DOWNDRAFT

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOMEWHERE OVER THE SOUTH CARIBBEAN - DAY

A small twin-prop airplane is careening toward a billowing, brutal storm front. The plane is miniscule in comparison.

It disappears into the swirling clouds.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - DAY

The airframe RATTLES and GROANS under stress from the storm. RAIN pelts the windshield. Lightning FLASHES. Thunder BOOMS.

A red warning light BLINKS.

A hand taps the fuel gauge. Nearly empty.

MARC, mid 30s, a disparaged pilot who’s let himself go, returns his hand to help fight the bucking yoke.

    MARC
    (over his shoulder)
    It won’t be long now. Almost there.

Marc picks up a small bottle of whiskey from between his legs and takes a quick swig. It burns.

    MARC (CONT’D)
    (to himself)
    Almost there.

The whiskey bottle slips from Marc’s hand.

Marc looks back to see the bottle roll past a large, long wooden box to the rear of the cabin.

Marc turns back to the storm, saddened. He touches a photo on the instrument panel then plucks it off. He sinks back into his chair.

Marc closes his eyes.

EXT. HEART OF THE STORM - DAY

The tiny plane banks and bounces as thick clouds and horizontal rain rush past.

The plane jerks violently.
INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - DAY

A loud CRASH then SPLINTERING WOOD.

Marc’s eyes shoot open.

A WARNING ALARM belches distress.

Marc gets control of the aircraft.

He looks over his shoulder to see the wooden box in shambles. The lifeless body of his wife, OPHELIA, 30’s, a once brilliantly vibrant and beautiful woman, is sprawled unceremoniously around broken planks.

MARC
Oh, no, Ophie.

Marc’s finger reaches for the autopilot switch, hovers for a moment, then flicks it on.

He unbuckles his harness and moves into-

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - DAY

The plane bounces hard. Marc falls, landing next to the body. Ophelia’s vacant eyes stare back at him.

Marc gets to his feet and picks Ophelia’s body up, moving her to one of two rear-facing passenger seats directly behind the cockpit. He straps her in, fixes her dress, and gingerly places her hands in her lap.

MARC
There you go.

Ophelia’s head slumps against the window.

Marc stares at her for a moment, then moves back into-

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - DAY

Marc collapses into the pilot’s seat, wiping sweat away.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

Marc.

Marc jumps in his seat, looking to the source of the voice. Seated next to him in the copilot’s chair is Ophelia, warm and flush. Alive.
OPHELIA (CONT’D)
Marc, what are you doing?

MARC
Ophelia?

Marc shakes his head.

MARC (CONT’D)
You’re dead.

Ophelia frowns. She looks toward the storm raging outside.

OPHELIA
You’re going to kill yourself.

MARC
So?

OPHELIA
You’re not supposed to be here. Neither am I. You were supposed to bury me.

MARC
You wanted to see Saint Lucia.

OPHELIA
We can’t always get what we want. We play the hand we’re dealt.

Marc looks away.

MARC
Well, we were dealt a lousy hand.

Ophelia places a hand on Marc’s shoulder.

MARC (CONT’D)
We had so many plans. Traveling the world in this stupid rust bucket. Just you and me, up here, a few thousand feet between us and paradise. What the hell happened?

OPHELIA
There was nothing you could have done. You know that.

Marc picks up the crumpled photograph of him and his wife.

MARC
I don’t even recognize those people anymore.

(MORE)
I look in the mirror and see a stranger staring back at me. When I see your face—

Marc turns to her.

All I see is her.

Marc motions to the body strapped in the passenger seat.

It’s unbearable.

Marc cries.

You left me too early. I didn’t even get to say goodbye. I couldn’t give you what you needed. I just— I don’t know how to go on.

I fell in love with you for the strong man you are inside, not what you could give me.

She leans in.

You have so much to live for. If not for yourself, then for me.

She kisses Marc on the cheek.

The sky outside the windshield grows lighter and brighter.

The small twin-prop airplane bursts from the dark clouds. The sun shines brightly, blue skies above.

The sunlight is blinding. Marc shields his eyes.

The plane stops rattling. The air is calm under his wings.

Marc looks to the copilot seat. No Ophelia.

He checks behind to the passenger seat. The body is lifeless.
Marc is still clutching the crumpled photograph. He straightens it.

MARC

Thank you.

The sky outside the windshield grows darker. Marc notices he’s about to reenter the storm.

He drops the photograph and buckles himself in.

He pulls back on the yoke, hard, putting the plane into a steep ascent.

EXT. SOMEWHERE OVER THE SOUTH CARIBBEAN - EYE OF STORM - DAY

The plane is miniscule against the overwhelming size of the storm cloud wall. Lightning crackles in the cloud layers.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - DAY

The plane’s instrumentation SCREAMS at Marc. The fuel gauge reads empty. Stall warnings are BARKED at him.

The plane stalls, reaching its apogee.

TIME SLOWS TO A CRAWL for Marc.

Particles of wood and loose items pepper the air, weightless.

The photograph floats by Marc’s head.

He touches it.

It spins in the micro-gravity.

Marc notices Ophelia floating outside the windshield, looming above the plane’s nose.

Marc unlatches his harness and, grabbing a parachute bag behind him, lifts off his chair.

Marc pulls himself over the instrumentation panels.

Up to the windshield.

He slips the parachute on.

His hand presses against the glass.

Ophelia reaches out.
Gravity takes hold again.
The plane pitches backward.
Marc grunts as his weight shifts to the nose of the plane.
The whiskey bottle shoots past Marc and shatters the windshield.
Shards of glass GLITTER in the sunlight.
Marc grabs Ophelia’s hand and the plane falls away beneath him, plummeting down until it is swallowed by the storm.

Ophelia pulls mark in close. Her lips touch his ear.

OPHELIA
Live.

She pulls the ripcord and the parachute deploys.
Marc is pulled away.

EXT. SAINT LUCIA - BEACH - DAY
Marc is laying on the beach, unconscious, tattered and bruised.
His parachute, still attached to him, billows in the wind.
A wave washes over him.
Marc wakes, groaning. He hoists himself to a seated position, watching pieces of plane debris dance in the surf.
The photograph of him and his wife floats down to land next to him. He picks it up, looks to the sky, and smiles.

FADE OUT.

THE END.