

"FLYOVER COUNTRY"
(SET-UP AND INCITING
INCIDENT)

FADE IN:

EXT. AIRPORT - RUNWAY - SUNSET

An airliner takes off and cuts across the sunset.

ON AIRLINER FUSELAGE: an eyeball logo with the wrap-around caption: "LOTHAR IMPALAGALOS DEACTUALIZATION TOURS."

INT. AIRLINER

Inside is one big first-class section. Plenty of legroom. Computer screens at lounge seats that swivel as well as recline. None of the seats side-by-side.

And none of the thirty-plus PASSENGERS appear to be of any one race. Most are young. All are well-dressed, with a rough balance of men and women.

A good representative of the above, twenty-something KIMBERLY ("KIM") GAUCHO, stares out a window into the void below.

ON WINDOW: a wall of skyscrapers falls away, revealing green suburban sprawl beyond.

PILOT (V.O., INTERCOM)
We're departing the Blue Coast East
Metro Strip.

Cloud scud rapidly obscures the dwindling terrain beneath.

PILOT (V.O., INTERCOM)
We'll be crossing into Red Frontier
Region Two shortly. Time of arrival
in the Blue Coast West Metro Area:
midnight. No scheduled stops along
the way.

Appreciative chuckles ripple through the cabin.

PILOT (V.O., INTERCOM)
Until then, relax and enjoy your
DeActualization Seminar flight.

The plane enters cotton-batting clouds.

MAN (O.S.)
Hi. I'm Jace Tumulty.

A ashy-complected 30ish MAN in an orca-patterned blue and black jumpsuit extends a hand. Which Kim shakes demurely.

KIM

Kim-short-for-Kimberly Gaucho.

She pronounces it, "Gow-sho." She too has a light charcoal color.

MAN/JACE

Hi, Kim-short-for-Kimberly. How long you been with Standardyne?

KIM

Since last June. I'm in the lab.

JACE

A techie, then. I'm Chief Expeditor. Been onboard since vintgtwelve.

KIM

Ah. The oldest of old-timers --

The cabin jumps slightly, jarred by turbulence.

JACE

We must be near the border.

KIM

That's a myth. The weather in the Red Zone is no different from the coasts.

JACE

It just feels that way.

KIM

Believe me, I know. I was born and brought up there.

Jace blinks three times. He involuntarily draws back.

KIM

Don't worry. I don't have green genes.

JACE

Uh -- how did you get out?

KIM
 My parents sent me to stay with an
 Aunt in Boston. Uh. MetroPlex
 Three?

Other Passengers eye her from their floppy computer pads.

JACE
 Most of the people in MetroPlex
 Three ended up in the Red Zone.

KIM
 Not us. And we went through GATTACA
 triage more times than I can
 recall.

AN AIRLINE ATTENDANT comes around.

JACE
 I'll have a drink, when you get the
 chance. A double single malt
 scotch.

EXT. AIRLINER - SUNSET

The aircraft wings above the red rim of the sinking sun.

INT. AIRLINER - PASSENGER CABIN - TWILIGHT

The Passengers lounge in adjustable recliners. With a SOFT
 WHIR: Interior shutters cover the windows. In the --

INT. GALLEY

The Airline Attendant arranges cocktail items on trays. A
 SECOND ATTENDANT peers out the only unshuttered window.

SECOND ATTENDANT
 I'm gonna close this, okay?

FIRST ATTENDANT
 Why so nervous?

SECOND ATTENDANT
 There's no lights down there.

FIRST ATTENDANT
 Oh I've seen lights in the Red
 Zone.

SECOND ATTENDANT
 You want to see those kind of
 lights?

The First Attendant punches a button next the window. THE SHUTTER WHIRS DOWN.

FIRST ATTENDANT

There. Happy?

INT. AIRLINER - PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

The only sound is the DRUMMING of JET ENGINES. All the seats are now turned toward the front of the darkened cabin.

The Passengers listen with rapt attention to the shimmering holographic image of a dark-complected MAN with wavy silver hair.

DR. LOTHAR IMPALAGALOS wears mirror glasses and a trenchcoat. He stands on a spiral staircase leading up into a gap in the fuselage, where the plane's SLIPSTREAM is in FULL ROAR.

LOTHAR

Here's a dirty little secret they don't teach in business school: those of you who can push your agenda in the face of reality are the ones who are gonna make out. But you have to learn to trust your programming. Not just in the crunch, but day in day out until it's second nature. It's what I expect of you and it's the least you should expect of yourselves.

(climbs stairs)

Those who can't deliver on that expectation will soon return to Blue Coast East. But for you who do come through: the sky is no limit.

Lothar reaches a step where his hair is sucked up into the slipstream.

LOTHAR

Put on your virtual reality headsets. Things are about to get interesting.

Lothar raises his arms and goes straight up. There's a far-off "YAH-HOO!" The opening in the fuselage and the spiral staircase fade with a twinkle.

A DIM WHIRRING FILLS THE CABIN. Bins swivel open under the computer tables. From the bins, the Passengers fetch two-axis headsets with attached screens and sensor probes. Also --

JACE
What's this?

He holds up a collapsible plastic mouthguard connecting to a gas cannister. First Attendant comes over.

FIRST ATTENDANT
That's in case we lose air pressure while you're still under.

JACE
Oh.

They fit on the headsets, feeding the probes into their nostrils and fitting the screens over their eyes. Finally, the Passengers each chomp onto the mouthpieces.

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

A BILLOWY WHITE MASS undercut with black looms ahead.

THE FLIGHT CREW gathers around the cockpit window watching. White-haired Pilot AVI GAMARAL sums up the situation.

AVI
The computer says head south.
That'll put us on a redline
southwesterly.

COPILOT
Another eight-oh-seven got shot
down on that flyway last year.

AVI
Going north will leave just enough
fuel to reach MetroPlex West.

A wicked flash comes from the base of the huge thunderstorm.

Like an echo, the Navigator's headset BEEPS.

NAVIGATOR
Doctor Impalagalos says, go north.

The Navigator retreats to his niche. He RATTLES OFF a string of numbers on a keyboard. Punches "ENTER."

WITH A LOW WHINE, the airliner banks away from the storm --

INT. PASSENGER CABIN

-- Unnoticed by the Passengers, who remain in the dark.

CUT TO VIRTUAL
REALITY P.O.V.:

EXT. TITANIC - BOW - NIGHT (1911)

Wearing period attire, the Passengers are gathered around Dr. Lothar Impalagalos, who stands, back to the wind, at the point where the bow gunwales join.

LOTHAR
Step to the rail please.

The thirty-odd Passengers move to the edge of the deck.

LOTHAR
Any second, you'll hear a shout
from the crow's nest. When you do,
climb over and stand with your back
to the rail.

Sure enough, there's a DISTANT ECHOING CRY from above. With as much fret as in real life, the Passengers climb over. Lothar does likewise. Holding on with his hands behind his back, he leans out over the churning water.

LOTHAR
It's an historic moment. Look left.

The Passengers crane their necks to see --

OUT OF LUMINOUS FOG: A WHITE MOUNTAIN LOOMS DEAD AHEAD. The ship veers to port. The iceberg creeps away from the bow. But it's too little, too late.

LOTHAR
We're going to transfer over to the
iceberg. When I yell "Jump," throw
yourselves at whatever welcome-
looking spot you see, on that sheer
ice face.

ON PASSENGERS: their eyes are glarey with fear, but their jaws clench with determination.

THE ICEBERG SCRAPES PAST the ship -- which SHAKES AND BUCKS as submerged ice impacts the hull below the waterline.

LOTHAR
Jump!

One by one, the Passengers hurl themselves into space.

END VIRTUAL
REALITY P.O.V.

INT. AIRLINER - PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

The hardware riding the heads of each of the Passengers emits a LONG, WARBLING CHIME. LED readouts flash off and on.

LIGHTS COME UP in the cabin. Sensor probes withdraw from the Passengers' nostrils. Computer screens fold aside to lay like blinders on either side of their faces.

Flight Attendants push collection carts through the cabin, dumping dishes and empty glasses into cleaning receptacles.

As they go about their work, there's a BANG from the back of the aircraft. The tail sinks with a GROAN. The Attendants roll their carts back into the galley and stow them there.

AVI (V.O./INTERCOM)
We may have caught a lightning
strike -- the flight computers have
gone haywire. We'll fly by stick to
Fort Chicago, get her checked out,
and have you in the air A.S.A.P.
For now, try to relax, and --

The floor of the cabin sinks downward. The window shutters lift, allowing a tilt-a-whirl view of the rushing blackness. Several of the seats spin partway around before locking in place. Oxygen masks dangle overhead.

BERNDT, a fratboy-looking dude with a buzzcut, says:

BERNDT
I can't believe this. First
class, they give us a pop quiz.

Jace grabs his oxygen mask, but pauses before putting it on.

JACE
You think this is part of
a virtual reality session?

BERNDT
You don't?

Kim leans forward to look out the window. She sees --

ON WINDOW: what appears to be a red whirlpool, flashing in and out of view, as the plane yaws from port to starboard.

Momentarily, the picture resolves itself. The red lights are torches, moving in a wide ellipse on the ground.

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Avi struggles with the steering yoke.

AVI
Can't get her off this heading.

CoPilot fights the throttle lever. The Navigator whales away at the computer keyboard like a mad pianist, his little finger returning constantly to the "ENTER" key.

NAVIGATOR
I've never seen anything like it.
Except maybe -- an encrypted virus.

The Navigator sprints through a final flurry of computer arpeggios, and falls back with a gasp.

Dr. Lothar Impalagalos enters from a rear upper stairwell.

LOTHAR
Why don't we take a deep breath
and see where this little
misadventure is taking us?

Avi lets go the yoke and motions CoPilot to cease and desist.

With that, the plane straightens out and flies as if on silk.

AVI
Altitude: a klick and a half. Rate
of descent: two hundred meters a
minute.

The Navigator RATTLES AT THE KEYBOARD again.

NAVIGATOR
There's an emergency airstrip on
this vector. But it's a good three
hundred klicks south of Fort
Chicago.

LOTHAR
Take care of it. I don't feel like
waking up in the Red Zone.

Lothar retreats back up the stairs.

COPILOT

I'd never wake up in the Red Zone.
Because I'd never fall asleep
there.

AVI

Let's try again. One two three. Go.
Both men attack the flight
controls.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN

The floor drops, then stops with a BANG!

JACE

Here we go again. I'm gonna be
sick.

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

The Flight Crew give up with howls of aggravation.

NAVIGATOR

I put out a mayday. But they won't
reply until we have a secure line.

AVI

Is the emergency airstrip secure?

NAVIGATOR

It's triple fenced behind a free
fire zone.

AVI

Kellids will probably be waiting
for us with kettles of boiling oil.

NAVIGATOR

I don't like it anymore than you.
But we're going to be on the ground
in five minutes. We'll call for
help then.

COPILOT

And take off again?

NAVIGATOR

Not until I debug the computers.

THE COCKPIT SHAKES WITH A WHIRRING VIBRATION that ends with
a CHIME from the instrument panel.

COPILOT

Fuck me. Is that the landing gear?

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The Flight Attendants, retrieving the last virtual reality headsets, look up with alarm as Avi announces:

AVI (V.O., INTERCOM)

Flight crew take your seats.
Everybody fasten seat belts. We'll
be on the ground in three minutes.

EXT. EMERGENCY AIRSTRIP - NIGHT

Kliegs like frozen flares illuminate a runway boxed in by chainlink fences topped by concertina wire. More wire unspools between the fences and along the perimeter.

Outside the perimeter: a grassy moat extends for half a klick to a dark treeline.

Out of the distance comes a LOUDENING WHINE, cut with the FAINT OVERTONES OF A SCREECH: APPROACHING JET ENGINES.

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

ON WINDSHIELD: tracerlike blips of runway lights rush up. Avi fidgets with the yoke.

AVI

She's responding. Give us some
power.

The CoPilot pushes mightily at the throttle.

COPILOT

Nope.

AVI

Alright. We're going in.

EXT. EMERGENCY AIRSTRIP

With a SHOUT OF RUSHING AIR and WAILING JET ENGINES, the airliner sails over the inmost fence and touches down.

The TIRES SHIMMY and SMOKE. First the wing wheels, then the nose gear settles onto the tarmac. The airliner rushes past a solitary tower in the middle of the field.

Tires fume as the aircraft halts, fifty meters shy of the inmost fence.

INT. AIRLINER - PASSENGER CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The Passengers start to unbuckle.

AVI (V.O., INTERCOM)
Please stay in your seats until
we've done a safety check.

Kim pushes herself up to see --

ON WINDOW: weed-speckled gravel leading to a chain-link
fence. Kliegs shed hallucinatory brilliance over the scene.

JACE (O.S.)
Have the Kellids flown in on
broomsticks yet?

At the edge of their little circle, LISA LEE, a young
Oriental secretary-type with blue hair, strains against her
seatbelt. She flashes a dirty look at --

JACE
Hi. Jace Tumulty.

LISA
Kellids coming on broomsticks?

JACE
Lighten up. Whatever-your-name is --

LISA
Lisa. Lee.

JACE
Lighten up, Li Lee.

INT. COCKPIT

The outside floods die back. Avi squints at the windshield.

AVI
Kill the engines.

The CoPilot yanks the throttle lever. It moves, but only to
shut off the flow of fuel. Avi twists a key in the middle of
the instrument panel. THE ENGINES WHEEZE into silence.

AVI
When can I have that secure line to
Fort Chicago?

NAVIGATOR

Call from the control tower. I'll stay here and work on the computer.

AVI

You mean, go outside in the Red Zone.

NAVIGATOR

All airfields are Blue Coast territory.

AVI

It's Red Zone air. What if I have the wrong recessive chromosomes?

COPILOT

None of our ancestors had a "Mac" or "O-apostrophe" in their surnames. Else we wouldn't be airplane jockeys.

Avi unbelts and pushes himself up. He opens a compartment behind the throttle and brings out a hand-sized revolver.

COPILOT

Want me to hold your hand?

AVI

Yeah. But it's against regs for both of us to leave the cockpit.

Avi stuffs the gun under his belt. He shoulders into a jacket sporting the airline colors, and heads for --

INT. PASSENGER CABIN

Crowd noise blooms as Avi emerges, buttoning his suit coat.

PASSENGERS

What's going on? Why did we land here?

AVI

We landed for your safety.

JACE

You landed us in the Red Zone for our safety?

AVI
 We're on the equivalent of Blue
 Coastal territory. Kellids can't
 enter this area on pain of death.

The Attendants appear, looking skittish.

AVI
 Get anyone a drink that wants one.
 If any of you'd care for a breath
 of fresh air, I'm stepping outside.

JACE
 Yeah. Right. Be your last breath,
 but at least it's fresh air.

But Kim unbuckles and pushes to her feet.

KIM
 I'll tag along.

JACE
 You would.

No one else rises to the occasion. Avi smiles at Kim.

AVI
 How are your walking shoes?

Kim shows her feet. Shod with sneakers. Avi leads on.

INT. COCKPIT

Avi holds the door to the cockpit open for Kim. As she
 enters, Lothar steps down, swishing a drink in its glass.

KIM
 I thought we left you back
 at the iceberg.

LOTHAR
 That was a mere representation
 of the fleshly Lothar Impalagalos.

AVI
 We're going to pay a visit to the
 tower. If you'd care to stretch
 your legs.

LOTHAR
 Excellent idea.

EXT. AIRFIELD - AIRLINER - NIGHT

A ladder drops from a hatch in the aircraft's forward belly. Avi, Kim, and finally Lothar climb down.

Once they're on the tarmac, Avi leads under the starboard wing out into the open. They head for the air control tower.

Faces watch from the lit-up airliner windows. Kim waves.

LOTHAR

You're taking this in good stride.

KIM

I was a child in the Red Zone when the Hex first broke out. I'm used to the unexpected.

LOTHAR

Gow-sho. What is that? Spanish?

KIM

Basque. The other half is Jamaican.

LOTHAR

I thought the Basques were Kellids.

KIM

No one knows what the Basques are. But don't worry. I got my GATTACA bill of health. I won't morph into a green meanie.

LOTHAR

I hear blue is the complexion preferred by the back-to-prehistoric Kellid.

EXT/INT. CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT

Avi arrives at the steelframe door admitting to the tower. He punches a sequence of numbers onto a security console.

AVI

The pass code came up on the flight computer when we landed.

The door divides into halves that shunt aside like elevator panels. Overhead fluorescents come on. Revealing --

A long vestibule, with further doors on either side, and a staircase at the end.

Avi strides on as if he's just arrived at the first stop on a vacation. Lothar steps aside to allow Kim to enter.

KIM
Thanks. But I'll wait out here.

LOTHAR
Whatever suits you.

Lothar rushes to catch up with Avi.

Silhouetted against the illuminated doorway, Kim wraps her arms around her shoulders and turns to face --

Sudden darkness as the runway lights cut back.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

Sconces in the black ceiling shed blood-colored gleams over an array of computer and radar screens. Angled-out windows provide a full three-hundred sixty degree view of --

The perimeter fence and that big three-engined airliner sitting at the end of the runway.

Avi climbs from a well in the floor. Lothar follows him up.

LOTHAR
Check the computers. They should
have radio or satellite access.

Avi proceeds to a big screen set at an angle in a horseshoe-shaped work station. As he sits, soft illumination streams up from the floor. He scans the keyboards. Fidgets with the mouse, highlighting an onscreen icon.

A BLOODLESS VOICE ANNOUNCES:

VOICE
Out of service. This feature is --
out of service.

He hits more icons. Same result. Lothar ventures over.

LOTHAR
Let me try my hand at it --

Avi steps aside. Lothar sets to work on the keyboards.

EXT. AIRFIELD - CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT

Kim paces back and forth in front of the doorway. Abruptly --

There's a DISTANT, BOOMING SHOUT like a giant might make if he woke up on the wrong side of the bed. SUDDEN WIND HISSES in the treetops around the airfield.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

Avi and Lothar look up sharply.

AVI
What the hell was that?

Lothar puts on a headset and pushes the mike to his teeth.

LOTHAR
Impalagalos Tour Flight Eleven.
Can you hear me?

INT./INT. CONTROL TOWER/AIRLINER - NIGHT/NIGHT (INTERCUT)

The CoPilot presses the earpiece of his headset.

COPILOT
This is Impalagalos Tour Flight
Eleven on the ground south of
former Indianapolis.

LOTHAR
Hi. I'm afraid it's only us in the
Tower.

COPILOT
Doctor Impalagalos. What's going
on?

LOTHAR
Why don't you try accessing the
emergency line from the cockpit ...

COPILOT
Alright ... Tower? Are you there?

LOTHAR
Stand by.

ON WINDOWS: flickering lights arc above the distant treeline. Some veer skyward, then arc back down. Others head for the airfield, brightening before they turn away and fade.

COPILOT
Everything okay?

LOTHAR
 We'll let you know if it's
 otherwise. Patch into the emergency
 line via the UB four port --

The CoPilot snaps his fingers and points to the Navigator,
 who RATTLES again at the onboard computer KEYBOARD.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - OBSERVATION DECK

Lothar and Avi are both on their feet, watching the antic
 play of lights getting closer.

AVI
 What the hell is that -?

Fresh firefly lamps flash toward the airfield. They take the
 form of brilliant, shining discs before blazing overhead and
 out of sight behind the opposite treeline.

INT./INT. CONTROL TOWER/AIRLINER - NIGHT/NIGHT (INTERCUT)

CoPilot's back on the horn.

COPILOT
 Tower, what was that?

LOTHAR
 Some kind of aerial display.

COPILOT
 We're feeling awfully lonely out
 here at the end of the runway.

LOTHAR
 Are you making any progress with
 the radio or satellite feeds?

NAVIGATOR
 I got something!

AVI
 (into Lothar's mike)
 Send out a distress call. Do it
 now!

NAVIGATOR
 Mayday, mayday. This is Flight
 Eleven from M.A.B.C. East to
 M.A.B.C. West. An intruder program
 has taken Command of the aircraft.

NAVIGATOR(cont'd)

We've landed at an emergency airfield south of former Indianapolis and are attempting to regain control of onboard computer systems before taking off again. Please advise. Please advise.

RE: a faint, rushing sigh from the computer speakers. Then:

FORT CHICAGO CENTRAL (V.O., RADIO)
Flight Eleven this is Fort Chicago Central. Find a secure locale and await further notification.

ON OBSERVATION TOWER WINDOWS: showers of glowing blips spray from the forest and lace in toward the parked airliner.

AVI
Look out look out! You got incoming!

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

The CoPilot looks around in time to see glowing discs IMPACT THE STARBOARD WING with FLATULENT CRUMPS.

EXT. AIRFIELD - RUNWAY

Kim sprints for the airliner as a fireball blossoms above the right wing. The plane wobbles but regains three-point stability as flames subside.

A jack-in-the-box escape chute pops out the port side and connects to the ground. People begin rolling down.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - OBSERVATION DECK

Avi and Lothar crouch, faces aghast at the catastrophe. Then Avi's off and running, downstairs --

Lothar gets up, turns and walks off in a different direction.

INT. AIRLINER - COCKPIT

The CoPilot's on his feet. He shouts to the Navigator:

COPILOT
Keep transmitting as long as you can. I'll make sure everybody got out.

He continues into the passenger's cabin while the Navigator repeats like a mantra:

NAVIGATOR

Mayday, mayday. This is Flight
 Eleven from M.A.B.C. East to
 M.A.B.C. West. We're under attack
 at an airfield south of former
 Indianapolis.
 (repeat)

INT. PASSENGER CABIN

The CoPilot hurries toward the back of the aircraft. To his left, the windows are all ablaze. The faces of those already evacuated flicker across windows on the right, as they backpedal across the tarmac to safety.

Before he reaches the plane's aft section, the last evacuee tumbles down the chute. The Attendants turn ashen faces to him.

COPILOT

Everybody out?

FIRST ATTENDANT

That should be it.

COPILOT

Go on. I'll fetch the navi --

The starboard side of the airliner collapses, and a wall of FIRE THUNDERS IN, incinerating everyone still on the plane.

EXT. AIRLINER

Kim helps the last evacuee off the slide. She looks up.

Fire fills the windows on the port side of the plane. The Stewardess standing in the emergency exit breaks into pieces that fly off in different directions.

Then Kim is hurled to the ground.

EXT. AIRFIELD

Halfway to the airliner, Avi stops, his face bright in the firelight. He ducks as --

A METAL SHARD HALF AS BIG AS A GARAGE DOOR WHICKERS OVERHEAD.

EXT. AIRLINER

Screams. ROARING CHAOS. Kim crawls on her elbows. Nearby --

Flaming figures of burning people run off into the darkness.

EXT. AIRFIELD PERIMETER - FENCE

A MACHINEGUN ON A POP-UP TURRET swivels and catches the burning figures in its sights. It fires in short bursts. The burning figures fall and don't get up.

EXT. AIRLINER

Kim hides her face behind her forearms.

KIM
Oh God oh God --

Heat and light pour from the flaming aircraft somewhere behind her kicking feet. Cinders and bits of burning shrapnel bounce off the pavement.

EXT. AIRFIELD

Avi scrambles from one huddled survivor to another. He grabs them by the collar and points back to the Control Tower.

AVI
It's safe over there. But
keep your head down --
(repeat)

He comes on a clenched form not far from the tail of the plane, and feels for a pulse. Kim yanks her hand back.

AVI
Are you injured?

KIM
I don't think so.

AVI
Then go on, to the control tower.

KIM
What are we going to do?

AVI
We'll talk about it once everyone's
accounted for.

INT. CONTROL TOWER - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

It looks like a post-apocalyptic business meeting. All of the SEVENTEEN SURVIVORS are singed, battered, and exhausted.