous muffled force.

397 KESSLER AND THE ENTIRE GAS CELL IV

disappear.

398 ANGLE ON VÖGEL

hurled backwards. Molten aluminum, sizzling wires, burning fabric fill the air.

399 EXT. SHACK AT EDGE OF AIRFIELD - DAY

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

A plume of flame bursts from the top of the ship.

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

401 INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

The ship gives a lurch. Lehmann, turning from the instruments, looks quizzically at Pruss by the window.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

PRUSS
(wonder, then
wrath)
No...no!

EXT. AIRFIELD - DOWN SHOT
A red glow spreads on the ground; people stare up transfixed.

ANGLE ON WEATHER EMPLACEMENT
tinged red. The clock shows 7:25:05.

EXT. TOP OF MAST - DAY - CLOSE ON KIRBY
atop the mast, bawling through a megaphone:

KIRBY
Run....

DOWN ANGLE ON LINESMEN
In the brightening glare, some of the linesmen bolt.

BOSUN HOBAN
(foghorn voice)
Stand fast!

ANGLE ON ROSENDAHL
running toward ship o.s.

ROSENDAHL
Get the people out of there.
(pointing back)
Fire extinguishers.

INT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - "A" DECK PROMENADE
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.
CLOSE ON SWEET-FACED OLD LADY

as the contents of her carpetbag spill out -- stationery, Hindenburg towel, silverware, etc.

ANGLE ON IRENE, BRESLAU AND TWO BOYS

pinned to a banquette. Breslau crawls from the struggling mass.

BRESLAU

Stay with the boys, Irene.

INT. SMOKING ROOM - DAY - ANGLE ON DOUGLAS

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.

OMITTED

and

EXT. LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - WIDE ANGLE - SHOOTING DOWN

Sailors and civilians scatter wildly. People, cars, the mast, the ground, light up in the glow.

INT. PASSAGEWAY AND STAIRS ON "A" DECK - DAY

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.

INT. THE BOW - DAY

Fire funnels through the interior. The flames spurt as from a blowtorch toward:

THE NOSE CONE CREW

high on the rigger's shelf. Two men dive out a window in the nose. Chief Knorr hoists himself up onto a girder.
DOWN ANGLE ON STAIRS

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 barbeque pit -- Ludecke, Chef Mueller, Navigator von Baurer, others. One by one they start to let go.

EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

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.).

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

A monstrous torch against the sky...

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

Dinmiller, 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.

INT. THE TAIL - DAY

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.

OMITTED

INT. OFFICERS' MESS - DAY

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.
HER POINT OF VIEW TOWARD GROUND

Sixty feet below Speck lies spread-eagled on a funeral pyre. In the b.g. a photographer keeps clicking away.

ANGLE ON COUNTESS

Sparks fly through the window. She backs away. Pulling the hood of her cape over her head, she runs out.

EXT. THE LANDING CIRCLE - DAY - SHOOTING DOWN

Sounds of horror everywhere...a phantasmagoria of action.

OMITTED

INT. AN OBSERVATION WINDOW OPPOSITE WRITING ROOM - DAY

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.

EXT. THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

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

INT. SHOWER ROOM ON "B" DECK - DAY

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.
stunned on the ground. O.s. above a water tank bursts, deluging him. Revived, he scrambles clear of the flaming wreck.

Boerth crawls through smoke to the wicker cage and releases the frantically barking dog. Flames break through the wall. The floor gives way.

Under a swirl of sparks, the clock shows 7:25:15.

The ship's stern crashes on the edge of the mooring circle. MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

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.

advancing on the ship's glowing skeleton with a fire extinguisher. The intense heat forces him back.

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, wits, and lies still. Rosendahl forces himself within range of the victim, sprays the extinguisher in front of him sending up black smoke.

The man struggles up and runs through the smoke to Rosendahl who grabs him and guides him to a sailor.
ROSENDAHL
Take care of him. He can't talk.
His jaw looks broken.

As the sailor helps the man off he turns: Vogel.

ANGLE ON REED AND BESS CHANNING

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Channing turns, tucks her arm under his, and runs with her.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT

as they come to a stop safely beyond the inferno. Sobbing, she goes into his arms. His hands on her back are badly burned.

OMITTED

and

EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - ANGLE ON IRENE, PAUL AND PETER

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.

ANGLE ON HOBAN AND BRESLAU BOYS

HOBAN
You're scared.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

ANGLE ON BOERTH

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.

EXT. WEATHER EMLACEMENT - DAY

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.

EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

The bow strikes ground, and bounces up again into the sky.

MOMENTARY FREEZE, THEN CUT TO

EXT. BEHIND LANDING BAST - DAY - ANGLE ON NEWSREEL MEN

Atop their cars they swing their cameras on the same point.

EXT. HINDENBURG - DAY - CLOSE ANGLE ON SPAH ON THE BOW

With one arm Spah hangs onto a window ledge, pulling off his smouldering coat with the other. The ledge begins to buckle.

SPAH'S ANGLE TOWARD GROUND

a hundred feet below.

CLOSE ON SPAH

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.
NEW ANGLE ON SPAH

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.

CLOSE ON SPAH

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.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SPAH'S FAMILY

Running to him are two small kids and his wife carrying a baby. Spah opens his arms and gathers them in.

EXT. UNDERCARRIAGE OF CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

The big landing wheel hits the sand. Fried and smoking, the rubber tire squashes.

INT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY

Lehmann and Pruss are alone in it. The back end of the gondola is wide open, burned away.

PRUSS

(as she hits)

Now.

EXT. CONTROL GONDOLA - DAY - ANGLE ON PRUSS AND LEHMANN

As they fling themselves to the ground, wreckage from the disintegrating gondola crashes around them. Pruss runs through the glowing metal.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON PRUSS

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?
ANGLE FAVORING LEHMANN

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.

EXT. WEATHER EMPLACEMENT - DAY

The clock reads 7:25:25 and changes to 7:25:30.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY - ANGLE ON NAPIER, PAJETTA, AND COUNTESS

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.

ANGLE ON DETECTIVES MOORE AND GRUNBERGER

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 backgammon 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.
CLOSE ON COUNTESS

watching them a moment, then turning to stare bleakly at:

THE WRECK OF THE HINDENBURG - DAY - STOCK

The Zeppelin is now completely down, hydrogen consumed, sending up black clouds -- a stripped, glowing skeleton.

ANGLE ON COUNTESS

numb, her face a mask. With a shudder she pulls her tattered cape around her and moves away, anxiously scanning the bystanders.

ANGLE ON TRUDI

frantic, nearly out of her mind, darting this way, then that. She stops, buries her face in her hands and sobs.

CLOSE ON COUNTESS

as she sees her daughter; reacting.

ANOTHER ANGLE - INCLUDING COUNTESS AND TRUDI

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.

CLOSE ON BOW

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

EXT. THE REMAINS OF THE HINDENBURG - ANOTHER DAY - MATTE

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.
in conference at the landing mast. They are German Ambassador Luther, a Luftwaffe General, a USAF General, a Dept. of Commerce Official, Dr. Eckener, Commander Rosendahl, and Captain Pruss, his head, neck and one hand in bandages.

CLOSE ANGLE ON INVESTIGATORS

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....

EXT. AIRFIELD AND SHACK - DAY

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.
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

EXT. THE SCENE OF THE DISASTER - ANOTHER DAY

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
CONTINUED

MORRISON'S VOICE
The sun is striking the windows
of the observation deck and sparkle-
ling 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.

A SUBLIMINAL FLASH SHOT
The Hindenburg bursting into flame.

NARRATOR'S VOICE
'We must conclude, therefore, that
it was an Act of God.'

ANGLE TOWARD SKY - MINIATURE
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.

CLOSER ON HINDENBURG - MINIATURE
Her huge silver bulk, long as a skyborne train, flows past,
the boom of her engines shaking the earth.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

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.

REVERSE ANGLE.

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.