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Censored on Final Approach

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More Great Plays From Original Works Publishing

Bea[u]tiful in the Extreme by Leon Martell

9 or more actors playing multiple roles

Synopsis: America, 1809. Barely in his thirties, Meriwether Lewis, with his friend and partner William Clark, had led an expedition across the continent and back. He was a national hero, the governor of the Louisiana Territory, and he killed himself. Bea[u]tiful in the Extreme, his own words to describe the prairie, follows Meriwether Lewis as he wrestles the demons in his mind. Between the time of his first suicide attempt on a flat boat down the Mississippi, and his final self execution in an inn on the Natchez trace, Lewis relives the triumphs and trials of his epic journey. With Thomas Jefferson, his mentor, Sacagawea the native girl as his guide, and William Clark, his friend, anchor and in many ways soul mate, he struggles to find meaning in all he has seen and done. A warrior faces evil spirits, broken dreams, and politicians in his final battle. Whiskey, meat, laughs, and laudanum on the long trail to immortality.

Liberation by Steve Patterson

5 Males, 4 Females

Synopsis: Set during the heat of the Bosnian conflict, a young Bosnian soldier deserts his company, fleeing with his sister to a Sarajevo newspaper office in hopes of striking a deal. In exchange for safe passage out of Bosnia, he will give eyewitness testimony of his company's participation in the massacres of Muslim men and boys and systematic rapes of Muslim women. But before his testimony can be recorded, the office is surrounded by Serbian infantry. The newspaper editors are given 24 hours to give up the soldier or be stormed by the troops.

*Contains heavy language and violence.

Censored on Final Approach

by Phylis Ravel

Background of *Censored on Final Approach*

The women who were a part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots program of more than half a century ago wanted merely to serve their country in time of war. To do so, they endured bigotry that was not only routinely demeaning but occasionally fatal. That they also might, years later (as some characters in this play do) choose to forget how their colleagues died and concentrate instead on memories of good times with youthful friends is perhaps natural. The fact is, however, that this play about the American military's first women fliers does not focus on relatively tame late-century sexual problems resembling the Tailhook or Kelly Flinn fiascoes but rather on homicidal sabotage and consequent cover-ups. The result is not a simple good-versus-evil scenario. Instead, *Censored* brings a nearly forgotten history to life as it shows the three-dimensional conflict implied and expressed among the males and females, the non-coms and the officers, the staffers and the pilots and the commanders in the American military (and American society) of 1943-45. WASPs and Other Pilots: Historical Context in *Censored on Final Approach*, Mark D. Noe – War, Literature, and the Arts, *An International Journal of the Humanities* - Volume 15. Article found online at <http://wlajournal.com/backissues.htm>

Other websites of the WASPs

<http://www.wingsacrossamerica.us>

<https://www.twu.edu/library/wasp.asp>

History of the Play

Censored on Final Approach was written in 1993. In 1994 the play premiered at the Women in Theatre Conference at Hofstra University. Since that time, the play has been produced professionally at Alice's Fourth Floor in New York, The Players' Club in New York, Pleiades Theatre in Lexington, Kentucky, the Spangdahlem Air Force Base in Bitburg, Germany and optioned for film by Pachyderm Productions. University productions include Keane College, University of North Dakota, Manatee Community College, Suffolk Community College, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and Marquette University, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, and University of Wisconsin – Parkside. The play has been selected for reading in Women's Studies Program in a number of universities. *Censored on Final Approach* was runner-up for the Jane Chambers playwriting award. I am most grateful to WASPs Madge Rutherford Minton, Nonnie Anderson, Margaret Gilman, Bee Haydu, and Dawn Seymour who extended their friendship and memories. The play is inspired by the stories of Camp Davis. Historical figures are Jacqueline Cochran and Major Stephenson. All other figures are composites of individual stories.

Censored on Final Approach was produced in workshop by Hofstra University's Department of Drama and Dance, Hempstead, New York at the Emily and Jerry Spiegel Theatre November 22, 1993 directed by Phylis Ward Fox with music by Michael DiPaolo, Lighting Design by Megan McClung and Stage Managed by Vanessa Edwards. The cast featured Antoinette Accardi, Jennifer Baker, Jennifer Fox, Jason O'Connell, Cara Pontillo, Rick Suvalle, and Adrienne Thompson*.

On October 7, 1994 *Censored on Final Approach* was presented as a mainstage production at Hofstra University's national Women in Theatre Conference at the West End Theatre. It was directed by Phylis Ward Fox with music composed by Michaelangelo DiPaolo, music director, Steven Lavner, set and light design by D.J. Markley, Costume Design by Tim Rucker, flight choreographer Alicia Mikoloski and stage managed by Riham Farid.

The cast was as follows:

Catherine	Lisa Ortiz
The Brother	Robert Casteline
Gerry	Victoria Minardi
Mary	Alicia Mikoloski
Jacqueline Cochran	Adrienne Thompson*
Liz	Season Malan
The Captain	Christopher Daly
The Operations Officer	Seamus Hurley
The Mechanic	Justin Schultz

*Member, Actors Equity Association

Special thanks to Gary Garrison, Stephen Hudson-Mairet, Debra Krajec, Dr. James Kolb, Beth Lincks, David Ravel, Judith Royer, and Peter Sander.

CENSORED ON FINAL APPROACH

Time: The summer of 1943 and 1955

Locations: The home of Catherine Watts in northern California (1955) and various locations at Camp Davis, North Carolina. (1943)

Cast of Characters

Private First Class Donald Foster - age 25

Catherine Watts - age 25 and 35

Elizabeth Langley – age 22

Gerry Hansen - age 23 and 33

Mary O'Connor – age 20

Jacqueline Cochran - age 37

Major John Stephenson - age 28

Lieutenant Paul Ryder - age 23

Wayne Langhorn - age 39

The Control Tower Operator - age 23*

The Serviceman - age 19*

Artillery Officer - age 23*

Artillery Trainee - age 18*

*These can be double cast

Major Stephenson, Gerry Hansen, and Wayne Langhorn are southerners. Jacqueline Cochran is also from the south; however, she emulated Eleanor Roosevelt when speaking. Her southern dialect would slip in when it suited her.

The flying sequence has the potential of a full theatrical event. Sound, lights, and choreographed movement can play a major role. However, the scene can also work with just the actors and the text.

Special Note: The following words are used by characters in the play:

1) Jap: This term refers to the Japanese. This term reflects a time in history when the United States was at war with Japan. 2) Geronimo: This term refers to the Native American leader and medicine man of the Chiricahua Apache tribe. During World War II, His name was used by the United States military as a warrior cry of victory.

Act One

(There are five acting areas with minimal set pieces. Changes of time and location are accomplished through sharp area lighting and sound. The houselights go out. The pre-set remains on. All the actors enter and go to their positions. CATHERINE WATTS, GERRY HANSEN, ELIZABETH (LIZ) LANGLEY, MARY O'CONNOR, JACQUELINE COCHRAN, DONALD FOSTER, WAYNE LANGHORN, LT. PAUL RYDER, ARTILLERY OFFICER and MAJOR JOHN STEPHENSON, are on the stage. The FIVE men and JACQUELINE COCHRAN are on the upstage platforms. Their backs are to the audience. GERRY is upstage slightly left of CATHERINE. CATHERINE sits on the bench downstage right. LIZ and MARY are downstage left. Once the actors are in position, the lights go to black.

MUSIC: ESTABLISHES IN THE BLACK – “In My Solitude” sung by Billy Holiday. The lights come up on CATHERINE, then GERRY. MUSIC goes under and out. The other actors are in shadow. CATHERINE is drinking from a small, delicate, monogrammed silver flask. By the nervous exuberance of GERRY'S first lines, it is obvious that she has been attempting to draw CATHERINE into conversation. The beat change is simply another futile attempt to reach CATHERINE.)

GERRY: No one could out-fly her. Not you -- not me -- not Mary. And the men -- hell, she left them in the dust. *(Silence.)* I saw Don before I came here. He sends his best. *(Silence.)* He said he wrote you. He called you. He... *(CATHERINE takes another swig from her flask. It is painfully apparent CATHERINE wants nothing to do with GERRY.)* I'll let myself out. *(GERRY starts to leave.)*

CATHERINE: You haven't aged.

GERRY: You haven't either.

CATHERINE: Inside. Inside I am old as Methuselah.

GERRY: *(Taking another chance.)* Did you know Don had no idea she signed on?

(Lights up on LIZ and DONALD.)

DONALD: Liz, have you gone squirrely?! We're *suppose* to get married!

LIZ: You said we had to wait out the war. I'm just helping. The faster we win - and you come home - the faster we can have our own baseball team.

DONALD: This is no joke!

LIZ: I never said birthing nine sons was a joke -- although I'm sure we'll have a lot of giggles!

DONALD: Liz, you're not going.

LIZ: We're not married yet, Don. That means you're not my commanding officer. *(Pause.)* I won't be flying combat, darling. Sweetwater, Texas isn't Pearl Harbor. *(Pause. Then very determined.)* Jason would have wanted me to do this.

DONALD: Jason would have put you over his knee and spanked you within an inch of your life. Which is exactly what your father should have done when you first stepped onto a plane.

LIZ: We're military, Don. Dad's given me his blessing. I'd like yours.

DONALD: And if I don't –

LIZ: I'll still love you.

(DONALD takes a moment. He's not sure if he should say what is on his mind. He decides to follow through.)

DONALD: Liz, nothing you do can make up for Jason dying.

LIZ: This has nothing to do with my brother.

DONALD: It has everything to do with your brother.

LIZ: Please, Don -- just say you love me - we'll take care of everything else after the war.

DONALD: Of course, I love you, knucklehead. But after we're married, you will not step on a plane, you hear me?

LIZ: Cross my heart and hope to –

DONALD: Don't say it -- I love you.

LIZ: Why?

DONALD: For God and Country! Love you!

(Lights out on LIZ and DONALD.)

CATHERINE: She was so damned patriotic. Listening to Mary and Liz -- you'd think...

(Lights up on LIZ and MARY.)

LIZ: I saw it! I saw it! I was flying up, up -- and there it was -- a halo all around my plane!

MARY: Oh, yes -- flying right up into the arms of God!

CATHERINE: Arms of God! Did you hear that Miss Hansen?

GERRY: Indeed. Indeed, Miss Watts. But if the truth be known, I have never felt that way when I was flying.

LIZ: Of course you have.

MARY: How could you not?

GERRY: I just haven't.

LIZ: You mean to tell me that flying doesn't ignite something beyond –

GERRY: Oh, it ignites -- the take-off -- when you rev up. And then you feel the vibration right under you. I don't know about you, but I get all soft and warm inside.

LIZ: I wouldn't go that far.

MARY: (*squeals*) I cannot believe you! I cannot believe you! I cannot believe you!

GERRY: Oh, come on now, Mary, you were raised on a farm.

MARY: My folks raised chickens; they reared me.

(*LIZ and MARY are obviously embarrassed and, at the same time, intrigued by GERRY'S risqué performance.*)

GERRY: Now, where was I? Oh, yes, the take-off -- real slow approach -- vibrations are steady but warm, and then you pick up speed for lift off, but it's a gradual build, and that vibration that you thought was just lovelier than all get out, well, it gets even more intense -- surprise, surprise -- and what with the speed for take-off building, the vibration along with it, before you know it you're feelin' kind-a-damp. Oh, now come on -- don't tell me you haven't experienced... -- even virgins have wet dreams.

LIZ: Cut it out!

(*MARY by this time is speechless. CATHERINE is enjoying the fun.*)

GERRY: So here I am into the approach for take-off -- speeding along, wheels just barely caressing the pavement... and it's faster, faster, and then you suddenly lift up, and up -- and you feel those flaps going in... under I mean, and the vibration goes deeper -- passed the thighs, passed the -- you want to talk about finding God?

LIZ: Stop it!

MARY: I think that's a good idea.

CATHERINE: No, don't you dare stop!

GERRY: And then you're at this steady flow -- this holier than oh my goodness never-going-to-end -- and I'm going to squeeze every last vibration from every little part of the plane. Then there's this moment -- everything stops -- and you're on top -- so to speak -- you have come into your moment. And then you are -- floating -- perfect visibility for miles -- inside and out. Sometimes, there's even a view.

LIZ: Very nice.

MARY: What's so nice about it?!

CATHERINE: Best thing since hot fudge sundaes.

GERRY: And I'm not done.

CATHERINE: She's not done. She needs the cherry on the whip crème.

MARY: Oh, dear.

LIZ: Oh, yes you are!

(As GERRY continues, LIZ and MARY try and grab GERRY: CATHERINE protects GERRY. GERRY is determined to finish her verbal "flight.")

GERRY: So now, it's time to come down -- and what's nice about coming down is that it's as terrific as coming -- up. So here's final approach.

LIZ: (*Diving for GERRY.*) That's enough. We are fair young maidens. And proud of it.

GERRY: You take a wide swing. Almost as if you're gettin' a second wind.

(*MARY squeals.*)

LIZ: I'm countin' to three! One!

CATHERINE: That's a girl, Gerry!

LIZ: One and a half!

GERRY: The wide swing does something to your belly!

CATHERINE: Don't you dare stop, Miss Hansen! (*CATHERINE is circling LIZ.*) Touch her, and we'll chop you up for firewood!

GERRY: You finish that wide swing and start the approach --

LIZ: Two!

GERRY: The speed increases -- building... You feel flaps opening.

LIZ: Two and a half. Gerryyyyyyy!

MARY: Don't say it! Don't say it!

CATHERINE: Building... Building... Keep going! I can feel those flaps!

GERRY: The wheels drop! Speed makes --

CATHERINE: Wheels drop! Wow! Contact!

LIZ: Two and three quarters! I'm warning you!

MARY: You are naughty! Naughty! Naughty! We don't talk that way!

GERRY/CATHERINE: ...contact with wheels -- contact with ground.

CATHERINE: And what do you know, but here's that ol'devil vibration...

LIZ: And Two and three quarters and... Last chance!

GERRY: But this time he's coming for his due. It hits!

LIZ/MARY: Three!

GERRY: Pull on the brakes!

(*They tickle each other - screaming and laughing uncontrollably.*)

MARY: I'm gonna have to go to confession! Hey, don't mess up my dress!

LIZ: Prepare to meet your maker!

GERRY/CATHERINE: And slide! Slide! Slide!

(GERRY and CATHERINE tickle LIZ and MARY senseless. The laughter subsides as the lights change. SOUND: Laughter of the WOMEN up and under as the scene changes. LIZ and MARY slowly leave the lighted area, as GERRY and CATHERINE continue.)

GERRY: Those were good times. *(Silence.)* Why didn't you talk to Don?

CATHERINE: There was nothing to say.

GERRY: Every year he writes you.

CATHERINE: I don't read his letters.

GERRY: And mine?

CATHERINE: You're here, aren't you?

GERRY: He wants to know what happened.

CATHERINE: Liz died on final approach.

GERRY: He knows that. He wants to know why. I want to know why.

(Lights up on LT. RYDER.)

LT. RYDER: It was an accident. Pilot error.

(Lights down on LT. RYDER.)

CATHERINE: Too bad you didn't stick around.

GERRY: Guilty! All right?! I don't know how many ways I can apologize.

CATHERINE: There are casualties in war.

(Lights up on the ARTILLERY OFFICER.)

ARTILLERY OFFICER: That's our second casualty, Lieutenant. Decisions have to be made.

(Lights down on the ARTILLERY OFFICER.)

GERRY: You're talking about Liz -- not some damned statistic!

(Lights up on MAJOR STEPHENSON.)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Miss Watts, I am not at liberty to speak to you.

(Lights down on MAJOR STEPHENSON.)

GERRY: I can't believe it was pilot error.

CATHERINE: I'm sure Don showed you the accident report.

GERRY: Censored. A whole paragraph cut out.

(Lights up on WAYNE.)

WAYNE: The lady was a top flyer. The plane wasn't. I'll swear that on a stack of Bibles.

(Lights down on WAYNE.)

CATHERINE: So?

GERRY: You can't tell me her death meant nothing to you.

CATHERINE: Gerry, it's over. The war ended, and so did we.
(Drinking from her flask.) I'd offer you one but I prefer to drink alone.

GERRY: I don't drink anymore.

CATHERINE: Too bad. One of the two things you did well.

GERRY: Don't do that anymore either.

CATHERINE: You weren't at the funeral.

GERRY: That was ten years ago.

CATHERINE: Well, like an elephant.

GERRY: I'm sorry I disappointed you.

CATHERINE: Do us both a favor. Leave. Now.

GERRY: Not till I have the answers.

CATHERINE: I stopped asking questions.

GERRY: It's time people knew.

CATHERINE: Knew what? That women flew planes for the military? That some made it and some didn't.

GERRY: You know damn well what I mean. *(Pause.)* Don't you want people to know the truth?

CATHERINE: You think I know the truth?

GERRY: You know more than I do. I've been to Washington, Sweetwater, Camp Davis. It's as if we never existed.

CATHERINE: Well, I'm not about to rip myself apart so you can feel better.

GERRY: Fine. OK. Fine. You don't care about me and I don't care about you. I think we can live with that. I want to know how and why she died, so I can make peace with myself, and maybe set the record straight. And if you think that's selfish, tough. Jesus, Catherine -- We went through a hell of a lot together. And if I could do it all over again I would! Right now! Damn it. You were there! You saw the report before it was censored. What was on the report? You owe this to Liz!

CATHERINE: Don't you dare presume to know what I owe Liz!

GERRY: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. *(Starts to leave.)* This was a bad idea.

(GERRY gathers her purse and gloves. She can't get out fast enough.)

CATHERINE: *(After a moment.)* I have something for you.

(She takes a hankie out of her pocket and unfolds it. She holds the open hankie out to GERRY.)

GERRY: *(She takes from the hankie a small pin shaped like wings.)*
My wings.

CATHERINE: The last time we were together you...

GERRY: Thank you.

CATHERINE: I don't know why I kept them.

GERRY: I'm glad you did.

CATHERINE: You sure you don't want a drink?

GERRY: That stuff will kill you.

CATHERINE: I hope. *(Pause.)* There's nothing to tell. It's over. I want it to be over. We were just an experiment, Gerry. An experiment –

(Lights up on JACQUELINE COCHRAN.)

JACQUELINE: Once you accept this assignment, there is no turning back. You are sworn to secrecy.

(Lights down on JACQUELINE COCHRAN.)

CATHERINE: "Sworn to secrecy." -- an experiment for the Army.

GERRY: How is Miss Cochran?

CATHERINE: She moved on. Like we all did.

GERRY: I read she was the first American woman to fly into Hiroshima after the war. She said it was hard landing 'cause of the weather -- poor visibility for miles. Pissed her off.

GERRY: *(Pause.)* Do you still have your wings?

CATHERINE: As a matter of fact -- *(Taking the wings out of her her pocket.)*

GERRY: Cochran's wings –

(The light comes up on MARY and ELIZABETH.)

MARY: They are gorgeous. I wish I could get more -- I'd send them to my sisters.

LIZ: You earned those wings, Miss Mary. It's not a souvenir.

MARY: I cannot believe it! I cannot believe it! I cannot believe it!

CATHERINE: I am not going to ask her what she can't believe.

MARY: A reception with Miss Jacqueline Cochran at the Mayflower Hotel -- have you ever seen such plush furniture? And we're treated like we're important. And the Dodge Hotel right on Capitol Hill - the rooms have hot and cold running water. The bed is enormous and soft, and I can order all the ice cream I want just by calling the operator! Its Christmas morning!

GERRY: Well, enjoy it -- because you'll be in two by four bunks in forty-eight hours and K-rations.

MARY: Oh, I don't care. I'm the first member of my family that's going to see the White House.

LIZ: There she is! There's our Miss Cochran!

GERRY: Don't genuflect. She's only a woman.

LIZ: That's not just any woman. *That* woman is the reason why we are flying!

CATHERINE: You're right, Liz. If it weren't for her -- it would just be the debutantes.

LIZ: And you're our only debutante!

MARY: Miss Cochran! Miss Cochran!

(There is the sound of 25 females applauding. LIZ, MARY, and CATHERINE lead the ovation. GERRY is courteous but reserved. As this scene takes place -- CATHERINE and GERRY are downstage right; LIZ and MARY are downstage left. JACQUELINE is center.)

JACQUELINE: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. *(beat.)* You all look beautiful. I cannot express to you what is stirring in my heart. I look at your faces -- and I thank God that He has seen fit to use me -- to use us all. When I was no bigger than a grasshopper, I used to go to a small little church in my small little town -- and there was this preacher, and he would lift up his voice and we would all join in singin' God's praises. *(JACQUELINE starts to recite the words.)* "Dwellin' in Beulah Land!" I'm feeling that as a woman who can serve my country I am dwellin' in Beulah Land. I am living on that mountain. I am living one of the greatest moments in our history as a nation. And it is my highest honor to share that moment of history with you. Your program of training has equipped you to fulfill any noncombatant flying assignments reserved for men. We will take over their burdens so as to free our men for combat service. Each and every one of you has been carefully chosen for this mission. And it is a mission -- A top-secret mission. You are doing more than ferrying planes up and down the coast. I am not belittlin' that type of work the WAFS have been assigned. Lord knows, I led a group of American women pilots to assist the British Air Transport Auxiliary in ferrying operational equipment long before Colonel Tunner and Nancy Love instituted their program. You ladies are about to serve your country in a way no other women in our history have ever done. You are the first non-ferrying group of women pilots. You will be towing targets for artillery trainees. Tow target pilots. High altitude precision flying. You are the first women given this assignment. You will not be the last. As you dedicate yourself to this mission know that President and Mrs. Roosevelt offer their deepest respect for your courage and selflessness. President Roosevelt speaks of every American's rendezvous with destiny. I am sure when he spoke those words he was not thinking only of American men but

the women who serve -- and those women are you. And now, Ladies, I have a plane to fly. And so do you! (*Applause. JACKIE begins to leave and sees CATHERINE. She goes to CATHERINE and takes her aside.*) Why, dear Miss Watts, I am so pleased you are flyin' with us.

CATHERINE: So am I.

MARY: (*Whispers to LIZ and GERRY.*) Did you know Catherine knew her?

CATHERINE: (*Privately to JACQUELINE.*) Is Miss Love a little upset with me?

JACQUELINE: (*Privately to CATHERINE.*) Not as upset with you as she is with me.

CATHERINE: I'm sorry.

JACQUELINE: Thank you, Miss Watts. I have pretty thick skin. But I can't do this without my women. I'll be depending on you at Camp Davis. Keep by my side. (*Speaking to the others.*) I was telling Miss Watts that I'll be depending on all of you to move this mission forward.

MARY: We'll make you proud, Miss Cochran.

JACQUELINE: (*Wanting to move on to the next appointment.*) Well, God Bless you all. Fly high, fly straight, and have a smooth landing.

(*JACQUELINE starts to leave.*)

LIZ: Miss Cochran, there are rumors that we will soon be militarized.

JACQUELINE: Not exactly rumors, Miss...

CATHERINE: (*Whispering to JACQUELINE.*) Langley - her brother, Corporal Jason Langley, died at Pearl Harbor. Her Father - career man - Army - master sergeant.

JACQUELINE: Miss Langley. There are discussions but nothing is official yet. As you may or may not know, as of last week, I am in charge of the women pilots in the Army Air Forces and while we are not militarized, we have a name. Each of you serves our country as a WASP. You are part of The Women Air Force Service Pilots. And while you are not military, you do have all the rights of the officers, and you don't have to salute (Pause.) That was a little "itty bitty" joke.

(*The WOMEN laugh.*)

JACQUELINE (CONT'D): Most important, as civilians you are not obligated to take any assignment to which you feel you are not suited.

GERRY: Why is that so important?

JACQUELINE: Well, right now, this whole business of women flying is touch and go. It's a little difficult for our men to conceive of us flying -- much less flying with military status. You might meet up with some hostile CO who wants to put you through the wringer. Well, as a civilian, he has to think twice about the demands he puts on you. You know the military, Miss-

LIZ/CATHARINE: Langley.

JACQUELINE: What do they say? "Don't think! Just follow orders!"

LIZ: Oh, I know that ma'am. I'm an army brat.

JACQUELINE: Now, I remember -- Your dear brother, Corporal Jason Langley, gave his life for his country -- Pearl Harbor.

LIZ: (*Greatly moved that she knows her brother's name.*) Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: And your father. Career man -- Master Sergeant. Now, they're the men who really run the army.

LIZ: (*Even more impressed.*) Yes, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: Yes, I do. (*To all the women.*) I know some of you want to be military --

GERRY: Not me!

LIZ: Shush!

JACQUELINE: At present you are better off with civilian status. That includes me -- now, don't you think I'd like Colonel in front of my name? We all have to patiently wait. And if there's one thing women can do well, is wait.

LIZ: Miss Cochran, if we are not military, what are we to the military?

JACQUELINE: Something special. Chosen. We're here to serve. We are here to win this war. Ladies, take the challenge. (*To Liz.*) Must be difficult for a military child to grasp this whole civilian balance -- just as hard, I guess, as it is for the men to even consider us ladies piloting planes.

LIZ: I meant no disrespect, Miss Cochran. Whatever you have in store for us, I want it.

JACQUELINE: Just to serve your country.

GERRY: For God, country, and the thrill of it?

MARY: (*Under her breath.*) Gerry.

JACQUELINE: ...Most certainly not for the thrill of it.

CATHERINE: She didn't mean it the way it sounded.

GERRY: Oh, no, ma'am. Military or civilian -- what difference does it make?! We're doing what no other women have been able to do.

MARY: That's right. And I, for one, want to thank you for that -- from the bottom of my heart.

JACQUELINE: No need to thank me. Just do your job. That and that alone is thanks enough. (*To everyone but particularly to LIZ.*) And I can assure you that I want my women part of the armed forces. I will fight for that. That is a promise.

CATHERINE: (*Wanting to change the subject - with fake seriousness.*) There is one *problem*, Miss Cochran.

JACQUELINE: Yes, Miss Watts.

CATHERINE: A rather delicate problem-

JACQUELINE: Yes.

CATHERINE: Uniforms.

JACQUELINE: Well, that's a question I like to answer. When you get to Camp Davis, you do have new flight uniforms, and they have assured me they will do their utmost to form fit them for you. However, next month I am havin' a fashion show for General Arnold. I'll be showing him three styles, and if I play my cards right, you will have the most stylish uniforms ever worn in the military. Niemann Marcus issued. Well, if I can't get Niemann Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman will just have to do. Ladies, I have a plane to fly and so do you. Your flight leaves 0600 tomorrow. God Bless you. Oh, before I forget. You can tell the other girls that you'll all be receiving a sample of my new cosmetics, "Wings for Beauty". I've developed a new colorless lipstick I made for husband Floyd. He's got the worst dry lips -- but it works good when you're flying those high altitudes. (*JACQUELINE says the next line in dead earnest, as if the outcome of the war depended on it.*) I hope you ladies remember that no matter how long, or how tough your assignment is, when you land, you do not leave that plane, until you have combed your hair and touched up your make-up.

GERRY: Yes, ma'am.

MARY: (*Whispers to LIZ.*) But I don't wear make-up.

JACQUELINE: And one other very important matter -- a s a WASP you are expected to behave as if you were officers. Do not date the enlisted men. And, if I were you, I would not date the officers for a few weeks; and when you do, sweet Lord, use your discretion.

MARY: We will! We will! Except for Miss Langley! She's engaged.

JACQUELINE: And now, ladies, I have a plane to fly! Now, top of your lungs -- let's hear it! (*JACQUELINE starts singing to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and everyone joins in.*) We are Yankee Doodle, Pilots...

THE WOMEN: Yankee Doodle Do or Die, Real live nieces of our Uncle Sam, Born with a yearning to fly, Keep to step to all our

classes, March to flight line with our pals, Yankee Doodle came to Texas, Just to fly the *PT*'s, We are those Yankee Doodle gals.

(As they begin singing "Real live nieces of our Uncle Sam", a snare drum takes up the beat and follows throughout the next scenes as indicated. When the ladies reach "Keep to step to all our classes", they begin to march off, as JACQUELINE waves good-bye. Simultaneously, the men set up the ready room. A telephone is handed to JACQUELINE.)

JACQUELINE: General Hap Arnold. Miss Cochran returning his call. General Arnold, I wanted to get back to you sooner, but I was saying good-bye to my girls. I'm so proud of them, sir. They will prove their worth to the military. I guarantee you that. They are heading for Camp Davis as we speak! They are ready. They are willing. They are able. Pardon me! *(A little irritated.)* Well, of course, Camp Davis is ready for them!

(Drum riff. JACQUELINE exits. Drum riff. ARTILLERY OFFICER ENTERS with the ARTILLERY TRAINEE running towards him from the other side of the stage.)

ARTILLERY TRAINEE: Permission to speak, sir!

ARTILLERY OFFICER: At ease soldier.

ARTILLERY TRAINEE: Is it true, Sir?

ARTILLERY OFFICER: Don't ask questions unless you know the answers.

ARTILLERY TRAINEE: Yes, sir. I know the answer, sir.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: And the answer?

ARTILLERY OFFICER: The ladies cannot date enlisted men.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: And...

ARTILLERY TRAINEE: I am an enlisted man. That said, sir, you are an officer, sir. I would be honored to chauffeur you and your special guest to any location.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: Soldier. I am very married. Two small children, and a beautiful wife, I might add. *(ARTILLERY OFFICER starts to leave.)*

ARTILLERY TRAINEE: How long will it take me to become an officer?

ARTILLERY OFFICER: God willing, the war will be over.

(Drum riff. ARTILLERY OFFICER and ARTILLERY TRAINEE exit. Drum riff. LT. RYDER marches to center stage holding a large army issued box. MAJOR STEPHENSON comes from stage left holding a clip board with inventory sheets and a pencil.)

LT. RYDER: Major, sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, Mister.

LT. RYDER: (*Amused.*) There's been a mistake, sir - in the supply room, sir. Sergeant asked me to bring this over.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Is it contraband?

LT. RYDER: Not exactly, sir.

(*LT. RYDER lifts from the box, a white cotton brassiere. There is no response.*)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Return it to supplies, Mister. They will be issued 0900 tomorrow.

LT. RYDER: Sir?!

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Tell the sergeant these with the other supplies arriving at 1500 today. (*He rapidly reads off the list.*) Ersatz bobbin pins, hairnets, shower caps, undergarments, including slips and elastic garters (*and barely audible*) and... (*he reads items but says instead...*) other feminine hygiene items of a personal nature.

LT. RYDER: You mean, there are going to be wo –

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, Mister. Female flyers. (*LT. RYDER starts to laugh.*) Top Secret! (*LT. RYDER stops in mid-laugh.*) Dismissed!

(*LT. RYDER, laughing, makes an about face and marches up center and exits. Drum riff accompanies his exit. At the same moment a uniformed non-com wheels out a clothes rack where four uniforms are hanging along with boots, belts, and socks. WAYNE shakes his head and exits. MAJOR STEPHENSON looks at the clothes rack specified for the female flyers and remarks:*)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Dear God, get this war over before the whole nation goes berserk.

(*The snare drum underlines MAJOR STEPHENSON'S exit stage left. The YOUNG WOMEN, dressed in their underwear, march on stage right singing.*)

LIZ/MARY/GERRY/CATHERINE: We are Yankee Doodle Pilots, Yankee Doodle Do or Die –

(*The singing comes to an abrupt stop as the young women see the flight uniforms and shoes issued to them.*)

GERRY: Oh, shoot, they've given us men's flight suits again. Oh, shoot.

CATHERINE: I don't think they want us to entice the men.

LIZ: Well, at least our undergarments were the right size.

GERRY: That's because we ordered them! What the hell happened to Niemann Marcus!

LIZ: Okay. Shoes... for you... no. Those are mine. Here. Take these.

MARY: I guess they weren't expecting us. What's all these pockets for?

GERRY: Flashlight, of course, if you're smart, you'll squeeze a lip-stick in there. You're latest penguin book -- romance, of course, your compact case, and don't break that mirror, or you'll have seven years bad luck -- marriageable years, I might add. A screw-driver and perfume -- Evening in Paris or Chanel, extra underwear for when we can't get back to base and ... what the heck are these zippers for? *(The front zipper has two openings. One zipper is at the top and one is at the bottom. GERRY works both zippers and remarks.)* The bottom one's non-applicable, ladies. Well, let's get crackin' -- we got to put some style in these godforsaken clothes.

(As they are putting on their clothes, when they are not talking, they are singing "Yankee Doodle Gals" -- just playing around.)

CATHERINE: Pull it a little tighter.

GERRY: I'll love pulling outfits tighter. Here I go. Tighter. Tighter. There.

CATHERINE: Now, we're starting to look like women of fashion.

MARY: You think so?

GERRY: She doesn't understand irony.

CATHERINE: Ouch! You trying to kill me before the war's over?

GERRY: Sorry. I didn't know there was flesh there.

CATHERINE: Hour-glass figures are not in fashion.

GERRY: Says who?

CATHERINE: Says anyone who doesn't have an hour-glass figure.

MARY: How do I look?

CATHERINE: Like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.

MARY: Thank you.

LT. RYDER: *(over loudspeaker)* Ladies, report to ready room on the double.

MARY: My Gosh! That's it! Here we go!

GERRY: Hold your horses, Mary -- let me finish tiein' my boots.

MARY: Well, hurry.

CATHERINE: Slow down, Mary. The war's still going to be there.

MARY: I just want to show them we're right on schedule.

LIZ: We'll show them! Don't worry!

(The girls move swiftly to the acting area - ready room.)

CATHERINE: Watts reporting, sir.

LIZ: Langley, reporting, sir.

MARY: O'Connor, reporting, sir.

GERRY: Hansen, reporting, sir.

LT. RYDER: I believe a salute is in order.

LIZ: We're civilians, sir. However, we look forward to the day that we can salute you, sir.

LT. RYDER: I cannot say the same, ma'am. Your orders are as follows –

LIZ: Yes, sir.

CATHERINE: Yes, sir.

MARY: Yes, sir.

GERRY: Yes, sir.

LT. RYDER: Ladies. You must allow me to issue your orders before answering in the affirmative. However, I do appreciate your willingness. Availability on the part of a young woman is something I truly appreciate. (*The double meaning does not go unnoticed by the women.*) Now, you are assigned L-5's -- your mission is administrative and tracking flights. You will fly low altitude missions -- takin' it slow -- you are to take radioed orders from ground station Sugar Charley.

LIZ: Sir. Are you referring to the gun crew that shoot camera film?

LT. RYDER: Affirmative.

LIZ: Sir. We have been assigned to tow targets. Live ammunition, sir.

LT. RYDER: Those aren't the orders, ma'am.

CATHERINE: There must be some error.

LT. RYDER: Oh, yes, ma'am. There is an error.

MARY: If you could just point us in the direction, sir –

LIZ: One minute, Mary. (*To LT. RYDER.*) I'd like to speak with the CO.

LT. RYDER: He's fightin' a war ma'am. These are your orders. You're civilians. Take them or leave them. (*LT. RYDER exits.*)

CATHERINE: (*Not so LT. RYDER can hear.*) Oh, we'll take them all right, but you can bet your sweet stripes, Lieutenant, you won't hear the last of it. (*CATHERINE turns to the other WOMEN.*) Excuse me, Ladies; I have to talk to the horse's mouth.

(*As they exit, lights immediately up on two acting areas. MAJOR STEPHENSON and LT. RYDER are in one area. JACQUELINE is in another. JACQUELINE and LT. RYDER are speaking to each other on telephones. MAJOR STEPHENSON is doing the paper work. The ARTILLERY OFFICER is working with MAJOR STEPHENSON.*)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: That woman again? If she calls one more time I'll have her girls cleaning out latrines. (*LT. RYDER nods.*) Carry on, Lieutenant.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: Major – the women are scheduled to fly at 0800.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Like hell they are.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: We have one war, sir. We don't need another.

LT. RYDER: He is unavailable, Miss Cochran.

JACQUELINE: Oh, is he now? Well, please inform Major Stephenson that General Arnold is standing beside me and would like to know precisely when Major Stephenson will become available.

LT. RYDER: May I repeat that, ma'am?

JACQUELINE: Repeat, whatever, you like.

LT. RYDER: You are sayin' that General Hap Arnold is standing beside you and would like to know precisely when Major Stephenson will become available.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: Major, perhaps –

MAJOR STEPHENSON: *(As he goes over to the phone, he hands the orders to the ARTILLERY OFFICER.)* Here are your orders.

ARTILLERY OFFICER: Permission to speak, sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Your orders. Now.

(ARTILLERY OFFICER takes the orders and exits.)

LT. RYDER: Pardon me, ma'am, but he has just come through the door.

JACQUELINE: Thank you, Lieutenant.

(As MAJOR STEPHENSON talks with JACQUELINE COCHRAN, he is signing papers handed to him by LT. RYDER: As the conversation continues the activity stops as he listens -- his response is a slow burn.)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Miss Cochran.

JACQUELINE: Major Stephenson, thank you so much for taking my call.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: A pleasure, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: I understand there has been some misunderstanding as to the assignments for my women.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: No, misunderstanding, whatsoever, Miss Cochran. They are simply following the prescribed orders for any new cadet assigned to tow targets.

JACQUELINE: The men cadets go directly to the heavier planes. They don't fly cubstuff. Also, my girls have informed me they are denied milk and clean sheets.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: There's a war on ma'am. We are rationed. We did not expect your girls, and supplies were not ordered.

JACQUELINE: Major Stephenson, you're from the south.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Ma'am..

JACQUELINE: Southerners like stories.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Ma'am...

JACQUELINE: I know I do.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Ma'am. I have a meetin' I must attend.

Immediately.

JACQUELINE: (*As if she is speaking to General Arnold.*) What did you say, General? You want to hear this story? (*Into the phone.*)

General Arnold wants to hear the story, Major Stephenson. I hope you will indulge my female nonsense.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: The story's about when I was a little boy.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Excuse me, ma'am?

JACQUELINE: When I was a little boy. Well, as you may or may not know. There was a time when we were all little boys. But I am talking about when I was a little boy. When I was a little boy I lived on what's known as "the other side of the tracks" meaning I was dirt poor. And bein' dirt poor I used to stand in front of the General Store in town wishin' I had money to go into the store and buy something. Well, there I was, standing in front of the store when this big ole' Indian came by. He spied me. I spied him. Then he raised-up his big ol' bow and arrow, aimed, fired and shot me right in my gut creating my belly button! Well! I was so shocked; I was so mortified that I sat down on a stump not realizing that there was an axe on it. So that when I sat down, the axe chopped off my "who-who"! And that's how I got to be a little girl! (*MAJOR STEPHENSON is stone silent.*) Are you there, Major?

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: Now, I do have a purpose in telling you this story.

One should never tell a story unless one has a purpose. You bein' a little boy and me being a little girl is an accident. Like that old axe that chopped off my –

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, ma'am.

JACQUELINE: Now, you know and I know that I am as good or better a pilot than any of your men. You ask Chuck Yeager. And my girls are the same. It's just an accident that they are made of sugar and spice, and you are made of snails and puppy dog tails. Now, I told a little fib. General Arnold is not really here with me. But I am saying as sweetly as my southern tongue can manage that you either put my women on tow targets immediately, or I will truly speak with General Arnold. And I will speak my mind. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a plane to fly. (*JACQUELINE exits.*)

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Lieutenant. Those women are to be given every shit assignment you can find. And if you run out of things to do, let them sit on their firm little derrieres. One more thing. If the supplies of milk and clean sheets arrive, you give them to our men. I will not have some ex-beauty parlor operator, home wrecker turned pilot tell me how to run a war. Chuck Yeager, my ass.

(Lights up in ready room. MARY is seated alone – reading a letter from home. LIZ and CATHERINE are each reading an operation manual and are seated in a corner away from LT. RYDER. MAJOR STEPHENSON enters.)

LIZ: Major Stephenson, permission to speak, sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Not now, mister... miss... ma'm... you -
(MAJOR STEPHENSON hurriedly exits.)

LIZ: But...

LT. RYDER: He's fightin' a war ma'am. There's a recent copy of *Ladies Home Journal*. You might want to do some catch-up.

MARY: *(Picking up the magazine.)* Thank you.

LIZ: Yes, indeed. Thanks a whole lot.

CATHERINE: I am going out of my mind. *(She takes her flask out.)*
God! Could I go for a drink.

LIZ: Catherine! *(CATHERINE motions LIZ over to the far side of the ready room.)* If you get caught-

CATHERINE: I never get caught. It's vodka -- there's no smell.

LIZ: Straight?

CATHERINE: A pony. It's called a pony. Lady, for any army brat, you are real delicate.

LIZ: Sorry. This is the first time I've spent anytime with a blue-blood.

CATHERINE: *(She mimics her mother.)* I hate to disappoint you but *mumsy* considers me tainted. They are not talking to me.

LIZ: Maybe when the war's over, and they see what you've done for you country.

CATHERINE: The only way I'll be *worthy to represent our family* is to quit flying. As a hobby, it's acceptable -- something any husband, of our sort, you understand, would find terribly amusing and just this side of naughty. Something to tell the boys. Great, just what I need. My flying make some fatuous, old fart a stud!

LIZ: *(Shocked by Catherine's words.)* Do your parents know you talk like this?

CATHERINE: *(Laughing gently at the memory.)* Oh yeah. Dinners were vicious. But I digress. My point, old girl, where is my point

-- yes, my point is I will never stop flying. I will fly because that's what I want to do. That's all I've ever wanted to do. I want to die flying the biggest, fastest, slickest plane ever built. And - (*Toasting her mother with the bottle.*) sorry mums, I will die single. (*CATHERINE offers bottle to LIZ.*) Sure you don't want some?

LIZ: You're spiffed. What if they want us to fly?

CATHERINE: Fly? (*She chuckles and takes another sip.*) Besides I never get spiffed. The stuff is like mother's milk to me.

LIZ: What about Miss Cochran? We're her girls. What if you are caught? She's the one who gets in trouble -- the whole program could go down the drain just because of --

CATHERINE: (*Putting the flask away.*) Okay -- you said the magic words. I wouldn't do anything to mess this up for Jackie -- from now on I'll keep this stuff under the barracks.

GERRY: (*Enters.*) What the hell is goin' on here?

LT. RYDER: Excuse me, ma'am?

GERRY: You heard me. I just came back from deliverin' a turkey to some General's wife in some godforsaken little town down the coast.

LT. RYDER: That was your assignment.

GERRY: I'm not in the mood for games, Lieutenant.

LT. RYDER: You are mighty pretty when you are angry, ma'am.

GERRY: Yes. I know.

LT. RYDER: (*LT. RYDER waves a slip of paper in front of Gerry.*) Miss Hansen, do you know what I have here?

GERRY: More turkey deliveries?

LT. RYDER: Better. Your chance to fly for God, Country and the thrill of it.

GERRY: Do you mean a real assignment?

LT. RYDER: Want it?

GERRY: We all want it.

LT. RYDER: I only have one. Think I should hold an auction? Or let it be our little secret.

GERRY: There's only one assignment, and you want to give it to me?

LT. RYDER: I certainly do.

GERRY: Well, hand it over.

LT. RYDER: Now -- now. Not too fast - a little negotiation here.

GERRY: I see.

LT. RYDER: Do you, Miss Hansen?

GERRY: (*GERRY goes to attention. Her movement is military precision.*) Oh, indeed I do. May I see the order?

LT. RYDER: Come a little closer. (*GERRY marches to him.*) Just a little bit more. (*GERRY marches closer and stands at attention facing out.*) I love a young woman who knows how to play. (*LT. RYDER walks behind her and holds the clipboard with the orders so GERRY can read it but not touch it.*) How's that for an assignment?

GERRY: It is a wonderful assignment.

LT. RYDER: And there's only one.

GERRY: I'll take it. (*GERRY tries to take it.*)

LT. RYDER: (*Whipping the paper behind his back.*) And you can report back to me right after the assignment. 2100 behind the hangar, so you can tell me all about it.

GERRY: Is that what you want me to do?

LT. RYDER: I would be honored if you would follow these orders.

GERRY: So there's a string attached.

LT. RYDER: You want to fly, don't you? Somethn' bigger? Better? Here's your chance.

GERRY: You know I do. We all do.

LT. RYDER: My concern. My deep concern revolves around you, Miss Hansen. Here. You can touch it. (*LT. RYDER hands the paper to Gerry.*)

GERRY: (*She runs her hand over the paper but does not touch it.*) My -- this has such a smooth surface.

LT. RYDER: You cannot imagine how smooth, ma'am.

GERRY: You know I love to fly. It's my life.

LT. RYDER: I certainly can understand that.

GERRY: I also like men.

LT. RYDER: I certainly can appreciate that.

GERRY: But I've always managed to have both on my terms. And while flying is something I will never give up; you are definitely something of which I will never, never take up. (*GERRY crumples the paper and throws it at his feet.*)

LT. RYDER: (*He picks up the paper.*) Well, that may cost you in the long run. (*She turns to leave.*) I just have one question. If you were to change your mind how much do you charge, my soiled little dove?

GERRY: (*She takes a moment and smiles.*) I am not a soiled little dove, Lieutenant. I am a falcon. A Kestrel Falcon – the smallest of the falcons. Did you know that falcons were jet fliers of the sky? We have keen vision, and we can hover over our prey. Did you know that unlike other falcons we attack with our beak, not our talons. I am sure, you know nothin' of falcons. So I will demonstrate. (*She pounces*) You son-of-a-reptile! I will tear your eyes out!

(GERRY dives for LT. RYDER. GERRY attacks LT. RYDER. There is a tussle. LIZ, MARY, and CATHERINE grab GERRY before she claws him.)

LT. RYDER: Hold on, lady!

LIZ: Whoa!

CATHERINE: Jesus, Gerry!

MARY: Oh, my God!

GERRY: How dare you presume I am a lady of the night.

LIZ: Don't ruin it for us!

LT. RYDER: I'm calling the Major.

CATHERINE: That's won't be necessary. Let's just drop it.

LIZ: Get over here, Gerry!

MARY: Did he hurt you?

LT. RYDER: Did I hurt her?! She's the one with the goddamn nails!

MAJOR STEPHENSON: *(Off-stage.)* Lieutenant! Office! Now!

CATHERINE: Enough.

(LT. RYDER exits.)

LIZ: What did he say to you?

GERRY: He asked me how much I charged.

MARY: For what?

GERRY: Oh, never mind.

LIZ: That bonehead. You can't let it get to you.

GERRY: I wouldn't if I could just have a few assignments.

CATHERINE: Cochran's working on it.

GERRY: Like hell, she's working on it. She flew in here – dressed in her new Neiman Marcus uniform. Major Stephenson took off. Decided to check on the trainees out at the artillery sights.

LIZ: Cochran has talked with him. Maybe not that day...

GERRY: Maybe not at all. Maybe by carrier pigeon. He doesn't consider her his equal. He's ignoring her.

MARY: He's really ignoring all of us. I think he's shy.

GERRY: He's not shy. He doesn't want us here.

LIZ: We can't do anything. We are under military rules. Cochran talks to Major Stephenson.

GERRY: We're civilians.

LIZ: Under military rules.

GERRY: Which we can ignore at any time.

CATHERINE: Not if we want to fly. Look, Gerry, Major Stephenson is not having an easy time. The men aren't happy we're here.

GERRY: Are you saying that if his men were okay, we'd be flying?

CATHERINE: I'm saying give it more time.

GERRY: More time?

CATHERINE: I think that's what I said.

GERRY: How much more?

CATHERINE: *(To LIZ)* You're the military expert -- how much more time?

LIZ: I'm not a military expert!

CATHERINE: A couple of days? A week? A month? A lifetime?

LIZ: *(Pulling a number for her head)* Seven days – a week – yes. A week.

GERRY: I've got to spend a week with the G.D.O. ogling me?

CATHERINE: Gerry, since when didn't you like men ogling you?

GERRY: I like to pick and choose. Okay. A week. Just keep that gorilla away from me.

(During the next sequence the following action occurs: 1) A drum riff begins and the WOMEN march into formation. 2) As they march into formation, LT. RYDER marches in and stands at attention. 3) The drum riff ends.)

LT. RYDER: Bridges, Sloane, Read, and Nevelson report.

CATHERINE: No one else?

LT. RYDE: Yes, ma'am. You ladies are to report to ground school classes. Brush-up.

LIZ: What?!

LT. RYDER: Major's orders! Bridges, Sloane, Read, and Nevelson, move those parachutes!

(Snare drum riff; the WOMEN march to another lineup, while LT. RYDER makes an about face and faces forward.)

LT. RYDER: Bridges, Sloane, Reade and Nevelson! Report! *(LT. RYDER hands the WOMEN their orders.)* Ladies.

GERRY: What the hell is going on here?!

LT. RYDER: These are your orders.

LIZ: I'm losing my humor.

CATHERINE: I lost that weeks ago.

MARY: We're spending the day taking down an engine! But that's basic!

LT. RYDER: Bridges, Sloane, Reade and Nevelson! Report Now!

(Snare drum riff. The WOMEN march into a different formation. The MAJOR enters to speak with LT. RYDER. He hands LT. RYDER a notice.)

LIZ: Major Stephenson, sir, permission to speak.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Not right now, ma'am. *(Motioning to LT. RYDER to give them their orders and exits.)*

(LT. RYDER hands the orders to LIZ.)

LIZ: Thank you, sir.

CATHERINE: What are they?

LIZ: We're to practice preflight check.

CATHERINE: Are they kidding?

MARY: That means we're getting closer to flying.

GERRY: I don't need to go hunting for bird nests in the guts of my propeller. Who the hell do they think we are?!

CATHERINE: Liz, I talked with Cochran; she did talk with the Major. I think it's time we talked with the Major. *(To LIZ.)* You know military protocol – *(LIZ glares at her.)*

LIZ: *(Not believing what she may be about to do.)* I'll talk to the Major.

(Snare drum riff. The WOMEN change formation. LT. RYDER does an about face and faces forward.)

LT. RYDER: Bridges, Sloane, Reade, and Nevelson! *(Pause.)*
Bridges, Sloane, Reade, and Nevelson!

(MAJOR STEPHENSON enters.)

LT. RYDER: Sir, the men... well, the men...

MAJOR STEPHENSON: What the hell is goin' on here!

LT. RYDER: We've got a little problem here, sir.

LIZ: Major Stephenson, sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Would you like to explain that to me?

LT. RYDER: Well, sir... *(Lowering his voice.)* We have a *FUBAR* here, sir. The men. The men. Sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Yes, yes. What about the men?

LT. RYDER: They don't want to fly tow-target missions for the trainees, sir. They're even talking about...

LIZ: Major, permission to speak, sir.

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Hold on their, Mister... Miss. *(To LT. RYDER.)* Mister, start talkin'! We have artillery trainees looking up into the blue sky, and there's nothing comin' across. *FUBAR* or *SNAFU* - it is your ass, mister.

LIZ: Sir, I am requesting to speak with you now!

MAJOR STEPHENSON: You do not interrupt a superior officer!

LIZ: I am a civilian!

MAJOR STEPHENSON: Miss. I have got bigger problems!

LIZ: That we can solve, sir!

MAJOR STEPHENSON: You do not have a clue as to what my problem is!

LIZ: Your men are refusing to fly, sir! Is that not right, Ladies?