SULLY

by

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based on the book "Highest Duty: My Search For What Really Matters" by Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger III and Jeffrey Zaslow

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The SCREEN is BLACK. But it --

SHAKES.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
'Too low. Too low. Pull up, terrain. Pull up. Pull up.'

Suddenly --

EXT. SKY - DAY

A PLANE falling two stories per second. This is real...

CUT TO BLACKOUT.

BLACK

VOICE (V.O.)
Mayday, Mayday, this is Cactus 1549! Lost both engines. Both engines.

BLACK WHIPS INTO...

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

CAPTAIN "SULLY" SULLENBERGER, 57, lithe, intense, is behind the stick of this plummeting plane.

ALARMS are sounding.

CACOPHONY.

VERTIGO.

Beside Sully, First Officer --

JEFF SKILES, 49, youthful, handsome. Skiles is desperately trying to get the engines started again.

SKILES
No re-light. On one or two.

CUT TO BLACKOUT.

BLACK

The SCREEN QUIVERS and hums. All we hear is...

(CONTINUED)
AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (V.O.)
Cactus 1549, you can land on 
runway one-three, if you want it,
it’s yours.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
‘Pull up, pull up. Terrain. Pull 
up.’

BLACK INCINERATES TO...

EXT. ENGINES - CONTINUOUS ACTION
FIRE. Both engines howling and useless.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
‘Terrain, terrain, pull up, pull 
up.’

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION
SULLY
Departure control, we can make it 
back. We’re returning to 
LaGuardia.

SKILES
No relight. We got no power.

CUT TO BLACKOUT.

BLACK
The sound of the ALARMS wail on. The rip of the falling 
plane through the pitiless air.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION
The ALTIMETER pins toward 0. Out the windshield, only -- 
WATER, 360.

SULLY
(into radio)
LaGuardia Tower, 1549. Trying to 
make 1-3.

SKILES
We’re too low.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY (V.O.)
'Terrain. Pull up. Pull up.'

CUT TO BLACKOUT.

BLACK
The SCREEN RATTLES and SHORTS IN and OUT.

SULLY (V.O.)
Come on, just a little further, goddamn it.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE - CONTINUOUS ACTION
The Manhattan skyline appears, nearly filling the plane’s windscreen.

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME
PASSENGERS scream and panic. The hellish wait for IMPACT.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION
SULLY
Lorrie. I love you.

CUT TO BLACKOUT.

BLACK
Silence. Long silence.

CRASH. The --
SOUND of the plane smashing into a high-rise apartment building.

EXT. SKYLINE - SAME TIME
The plane... shears the fourth floor in half. The skin-crawling screech of metal on concrete on bone.

EXPLOSION, as the engines catch fire and the plane careens down the city street...

(CONTINUED)
Taxis, pedestrians, all vanquished by the hurricane of violence.

BOOM. The plane --

EXPLODES. And spreads its damage as it burns.

The SCREEN FILLS WITH panic and fire and death.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAWN

A MAN IN SILHOUETTE sits up, his breath banging out of him.

CLOSE ON MAN’S FACE


SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. EAST RIVER BIKE PATH - DAWN

We are ON the BACK OF Sully’s head, as he runs fast and hard along the East River.

Then AROUND TO Sully’s face, his eyes dark with focus and the shadow of the nightmare he is trying to shed.

He wears an all-black sweatsuit, and despite the harsh cold, sweat pours down his expressionless face.

Not many out so early on a winter’s dawn. Sully has the pathway mostly to himself.

And as he runs... he cannot elude the relentless sounds and images of his nightmare.

Out of nowhere...

SCREECH and HORN of a CAR as Sully just avoids getting clipped by a passing car.

Sully just keeps running... west now, back into the teeth of the city. Unable to get enough speed to elude his own thoughts.

SMASH CUT TO:
INT. HOTEL - ROOM - LATER

Silence. Just the hum of a hotel room as Sully slowly dresses in his white shirt, (no epaulets), and black pants.

Every motion he makes is precise, but a beat slow.

And it is too quiet in here. So he remotes on the TV.

Every channel he checks is focused on the flight 1549 MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON.

Shots of the PLANE IN THE WATER, PASSENGERS on the wings and in the emergency rafts.

Ecstatic SURVIVORS hugging on the docks.

Surviving passenger BARRY LEONARD, 50, handsome and amazed, is shivering with cold and joy while being interviewed by a TV reporter.

BARRY (V.O.)
(Southern accent)
When I looked out the window and saw he was going to land us in the river... I thought... it’s over. What else could I think?

Another channel. Another interview.

DIANE HIGGINS, 58, lovely and stunned, is in blissful shock.

DIANE HIGGINS (V.O.)
You think you’re going to die, that’s what you think. And then... miraculously... you don’t.

Channel change. Back to Barry.

BARRY (V.O.)
(into camera)
... I guess I could only say thank you... thank you for saving my life.

Sully watches the television and it feels like a show more than the news. Is this his life?

DIANE HIGGINS (V.O.)
Thank you, Captain.
(choking up)
Thank you. Thank...

(CONTINUED)
SULLY - 11/18/15 (Full Blue) 6.

CONTINUED:

He smooths out the lines in his shirt, looks in the mirror. But somehow can’t quite meet his own gaze.

As we PUSH DEEP INTO Sully’s eyes, we hear...

CHARLES PORTER (V.O.)
(pre-lap)
... you. Yes, thank you, Captain Sullenberger, for joining us today...

INT. HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION 13

Sully and Skiles are sitting in a halogen-bright room, with two glasses of water in front of them.

Next to them is MIKE CLEARY, their union rep. He’s 50s, black hair, intense bearing.

Across the table from them are the 3 NTSB members.

ELIZABETH DAVIS, late 40s, gentle face, BEN EDWARDS, 50s, a banker’s demeanor and focus, and CHARLES PORTER, mid-40s, Marine-tough, who is beginning the session.

CHARLES PORTER
... and welcome also to First Officer Skiles. Glad you could make it in this morning.

SKILES
Not as glad as we are.

Slight laughter.

CHARLES PORTER
For the record, we have an Aircraft Systems Team on this investigation, also Aircraft Structures, MRT, Aircraft Performance, ATC, Wildlife Factors, Survival Factors, and Emergency Response. Today, we begin with our Operations and Human Performance investigation, of the crash of U.S. Air Flight 1549.

SULLY
Water landing.

CHARLES PORTER
Captain?

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
This was not a crash. It was not a ditching. We knew what we were executing. A forced water landing.

BEN EDWARDS
Why didn’t you attempt to return to LaGuardia?

SULLY
There was simply not enough altitude. The river was the only place long enough, wide enough, and smooth enough to even attempt to land the airplane safely.

BEN EDWARDS
Air Traffic testified that you stated you were returning to LaGuardia. But you didn’t.

SULLY
As I began the left turn, I realized I couldn’t make it back. It would have ruled out all other options. Returning would have been a mistake.

CHARLES PORTER
Let’s get into how you calculated all those parameters.

SULLY
There wasn’t time for calculating. I had to rely on my experience of managing the altitude and speed on thousands of flights, over four decades.

CHARLES PORTER
You’re saying you...

SULLY
Eyeballed it.

CHARLES PORTER
You eyeballed it?

SULLY
The best chance those passengers had was on that river. I’d bet my life on it. In fact, I did. And I would do it again.

(CONTINUED)
BEN EDWARDS
Aviation engineers are theorizing that you had enough energy to make it back to a runway.

SULLY
Engineers are not pilots. They’re wrong. And they weren’t there.

BEN EDWARDS
Regardless, we have to follow up all implications as part of our investigation.

CHARLES PORTER
Our computers will run return scenario algorithms to generate simulations with your exact parameters. The dual engine loss, the altitude. Everything you faced when you made your decision.

SULLY
I’d like to oversee those computer simulations.

BEN EDWARDS
Not possible during an investigation.

CHARLES PORTER
You stated it was a dual engine failure due to multiple bird-strikes.

BEN EDWARDS
That would be unprecedented.

SULLY
Everything is unprecedented. Until it happens the first time.

The tension escalates.

Mike Cleary shoots Sully a look to calm him down. But --

Sully digs in as the questions continue to come in an overlapping blur.

BEN EDWARDS
How much sleep did you get the night before?

SULLY
8 hours. Enough.
CHARLES PORTER
Is it possible your blood sugar was low?

SULLY
I was rested. Completely aware of my surroundings.

CHARLES PORTER
When was your last drink, Captain Sullenberger?

SULLY
A week ago.

BEN EDWARDS
Drugs?

SULLY
No. Never.

CHARLES PORTER
First Officer Skiles?

SKILES
Don’t drink. Never have.

CHARLES PORTER
Captain. How about any troubles at home?

A beat.

SULLY
No more than anyone else. And nothing that affected my work.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Darkness. It’s only 5 PM, but night presses in through the windows of the car driving Sully and Skiles and Cleary.

In the backseat, Sully looks exhausted. Skiles sits in the front seat, fuming.

SKILES
Why are they looking for something we did wrong, when it all turned out right? It’s bullshit.
CLEARY
It didn’t turn out all right for the airline and their insurance company. We should expect some blowback.

SKILES
Come on, Mike. What are they going to say, that he shouldn’t have saved everybody?

SULLY
It’s not personal, the NTSB is doing their job. Once they have all the facts, it’ll calm down.

SKILES
They should just pin on the medal and send you back to work.

Sully doesn’t answer. Instead, he starts to dial his cell.

SULLY’S PHONE (V.O.)
‘The voice mailbox of Lorrie Sullenberger is full and cannot receive further messages.’

SULLY
I didn’t call her since this morning. But apparently everyone else did.

ANGLE ON THE DRIVER
A handsome Egyptian man in his early 50s. He takes the silence as a chance to speak.

DRIVER
Not meaning to bother, but I have to say, it is an honor driving you today.

SULLY
Thank you.

DRIVER
What has it been this year so far? Bernie Madoff, the two wars without end, many million new people with no work... And that is just the first two weeks of January.

(beat)
Friday’s headline? This is beautiful.
Driver holds up the Jan. 16th DAILY NEWS. Its headline reads... “HERO ON THE HUDSON.” With Sully’s photo inset.

SKILES
Hey, Mike. How about we add the driver as a character witness?

The car stops as it awaits its chance to turn into the hotel entrance. Traffic keeps them at bay for the moment.

EXT. ALEX HOTEL - SAME TIME

A pack of paparazzi is waiting.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully sees the press and looks away. Then he pulls out his cell phone. Trying Lorrie one more time. It rings and rings and rings.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. SULLENBERGER BACKYARD (DANVILLE, CA) - SAME TIME

LORRIE SULLENBERGER, 50, fit, pretty, is in the backyard. She answers her cell.

LORRIE
Finally.

SULLY
The NTSB had us tied up all day.

LORRIE
I just wanted to hear your voice on the phone. Been hearing everyone else’s. You’d be amazed at how many ‘cousins’ you have.

EXT. HOTEL - SAME TIME

Driver finally makes the turn and stops outside the hotel. Cameras press up against the window, strobing Sully like a night at Studio 54.

A BELLMAN opens the back door of the Town Car and the rush of noise is deafening. Sully has to yank it shut again to hear Lorrie.
SULLY
Doesn’t feel like family here.

EXT. SULLENBERGER HOUSE - SAME TIME

CRANE UP FROM the b.g. to reveal their little street is clotted with worldwide media.

Two dozen NEWS TRUCKS. PARABOLIC MICS, hordes of PHOTOJOURNALISTS.

The doorbell rings, the home phone rings, news trucks honk as they crowd the tiny street.

LORRIE
Pretty quiet here, too.

Sully’s door gets opened again. Mayhem in the streets. Chants of “Sully... Sully... Sully.”

LORRIE
The reporters want me to give an update. Inside the mind of Sully. What should I tell them?

SULLY
Just tell them...

LORRIE
I can’t hear you. Call me back without the cheerleaders.

SULLY
I was saying to tell...

LORRIE
I can’t hear you. Call. Me. Back.

Lorrie hangs up.

EXT. HOTEL - SAME TIME

Sully gets out of the car with Skiles exiting the other side. And like Michael Jordan and the rest of the Bulls, the press try to swarm Sully, and let Skiles slip through almost imperceptibly.

Skiles waves amiably to Sully, happy to avoid the crush.

And Sully is left behind, encircled by COPS keeping the tangle of cameras, arms, and microphones fifteen feet back.

(CONTINUED)
The REPORTERS shout their questions.

REPORTER #1
How does it feel to be a miracle maker?

REPORTER #2
Show us your cape, Super Sully!

REPORTER #3
How did you pull off the impossible?

TIME SLOWS. Each FLASHBULB like a blow to a boxer’s head.

Sully winces, blinks, and finally closes his eyes. His anonymity is gone. Forever. And maybe more than that.

INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM - LATER

The shower burns. The bathroom is so full of steam that visibility is almost gone.

The tub is running hot water and so is the sink.

Sully has stuffed towels under the door to maximize the steam effect.

Finally, amidst the murk, we see Sully sitting on the edge of the tub, with a wet towel over his head.

IN CLOSEUP

We see he is taking long, deep breaths. Trying to slow down his heart, which is still beating at double its regular rate.

It’s not working.

INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM/BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

The water is all stopped now, though steam lingers. Sully wipes the mirror to see his reflection and it comes back diffuse. Unclear in all the heat. And then the --

NOISE. The unmistakable roar of a PLANE plummeting to the ground. Deafening. He feels the sound crashing towards him, louder and louder. And louder.

As Sully hurries in to escape the sound, he finds...

(CONTINUED)
SILENCE. The sound is gone. Only the slow ticking of the bedside clock. And the fast ticking of his own troubled heart.

Everything feels unsafe. Even the ground beneath his feet.

INT. SULLENBERGER HOME - LATER

The SILHOUETTES of several photographers and reporters shadow the front window as --

Lorrie crosses in front, dialing the home phone. She walks downstairs as she waits. After several rings, it’s picked up.

LORRIE
I’m thinking about running over the press with the car. Self-defense. Think a jury would convict?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Sully, in a robe, with a beer in hand, is on the line.

SULLY
Yes. Okay. Good.

INTERCUT:

LORRIE
I’m taking that as permission. The cops will be coming after you.

SULLY
Whenever you’re ready.

LORRIE
Sully. Are you even listening to me?

SULLY
Is there a strange buzz on this line? Do you hear a buzz? Maybe we should talk later.

LORRIE
Honey. I’ve been waiting all day. This is later. Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
Of course. Tired. That’s it.
(beat)
How are the girls?

LORRIE
They’re... a little overwhelmed.
(beat)
Sounds like you are, too.

SULLY
They’ll be all right. It’s a lot.

The sound of a photographer’s camera clinking against the kitchen window as the photographer comes too close.

LORRIE
Yes, it is.

Lorrie draws the kitchen curtains, then remotes-on the kitchen TV.

PULL BACK to reveal Lorrie has muted it.

LORRIE
The whole world’s talking about you. My Sully. I still can’t believe it.

No answer.

SULLY
They need me here longer. For the NTSB investigation. Did I tell you that already?

LORRIE
Sully, what is it?

SULLY
Just tired. I apologize if I didn’t tell you.

LORRIE
You don’t have to apologize. You’re where you need to be.

SULLY
I just want you to know. I did the best I could.

LORRIE
Of course you did. You saved everyone.
SULLY
Maybe we can talk tomorrow. The fatigue is... it feels like someone is inside my skin, sitting on my bones.

LORRIE
Do you want me to come be with you?

SULLY
Thank you, Lorrie. But the girls... need you there. (beat) Tell them I love them, okay?

LORRIE
I love you. Get some sleep.

SULLY
Yeah. And maybe when I wake up, it will be January 14th. That would be nice.

They hang up. Both standing still. 3,000 miles of distance between them. And somehow, even further apart.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

KATIE COURIC (V.O.)
(pre-lap)
Why Captain Sullenberger made that fateful decision to turn the Hudson River into a runway, only he can answer... but we now know that it was the wrong choice...

FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Sully’s in his sweats. “CBS News” is on, the volume peaked, replaying endless clips of the Miracle on the Hudson.

On TV, KATIE COURIC stands by the Hudson River.

KATIE COURIC (V.O.)
... A choice that endangered the lives of all on board.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
And while much of the country hails him as a hero, this new information will certainly change everyone’s understanding of the so-called ‘Miracle on the Hudson.’ Sometimes fireworks only exist to disguise fraud. From the banks of the Hudson, I’m Katie Couric. CBS News.

Sully jerks AWAKE.

He’s lying down in the hotel room. But the TV has been OFF the entire time. In fact, it’s UNPLUGGED.

He rubs his face, wishing he could get his hands inside his skull to silence his brain.

The clock reads 12:41 AM.

He picks up his phone several times. Half dials Lorrie. Quits. Finally picks up the hotel phone and dials an extension. Two rings until...

INT. JEFF SKILES’ HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

Skiles is sitting in a chair next to his made bed, drinking a soda, eating a mini-bar Snickers. He grabs the ringing phone.

SKILES
Hello?

SULLY (V.O.)
Jeff. Sorry to call this late.

INTERCUT:

SKILES
It’s okay. No sleep in this room, either. Can you believe they charge five dollars for a Snickers? I could bankrupt the airline in about four bites.

SULLY
Just wanted to see if... maybe you wanted...

SKILES
... to talk? Absolutely. Let’s grab some air...
The wind-whipped streets are empty and the closed storefronts and window displays make the street feel even emptier.

The night is mean with cold and Sully and Skiles walk north on 5th Avenue, bundled up. Words don’t come easy.

SKILES
You enjoying the shakes, the nightmares, and the rabbit heartbeat?

SULLY
A little bit.

(beat)
The union offered us counseling...

SKILES
What are they going to say? You were in a plane crash. And lived. It may have a minor impact on your day-to-day.

SULLY
I just... hate not being able to control this process. I want myself back.

SKILES
I’m hoping that six months from now, we’ll just be laughing about how we got to meet David Letterman.

SULLY
We’re doing ‘Letterman’?

SKILES
Right after the NTSB interview. I’m guessing Dave will be funnier.

SULLY
It’s all so surreal. I guess I’m just having a little trouble separating reality from... whatever the hell this is.

SKILES
This... is two men freezing their asses off.
They laugh, the steam from their mouths like unspoken thoughts.

SKILES
Sully... don’t worry. You did a great thing and it’s going to be remembered for a very long time.

SULLY
Funny thing is... I’ve delivered a million passengers, over 40 years in the air... and in the end I’ll be judged on 208 seconds.

SKILES
Come on. Tomorrow’s going to be a good day. Computer SIMS will prove you were right and we can all put our wings back on.

SULLY
You’re right. You’re right. All back to normal.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - SULLY’S EYES
The street lights reflecting, as we...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER EXTREME CLOSEUP - SULLY’S EYES
Lights still reflecting, but these are TV lights. PULL BACK to reveal he is sitting across from...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY
KATIE COURIC and her camera crew.

SULLY
... it was obvious this was a critical situation... losing thrust in both engines, at a low altitude... over one of the most densely populated areas on the planet...

KATIE COURIC
But choosing to land on the Hudson... there was still a big if...

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
I was sure I could do it.

KATIE COURIC
You were?

SULLY
Yes.

KATIE COURIC
How do you feel about people calling you a hero?

SULLY
I don’t feel like a hero. I was just a man doing his job.

KATIE COURIC
The right man for the job, at the right time. You’ve been flying for nearly 40 years.

SULLY
42. It has been my life. My whole life.

Sully’s eyes spark bright for a moment as we --
ZOOM INTO them and COME BACK OUT THROUGH --

FLASHBACK - INT. BI-PLANE - DAY (APRIL 3, 1967)

Seeing all of Denison, Texas stretched out below him.

Sixteen-year-old Sully sits in the front of this tandem two-seater prop plane.

In the backseat is L.T. COOK, 50s, clean-shaven and gruff, but aware he’s witnessing the birth of a pilot.

L.T. COOK
Your aircraft.

In the roar of the tiny cockpit, L.T. Cook circles the stick to signal it’s Sully’s plane, then takes his hands off the override controls. Sully circles his stick back in response.

SULLY
(amazed)
My aircraft.

Sully flies. He dips low over the verdant Texas landscape. Low enough for his parents --

(CONTINUED)
CHESLER and PAULINE Sullenberger to wave up at him, proudly.

He soars back up against the perfect blue and he looks absolutely in control. And free. Looks like he never wants to come down.

EXT. LANDING STRIP - MINUTES LATER

Sully lands the plane on his own. When the wheels touch down, it’s as if Sully’s memorizing the feel. The thrill. He was up there. Now he’s down here. He did it. Him.

He and L.T. disembark and stand on the grass strip as the propeller does its final spin.

L.T. COOK
I’ll be busy crop dusting in the Super Cub the rest of the summer. So you can take the plane up, I guess. When you please.

Sully doesn’t say anything.

L.T. COOK

SULLY
Yes, sir.

L.T. COOK
And never forget, no matter what’s happening, to fly the airplane.

SULLY
Absolutely, sir.

L.T. COOK
One other thing. And this is important.

SULLY
Yes, sir?

L.T. COOK
You can go ahead and smile.

Sully’s face unleashes a deeply satisfied smile.
INT. BI-PLANE - ANOTHER DAY

Sully flies alone, trying out new maneuvers. Memorizing everything on the panels, constantly testing himself, improving. He banks into the blue, and when he returns to level, we are...

INT. BI-PLANE - ANOTHER DAY

And this time his Mother is on board. PAULINE Sullenberger is 41 and attractive. She’s also relaxed, hands calmly on her lap, as if out for a Sunday drive.

SULLY
Your stomach’s not queasy, Mom?

MOTHER
No.

SULLY
Not too noisy for you?

MOTHER
No, now let’s enjoy. Just go low and slow.

She reaches over and squeezes his shoulder.

MOTHER
You realize that if you’d studied piano like this, we’d be on our way to Carnegie Hall now.

SULLY
This is my piano, Mom. (pause) And I can still get us to Carnegie Hall.

They laugh and she squeezes his hand, beyond proud.

PUSH IN CLOSE ON Sully’s joy-filled face, not a drop of sweat despite the Texas heat...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL - DAY (PRESENT)

Sully’s face, now 57, and moist with sweat.

The Katie Couric interview is over. Lights get switched off, camera packed up. Katie’s long gone, and --

(CONTINUED)
ALISON, cute, mid-20s, is removing the rest of Sully’s foundation, but he can’t stop sweating.

SULLY
Sorry about the perspiration.

ALISON
After what you did, I’d think that Katie couldn’t be too intimidating.

SULLY
Not Katie. The lights and camera she brought with her.

ALISON
(beat)
All done.

Alison gets on tiptoes and kisses Sully’s cheek.

ALISON
That was from my mom. Her name’s Brenda. She says to say thank you, and she’s single.

They laugh.

SULLY
Tell Brenda thanks, but I’ve got a girl at home.

ALISON
Lucky woman.

Alison exits and...

Sully is alone. Waiting in this strange hotel room, amidst the silence of not knowing what is going to happen next... he feels like the last man on Earth.

He stares out onto the streets of Midtown 30 floors below. Reflected in the window, we see the city before him. And then...

A PLANE... plummeting towards the Manhattan skyline.

SULLY’S POV

As the jet descends relentlessly across the canyon of buildings, hidden by high-rises and then reappearing, like a ghost that won’t perish.
Half the left wing severs free as it slams a building, then the plane vanishes again, behind a wall of skyscrapers.

BOOM. The plane detonates out of view, fire and debris licking out and around, still visible... the explosion echoing through the streets.

**MAN (O.S.)**
Sully. Sully...

CLOSE ON SULLY

still gazing out the window. His eyes are vacant, his nightmare still shadowing him.

But there is no reflection in the window.

And outside, there is no plane in ruins. No fire. Just the city in motion.

**MAN (O.S.)**
Sully!

Finally, Sully whiplashes back to find --

Mike Cleary, his union rep, standing by the door.

**CLEARY**
Sully, where are you?

Sully looks out the window one last time. Nothing.

**CLEARY**
I’m standing here, calling your name... what’s up with you?

Sully keeps staring out. Transfixed.

**CLEARY**
You need to get focused, because the media request avalanche continues. Larry Rooney volunteered to jump in and ride shotgun with you the rest of the way. Thought you might need a friend. He’ll take you to today’s NTSB meeting.

(beat)
Sully. Are you hearing me?

Sully finally looks at Cleary.

(CONTINUED)
CLEARY
Airbus completed their computer simulations as well.

SULLY
Good. Good. That will help.

CLEARY
There’s something else. Arnie Gentile called... he got the ACARS data.

(beat)
The left engine was still operating at idle.

Sully feels like he’s been stabbed.

SULLY
That’s not possible. I felt it go. It was like being stopped in mid-air.

CLEARY
Arnie said there was a chance it was sub-idle. That it still could’ve had thrust.

Sully doesn’t answer.

CLEARY
Just thought you should know.
Since the NTSB already does.

EXT. HOTEL - LATER

WOLF PACK OF PAPARAZZI at the hotel door, as --

Sully exits the hotel where the Katie Couric interview just took place. His eyes show an unfamiliar reticence, and he scans the crowd for a familiar face. He finds one in --

LARRY ROONEY. 47, stocky, friendly, intense. He wears a U.S. Air uniform, snugly over a slight paunch.

Larry waves from beside the car and Sully slowly makes his way through the mayhem.

Larry pulls him free of the final strangers, into a vehicle.

(CONTINUED)
INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SULLY
Larry. Nice to finally see a friendly face.

The Town Car’s dark windows turn the media throng into a horde of silhouettes.

LARRY
Might be the last one you see today.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NTSB HEARING - LATER

The tension is high as Sully and Skiles sit across from the investigators. Rooney is by their side for support. And --

Skiles is riled up.

SKILES
Isn’t it a little early in the year to go fishing?

CHARLES PORTER
Seeking the facts is hardly fishing, Mr. Skiles.

SKILES
Okay. Then here is the most important fact. There are only two people who know what happened in the cockpit that day, and I’m one of them.

CHARLES PORTER
And we appreciate your perspective...

SKILES
Why do you think we’re even here today? It’s because Captain Sullenberger did not head back to LaGuardia.

No response.

(CONTINUED)
SKILES
Look, I just finished training on the A320, and I can tell you that the only reason the plane operated as well as it did, that the aircraft could land anywhere, is because Captain Sullenberger turned on the Auxiliary Power Unit.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
He was simply following the QRH...

SKILES
No. He wasn’t following the proper procedure at all. And I know, because I had the QRH in my hands.

The board leans forward. Interested.

SKILES
He switched on the APU immediately after engine roll back. According to Airbus, that’s the fifteenth thing on the list to do. Fifteenth.

Silence.

SKILES
If he’d followed the damn rules, we’d all be dead.
(heating up)
Maybe that’s the part you don’t like. You’re not used to having answers to your guesses.

SULLY
(smoothing)
Look, what Jeff is saying is that I know the A320. What it does and doesn’t do. I’ve read countless CVR transcripts of deceased pilots and I have significant accident investigation experience.

CHARLES PORTER
There is no question that you are an experienced, dedicated, talented professional.

(CONTINUED)
BEN EDWARDS
But all the flights you piloted before January 15th and every crash you investigated are not the purview of this investigation. Only U.S. Airways 1549 matters today.

The room takes a breath.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
Your union has been advised...
ACARS data relayed that the left engine continued to turn throughout the flight.

SULLY
Then the data would be wrong.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
The evidence shows the left engine was at idle or sub-idle immediately following the bird strike.

SULLY
(punched)
Show me the left engine and it’ll be dead geese and no power.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
The left engine was lost in the crash, due to the extensive damage on touchdown, but we’ll circle back to that. Let’s assume it was, as you say, a dual engine loss due to bird strike...

CHARLES PORTER
Your weight was 151,510 lbs. Wind and temperature, N-NW, 21 degrees. Speed and altitude, 200 knots at 2,818 feet. Agreed?

SULLY
That’s correct.

BEN EDWARDS
We were able to run all the algorithms concurrently.

(continued)
CHARLES PORTER
And the resulting computer simulations of U.S. Airways Flight 1549 showed that the aviation engineers... were correct.

BEN EDWARDS
There was enough altitude and speed after the bird strike, for a successful return to LaGuardia.

SULLY
(dubious)
Successful?

CHARLES PORTER
The plane landed at LaGuardia. Intact. Undamaged.

SKILES
You got that from one computer simulation?

BEN EDWARDS
No. From twenty.

Including attempts for Teterboro runway 19, and LaGuardia, runways 22 and 13. Every computer simulation, with the exact flight parameters, demonstrated that a return was possible. And not just possible. Probable.

The room goes ghost quiet.

BEN EDWARDS
Does anyone need to hear further computer evidence?

Silence.

BEN EDWARDS
Captain Sullenberger, First Officer Skiles?

SULLY
(shaken)
Not at this time.

SKILES
No.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
I would like to go over all the parameters used...

BEN EDWARDS
We’ll make them available to the union.

LARRY ROONEY
Thank you.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
And once the investigation is complete, we’ll be able to share the actual computer simulations. For now, they remain confidential. We can’t afford a leak to the press.

(beat)
There’s been far too much talk in the press already.

NTSB stands. The room is somber.

CHARLES PORTER
When the complete Cockpit Voice Recording is compiled, with ATC, and all on-board transcripts combined, we will call you back.

The NTSB exits. So does Larry Rooney, who follows them out with hushed questions.

Only Sully and Skiles remain. Sully looks stunned.

SKILES
They’re playing Pac-Man, you were flying a plane full of human beings.

SULLY
Somehow. Not the way I remember it. It just doesn’t seem right.

SKILES
Because it’s not right. Sully, you did everything you could. And it was more than enough. Ask the passengers. Ask your wife and kids. Ask mine.

The two men stare straight ahead, dumbfounded by the turn of events. PUSH IN CLOSER. CLOSER...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:
... PIXILATED...

Because we are watching them on TV.

Their expressions are now strained smiles, as they weather lighthearted questions from --

DAVID LETTERMAN.

LETTERMAN (V.O.)
The first thing, the only thing the Captain said over the radio...

PULL BACK FROM THE CLOSEUP to reveal that Sully and Skiles are both in full uniform and are standing behind flight attendants.

DONNA DENT, 51, short hair, lovely smile... SHEILA DAIL, a very pretty and young 57... and DOREEN WELSH, 50, strong, confident... on the set of “David Letterman”.

LETTERMAN (V.O.)
... was ‘Brace for impact’?

DONNA (V.O.)
‘Brace for impact.’ Yes.

The flight attendants all have the wonder of survival on their faces. And --

Skiles seems utterly at ease under the lights.

Sully looks hemmed in. The one person at the dance who is hearing a different music.

PULL BACK ALL THE WAY to reveal --

Sully has been watching his and the crews’ performance on Letterman, taped earlier that night, on his hotel room television. He holds his cell phone to his ear as it rings out.

LETTERMAN (V.O.)
(on TV)
‘Brace for impact.’ Ever hear that before, coming out of a cockpit?

DONNA (V.O.)
(on TV)
No, not ever.

(CONTINUED)
LETTERMAN (V.O.)
(on TV)
Ever hear that in any other aspect
of your lives?

The audience and the crew laugh, but Sully’s no longer
listening, he’s connected on the phone with...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SULLENBERGER HOUSE - SAME TIME

Lorrie. She’s on the cordless, walking through their
house.

LORRIE
I’m sure you were fine.

SULLY
Nervous as hell. Jeff was relaxed
and funny. He should be getting
all the interview requests.

LORRIE
How long before we get you back?

SULLY
I don’t know.

LORRIE
The girls miss you. I miss you.

Lorrie peeks out the curtain. All the media trucks
remain.

LORRIE
Are they paying you to do all this
media stuff, at least?

SULLY
It’s news, Lorrie. No payment
necessary.

LORRIE
Wish the bank felt the same way.

Lorrie reaches their bedroom, only her side of the bed
slept in. She takes an open envelope off the nightstand.
It’s a bank statement.

SULLY
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)
LORRIE
It’s just... we got another notice about the space in Butte County.

SULLY
We’ll find a tenant. It takes time.

LORRIE
You’ve been saying that for nine months, Sully, and it’s still vacant.

SULLY
The economy... has to take a turn...

LORRIE
If we lose that space, it feels like the next domino to fall... is the house.

SULLY
We’re not going to lose the house. Lorrie, what are you...?

LORRIE
I’m sorry. Feeling a little anxious and alone at the moment. Not a lot of sleep...

SULLY
I know. Not much sleep here, either.

LORRIE
Just tell me you’ll be back in the air soon.

SULLY
Not before the NTSB finishes the investigation.

LORRIE
We need you flying.

SULLY
Well, they’re in no rush. It’s their job to scrutinize every thought I had, every syllable I uttered, every choice I made.

LORRIE
Of course you’ll be back flying.
SULLY
Lor. If it goes badly, my career as a safety expert will end as a website and a business card.

LORRIE
I’m more worried about your career as a pilot.

A pause. Then...

SULLY
What if I did blow it?

LORRIE
Wait.

SULLY
If I got this wrong, so close to the end of my career... if I endangered those passengers’ lives...

LORRIE
Sully. Watch the news. You’re a hero. And everybody’s going to have to get used to it. Including the NTSB.

SULLY
The NTSB doesn’t like heroes. They like to find and assign responsibility.

LORRIE
(worried)
What do you mean ‘responsibility?’

SULLY
Worst case scenario, the NTSB lists me as the probable cause... immediate retirement. No pension... a life’s work... gone.

LORRIE
I don’t understand what you’re saying... this could all fall on us?

SULLY
If it’s my fault, it should.

LORRIE
What fault? You won. They can’t take that away from you.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
Since I was 16 with L.T., the one
thing I’ve focused on was
excellence. Attention to every
last detail. And now they’re
etching my epitaph as, ‘He crashed
a 60 million-dollar airplane in
the river.’ Goddammit. I feel
like I’m in a vice, but I’m the
one who can’t stop tightening it.

LORRIE
You’re scaring me. Sully, what’s
going on?

Long silence.

SULLY
The left engine... it might have
still been idling. And the Airbus
computer simulations... they say I
could have made it back.

Lorrie’s worry is an unspoken sound.

SULLY
It doesn’t make any sense.
Doesn’t jibe with what it felt
like in the cockpit, but...
dammit.

LORRIE
Why did you do it? Sully. Land
in the water?

Sully hears the ROAR OF APPLAUSE and laughter from the
“LETTERMAN” SHOW, in direct contrast to how far away his
wife and his old life feel.

LORRIE
Wasn’t that the most dangerous
thing you could have done?

SULLY
I did it because... I knew... I
thought... it was the only chance
for survival.

Lorrie hears the uncharacteristic doubt in her husband’s
voice.

She looks at the bank notice and other unopened bills.

(CONTINUED)
LORRIE
Now all we have to do is survive surviving.

Long silence.

Two people breathing, unable to find the words.

LORRIE
Come home.

SULLY
I can’t.

LORRIE
Why not?

SULLY
Ever have the feeling... that you don’t want to be anywhere at all?

LORRIE
Thanks, Sully.

SULLY
It’s not you, Lorrie. I need you. And the girls. I just, I’m not myself. If I did fly back, it wouldn’t be me you’re getting.

LORRIE
What happened up there, Sully?

SULLY
I thought I knew.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. LaGUARDIA AIRPORT - DAY (JAN. 15, 2009)

Sully rolls his carry-on luggage through the crowded airport and he’s got a friendly word for everyone. He stops for a sandwich from his regular vendor, GURSIMRAN, 46, an Indian woman.

SULLY
The tuna/basil, Gursimran? Or the ham and cheddar.

GURSIMRAN
Tuna/basil, Mr. Sully. Very fresh. (beat) Be careful up there, too cold today. Too much cold.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
When are you going to come fly with me?

GURSIMRAN
When U.S. AIR starts flights to Hyderabad.

SULLY
(laughs)
Let me talk to the chairman. See what I can do.

Sully pays and rolls on, but --

CAMERA LINGERS BEHIND to find --

DIANE HIGGINS, 58, attractive and bright-eyed, pushing her mother, LUCILLE PALMER, 85, in an airport wheelchair. Lucille has an elegant sweep of light gray hair, a gorgeous, brand new, green, velour pantsuit. And a mischievous smile and spirit.

LUCILLE
Just a little something.

DIANE HIGGINS
The suitcase is already overstuffed with gifts for Will.

LUCILLE
Always fun to get something from the airport. Feels like you traveled, too.

DIANE HIGGINS
Mom. He’s turning one. Don’t think he’ll be discerning what gift came from where.

LUCILLE
But I will.

(beat)
Maybe a snow globe. Something he’ll remember. Something New York.

DIANE HIGGINS
(teasing)
Were you this generous when we were kids?

LUCILLE
Okay, sweetheart. I’ll get you a snow globe, too.

(CONTINUED)
Mother and daughter laugh and move toward the Lady Liberty snow globes.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Sully is settling in alongside his First Officer, Jeff Skiles, and running his pre-flight routine to the letter.

* SKILES
ECAM (ee’kam).

* SULLY
Checked.

* SKILES
MCDU (M-C-D-U).

* SULLY
Set.

* SKILES
Altimeters verify three-zero-two-three.

* SULLY
Three-zero-two-three.

* SKILES
Start checklist complete.
(pause)
Really think they’ll release us?

SULLY
Just checked the latest reports... we’re clear all the way to Charlotte.

SKILES
Then steaks at Del Frisco’s. On me.

SULLY
Never been. I hear good things.

SKILES
The rib-eye will break your heart.

SULLY
I’m more of a porterhouse man.

SKILES
The porterhouse will stop your heart.
INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - SAME TIME

Three MEN in a hurry, racing toward a gate.

ROB KOLODJAY, 60, handsome and rumpled in equal measure, tries to keep pace with the hurrying --

JEFF KOLODJAY, his son. Jeff is 31 and young De Niro good-looking. Keeping stride with Jeff is --

JIMMY STEFANIK, 27, a cousin, with close-cropped hair and a worried face.

ROB
Jeff, we’re not going to make it.

JEFF
Been waiting a year for this trip, Dad. I am not missing this flight.

(beat)
We’ll meet you at the gate.

Jeff and Jimmy take off into a full run.

Rob slows, catches his breath.

INT. GATE 21 - MOMENTS LATER

Jeff and Jimmy slalom through a final clutch of people and reach the gate for Flight 1549. No line.

Just an extremely pretty gate attendant, name tag “EMILY.” She is 38 and focused on her paperwork.

JIMMY
Spirit sent us. We got canceled and they said we were rerouted. That you guys had seats.

Emily doesn’t look up.

EMILY
Flight is closed.

JEFF
Wait. Wait. See the old guy, just limping up? That’s my dad. He needs to be on this flight. It’s an emergency.

EMILY
(dubious)
What kind of emergency?

(CONTINUED)
JEFF
A golf emergency.

Emily cannot suppress a grin.

EMILY
I.D.s, please. How many people are traveling?

JEFF
Three. And thank you...

EMILY
Nothing together.

JEFF
Hell. I’ll fly on the wing.

Rob finally reaches the gate, a little winded.

ROB
Canceled, right? Ought to be.

EMILY
Here we go.
(Extending boarding passes)
22A, 6A, and 6C.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SKILES
I Googled you last night. Read all about your company on your website. Impressive.

SULLY
Thanks.

SKILES
Man, I thought I was a good bullshitter, but you could go pro.

SULLY
Hey.

SKILES
I’m only teasing. But the site does make your air safety consulting business sound like you’ve got about 100 employees and headquarters in three states. But then, when I dug deeper, I realized... it’s only you.

(Continued)
SULLY
Go easy, I’m just getting it going.

(beat)
Not usually accused of being a bullshitter.

SKILES
Don’t take it wrong. Actually a compliment. Off that website... I’d hire you.

INT. PLANE - MOMENTS LATER
Sheila is preparing to close the main cabin door when --

Rob, Jeff, and Jimmy appear, just slip on. They walk down the aisle, squeezing by people jamming OVERSIZED BAGS into the overhead bins.

Jeff starts heading further down the aisle.

ROB
Where you headed? Jeff, we’re here in 6.

JEFF
That’s all Jimmy. I was up ’til three. I need to sleep.

ROB
You can sleep here.

JEFF
Not with you verbally walking the course the whole flight. ‘Think I’ll go... with the nine iron on the 7th.’ No. No. Good night...

As Jeff walks deeper into the cabin, he passes PASSENGER WITH BABY, 33, a lovely mother sitting alone with her eight-month-old, DAMIAN. The baby rifles through the seat-back magazines and safety instructions like he’s looking for treasure.

Sitting at the window by the woman is JIM WHITAKER, gentle, 46, and busy scooping up what Damian is tossing.

PASSENGER WITH BABY
I’m sorry. He likes to throw everything.

(CONTINUED)
JIM WHITAKER  
(smiling)  
Perfect. I like to catch everything.

Jeff walks deeper into the plane, past a couple speaking in Russian...

Past a man speedily texting before the doors get cross-checked.

Past a WOMAN wrestling with a too-big bag in a too-small overhead.

Jeff delivers the final shove and the bag jams into place.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Donna begins the SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS over the PA while --

Sheila demonstrates in the front of the cabin and Doreen demonstrates at the back. All three work with practiced and professional enthusiasm. Almost --

NO ONE is paying attention.

DONNA (V.O.)  
... please review the safety instruction card in the seat-back pocket in front of you...

80% of the passengers are mentally elsewhere. Reading magazines, catching a snooze.

DONNA (V.O.)  
... your seat cushion serves as a flotation device...

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SKILES  
LaGuardia Ramp, Cactus 1549, ready for pushback at gate 21.

RADIO (V.O.)  
Cactus 1549, gate 21, cleared to push, spot 28, ground for taxi.
The flight attendants do final checks, buckle in, and then they feel the plane --

Halt on the tarmac.

Donna checks her watch as Sheila joins her in the galley.

SHEILA
Just once, I'd like to get out of LaGuardia on time.

DONNA
Sheila, you know there's only one way to depart LaGuardia on time.

SHEILA
What's that?

DONNA
Fly out of JFK.

They laugh.

Skiles picks up speed as they begin down the runway.

SKILES
TOGA.

SULLY
TOGA set.

They build acceleration...
SULLY

80.

SKILES

Checked.

SULLY

V one, rotate.

They liftoff and start to climb.

SULLY

Positive rate.

SKILES

Gear up, please.

SULLY

Gear up.

Sully unclips his shoulder harness, as is his ritual, and slips out of it for comfort during the flight.

It could not be more beautiful. Up above the weather, the sky is stunning. Sunlight reflects off the Hudson like a million spilled diamonds.

This is the glory of flying.

SULLY

What a view of the Hudson.

(beat)

I will never get over how beautiful it is up here.

SKILES

Life’s easier in the air.

SULLY

Yes. It. Is.

Skiles guides the plane higher. The splendor of the New York skyline appears off in the distance. A moment of quiet wonder.

Until a sudden black curtain of GEESE covers the windshield and darkens their view up ahead.

SULLY

Birds!

SKILES

Oh, shit!
INT. ENGINES - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Geese from the flock get SUCKED INTO each engine.
Blood. Shredded bone and metal. Both engines cough and bang to a --
STOP.
FIRE rages in the right engine well. Useless.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The alarm begins to chime. Banging and ringing every 5.7 seconds.
Sully is Wyatt Earp CALM amidst the madness of the alarms.

SULLY
We got one roll... both of 'em rolling back. Ignition start.
(beat)
I’m starting the APU.

He turns on the AUXILIARY POWER UNIT.
The engines are toast, but the plane’s flight controls can now continue to work. He’s bought them a sliver of time.

SULLY
My aircraft.
Sully takes over flying the plane, despite feeling the narrowing of his VISION and the spiking of his PULSE. He forces himself to concentrate.

SKILES
Your aircraft.

SULLY
Get the QRH. Loss of thrust on both engines.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - SAME TIME

The room is filled with CONTROLLERS and SUPERVISORS behind their consoles. Another day of focus and details.
ANGLE ON PATRICK HARTEN

SULLY (V.O.)
(into radio)
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. This is Cactus 1549. Hit birds.

34-year-old, stocky, handsome, thick New York accent. Patrick, the ACT, hasn’t heard Sully’s Mayday.

He has keyed his microphone and is talking to another departing aircraft in his charge, oblivious to the danger.

PATRICK
(relaxed)
Maintain one-five thousand, Delta.

Patrick releases his mic, sips his coffee in time to finally hear.

SULLY
We’ve lost thrust on both engines. We’re turning back towards LaGuardia.

Patrick jumps on the emergency immediately.

PATRICK
Okay, Cactus 1549, turn left heading two-two-zero.
(beat)
Which engine did you lose?

SULLY (V.O.)
Both. Both engines.

Patrick goes off radio and shouts to his SUPERVISOR, 54, thin, vigilant, two consoles away.

PATRICK
Supe, I have an emergency.

Supervisor hustles to Patrick’s console. Plugs his headset into the console above Patrick’s.

SUPERVISOR
What’s the report?

PATRICK
Both engines.

SUPERVISOR
What?

(CONTINUED)
PATRICK
Both engines gone. No thrust.

SUPERVISOR
(receiving info over headset)
LaGuardia says bring him around to one-three.

PATRICK
(into radio)
Cactus 1549, if we can get it for you, do you want to try runway one-three?

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME
ALARMS are chattering at Sully. Ringing. Warning.
The plane is dropping. Two stories per second. But he remains steadfast.

SULLY
(realizing)
Unable. We may end up in the Hudson.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - SAME TIME
Patrick works the touch screen to carve out a path to Teterboro. Supervisor is on the phone calling for rescue support from the Coast Guard, police helicopters, any and everyone. Patrick demands the rest of the controllers' attention.

PATRICK
I've got an A320 diving for the river.

Patrick turns to his colleague, Al, at the next console.

PATRICK
Al, stack all the inbounds to LaGuardia.

SULLY (V.O.)
What about New Jersey? Maybe Teterboro?

PATRICK
(into radio)
Teterboro Tower, I need a runway.

(MORE)
PATRICK (CONT'D)

Cactus 1549 needs to go to the airport right now. Newark Tower, what have you got?

NEWARK TOWER (V.O.)
You have runway 2-9, cleared and ready. Need emergency...?

PATRICK
Yes.

Patrick looks back at the radar screen just as --

The L.A. (low altitude) light flashes on-screen and the data block spells out the rapid descent.

The MSAW plays out the beep-beep-beep alarm of a plane in altitude danger. On the screen, the plane drops as if off a cliff.

PATRICK
Shit.
(into radio)
Cactus 1549, turn right two-eight-zero. You can land runway one, Teterboro and I also got you Newark, off your two o’clock.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

PUSH INTO Sully’s eyes. The reflection of the sun off the river close enough to REFLECT in his calm eyes... as we see him make the DECISION.

SULLY
We can’t do it. We’re gonna be in the Hudson.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

1549 VANISHES from the radar screen.

PATRICK
Cactus 1549 radar contact lost. You also got Newark off your two o’clock in about seven miles.

Silence. Patrick’s heart is in his throat.

PATRICK
(off radio)
Don’t go in the river.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
1549? You... still on?

No response. Patrick works the touchscreen, the radar screen, anything to bring the plane back.

Patrick’s whole being wills contact. None comes.

Supervisor looks at Patrick’s blank screen. Hangs up his phone line.

SUPERVISOR
Patrick. I’m sorry.

PATRICK
He’s inbound to Newark, I know it. He just went off the box to focus.

SUPERVISOR
Patty.

PATRICK
He’ll come back up. He’s on his way to Teterboro. We need other eyes and ears.

A SIGHTSEEING HELICOPTER is darting its way above the city skyline.

A MALE PILOT, 40, scattered whiskers, operates the copter, with two TOURISTS, a young FRENCH COUPLE on a honeymoon, in back.
When we come around this bend, we’ll be looking at the U.S.S. Intrepid. One of New York’s...

Pilot pauses as over the radio he hears...

PATRICK (V.O.)
Cactus 1549 is low level, above the Hudson.

Just as 1549 comes INTO VIEW... two hundred feet below them.

Male Pilot increases altitude to create space and keys the radio.

MALE PILOT
This is Four-Six-One Sierra Alpha. I have him.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Okay, okay.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

PATRICK
I’ve got a chopper with visual. I’m staying on this.

Supervisor backs off a few feet.

PATRICK
He’s out there, he’s headed to Newark. Seven miles, only seven miles.

Patrick changes transmitters to the “REMOTE TRANSMITTER.”

PATRICK (into radio)
Cactus 1549, do you read?

Silence. Patrick hits another button.

PATRICK
He’s on emergency. That’s it. Call Newark, see if they see him.

Supervisor knows what’s waiting, but he calls Newark anyway.

(CONTINUED)
PATRICK
(into radio)
Cactus 1549, this is departure control on guard, do you read?

EXT. HUDSON RIVER - CONTINUOUS ACTION
The heli chases the descending plane. Only the inevitable awaits.

MALE PILOT
Shit. He’s going down.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION
PATRICK
... Cactus 1549, do you read me?

MALE PILOT (V.O.)
(into radio)
He’s going down.
(beat)
He’s gonna hit the water.

Patrick goes sheet white.

Supervisor puts his hand on Patrick’s shoulder.

Patrick keeps staring at the blank radar screens in disbelief.

SUPERVISOR
(to another controller)
Take Patrick’s seat.

A CONTROLLER takes Patrick’s spot and plugs in his phone to the console, replacing him.

SUPERVISOR
Testers will come down. Urine sample, breathalyzer. Standard.

PATRICK
His voice was so calm. When he said the Hudson, I didn’t believe it. This isn’t happening.
(beat)
People don’t survive water landings, Henry.

Sudden tears. He can’t wipe them away.

(CONTINUED)
INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

The river beckons from outside the window. Time is up.
The cockpit alarms RINGING, RINGING, RINGING.
Sully looks out the window. Too late to go back. Only the river ahead. Reaches for the radio to the cabin.

SULLY
(into PA)
This is the Captain.
(pause)
Brace for impact.

*Sully thinks about saying more to the cabin. Doesn’t. Hand steady, he sets the PA mic down.*

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The stewardesses buckle in, while shouting instructions. They chant it out in unison...

STEWARDESSES
(in unison)
Brace! Brace! Brace!
Heads down! Stay down!
Brace! Brace! Brace!

But the passengers can’t help but look out the windows.
In row 17, Diane holds Lucille’s hand.

DIANE HIGGINS
(crying)
I love you, Mom. I love you, I love you.

LUCILLE
To the moon and the stars and...

DIANE HIGGINS
(trembling)
... and all the way back.

In row 6, Jimmy grabs Rob’s arm. They hold fast.

JIMMY
We’re not gonna make it, Uncle Robbie.
In row 1, Barry Leonard is braced with only the bulkhead to smack into. He is praying. We can’t hear the words, but his face looks totally peaceful. As if he has already surrendered.

In row 19, Passenger With Baby is trembling. Without a seat belt for her lap child, she doesn’t know what to do.

JIM WHITAKER
Let me hold him.

And Passenger With Baby trusts Jim with her child. Jim holds onto Damian with strength and tenderness.

In row 12, a MAN writes “Mom, Jane - I love you.” on his business card, with a shaky hand. Then he plants the card deep into his pocket, so that when he does not survive, the note just might.

In row 22, Jeff watches the water speeding up toward the plane. Then he shuts the blind. Unable to watch.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully begins the flare for landing. Sidestick back, back, full aft.

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
‘Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up.’

Sully gives the airplane everything he’s got. But it won’t give him any more.

SULLY
We’re gonna brace.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM (PRESENT)
Sully is spent from the telling.
The hotel clock has rolled to 12:57 AM.

INT. SULLENBERGER HOME - SAME TIME
Lorrie holds the phone so tight, she’s white-knuckled.

(CONTINUED)
INTERCUT:

SULLY
I have to go.

LORRIE
I’m sorry, Sully. I love you.

SULLY
I have to go.

Sully hangs up. His hands, so steady in flight, now shaking a little.

And he and Lorrie are left on opposite sides of the divide between before Flight 1549.

And after.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

The blinding images include the NEWS SCROLL announcing the Miracle on the Hudson, on a seemingly endless loop.

Then, through the tourist crowd, jogging, fast, comes Sully. It’s another frigid winter night, but Sully is in his black sweatsuit and he is on the move.

And yet, running cannot turn off the images that rush at him from inside his head.

SERIES OF FLASH CUTS

Sully runs deeper into Times Square and the SCROLL changes to an endless loop of “Flight 1549 CRASH. Pilot needlessly risks lives of all on board.” “Pilot error. Pilot error.”

Sully runs harder and harder, trying to run out of his skin. But every step brings another flash. He heads west on 45th Street, away from the glare and cacophony.

At Tenth Avenue... he turns, right, directly into a huge congregation of --

PIGEONS...

The noise of their panicky flight, the gray black of their wings, shoot Sully back to the --

GEESE curtaining the jet’s windshield...

(CONTINUED)
He stops. The last pigeons vanishing into the darkness.
Every corner is just another edge of his mental prison.

Sully is now running across 12th Avenue and headed for
the Hudson. He’s at a full clip, as if chased.

The camera gets so tight on his face, the entire world is
his breathing, his breath like smoke signals in the
frigid night.

He hears the voices of LORRIE, her slip of doubt... of
SKILES, backing him up all the way... of his MOTHER, her
pride clear... of MIKE CLEARY, about the left engine
still being alive... of L.T. COOK, saying details are the
difference between life and death... never stop flying
the plane...

An endless stream of voices, all overlapping into a
cacophonous attack.

Inescapable. Even his running is a trap.

At the railing to the river, Sully stammers to a stop.
His heart bangs. Lungs and legs burn. Finally his mind
goes --

SILENT.

He looks out at the inky river. As if the runway he
chose could tell him why he chose it. But it offers
nothing.

He turns to see the --

U.S.S. INTREPID. The deck of the aircraft carrier/museum
is dotted with aircraft.

A Concorde SST. A Lockheed A-12. An F/A-18. All
visible from the river’s edge.

His eyes focus on the FIGHTER PLANE. He can almost feel
himself behind the stick... as we...

SMASH CUT TO:
SULLY - 11/18/15 (Full Blue) 56.

68

FLASHBACK - EXT. NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE (NEVADA) - DAY (1978)

F-4 in flight.

Low altitude, high-speed and the --

26-YEAR-OLD SULLY in charge of the military exercise. The --

SOUND is a feeling down to your bones. Flying barely 100 feet off the ground.

INT./EXT. F-4 - SAME TIME

Sully is flying, his face a mix of concentration and ecstasy. He was born for this. He is gifted, and fearless.

His GIB (guy in back), ANDREW CARRIGAN, 25, takes Sully’s cues and provides Sully with the assistance he needs. They are a synchronized team.

SULLY
How you feeling today, Andrew?

GIB
Rough n’ ready, sir.

SULLY
Good. Because I feel like flying all day.

(into radio)

Ready to zoom and boom.

Sully circles toward the bombing target when suddenly, his F-4 --

KICKS LEFT. On its own. Inches from a disaster. Only Sully’s deft touch keeping him from trap-dooring into the earth.

SULLY
Goddammit.

GIB
What the hell was that?

SULLY
I don’t know.

Sully is pulling on the stick, like riding a bucking bronco. His GIB can only watch and hope.

(CONTINUED)
Sully decides the only way out is up and he --

PINHOLES the F-4 straight for the skies, pulling maximum Gs.

Sully disarms all the bomb switches, runs every check.

**SULLY**

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. This is Tasty One One, flight control malfunction.

At 15,000 feet, Sully finally evens out. But the stick is jelly and the plane tugs this way and that.

**SULLY**

(into radio)

Las Vegas Approach, Tasty One One with an emergency, flight control malfunction. Need a straight-in approach.

**AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (V.O.)**

Okay, Tasty One One, cleared for a visual approach to runway 2-1 right. Keep your turn to final within five miles.

Sully begins to descend. But the aircraft is SHAKING like it wants to tear apart.

Sully drops to 14 thousand. Thirteen. At twelve a --

GUST OF WIND knocks the right wing down hard, and the plane dips precariously.

Sully maintains enough control to get the plane back to level.

Despite the high speed descent in an out of control military fighter...

Sully looks like he’s having an afternoon by the pool.

High-speed approach. Rapid descent.

His GIB filled with fear... and --

Sully scorches the landing, clean and mean, the --

DRAG CHUTE deploys and the fighter shreds the clear air as it finally comes to a halt.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSE ON SULLY

SULLY
(wry smile)
Ready to go back up again?

EXT. INTREPID (PRESENT) 70
Sully’s memory severs. The F-4 on the ship is a museum piece, never to be flown again.
As he stands in the black-ice air, he realizes the chances are real that he, too... may never fly again.

EXT. LANDMARK TAVERN - MINUTES LATER 71
The neon sign on 11th Avenue highlights Sully ducking inside.

INT. LANDMARK TAVERN - CONTINUOUS ACTION 72
Sully enters to a quiet, nearly anonymous bar. He sits on a bar stool, his face still flushed.
BARTENDER, 49 and bearded, slides him a napkin.

BARTENDER
Hey. You look like that guy...
Sully bows his head a bit.
BARTENDER
... the plane with the... Sully.
SULLY
I get that a lot.
BARTENDER
All right. Sully! Nice to meet you, sir. That was good, what you did. That was unreal.
Sully doesn’t answer. No matter where he goes, he can’t escape his fame.
BARTENDER
Check it out, I invented a drink after you. Ask Johnny. Johnny, did I not, right then and there?

(CONTINUED)
DRUNK CUSTOMER
Yeah. You did. Fact, I’ll take one.

BARTENDER
Splash of water.

Sully manages a laugh, a small release after trying to restrain so much.

BARTENDER
Can’t believe you’re sitting in my bar.

Bartender makes Sully “his” drink.

BARTENDER
To January 15th, the best day of the year.

Bartender lifts his own “Sully” to toast.

They all drink. Drunk Customer points to the TV mounted on the wall.

DRUNK CUSTOMER
Hey, look, Pete. Sully’s here, and there.

On the wall-mounted TV another report on Flight 1549. It has Sully’s image on the screen, with footage of the plane in the Hudson behind it. Inescapable.

DRUNK CUSTOMER
He’s everywhere.

The TV image goes to a shot of the Hudson and we --

PUSH IN ALL THE WAY UNTIL we --

COME OUT the other side...

FLASHBACK – EXT. HUDSON RIVER – DAY (JAN. 15, 2009)

The Thomas Jefferson ferry is chugging towards its Manhattan port, passengers in every seat.

ANGLE ON VICTOR GAGGERO

All NYC confidence and focus is at the helm. He steers the ferry towards its destination.

(CONTINUED)
A DECKHAND, HECTOR RABANES, approaches.

GAGGERO *
Little ice on the city side, and
dispatch said the chop’s coming
up, so I’m gonna run her real
slow.

EXT. FLOYD BENNETT FIELD (BROOKLYN) - JAN 15, 2009
An NYPD air/sea rescue helicopter sits outside the
hangar.

INT. AIR/SEA RESCUE BUILDING - SAME TIME
Scuba cop MIKE DELANEY, 32, brown hair, easy manner, is
hanging with his partner, ROBERT RODRIGUEZ, 35. The rest
of the scuba cops are scattered throughout the break
room.

DELANEY
I cannot believe you have the sack
to say that. That’s literally
like giving the city the finger.

RODRIGUEZ
I’ll say it again, Dennis
Eckersley is without question the
greatest relief pitcher in the
history of baseball.

DELANEY
You’re blinded by the leg kick.
That what it is. Or the
moustache.

RODRIGUEZ
You’re just jealous he was never a
Yankee.

They get interrupted by an impossibly loud ALARM... then
they scramble back to the helicopter.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION
Afternoon traffic crawls and drivers hear the JET ROAR.
They crane their necks to see the plane passing directly
overhead. It just barely --

CLEARS the bridge.
INT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME

One ELDERLY MAN, in his 80s, uses his cane to get to the window. Compassion and hope and fear crowd his heart.

EXT. BUILDINGS/STREET (MANHATTAN) - SAME TIME

In a city tuned to the fear of planes crashing... countless windows begin to fill with APARTMENT DWELLERS... magneted by the --

SIGHT of Flight 1549 so close to the riverfront. They fishbowl to the glass in building after building.

EXT. THOMAS JEFFERSON FERRY (HUDSON) - SAME TIME

Gaggero and the Thomas Jefferson are 50 yards from the dock when he hears an enormous NOISE overhead. All look up.

A plane plummeting toward the Hudson.

GAGGERO

... all hands on deck, this is a Mayday!

He throws the ferry into full impulse and hurtles forward.

GAGGERO

This is Victor Gaggero of the Thomas Jefferson. We have a... plane...

EXTREME CLOSEUP - GAGGERO’S EYES

as they go wide with astonishment. The REFLECTION and the sound of impact tells the story just as the plane hits the Hudson.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The plane hits the water.

The passengers react as the plane jerks to a halt.

A passenger in the last row dares to open the window blind. Water is already halfway up. Fish in a fishbowl. Surreal.

People begin to vacate their seats.
SULLY bangs OPEN the cockpit door, looks out at the stunned passengers.

SULLY
Evacuate!

Barry Leonard is first by the emergency door as it opens. He looks out onto the freezing river.

The life raft has not deployed. Barry is the only one who can see its useless shape, adhered to the plane.

DONNA (O.S.)
Jump. Jump!

Barry takes off his shoes. And obeys. He jumps directly into the frigid water.

Barry sinks several feet below the surface. For a moment, it seems this will be his ending place. And then he --

Rises.

At the surface, in shock... he begins to swim.

But AWAY from the plane... with half a mile between him and the coast. Madness.

Icy river water FLOODS into the plane through a gaping hole in the floor.

Doreen has BLOOD POURING from a leg wound, but she’s still shouting instructions to passengers.

DOREEN
The aft exits are unusable!
Everyone forward to the overwing exits. Don life vests, now!

Jeff is soaked and shivering, water to his knees already.
In row 6, Rob is screaming towards the back of the plane.

ROB
Jeff! Jeffrey!

The chaos blocks any visual contact.

Jimmy dons a life vest and grabs one for his distraught uncle.

JIMMY
Put this on. Uncle Robbie.

ROB
Can you see Jeff?! We have to get him.

Rob pushes into the aisle, tries to make it back towards Jeff. But the rush of people coming at him make passage impossible.

Too many bodies, and Rob winds up pushed back into row 6.

In row 17, Diane is unbuckling Lucille’s seat belt. Lucille tries to stop her.

LUCILLE
Diane. You have to go.

DIANE HIGGINS
I’m not leaving...

LUCILLE
Please go. I’ll only trap you here.

DIANE HIGGINS
Mom. I won’t leave you.

LUCILLE
You have to.

Their connection goes deeper than ten thousand words. Diane takes her mother’s face in her hands. After a long moment...

DIANE HIGGINS
(to the plane)
Help! My mother needs help!
as they march through the morass of confused passengers.

SULLY
Come forward! Grab life vests!

Sully and Skiles rip free the leftover LIFE VESTS, hand them out as they walk the cabin.

SULLY
Going to be bitter out there.

Sully and Skiles hand out blankets and coats to every departing passenger.

SULLY
Everyone take a blanket. Pass them along!

The freezing water rises. It’s at their knees. Now at their waists. Relentless.

The heavy plane is inhaling water and --

SINKING.

And still, some passengers are popping open the overhead bins, trying to take their luggage with them.

Skiles slams an overhead shut.

SKILES
Evacuate. Now.

REVEALS the crippled, drowning plane, lonely in the river. Then at the EDGES OF THE FRAME, a cavalcade of --

FERRY BOATS and first responders begin to close the gap.

ANGLE ON THE WINGS

slowly taking on SURVIVORS, hanging on for desperate life.

Not enough room.
EXT. LEFT WING - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Rob and Jimmy squeeze out onto the wing. Followed by others. The center cannot hold.

ROB
(overwhelmed)
Jimmy. Jeff's still in the plane.

Rob makes a sudden move, heads back toward the plane. He tries to step over escaping passengers, but the wing is icy, the water too close, everyone coming towards him in waves.

Jimmy finally gets a good grip and Rob fights against it.

ROB
We're not... leaving him in there!

JIMMY
Crew will grab him, Robbie.

Rob sees there is no way back for him. But he can't accept it. His heart hammers with the darkest of fears.

Other passengers cry out. Fear passing between them. Hypothermia climbing from toes to torso like a virus. And every new passenger on the wing... makes the plane -- SINK DEEPER into the river. Which will it be first? Drowning or freezing to death?

EXT. FERRY DOCKS - SAME TIME

CBS reporter RANDALL PINKSTON is live from the docks as the rescue unfolds.

PINKSTON
With a water temperature of 36 degrees and wind chill of -5, the surviving passengers of Flight 1549 literally... have minutes to live.

EXT. HUDSON - ANGLE ON BARRY LEONARD

... he has swam 30 yards toward New Jersey. Stops, breathless. Knows he will never make it. Both the coast and the wreckage seem too far a swim. The water owns him.
INT. CABIN - ROW 17 - SAME TIME

Donna Dent is shouting/waving to the last remaining MALE PASSENGERS for assistance. And one of them makes it back to the 17th row. And scoops up --

Lucille Palmer into his arms. Diane trails behind as they all make their way to the exit.

EXT. FRONT RIGHT RAFT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

They reach the exit and Lucille is carried with the greatest of care into one of the life rafts. All make room for her and Diane slides in beside her. She holds her mother as if she were a tiny child.

DIANE HIGGINS
I won’t leave you.

EXT. THOMAS JEFFERSON FERRY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Gaggero is barking commands to the commuters, mobilizing them to assist in the rescue. And they are responding. United.

GAGGERO
Oxygen’s in the medical closet!
Blankets, aft storage. Life vests in the lockers. Gonna need everybody!
(to ship)
Come on, you sonofabitch, go!

He hits the chop head on. 20 knots, the ferry maxed out, knocked sideways.

Ferry passengers hang on like pirates in pursuit, the whole of them ready to help.

EXT. LEFT WING - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SHAE CHILDERS, 38, frightened, exits onto the wing. She looks to the closest LIFE RAFT. But it is overturned and sinking. She sees a slick of jet fuel in the river...

panics...

DIVES in, swimming, gulping, trying to get away from the plane.
The NYPD AIR/SEA RESCUE HELICOPTER flies toward the Hudson.

The *Jefferson* is the first to arrive at the scene. Gaggero tosses a ROPE into the right-side wing and the rescue is on.

Barry Leonard finishing his swim back to the left raft, shivering with shock and confusion. Passengers pull the nearly-dead Barry into the raft. They huddle around him for warmth. Giving up their own clothes to warm him.

Passengers shout out for Shae to return to the wing, but she has seized up with cold and fatigue. She is barely moving, her head dipping below the water’s surface, water rushing into her gaping mouth. Her seat cushion floats away.

Drowning.

NY1’s BOBBY CUZA films a report, surrounded by a cavalcade of first responders. Police. Firemen. EMT. Awaiting the survivors.

CUZA

Whoever has miraculously survived this plummet from the skies into the icy Hudson has about three hundred of New York’s finest ready to help them. The only question remaining is, will it be too late.

The bow of the *Moira Smith* drifts INTO VIEW and there, just bobbing for life is --

Shae Childers.

(CONTINUED)
We WIDEN to reveal the stern of the Moira Smith swinging toward the front left raft. It stops just before crushing the raft and its survivors against the sinking plane.

INT. CABIN - ANGLE ON SULLY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully, Skiles and a few remaining male passengers stand abreast of the exit and pass out blankets, life vests, spare coats. Anything to stem the cold and keep people alive. Sully grabs the plane’s emergency location transmitter and hands it to someone in the front left raft.

Finally, with nothing left to hand out and every other person on a wing or in a raft...

Sully walks down the aisle searching for passengers.

SULLY
Is anyone else here?! Come forward. Come forward!

Water up to his waist, teeth chattering, he wades back of the front of the plane.

EXT. NYPD AIR/SEA RESCUE HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

The NYPD AIR/SEA RESCUE HELICOPTER arrives overhead, rippling the water and scanning the entire tableau.

EXT. MOIRA SMITH FERRY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

With her all strength gone, Shae somehow reaches out and catches the rope ladder attached to the bow of the ferry.

But holding on is all she can do.

She sobs. She prays.

DECKHANDS shout down at her, encouraging her to climb.

But her extremities are frozen. And she cannot move an inch.

SHAE
The boat... is going to pull me under. I have to let go.

DECKHAND ALFONSO *
No! Hang on, ma’am, I can climb down to you.
DECKHAND CARLO ALFONSO, limber and fierce, scampers down the rope ladder, reaches for Shae’s hand.

But she won’t let go of the rope. Too afraid. Too cold.

SHAE

I can’t...

The ferry drifts closer to the left wing.

And the wing gets closer and closer, the tip just missing Shae’s back.

JOE HART, a Flight 1549 passenger, leaps off the wing and onto the rope ladder.

He desperately tries to pull her up. But she is paralyzed by fear and cold.

SHAE

I have to go. Please, let me go.

Shae nearly gives up. Lets her arms begin to release the ladder... Until the river around her begins to --

EXT. NYPD AIR/SEA RESCUE HELICOPTER

SHIMMER with the NYPD AIR SEA RESCUE HELICOPTER appearing overhead.

Scuba cop MIKE DELANEY, wearing only flippers and mask...

LEAPS twenty feet from the chopper and swims madly to Shae.

EXT. HUDSON RIVER

He arrives just in time.

Terrified, Shae fights Delaney, pulls him under for a moment. Until at last, Delaney reigns her in.

DELANEY

You’re all right. I got you. I got you, ma’am. Relax!

She spits water from her blue lips.

DELANEY

My name’s Michael, what’s yours?
SHAE
(shriveling
unstoppably)
Shae...

Scuba cop Rodriguez leaps out of the helicopter and swims toward the rescue, as well.

SHAE
I can’t... get on... that boat.

DELANEY
Then let’s get you on another boat. We got plenty of boats. Okay?

SHAE
I jumped... I was afraid the plane was going to explode... I’m so sorry.

DELANEY
No apologies. We got this. You and me.

INT. PLANE - ANGLE ON SULLY

Sully is doing a second and final search for passengers. With water up to his belt, he is standing on the seat of the fourth row from the back. Hypothermia chases after Sully as he searches every row, every seat. The cold plays against his heart, shortens his breath.

DONNA (O.S.)
Captain, it’s time to go! We’ve got to get off this plane! Right now!

SKILES
They’re here!

SULLY
I aimed for the Intrepid. Close to the boats.

Sully climbs over the seats toward the front. Water rising. At the wing exit, one last look as he straddles the doorway... but then he races back toward the cockpit.
INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully grabs the metal AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE LOGBOOK. He snares his overcoat and takes a final look around. The instrument panel is completely dead.

EXT. FRONT LEFT DOOR - SULLY’S POV - CONTINUOUS ACTION

As he steps OUT of the left forward entry door. Nearly an entire plane-load of people on the slippery wings. The rest in emergency life rafts. But the river is deathly cold. And --

RISING.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sully, last man out, squeezes onto one of the life rafts next to Skiles.

EXT. THOMAS JEFFERSON FERRY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The deckhands use the Jason’s Cradle to rescue Lucille.

EXT. FRONT LEFT RAFT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully is rapidly scanning the wings, rafts, everything, his lips moving in a silent count.

EXT. ATHENA FERRY/RAFT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The last passengers are being plucked from the rafts, including Barry.

Deckhands FRANCO SANTINI, gray-haired, linebacker strong, and BRIAN KELLY, 28, laser focus, cover him in blankets as he reaches the deck.

SANTINI
We gotta warm him up. Get him a blanket. Fast!

Kelly wraps him in a blanket.

BARRY
I can’t... this isn’t...

He grows increasingly distraught.

(CONTINUED)
KELLY
It’s okay. You’re good now, sir.

Kelly takes off his coat and hat and puts them on Barry, to still his quivering, but he can’t stop shaking.

KELLY
Safe home.

BARRY
It was supposed to be me... it was supposed to be me... it was...

SANTINI
Calm down, sir.

BARRY
I was sure I was going to die.

Santini embraces Barry, pulls him close. Looks him in the eye.

SANTINI
Hey. No one dies today.

ANGLE ON SULLY
who is still counting. Scanning the boats, the rafts, as the final passengers from this raft climb up to safety. He relieves Skiles of the rope connecting them to the Athena ferry, sends him up the ladder.

Sully is alone in the raft, trying to hold it close to the ferry, but his frozen hands refuse to function. He’s drifting away from the rescuers’ reach.

SKILES
(from the ferry)
Sully! Wrap it around your arms!

Sully barely manages to twist the rope around his frozen arms and pull himself slowly back toward the ferry.

SKILES
Climb out now!

Sully reaches toward the ferry ladder. Has to --

HOOK HIS ELBOWS around the rungs and, rung-by-rung, haul himself up toward the ferry deck. The last three rungs he’s --

(CONTINUED)
PULLED UP by deckhands and Skiles. They immediately try to throw a blanket around him, but he pushes through. Still carrying the metal aircraft maintenance logbook.

While others celebrate and weep, Sully soldiers on, pinpoint focus. Still counting.

But he’s so surrounded by “thank you”s and embraces he can’t keep track.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON SULLY

... he goes to a railing, trying to count passengers on the other ferries, even as they dock further down the pier. Impossible. Looks out at the plane, listing and sinking.

Then in front of him, on the river...

PERSONAL ITEMS begin floating by. Purses, souvenirs, I LOVE NEW YORK bags.

The two SNOW GLOBES OF NYC Lucille bought, bobbing in the choppy water. The Statue of Liberty ringed in fake snow, floating on the darkening river.

Sully reaches onto his belt for his cell phone. And somehow it works.

He dials Lorrie.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SULLENBERGER HOUSE - SAME TIME

Lorrie casually picks up the phone.

LORRIE
Hello.

SULLY
I wanted to call to say I’m okay.

LORRIE
Are you still on the 5:50 PM home?

SULLY
No.

LORRIE
Oh, Sully. Don’t be late, the girls were really hoping to...

(CONTINUED)
SULLY

There’s been an incident. I’m okay. Not a scratch. Somehow. Turn on the television.

LORRIE

What do you mean, the television?

Sully gets swarmed by more grateful embraces.

SULLY

Lorrie, I can’t talk now. I’ll call you from the pier, once things quiet down.

LORRIE

Sully. I don’t understand.

SULLY

I had to land... in the Hudson. I love you. I’m okay, tell the girls I’m okay, but I have to go.

Sully hangs up.

Lorrie quickly turns on the news, still confused. It’s on every channel that she rifles through.

The floating plane. The rescue.

It finally begins to dawn on her. And she begins to shake.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - TELEVISION - SAME TIME

ZOOM INTO CNN coverage of the rescue, live. The Thomas Jefferson ferry is just pulling into dock.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FERRY TERMINAL (NY) - SAME TIME

The Thomas Jefferson ferry docks to MAYHEM.

PRESS everywhere.

POLICE trying to keep order amidst the madness.

Passengers borrow cell phones from police and firemen to contact love ones immediately.

Donna and Sheila continue to help passengers with blankets, comfort, attention.

(CONTINUED)
Rob Kolodjay disembarks from the ferry and immediately pushes through the crowds. He is wrapped in a blanket and followed by Jimmy, but all he wants to do is find his son, Jeff.

ROB
Maybe he’s here, maybe he beat us somehow. There were a lot of boats...
(yells out)
Jeff!

Stops to describe Jeff to police officers. And the swirl of humanity just makes it more exasperating.

ANGLE ON SULLY

who is just shouldering past, towards...

U.S. AIRWAYS Captain DAN BRITT, 54, in full uniform, the union rep from LaGuardia, wearing his union badge. Dan is slender, handsome, easygoing even in this startling environment.

SULLY
Dan. Need to know who’s hurt and how badly. And I need a count.
155 is my number, passengers and crew.

DAN
How about you?

SULLY
I’ll answer that when we’ve counted 155.

ANGLE ON BARRY

pacing through the thicket of rescuers and rescued, he is handed a phone and begins to dial.

SHERRI LEONARD (V.O.)
I know. You’re calling to say they canceled your flight...

BARRY
Sort of. I won’t be home tonight...

SHERRI LEONARD (V.O.)
I knew it. The weather report was bad news.
BARRY
Sherri... I can’t believe I’m
talking to you.

SHERRI LEONARD (V.O.)
Barry, what is it? You sound...

BARRY
When you were so sick last year,
and I asked God that you would be
saved and I would be taken
instead...

SHERRI LEONARD (V.O.)
What are you... I don’t
understand?

BARRY
And you said... God was too
merciful to make me hold up my end
of the bargain...

After a beat.

BARRY
... you were right.

BACK TO SULLY
as a POLICE CAPTAIN sidles up.

CAPTAIN
Captain, I’m here to escort you to
meet with Mayor Bloomberg and
Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly.

SULLY
If the Mayor wants to say hello,
he’ll have to come down here.
We’re still working.

DAN
Sul, I can keep assembling a
count.

Skiles approaches.

SULLY
I need a count, Jeff. I need a
count.

SKILES
No way to get a real count out
here.

(CONTINUED)
DAN
Jeff’s right. Let’s get you in some dry clothes before you freeze to death.

CAPTAIN *
Captain, what if the Mayor and Chief Kelly head down here to meet you?

It doesn’t change Sully’s point of focus.

SULLY
(to Dan Britt)
Dan, being a domestic flight...

DAN
... no manifest. We’ll have to track the passenger info down one-by-one.

SULLY
Can you get help?

DAN
I’ll call John Carey. We’ll get your count. You’ve done enough, Sully. Let me take it from here.

Sully sees the flashing lights of the waiting ambulance. But he’s not ready yet. Something draws him to the edge of the pier and Skiles follows. The magnet is the --

PLANE, now lashed to fireboats and ferries.

CAMERA FINDS CLOSEUP after CLOSEUP.

SULLY AND SKILES. Shock and disbelief.

BARRY LEONARD. Tears of joy.

DONNA DENT. Silent awe.

DIANE and LUCILLE. Exhausted and seeking aid.

PASSENGER WITH BABY and 8-MONTH-OLD BABY. Joyous.

ROB KOLODJAY, his face cratered by worry and fear... looking at every face that passes, desperate to see his son...

Until his cell phone rings. Caller ID reads -- “JEFF”.

(CONTINUED)
Rob answers. Hears his son’s voice. All he can do is weep.

EXT. FERRY TERMINAL (JERSEY SIDE) - SAME TIME

JEFF
I’m okay. Pop. I was on the other wing. And they brought us to Jersey.

INTERCUT:

ROB
I couldn’t find you, I couldn’t see you.

JEFF
(amped)
I heard you shouting my name the whole time. I shouted back. I guess the river...

ROB
You’re okay? You’re not hurt?

JEFF
I’m okay, Pop. I’m here. Dad. Don’t cry.

ROB
I love you.

JEFF
I love you, too. Can you believe we made it!? I mean... the plane... crashed. In the river. Are you fucking kidding me!?!
Patrick, the ATC guy in charge of 1549, sits in this windowless room, head in his hands. He looks like he’s had the longest hour of his life. Tears still pool in his eyes.

The door opens and a ATC #1 pops his head in.

**ATC #1**
Hey, Patty, aren’t you coming?

Down the hall, noises emanate.

**ATC #1**
Everyone’s going nuts up top. Supe sent me looking for you.

**PATRICK**
I guess you didn’t hear. Lost Cactus 1549. In the Hudson.

**ATC #1**
I guess you didn’t hear. He landed the sonofabitch.

**PATRICK**
What?

**ATC #1**
Everyone just got pulled off. It’s a miracle.

Patrick grabs his friend in an embrace of disbelief.

**PATRICK**
I thought I lost them all.

Man, still being hugged, scans the barren room.

**ATC #1**
They have got to get a TV in here.

A light beam examines cornea and iris.

**PULL BACK** to reveal Sully, still in his wet clothes, sitting on an examination bed.

The **DOCTOR**, 36, thin hair, thinner waist, writes notes on his pad, then listens to Sully’s heart and lungs.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
What’s my pulse?

DOCTOR
110.

SULLY
My normal resting is 55. 110 is not good.

DOCTOR
You’re right. It’s not good. After what you just went through, 110 is extraordinary.

SULLY
How is Doreen?

DOCTOR
Fairly deep laceration, we’ll keep her a day or two to stem infection.

SULLY
But she’ll...

DOCTOR
... have a scar and a story to tell, although no one will believe her. I’m here with you and I don’t believe it. You landed a plane on the Hudson. Not a scratch on you. Rest of your crew, too.

A voice from the other side of the curtain.

ARNIE (O.S.)
Captain Arnie Gentile to see Captain Sullenberger.

SULLY
Wow, the union is sending all the big guns today.

The curtain pulls back. ARNIE, middle-aged, stocky. Serious.

ARNIE
I talked to Dan Britt, Sully. We’ve got a count.

A beat. Sully’s heart constricts.
ARNIE 155.

For the very first time, Sully’s professional face gives way to something more vulnerable. The shock of the human experience breaks across his brow, shadows his eyes, opens his mouth.

He leans against the wall.

SULLY 155?

ARNIE

It’s official. 155.

SULLY (spent) 155.

EXT. COURTYARD MARRIOTT HOTEL – LATER 120

ESTABLISHING of the nondescript hotel. If not for the three police SUVs parked out front, it’d look like just another quiet night in Queens.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – THAT NIGHT 121

U.S. AIR Captain CARL CLARKE, tall, soft-spoken, 50, is walking down the hall with two big shopping bags. He’s accompanied by hotel manager EVELYN MAY, late 30s, tall, * lovely. They knock on rooms 311 and 313.

Skiles exits one door, Sully the other.

Skiles is showered and in a robe.

Sully is still in his wet uniform, six hours after the landing.

SKILES

Hey. Carl.

CARL

Jeff. Sully. Helluva thing you pulled off out there today.

SULLY

We’re here. That’s about all I know at the moment.

(CONTINUED)
CARL
This is Ms. May, from the hotel. She wanted to have a quick word.

EVELYN
I won’t take your time, gentlemen. This is only to say that my staff and I are committed to protecting your privacy. And if there’s anything I can do at all...

SULLY
Is it possible... I’d love to get my uniform dry-cleaned overnight. It’s the only clothing I have.

EVELYN
Dry cleaning?

SULLY
If it’s too much, this late...

EVELYN
Are you kidding? Captain Sullenberger, I’d give you this whole hotel if I could.

Tears rim her eyes.

EVELYN
The families of crash victims often stay here after... this hotel has seen a lot of grief. But this time... we get to see joy.

She hugs him. Sully is stiff, unsure of what to do. Still in shock.

CARL
Thanks, Evelyn.

EVELYN
Anything for Sully. Have a blessed day.

She walks away, radioing for a bellman to go to Sully’s room.

SULLY
What just happened?

CARL
You got hugged by a total stranger.

(MORE)
Sully, when’s the last time you heard of someone landing a jet on the water. And everybody lived?

Sully is silent.

Carl

Exactly.

INT. SULLY’S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carl empties one bag on the bed.

Carl

Shaving cream, razors, toothpaste... also got you new clothes.

He pulls out identical BLACK SWEATSUITS, socks, and black, low-rise briefs.

Skiles

You thought we were ninjas?

Carl

K-Mart was the only store open. It’s Queens at ten in the evening. You find a Brooks Brothers.

Skiles

(to Sully)

What are you even still doing in uniform?

Sully

I... don’t know.

Carl

Been a long day. Get some rest. Mike Cleary will be by in the A.M. Make sure you’re both doing okay.

Sully

Thanks, Carl.

Carl

Thank you, Captain. Been awhile since New York had news this good. Especially with an airplane in it.

They shake. Take in the gravity of the statement. Then part.

(CONTINUED)

He pulls his wallet out of his soaked trousers. Opens it. The contents are soggy, but intact. Out of an inside slot, he pulls a yellowed slip of paper from a fortune cookie. One he’s carried around for years. Now, he can only look at it in stunned wonder.

It reads: “A delay is better than a disaster.”

Sully turns on the TV. And every channel is showing --

The plane floating in the Hudson, passengers on the wings.

PUSH INTO the TV image, ‘til it pixelates.

PIXELATED TV IMAGE

PRE-LAP DIALOGUE:

REPORTER (V.O.)
The word that city officials keep repeating is ‘timing.’

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LANDMARK TAVERN (PRESENT)

PULL OUT of TV image until we see we’re back in the bar where Sully was given his “Sully” drink.

Reporter is now on-screen.

REPORTER (V.O.)
The perfect timing of the NYPD scuba unit, and the ferry boat captains. And, of course, the inexplicably precise timing of the pilot, Captain Sully Sullenberger, who with almost no time, became a man for all time.

ANGLE ON SULLY AT THE BAR

SULLY (to himself)
No time. No time...

Slowly something seems to be dawning on him.
ANGLE ON THE BARTENDER

mixing another drink.

BARTENDER

Can I buy you another ‘Sully,’ Sully?

But when he turns, Sully is gone and there’s a 20-dollar tip on the bar.

EXT. NY STREET - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully’s on the move and he’s on his cell phone. It’s ringing. And ringing.

SULLY

Answer. Answer.

MAN (V.O.)

Hel... hello.

SULLY

The CVR recording is in two days, how fast can you arrange a favor?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LARRY ROONEY’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Larry Rooney is up on one elbow, half-asleep. His wife, with eyeshades, sleeps next to him.

LARRY ROONEY

Sully?

SULLY

I know Airbus has scheduled simulations in their S22 sim at the factory. Can you get them to reschedule?

LARRY ROONEY

It’s 1:30 in the morning.

EXT. NY STREET - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully stops on the corner, the Intrepid moonlit behind him.

(continued)
They’re using mostly U.S. Air pilots, some of whom I know, so I got wind of it. Next week in Toulouse.

Okay. Yes. That’s right.

I need you to make it happen... before we listen to the CVR. Before our testimony is complete.

Why?

I have the right to see the simulations. And I have a feeling that with human pilots, not a computer, the results are going to be different.

What if they show the exact same result?

If they do, I’ll hand you my wings myself. It’s all about time, Larry. You can do anything, if you’re never in a hurry.

I sure as hell agree with that.

I spent so much time thinking I might have gotten it wrong... I forgot that I had actually gotten it right.

(beat)
The CVR is on Wednesday. That’s 36 hours. Can you arrange it?

I’ll try. That’s a lot of phone calls to make.

It’s already 7:30 in France. You better start now.

Sully hangs up.
And for the first time since the crash, hope in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. L’ENFANT PLAZA - NTSB HEADQUARTERS - TWO DAYS LATER

It’s so cold, even the building looks like it wants to duck for cover.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The door to the NTSB conference room is closed, the noise of set up audible slightly through the door.

ANGLE ON SULLY

He is about to enter the rest of his life, and gathers himself for what awaits him.

His heartbeat has still not slowed since the crash, and even the deepest of breaths cannot slow it.

INT. NTSB CONFERENCE ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Sully enters. Sits next to Skiles. They wait in silence.

Larry Rooney sits steadfast, as well as other airline and union reps.

Across from them are Porter and the other NTSB board members.

All have headsets on the tables in front of them.

CHARLES PORTER

Before we listen to the cockpit voice recording, and we will be listening to it for the first time, along with you, gentlemen...

ELIZABETH DAVIS

... per the request of Captain Sullenberger, and the union, Airbus has agreed to link us via satellite to today’s piloted simulations.

BEN EDWARDS

Upload the link, please.

(CONTINUED)
Sully sits stone-faced.
The satellite link revs up and shows the stunning --

EXT. S22 SIMULATOR

The outside looks exactly like the nose of an A320, and
it is on a gimbal, to provide the full rise and fall,
shaking and plummeting of a distressed plane.

INT. AIRBUS SIMULATOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Inside it looks exactly like the A320 cockpit.

A square-jawed AIRBUS TEST PILOT, 35, in civilian
clothing, buckles into the seat with a CO-PILOT beside
him. And the flight begins.

From inside the cockpit, the simulator shows a perfect
graphic representation of the take-off from LaGuardia.
Everything is precise.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM

Skiles leans toward Sully.

SKILES
They’re just simulations, Sully.
Won’t change my mind about what
happened up there.

SULLY
It might change theirs.

INT. AIRBUS SIMULATOR

BIRD STRIKE.

The AUTOMATED WARNING SYSTEM begins inside the “cockpit”
and it is devastating and rattling.

Even though it’s only a simulator, the Pilot and Co-
Pilot’s faces betray the terror of the situation. The
simulator drops the plane two stories a second. Death-
defying.

Then the Pilot makes an IMMEDIATE left turn to return to
LaGuardia.

Co-Pilot runs the QRH, every proper part of the
checklist. Pilot steadies the plane.

(CONTINUED)
Flaps 2, just like Sully used. Everything exactly the same. The approach is harrowing. They can only configure for landing in the last fifteen seconds. Moments from crashing until a --


INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - SAME TIME

The room is buzzing after the successful landing.

CHARLES PORTER
For the record, the pilot’s and the computer sims bear the same result.

Sully’s expression betrays nothing.

INT. SIMULATOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A NEW PILOT, a woman, and NEW CO-PILOT enter the simulator.


The tension is just as thick. Full concentration. Last minute flaps and another --

Perfect landing on LaGuardia 1-3.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - SAME TIME

Edwards and Porter are writing notes. And the room feels more and more like a gallows.

Larry Rooney leans forward toward Sully to say something, but Sully blocks the comment with a gesture.

INT. SIMULATOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

THIRD TEST PILOT, a lanky 40-year-old man, slides into place confidently, with his Co-Pilot.

A new target is chosen. Teterboro airport.

Bird strike. CHAOS. The river beckoning, and 3rd Pilot yanks the plane into an extreme bank.

(CONTINUED)
The simulator strains at the effort. Extraordinary flying. At the last possible second, he comes out of the bank and --

SLAMS it down on the runway. Harrowing. But safe and sound.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - SAME TIME

BEN EDWARDS
Three simulations, multiple runways and airports. Three successful landings. We’re simply mimicking what the computer already told us.

CHARLES PORTER
A lot of toes were stepped on... in order to set this up for today. And, frankly, I’m not sure what you gentlemen planned to gain by it.

Silence. The room tightening at the edges.

CHARLES PORTER
Captain Sullenberger?

For a moment, it seems Sully is out of rope. Finally...

SULLY
Can we get serious now?

CHARLES PORTER
Captain?

SULLY
We’ve heard about the computer simulations and now we’re watching actual sims, and I find it hard to believe you’re still not taking into account the human factor.

CHARLES PORTER
Human-piloted simulations show that you could have made it back to the airport.

SULLY
No. They don’t.

His “no” is clear and strong and galvanizes the room’s full attention.
SULLY
These pilots are not reacting like human beings. Like people who are experiencing this for the first time.

CHARLES PORTER
They may not be reacting like you did, but...

SULLY
Immediately after the bird strike, they’re turning for the airport. Just as in the computer sims, correct?

CHARLES PORTER
That is correct.

SULLY
They obviously knew the turn and exactly what heading to fly. They didn’t run a check or switch on the APU...

CHARLES PORTER
They had the same parameters you faced...

SULLY
No one warned us. No one said, you’re about to lose both engines... at a lower altitude than any jet in history. But be cool. Turn back for LaGuardia like you’re going out to pick up the goddamn milk.

His outrage pins the room to the wall.

SULLY
This was dual engine loss at 2,800 feet followed by an immediate water landing. With 155 souls on board. No one has ever even trained for an incident like that. No one.

SKILES
Sully’s right. It’s absurd to expect an immediate turn for the airport.

(CONTINUED)
SULLY
And the Teterboro landing, with the unrealistic bank angle... this wasn’t the Blue Angels up there. I’d like to know how many times the pilot practiced that maneuver before he actually pulled it off.

Long pause. No answer from the NTSB forthcoming.

SULLY
I’m not questioning the pilots. They’re good pilots. But they’ve clearly been instructed to head to the airports immediately after the bird strike. You have allowed no time for analysis and decision making. And with these sims, you have taken all the humanity out of the cockpit. How much time did these pilots spend making their plans for this event? Hours, days?

(beat)
You’re looking for human error...? Then make it human.

NTSB confers.

SKILES
It wasn’t a video game, it was life and death. Sully’s right. That’s worth a few seconds.

Charles Porter contacts Airbus via satellite and confers with them while the others await the decision.

The room is heavy with anticipation.

SULLY
Please ask them how many practice runs they had...

ELIZABETH DAVIS
17.

SULLY
17?

ELIZABETH DAVIS
The pilot who landed at Teterboro had 17 practice attempts. Before the simulation we just witnessed.

All Sully can do is shake his head.

(CONTINUED)
Charles Porter hangs up with Airbus.

CHARLES PORTER
The reaction-decision time will be set at thirty-five seconds.

SKILES
(to Sully; sotto)
That’s not enough time.

SULLY
It’s something. We only had 208 seconds total, so I’ll take it.

INT. SIMULATOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION
The first Pilot and his Co-Pilot, who high-fived after their first run, re-enter the simulator. They fly this simulation with more confidence, barely reacting to the bird strike, no fear in their faces. Then they wait 35 seconds before returning to the airport. When they do, they --

CRASH. Coming up short, despite going full aft on the stick. The plane --

CARTWHEELS into the water just short of the runway. And is torn into pieces. The Pilot looks stunned.

PILOT
Let me run it again. Runway 2-2, with a right turn, is the better choice.

Same Pilot. Same 35-second reaction-decision time. This attempt, a hard right turn to LaGuardia, almost like flying blind during the turn. This approach, the --

CRASH is worse. The plane nosedives, half into the water, half onto the edge of the runway. Splinters like a shattered bone.

CHARLES PORTER (V.O.)
(stoic)
Let’s... try Teterboro.

The Pilot who successfully landed at Teterboro with the extreme 66 degree bank and sudden set down, buckles in.

The flight. The madness of noise and technology. The delay and turn for Teterboro. The plane banked hard to 66 degrees, just as before, but this time the plane doesn’t make it to Teterboro. It --

(CONTINUED)
STRIKES several buildings on the Jersey side of the river and DISINTEGRATES onscreen.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - SAME TIME

Sully isn’t smiling on the outside. But on the inside...
The 35-second delay, the human delay, is making all the difference.

SERIES OF FLASH CUTS

Attempt after attempt, for Teterboro or LaGuardia. With the 35-second delay --

Crash after crash. Finally --

SULLY
Does anyone need to see any more simulations?

This time, the NTSB is silent.

Skiles can’t hide his grin.

SKILES
Now that we’ve seen what could have happened... can we listen to what actually did?

It takes a beat, but Charles Porter finally shuts down the satellite link.

CHARLES PORTER
We’ll study all the results at a later date. Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
For the record, this is the CVR of U.S. Airways Flight 1549, January 15th, 2009.
(beat)
Gentlemen, headsets.

They all don their headsets. And the switch is flipped.

Sully and Skiles close their eyes.
A flock of CANADIAN GEESE appear, thick as a black and gray curtain, in an exact Y-pattern. The sound of their wings is rhythmic. Peaceful. Perfect.

INT./EXT. FLIGHT 1549 - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SULLY

Birds!

They are 100 yards away when Sully sees them. Before he blinks, they shadow the windscreen completely.

SKILES

Whoa!

Several birds enter each engine. The engines both shudder to a complete and silent stop. Then BURST INTO FLAMES.

SKILES

Oh, shit.

SULLY

Oh, yeah.

SKILES

Uh, oh...

SULLY

We got one rol... both of ‘em rolling back.

The power drains from the plane like blood from an open vein.

SULLY

I’m starting the APU.

Sully flips on the auxiliary power unit. No engines, but now enough power to buy them a little time. A very little.

SULLY

(beat)

My aircraft.

SKILES

Your aircraft.

Sully’s focus is absolute. And his bearing, calm, but inside, his heart thunders.
Get the QRH. Loss of thrust on both engines.

Skiles grabs the Quick Reference Handbook. It has 150 checklists for various emergencies. Which one works for double engine loss at 2,800 feet?

None of them.

Down below, the Hudson rushes up at them like an attack.

Sully turns left and calls ATC.

Sully's called “Mayday,” but Patrick, the ATC, hasn’t heard it.

He has keyed his microphone and is talking to another departing aircraft in his charge, oblivious to the danger.

Patrick releases his mic, sips his coffee in time to finally hear.

Sully (V.O.)

... we’ve lost thrust on both engines. We’re turning back toward LaGuardia.

Patrick sits up straight at the news. Immediately, charts a return route on his computer.

Patrick

Okay, you need to return to LaGuardia.

(beat)

Turn left, heading of two-two-zero.

Sully (V.O.)

Two-two-zero.
SKILES
‘If fuel remaining, engine mode selector, ignition. Ignition.’

SULLY
Ignition.

SKILES
‘Thrust levers confirm idle.’

SULLY
Idle.

SKILES
‘Airspeed optimum relight, three hundred knots.’

Skiles looks at the instrument board.

SKILES
We don’t have that.

SULLY
We don’t.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

PATRICK
Tower, stop your departures, we got an emergency returning. 1549.  *
Bird strike. He lost both engines. Returning immediately.

LaGUARDIA TOWER (V.O.)
Which engine?

PATRICK
He lost thrust in both engines. He said.

Patrick’s face pales. “Both engines” begins to sink in.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

PATRICK (V.O.)
Cactus 1549, if we can get it for you, do you want to try to land runway one-three?

The alarm chimes punctuate Patrick’s transmission.

(CONTINUED)
Sully looks out of the window. The Hudson is below. Sully's mind calculates how long he has remaining. He sees the --

Manhattan skyline to the left.

New Jersey to the right, the riverfront thick with buildings.

SERIES OF FLASH CUTS

PEOPLE watching TV, in their waterfront apartments, oblivious that their lives are at risk.

A SIX-YEAR-OLD LITTLE GIRL with a dog, coming to the window at the sound of the jet plane.

An ELDERLY MAN, with a cane, at his window, watching it all.

Every building buzzing with life, just one bad decision away from death.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

It takes Sully only a few seconds to realize he's out of choices.

SULLY

We're unable. We may end up in the Hudson.

Skiles continues the checklist.

SKILES

'Emergency electrical power. Emergency generator not online.'

SULLY

It's online.

SKILES

'ATC notify. Squawk seventy-seven hundred. Distress message transmit.' We did.

PATRICK (V.O.)

Cactus 1549, it's gonna be left traffic for runway three-one.

SULLY

Unable.

(CONTINUED)
PATRICK (V.O.)
Okay. What do you need to land?

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
‘Go around. Wind shear ahead.’

SKILES
‘FAC one off, then on.’

Sully watches the altimeter plummet. Looks left and right. And now, this low, only 1200 feet above the Hudson, water is all he sees.

INT. ATC - CONTINUOUS ACTION
Patrick checks his time readout.

PATRICK
(to himself)
Been ten seconds, Captain. Come on. Talk to me.
(into radio)
Cactus 1549, runway four’s available if you wanna make left traffic to runway four.

SULLY (V.O.)
I’m not sure we can make any runway.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME
SULLY
Uh, what’s over to our right, anything in New Jersey? Maybe Teterboro?

Skiles pauses a mini-beat. His first doubt. Almost challenges Sully, bites down on it.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION
PATRICK
(relieved)
Okay, yeah, off your right side is Teterboro airport.

Patrick works his touchscreen like a magician. Gets the number he needs and dials.

(CONTINUED)
PATRICK
LaGuardia departure, got an 
emergency inbound.

TETERBORO TOWER (V.O.)
This is Teterboro Tower, go ahead.

PATRICK
Cactus 1549 over the GW bridge, 
wants to go to the airport right 
now.

TETERBORO TOWER (V.O.)
Check, does he need assistance?

PATRICK
Yes. Bird strike. Can I get him 
in for runway one.

TETERBORO TOWER (V.O.)
Runway one. That’s good.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION
The plane is dropping like a stone. The bridge looks 
like it’s going to clip a wing.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME
Skiles looks to Sully. Sees his calm. But wants to 
contradict the Teterboro call. Waits. Every second an 
eternity.

SKILES
‘No relight after thirty seconds, 
gine master one and two confirm 
off.’

SULLY’S POV
as they just --

BARELY clear the GW bridge. And its massive traffic. 
Already, lives saved.

BACK TO SCENE

PATRICK (V.O.)
You wanna try and go to Teterboro?

(CONTINUED)
SULLY

Off.

SKILES

‘Wait thirty seconds.’

Sully hears “thirty seconds.” Knows he doesn’t have it. Reaches for the radio to the cabin.

SULLY

(into PA)

This is the Captain.

(pause)

Brace for impact.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

‘One thousand...’

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

PATRICK

(excited)

Cactus 1549, turn right, two-eight zero. You can land runway one at Teterboro.

SULLY (V.O.)

We can’t do it.

PATRICK

Okay. Which runway would you like at Teterboro?

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

SULLY

(to Skiles)

Go ahead. Try number one.

Nothing from the engine.

SULLY

(into radio)

We’re gonna be in the Hudson.

Sully slips his shoulder harness belt back into place and secures it.

PATRICK (V.O.)

I’m sorry, say again, Cactus 1549.

Sully doesn’t key the radio. His only focus now, landing the plane on the roiling river.

(CONTINUED)
WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)

The chimes are relentless. Cockpit noise, cacophonous.
Sully eyes the approaching water as if it were a runway.

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME
Almost all are leaning forward, braced for impact, as the flight attendants keep reciting, over and over...

SHEILA
Brace, brace! Heads down, stay down!

Barry Leonard prays.
Diane holds her mother Lucille’s hand.
Jeff Kolodjay cannot bear to look out the window as the enormous river seems to rise to meet them.

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS
(shout)
Brace!

-- one more time, then bow their heads and lean forward.

Only sounds remaining are...

A prayer in Russian... the words need no translation.
The sound of a text being rush-typed.

TEXT: I love you and the girls.

The word “delivered” on the screen, bringing deep relief.
Message sent/message received.

An overlapping chorus of praise and fear and hope and goodbye...

Some on their cell phones... “Daddy loves you, you know that, Jesse? Daddy loves you forever…”

Some from their souls... “Thank you... for this life.” “Please. God. Mercy. Please.”
WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Too low. Terrain. Terrain.'

SKILES
No relight.

SULLY
Okay. Let’s go put the flaps out, put the flaps out.

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Caution. Terrain. Caution.'

SKILES
Flaps out?

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Terrain. Pull up. Pull up.'

PATRICK (V.O.)
Cactus 1549, radar contact lost. You also got Newark off your two o’clock in about seven miles.

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up.'

SKILES
Got flaps out. Two hundred fifty feet in the air.

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Too low. Terrain. Too low. Gear.'

SKILES
Hundred and seventy knots. Got no power on either one? Try the other one.

SULLY
Try the other one.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Cactus 1549. You still on? *

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Caution. Terrain.'

PATRICK (V.O.)
Cactus 1549, you got runway two-nine available at Newark, it’ll be two o’clock and seven miles.

(CONTINUED)
SKILES
Hundred and fifty knots. Got flaps two. You want more?

SULLY
No, let’s stay at two. (beat) Got any ideas?

SKILES
Actually, not.

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
‘Terrain, terrain, pull up, pull up, pull up.’

Sully eyeballs the landing. Eyes on the airspeed displays, then the water. Back and forth.

Outside.
Inside.
Outside.
Inside.

EXT. AIR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully fights to keep the plane’s pitch optimum, the nose up. The wings level. One inch off and the plane will disintegrate on impact.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
‘Pull up, pull up, pull up.’

EXT. BELLY OF THE PLANE

We see the dark water, only feet from impact, RACING UP to meet us. The plane’s skin shivers and moans. No escape.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Sully begins the flare for landing. Sidestick back, back, full aft, everything he’s got.

SULLY
We’re gonna brace.

(Continued)
WARNING SYSTEM (V.O.)
‘Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up.’

EXT. HUDSON RIVER - CONTINUOUS ACTION
SLAM. The plane hits the Hudson.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION
Underwater.
Blackness.
All the power gone. Panel completely dark. Dead.
Finally, the nose begins to bob up, and as the water clears, Sully and Skiles have a sudden and perfect view of the --
MANHATTAN SKYLINE. Dream-like. As if they’re inside a snow globe, all of NY, opening before them at river level.
Sully and Skiles look at each other. Alive.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION (PRESENT)
Silence. No more words. Who could have survived that?
The recording is over. The room hums with the quiet of shock.
For the first time, Porter and the other board members seem to really look at Sully and Skiles. To take them in. To realize that they survived this impossibility.
This was a miracle on the Hudson.
Sully and Skiles betray almost no emotion, still shaken.

SULLY
(rising)
I need a quick break.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION
Sully and Skiles walk side-by-side, not a word between them.
INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION
Sully and Skiles wash their hands. Still mute.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER
Sully exits alone, and as he waits for Skiles, his phone rings. Lorrie.

SULLY
Lorrie.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SULLENBERGER BEDROOM - SAME TIME
Lorrie is lying on their bed. Next to her is a large, opened FEDEX PACKAGE which held...

SULLY’S SUITCASE, rescued from the wreckage of Flight 1549. Including his --

Pilot’s hat. Which Lorrie is cradling in her hands. Tears steal the rest of her speech.

SULLY
Sweetheart, what happened?

LORRIE
For the first time, just now, I realized that there were 155 people on that plane. And you were one of them.

More tears. Tears of relief and joy.

LORRIE
I almost lost you. The girls almost lost you.

SULLY
But you didn’t. I’m here.

Long pause as they simply take in the sound of each other’s breathing. Their existence. It is beautiful.

LORRIE
How are you holding up? Tell me it’s almost over.

SULLY
It’s almost over.

(CONTINUED)
LORRIE
I love you.

SULLY
I love you.

Sully hangs up. Takes a moment to gather himself.

Skiles exits the bathroom and joins Sully as they walk in silence back toward the conference room.

Just before they reach the doors... Sully stops.

Skiles stops, too. Faces Sully.

SULLY
What did you think? Listening to the CVR. Now.

Skiles can’t muster an answer.

SULLY
I’ll tell you what I think... I’m just so damn proud of you. You were right there with me, through all those distractions. With so much at stake.
(pause)
We did this together. We were a team.

Skiles’ eyes brim with tears.

SKILES
Thank you.

Then they lock into an embrace. Brothers. For life.
When they step back, the emotion is an invisible cord between them.

SULLY
We did our job.

SKILES
We did our job.

INT. NTSB HEARING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

All have returned. The weight of the investigation has been replaced by a sense of humble awe.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLES PORTER
That is, honestly, the first time
I have listened to a crash
recording... while actually
sitting with the Captain and First
Officer. Extraordinary.

SKILES
That was no simulation.

CHARLES PORTER
No, it wasn’t.

The NTSB board is looking for the right words.
Finally...

ELIZABETH DAVIS
I also wanted to let you know that
the left engine was recovered late
yesterday.

Sully waits a beat.
The monitors they have been watching come to life with
VIDEO FOOTAGE...

A massive crane lifts the LEFT ENGINE from the Hudson
River. It dangles over the water, facing away. Its
damage unseen.

On the video, the LEFT ENGINE rotates TOWARD CAMERA. It
is mangled and decimated from within and without.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
Extensive damage on both the guide
* 
vanes and fan blades of the
* 
engine. Five compressor blades
* 
were fractured and eight variable
guide vanes... missing.

SULLY
No thrust.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
As you testified, it was
completely destroyed. The ACARS
data was wrong.

Sully and Skiles are transfixed by the video of the
engine that almost got them killed.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
I’d like to add something on a
personal note.

(MORE)
I can say with confidence, that after speaking with the rest of the flight crew, with bird experts and airplane engineers, after running all the scenarios and talking to each of the players... there is an X in this result. It’s you, Captain Sullenberger. Take you out of the equation and the math just fails.

SULLY
I disagree.

The room hushes. Waiting for Sully to finally unleash. Instead...

SULLY
It wasn’t just me. It was all of us. Jeff, Donna, Sheila, Doreen. The passengers, the rescue workers. Air traffic control. The ferry boat crews and the scuba cops. We did it. We survived.

ELIZABETH DAVIS
First Officer Skiles, is there anything you’d like to add? Anything you would have done differently, if you had to do it all again?

SKILES
Yes.
(beat)
I would have done it in July.

Laughter surprises the room. Finally, a little space to breathe.

FADE TO WHITE.

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - INT. THE CAROLINA AVIATION MUSEUM - MONTHS LATER (REAL-LIFE FOOTAGE)

The wreckage of U.S. AIR Flight 1549 on full display. The damage to the fuselage, the missing left engine. It doesn’t look like the kind of plane you walk away from alive.

The lobby is filling up with visitors, but not just any tourists. Flight 1549 passengers, one and all.

(CONTINUED)
The real-life SURVIVORS...

They were strangers when they boarded the flight. Now they are family forever.

Jeff Skiles enters. An eruption of APPLAUSE, as Sully enters and signals for...

Jeff and Donna and Sheila and Doreen to join him. He pulls them in line with him, so that the crew of 1549 are receiving the cheers. As one.

FADE OUT.

THE END