

In the Shadow of 9/11

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INT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING LIFT - DAY

Five people stand in the Empire State Building elevator:  
LAURA has her arm around her son, Brandon's, shoulder and is holding him close.

On either side of the mother and son are: PHILLIP JAMES, an Australian pilot, and THOMAS WHITE, a troubled, middle-aged man.

NAHLA, the lift operator, stares straight ahead, avoiding eye contact with the other lift occupants.

BRANDON

Look, Mummy, a pilot.

LAURA

Yes, Brandon.

PHILLIP

(smiling at Brandon,  
speaking to Thomas)

Didn't I see you on the plane?

THOMAS

I was visiting relatives in Sydney.

PHILLIP

(reaching out his hand)

I'm Phillip James. You?

THOMAS

(reluctantly shaking  
hands)

Thomas. Thomas White.

PHILLIP

Your first trip to Australia?

THOMAS

(after a moment, he shakes  
his head)

No, I lived there years ago.

BRANDON

Mummy, can we go to 'stralia?

LAURA

I don't know, sweetheart. Maybe  
someday.

BRANDON

Daddy said I could ride in a kangaroo's pouch, just like in my book.

LAURA

(smiles weakly)

Honey, Daddy was just teasing.

BRANDON

I still wanna go to 'stralia.

(to Phillip)

Could we fly on your plane, Mister?

PHILLIP

I'd like that. I could show you the cockpit.

BRANDON claps his hands and jumps up and down.

Suddenly the lift jerks to a halt.

LAURA pulls Brandon even closer.

BRANDON

Did I do that, Mummy?

LAURA shakes her head, apparently too frightened to speak.

THOMAS

You OK?

LAURA shakes her head.

BRANDON

We're not gonna go to heaven like Daddy; are we, Mummy?

LAURA

(tears rolling down her cheeks)

I ... I don't think so. Not yet.

PHILLIP

Don't worry, Sport. God will take care of us.

THOMAS

Humph!

BRANDON

Don't ya believe in God, Mister?

LAURA  
Brandon, that's not polite.

BRANDON  
(sighs)  
Sorry.  
(beat)  
Well, don't ya?

PHILLIP tries to hide a smile.

THOMAS shakes his head.

NAHLAH answers her ringing cell phone and carries on a conversation inaudible to the others.

BRANDON  
Cool! That lady's name is from the  
Lion King.

LAURA  
(taking slow, deliberate  
breaths)  
What?

BRANDON  
See her name tag? It says "Na La".

PHILLIP  
You are one smart little man.

BRANDON  
Hey, that's what Daddy used to call  
me?

PHILLIP casts a questioning glance at LAURA.

LAURA  
(glances at Nahlah and  
lowers her voice)  
My ... uh ... my husband was working in  
the Towers on September 11.

PHILLIP  
I'm sorry ... but I'm sure your faith  
has helped.

THOMAS  
Lay off, would ya?

PHILLIP  
Pardon me?

THOMAS  
 (indignant)  
 God had nothing to do with it. If  
 He did, do you really think He's  
 the kind of God someone could turn  
 to for help?

BRANDON looks questioningly at THOMAS.

THOMAS  
 Sorry, kid, but you might as well  
 know now: God forgot about us a  
 long time ago.

LAURA  
 I would thank you ...

PHILLIP  
 (raising his hand)  
 Why would you want to shake an  
 innocent little boy's confidence in  
 God?

NAHLA hangs up and puts her cell phone back in her purse.

THOMAS  
 After 9/11, none of us are  
 innocent.

NAHLA glances in his direction but quickly turns away.

PHILLIP  
 (speaking to Laura)  
 I don't have the answers to your  
 pain, but God still cares. His  
 plans are for our good, even if we  
 can't see that.

THOMAS clenches and unclenches his fists.

The lift shudders slightly.

LAURA lets out a quiet squeal.

BRANDON  
 (gives his mum a hug)  
 It's OK, Mummy. I believe the  
 'stralian pilot. God will take care  
 of us.

LAURA  
 (picks up the emergency  
 phone)  
 (MORE)

LAURA(cont'd)

Listen, we're stuck in here. Do you know when we're going to get moving again?

LAURA nods and hangs up.

PHILLIP

What did they say?

LAURA

(doubtful)

He said it's just a mechanical problem. They should have it fixed soon.

BRANDON

See, Mummy. We're gonna to be fine.

LAURA smiles at her son. After a few moments of silence, panic crosses her face.

LAURA

(looking toward PHILLIP  
and THOMAS)

Did you hear that?

PHILLIP and THOMAS shake their heads.

LAURA

I thought I heard something.

(lowering her voice so  
BRANDON won't hear)

I think it could have been an explosion. Do either of you have a cell phone? I'd like to make a call.

NAHLA begins to speak but thinks better of it.

PHILLIP

I'm sorry. I didn't bring my phone with me.

(laughing)

I didn't want the airline to tell me my layover had been cancelled.

THOMAS pulls his cell phone from his pocket and looks at it.

THOMAS

Stupid!

BRANDON  
(gasping)  
Mummy, he said the "s" word.

THOMAS  
(looking embarrassed)  
I'm sorry, Brandon. I meant I'm  
stupid. I forgot to charge my  
phone.

BRANDON  
(looking up at his mum)  
Is everything really OK?

LAURA  
I don't know, honey. I was going to  
call someone and try to find out.

NAHLA nudges LAURA'S arm with her phone.

LAURA  
(smiling weakly)  
Um ... thanks.

PHILLIP  
(speaking to NAHLA,  
referring to her name  
tag)  
So you work here?

NAHLA nods.

PHILLIP  
It must still be hard for everyone  
in New York.

THOMAS shakes his head in exasperation and rolls his eyes.

LAURA  
(handing back the phone)  
I couldn't reach anyone.

PHILLIP  
(speaking to Brandon)  
Do you want to hear a story while  
we wait?

PHILLIP crouches down.

BRANDON  
Is it all right, Mummy?

LAURA nods her head. Her expression reveals that she is only half listening.

BRANDON goes over and sits beside the pilot who is now sitting with his back against the side of the lift.

PHILLIP

A long time ago, there was a man walking down a very dangerous road.

BRANDON looks into the pilot's face, eyes wide.

PHILLIP

The man was all alone. On both sides of the road were lots of places where robbers would hide.

BRANDON gasps.

PHILLIP

A group of them jumped out, stole his money, and left him there.

BRANDON

Oh, no. Did they hurt him?

PHILLIP nods.

BRANDON looks at Laura.

LAURA

(still distracted)

What? ... Oh, it's OK, sweetheart. I know this story, and it has a happy ending.

BRANDON

What happened next, Mister?

PHILLIP

A very important man came by.

BRANDON

Did he help?

PHILLIP

(shaking his head)

Nope. He just kept on going.

BRANDON

That wasn't very nice.

THOMAS  
 (muttering quietly)  
 Get used to it, kid.

PHILLIP  
 Then a leader of the church came  
 by.

BRANDON  
 He helped, didn't he? Everyone at  
 our church is really nice. Right,  
 Mummy?

LAURA smiles weakly and nods. She is growing increasingly  
 panicky but doesn't want her son to know.

PHILLIP  
 Not even he helped. They both  
 walked right past as if the injured  
 man wasn't even there.

THOMAS  
 (angrily)  
 Stop there, OK? I know the story,  
 and so far, it's bang on. Life  
 sucks. Don't make any mistake about  
 that. People will leave you beaten  
 and bruised. If there's nothing in  
 it for them, no-one, I repeat - no-  
 one, is going to help you out.  
 Murphy's Law, ya know?

NAHLA'S head droops, and she nods slightly.

BRANDON  
 (speaking to LAURA)  
 Mummy, who's Murphy?

LAURA  
 (angry to the point of  
 tears, verbally lashing  
 out at THOMAS)  
 How ... how could you say that? If  
 you had children, you'd know better  
 than to crush a little boy's dreams  
 like that. You're right. Sometimes  
 life is unbearable. You may not  
 want to get up in the morning or  
 face another long night alone.  
 (pausing to catch her  
 breath)  
 But kids,  
 (MORE)

LAURA(cont'd)  
 (smiles at Brandon)  
 they're the reason we go on.

BRANDON  
 Mummy?

LAURA  
 (speaking to PHILLIP)  
 Finish the story. He needs to know  
 how it ends.  
 (looking at THOMAS) )  
 We all need to be reminded that  
 good things do happen. Some people  
 actually care about others.

PHILLIP  
 Well, Brandon. You're Mum's right;  
 this story does have a happy  
 ending. One of the man's enemy's  
 comes along.

THOMAS glances over at NAHLA.

BRANDON, focused on PHILLIP, gasps and covers his mouth.

PHILLIP  
 Do you know what he did, Brandon?

BRANDON shakes his head.

PHILLIP  
 He got off his donkey, went over to  
 the man and bandaged his wounds.

NAHLA looks at PHILLIP in disbelief, obviously intrigued.

BRANDON  
 What'd he do next?

PHILLIP  
 He put him on his donkey and took  
 him to the nearest inn.

BRANDON  
 What's an inn?

NAHLA  
 It's like a motel, Brandon.

The adults all look at NAHLA.

PHILLIP  
 (smiling)  
 She's right.  
 (MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

And the man's enemy asked the innkeeper to take care of him. He even paid for his care and promised to come back and give him more money if it wasn't enough.

BRANDON

Really?

PHILLIP

Jesus used stories to teach people many things. This is one of those stories.

The lift jerks again.

BRANDON goes back to his mum.

PHILLIP stands up.

The lift's occupants are quiet and thoughtful.

A look of longing crosses THOMAS'S face as he watches mother and son assuring one another that everything will be all right.

PHILLIP

(speaking to THOMAS)

So, what's your story, Mate?

THOMAS

What'da you mean?

PHILLIP

(gesturing toward LAURA  
and BRANDON)

I saw the way you were looking at them.

THOMAS

So?

PHILLIP

I've been thinking ... and this wasn't the first time you flew on my plane, was it?

THOMAS

Like I said, I used to live in Australia. I suppose you could have been the pilot at some point when I came back to the States to visit my folks.

PHILLIP  
(quietly)  
You weren't alone the last time I  
noticed you.

THOMAS  
What's it to you?

PHILLIP  
I remember she was beautiful and  
full of life. What was she? Seven  
months pregnant? And the little  
boy, about two years old?

THOMAS  
(speaking quietly, but red  
with anger)  
What gives you the right ..?

PHILLIP pats him on the arm.

THOMAS looks ready to throw a punch but doesn't.

PHILLIP  
You were happy, too ... back then.

NAHLA  
(speaking to Phillip)  
Is that story really true?

PHILLIP  
What story?

NAHLA  
About the injured man and his  
enemy.

PHILLIP  
Like I said to Brandon, Jesus used  
stories like that to teach us how  
to live. I don't know if it really  
happened, but the Lord was making a  
point.

NAHLA  
Jesus was good teacher. Muslims  
know that.

PHILLIP  
He was much more than that, Nahla.

THOMAS

So you're going to start preaching to her now?

PHILLIP

I'm not preaching; I'm just telling her the truth.

THOMAS

Yeah, right ... Ah, go ahead. Tell your stories. What difference does it make?

BRANDON

I wanna hear more, too. Why did Jesus tell that story?

PHILLIP

He wanted to show us how we should live.

NAHLA and BRANDON are both puzzled.

LAURA tries the emergency phone again only to find it isn't working.

THOMAS does his best to ignore them all.

PHILLIP

Brandon, who do you think Jesus wants us to be like? The foolish man who was alone on the dangerous road?

BRANDON

(shaking his head)

Nope. Mummy always tells me to be safe.

PHILLIP

How about the men who didn't do anything to help?

NAHLA

No, there are already too many people like that in the world.

THOMAS looks as if he is going to say something but is stopped by the look on Phillip's face.

BRANDON

The bad guy who was really a good guy. Right?

PHILLIP  
 (smiling)  
 You really are a smart little boy.

BRANDON beams.

NAHLA  
 Do you really think there are  
 people like that? People help their  
 family and friends ... at least  
 sometimes,  
 (softly and sadly )  
 but I don't know anyone who is  
 willing to help someone they think  
 is their enemy.

Everyone is quiet for a few moments.

BRANDON  
 Mummy, I'm getting hungry.

LAURA  
 I'm sorry, Sport. I'll buy you  
 lunch once we get out of here. OK?

NAHLA reaches into her purse and withdraws a chocolate bar.

NAHLA  
 (speaking to LAURA)  
 Is it OK?

LAURA  
 Thank you. What do you say,  
 Brandon?

BRANDON  
 That's my favourite.  
 (taking the candy from  
 NAHLA'S outstretched  
 hand)  
 Thank you, Nahla.

LAURA  
 What did I teach you about calling  
 grown-ups by their first name?

BRANDON  
 (speaking with a mouth  
 full of candy)  
 But, Mummy, I don't know her last  
 name.

LAURA  
(smiling and nodding)  
And what did I teach you about  
talking with your mouth full?

NAHLA  
It's OK if he calls me Nahla ... if  
that's all right with you.

LAURA nods.

NAHLA  
(speaking softly to LAURA)  
Do you blame me? Do you think I'm  
your enemy?

LAURA is at a loss for words.

BRANDON is too busy eating to pay attention to the questions.

PHILLIP and THOMAS choose not to say anything.

NAHLA  
(gently, but insistently)  
I need to know. So many people do,  
you know. I almost moved away. I  
love it here. New York is an  
amazing city.  
(sighs)  
But it's just so hard ...

LAURA  
(as if seeing NAHLA for  
the first time)  
I never thought of that.

NAHLA  
You never thought of what?

LAURA  
That this must be hard on you, too.

After a few seconds, BRANDON breaks the silence.

BRANDON  
(licking his fingers)  
Now, I'm thirsty.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THOMAS'S CAR / FLASHBACK - DAY

THOMAS's two children, Jayden (3) and Janie (1), are in car seats in the backseat of the family car. THOMAS'S wife, Lizzie, is standing beside the open driver's-side door. Thomas is a different man; he looks younger and content.

THOMAS

Are you sure you don't want to wait until the morning?

LIZZIE

You're so cute when you're worried.  
(putting her hand on his  
cheek)

It'll be OK. God will take care of us.

THOMAS

(taking her hand and  
kissing the palm)  
I know, but they're calling for a  
nasty storm. I don't want you to  
get caught in it.

LIZZIE

My sister is expecting us tonight.  
We'll be fine.

THOMAS

I could come with you.

LIZZIE

Are you forgetting about the  
business meeting this week? The  
congregation wouldn't appreciate it  
if their pastor wasn't there.

THOMAS

You're right. I'll have to join you  
on the weekend.

JAYDEN

(popping the last of his  
animal crackers into his  
mouth)  
Mummy, I's firsty.

LIZZIE

(handing JAYDEN a sippy  
cup)

(MORE)

LIZZIE(cont'd)

Here you go, Sweetie. You be nice  
and quiet. Don't wake your sister.

LIZZIE turns back to THOMAS, and they kiss good-bye.

THOMAS

(as the car drives off  
down the road)

Please God, keep them safe.

BACK TO:

INT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING LIFT - END FLASHBACK

PHILLIP

(gently shaking THOMAS'S  
arm)

Thomas, did you hear Brandon?

THOMAS

What? ... What did you say?

PHILLIP

Brandon was asking why you're  
crying.

THOMAS, embarrassed, swipes at his eyes with his shirtsleeve.

BRANDON

What is it, Mister? Did you want  
some of my chocolate bar?

THOMAS

(taking a deep breath)

No thanks, Kid. I was just thinking  
...

BRANDON

'bout what?

LAURA

That's enough, Brandon. I don't  
think he...Mr. White wants to talk  
about it.

NAHLA receives another call on her cell phone.

LAURA sits down and pulls BRANDON onto her lap. They play tic-  
tac-toe with paper and pencils LAURA takes from her purse.

PHILLIP

(speaking softly)

Were you remembering your family?

THOMAS starts to object, but simply slumps his shoulders and nods.

PHILLIP

What happened to them, Mate?

THOMAS

This loving God of yours ... He took them from me. That is ... He did if He even exists.

PHILLIP

God didn't take them from you. Bad things happen to all of us, but He really does work it out for our good. Sometimes it just takes a long time to see it.

THOMAS

(through clenched teeth)  
What possible good could come from losing my family in a freak accident?

LAURA

(looking up)  
If you find the answer to that one, let me know.

NAHLA

(quietly, tears beginning to run down her cheeks)  
I lost my family, too.

BRANDON

(jumping up and digging in his pocket)  
I've got a Kleenex in here somewhere, Nahla.

LAURA stands and takes a tissue from her purse.

LAURA

(handing the tissue to NAHLA)  
What happened? To your family, I mean.

NAHLA

(taking a deep breath)  
I left them behind when I came to America.

LAURA  
Where are you from?

NAHLA  
I came from Egypt when I was  
eighteen.

BRANDON  
(eyes wide)  
Have you seen the pyramids?

NAHLA  
(smiling)  
Yes, Brandon, I have.

BRANDON  
Are they as big as they look on  
television?

NAHLA  
(nodding)  
Um, hmm ... they are.

BRANDON  
(speaking to PHILLIP)  
Do you fly to Egypt, Mister? I  
wanna go there, too.

PHILLIP  
Sorry, Pal. I've never been to  
Egypt, but it sounds like you want  
to be a real world traveler.

THOMAS  
(sadly)  
So did Jayden.

BRANDON  
Who's Jayden?

THOMAS  
(looking at LAURA;  
speaking gruffly)  
He was my ... my son.

LAURA  
(looking down)  
You ... you had a son?

PHILLIP  
He had two children, didn't you?

THOMAS  
(firmly)  
I don't want to talk about it.

NAHLA  
I don't blame you.

Everyone casts questioning looks in her direction.

LAURA  
(gently)  
How come?

NAHLA  
That's why I had to leave Egypt. My  
... uh ... my father and mother  
wouldn't let me keep my daughter.  
You see ...

LAURA  
(handing BRANDON paper and  
crayons)  
Brandon, honey, why don't you draw  
a picture for me?

BRANDON settles on the floor and begins to draw.

LAURA  
(speaking softly to NAHLA)  
You weren't married, were you?

NAHLA shakes her head.

LAURA  
What happened to your baby?

NAHLA  
I ... I ...

NAHLA'S shoulders begin to shake as she cries quietly.

LAURA spontaneously puts her arms around NAHLA and let's her  
cry.

PHILLIP  
(speaking to THOMAS)  
So you think Murphy's Law is at  
work, huh?  
(motioning to LAURA and  
NAHLA) )  
Take a look over there.

THOMAS  
Your point?

PHILLIP  
Miracles happen every day.

THOMAS  
What miracle? All I see is two  
sappy females hugging each other.

PHILLIP  
Oh no. It's more than that.

THOMAS  
Like what, for instance?

PHILLIP  
What I see is a frightened woman  
who got in the lift this morning  
with someone she saw as an enemy ...

THOMAS  
Considering what just happened in  
this city ...

PHILLIP  
(raising his hand)  
How many non-Muslims kill someone  
in this country every year?

THOMAS shrugs.

PHILLIP  
Hundreds, right? Thousands even?

THOMAS  
I guess.

PHILLIP  
Just because a handful of  
(lowering his voice) )  
terrorists commits an  
unconscionable act doesn't mean  
every Muslim is out to kill  
Americans. Can you really tell me  
you think Nahla is your enemy?

THOMAS looks at NAHLA and shakes his head.

PHILLIP  
Maybe we've just seen two miracles.

THOMAS

I don't even know what this first so-called miracle of yours is.

PHILLIP

Brandon's mom is over there comforting her quote enemy.

THOMAS

I wouldn't call that a miracle. Nice - or foolish maybe - but not a miracle.

And the second?

PHILLIP

You.

THOMAS

Me? What about me?

PHILLIP

Not that long ago, you were angry with everybody - God most of all.

THOMAS

I haven't changed my mind about God. OK?

PHILLIP

Not OK, but that's between you and Him.

THOMAS

About me and some kind of miracle ...

BRANDON

(jumping up and waving the paper in the air)  
Mummy, Mummy, look. I drew a picture of Nahla's baby.

The adults look in BRANDON'S direction.

PHILLIP

Can I see that, Sport?

BRANDON

(clasping the paper to his chest)  
Well, I guess so, but it's for Nahla so she won't be sad anymore.

THOMAS

You don't miss much, do you?

BRANDON

I wanna be a 'tective so I gotta notice stuff.

PHILLIP

Not a pilot?

Everyone except BRANDON and THOMAS chuckle.

BRANDON

(looking serious)

Um ... no ... I wanna be a 'tective like my Daddy.

Everyone is quiet until LAURA clears her throat.

LAURA

Let's see your picture, Brandon.  
(speaking to NAHLA) I have stacks of pictures of Jack, Brandon's father.

(speaking to BRANDON) )

You drew them to make me feel better, didn't you, sweetie.

BRANDON

Yep, and it worked, too. (sighs)  
Most of the time, anyway.

LAURA pops down and gives her son a quick hug.

BRANDON holds out the drawing to NAHLA.

NAHLA

(studying the picture)

That's me, isn't it? I'm holding my baby.

BRANDON

Every mummy should get to hold her baby. Babies make mummies happy ... 'cept when they're crying. I don't like it when babies cry.

LAURA

Brandon has a baby cousin with colic. She cries a lot, doesn't she?

BRANDON makes a face and nods.

PHILLIP  
So, do we get to see the  
masterpiece?

NAHLA holds it out and even THOMAS glances at it.

PHILLIP  
(speaking to BRANDON)  
Know something? God is very happy  
that you drew that picture for  
Nahla.

BRANDON  
You think so?

PHILLIP  
I'm sure of it.

NAHLA  
Captain James, you said Jesus was  
more than a good teacher.

THOMAS  
(shaking his head)  
Oh no, here we go.

PHILLIP  
(ignoring THOMAS'S  
comment)  
That's right, He is. Brandon, who  
is Jesus?

BRANDON  
That's easy. He's God's Son.

NAHLA  
We're all God's children, aren't  
we?

PHILLIP  
Jesus was different. Right,  
Brandon?

BRANDON  
Uh, huh. Jesus came from heaven. I  
came from my mummy's tummy.

LAURA  
(looking embarrassed)  
That's enough, sweetheart. Let  
Captain James talk to Nahla. OK?

BRANDON  
(looking dejected)  
'kay, but he asked.

PHILLIP  
(laughing)  
I'll take it from here, Pal. Thanks  
for your help.

BRANDON gives his mum a mildly cheeky "I told you so" look.

NAHLA  
I've heard what the preachers on TV  
say, but some of it is confusing.

THOMAS  
You're not kidding.

PHILLIP  
You have to start at the beginning  
... well, at least a couple thousand  
years ago.

NAHLA  
That's when Jesus was alive. Right?

BRANDON  
He's still alive.

NAHLA looks questioningly at PHILLIP.

PHILLIP  
He still is, but now He's sitting  
at God the Father's right hand.

NAHLA  
But that's where a prince would sit  
... or the king's top advisor.

PHILLIP  
We can't understand it perfectly,  
Nahla, but the Father, Son and Holy  
Spirit are all God.

NAHLA  
Christians believe in three gods?

BRANDON  
'course not. That's silly.

LAURA  
Brandon, hush. That's enough.

BRANDON sticks out his bottom lip.

PHILLIP

Do you know why Jesus had to come to earth, Nahla?

NAHLA

(shaking her head)

Not really. Like I said he was a good teacher, but there have been lots of teachers throughout history.

PHILLIP

He had to come to show us how to live, and He had to die for our sins.

THOMAS

(exasperated)

I can't take it anymore. I stood behind the pulpit for almost ten years preaching the same kind of garbage. The stup-

(glances at BRANDON)

The congregation just sat there and drank it all it.

For a moment the adults are dumbfounded and simply stare at THOMAS.

BRANDON is busy drawing another picture.

LAURA

You were a pastor? And you had a family?

THOMAS

Is that so hard to believe?

LAURA

My faith hasn't taken away my pain, but I don't know what I'd do without God and the assurance that I'll see Jack again.

THOMAS

(sad but defiant)

I wish I could believe there is a heaven. I wish I could see Lizzie and the kids again.

PHILLIP

You will.

THOMAS

What kind of a fantasy world do you live in, anyway? Planes are flown into buildings.

(more softly)

Children are taken from their own bedrooms.

(looking down)

Whole families are wiped out in car accidents on stormy nights.

(looking up again,  
speaking more defiantly)

)

There are too many reasons not to believe.

PHILLIP

If you were a pastor, you know God's promises. You know He said we only have to look around the world He created to see evidence that He exists. What about the happy times you had with your wife and children. Aren't those memories enough to remind you that God loves you? Some people don't even get that.

NAHLA dabs at her eyes.

PHILLIP

I'm sorry, Nahla, I wasn't thinking.

NAHLA

That's OK.

(takes a deep breath)

I've heard that Jesus died for sins. You told Brandon a story about a man who helped his enemy. Aren't these just nice stories Christian parents tell their children? Do you really believe what the Bible says?

LAURA

I know I do. I couldn't make it through the day if I didn't believe.

PHILLIP nods.

The lift's lights flicker but stay on.

BRANDON jumps up and hugs his mum around the waist.

BRANDON

Mummy, do you think the lights are going to go out? I don't like the dark.

LAURA

(hugging BRANDON)

Don't worry. Captain James is right. Mummy forgot for a little while, but God

is taking care of us. I just know He is.

THOMAS

(speaking quietly to PHILLIP)

Congratulations. You've convinced another victim the fairy tale is true.

A muffled bang is heard. It could be an explosion.

The lift shudders considerably, and the lights go off.

CUT TO:

INT. TWIN-ENGINE PLANE / PHILLIPS' FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Close-up of altimeter reveals rapid descent of PHILLIP'S twin-engine plane.

Camera pans back to instrument panel. Several warning lights are lit.

A much younger PHILLIP is struggling to regain control.

PHILLIP

Some first solo flight!

Radio crackles and a garbled voice can be heard.

PHILLIP

(speaking into the radio)

My Cessna 340 is in a dive. Can you hear me?

Radio is silent.

PHILLIP

I repeat ... this is Phillip James. I  
am losing altitude ... fast!

The radio remains silent.

PHILLIP

(slamming the radio down)  
Looks like I'm on my own.

PHILLIP'S MOTHER'S VOICE

"Never will I leave you."

PHILLIP

Great! Now I'm hearing things.

PHILLIP'S MOTHER'S VOICE

"Never will I forsake you."

PHILLIP

(continuing to struggle  
with the controls)  
My first, and maybe my last flight,  
and I'm back in Sunday School.

PHILLIP'S MOTHER'S VOICE

"Ye must be born again."

PHILLIP

(breathing hard)  
OK. I get the message. I don't know  
if You're there, God. I chalked up  
the stories about sin and  
redemption and a home in heaven to  
myth ... fairy tales to make weak,  
ignorant people feel better about  
things.

(to himself) )

Funny, how I think of Bible verses  
when I'm face to face with eternity  
... if there is such a thing.

PHILLIP is growing noticeably tired. His arms begin to shake  
as he tries to pull the plane out of the dive.

PHILLIP

I guess it can't hurt  
(squeezing his eyes shut)  
God, if you're real, please get  
me out of this mess. I promise I'll  
check into this salvation thing.

(MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

Maybe I'll even go to church with  
my mum.

Slowly the plane levels off.

PHILLIP

Thank you, God.

BACK TO:

INT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING LIFT - PRESENT

PHILLIP

Thank YOU, God!

THOMAS

(harshly)

What are thanking God for? Do you  
really want your life to end  
helplessly trapped in this box with  
four strangers?

PHILLIP

What? Oh ... sorry. I forgot where I  
was.

THOMAS

The lights go out, and you forget  
where you are?

BRANDON

Mummy, I'm scared.

NAHLA produces a handful of light sticks from her purse. She  
shakes one and gives it to BRANDON.

NAHLA

I forgot I had these. This should  
help.

BRANDON

Thank you, Nahla. You're a nice  
lady.

LAURA smiles at NAHLA and nods.

THOMAS

I don't get it.

PHILLIP

What's that?

THOMAS

We got on this elevator, and everything seemed fine, routine even. Then this pathetic thing stops between floors.

THOMAS hits the wall of the lift with an open palm.

BRANDON jumps.

LAURA

(calmly, but forcefully)  
Thomas, please don't frighten Brandon.

THOMAS

That ... that's what I mean. You were a nervous wreck just a few minutes ago. Now look at you, all forgiving (glances and NAHLA) ) and calm.

PHILLIP

And that's a bad thing?

THOMAS

Don't any of you get it?

NAHLA

(with a new-found confidence)  
Mr. White, I'm sorry about your family. I really am. I lost my family, too, and I've lost respect in the country I've come to love. I've heard lots of talk about a loving God, but I've also heard ministers on TV paint all Muslims with the same brush, saying we're violent, that we hate all that is American, all that is Christian. But I look around this box as you call it and see what I think Christianity is supposed to be about.

(motioning to BRANDON and holding up the picture he drew) )

Here's a little boy who already knows too much heartache, but he's loving and kind and does what he can to make even strangers feel better.

BRANDON goes over and gives NAHLA a quick hug before going back to his mum.

NAHLA  
(after taking a few deep  
breaths and swiping at  
her eyes)  
And Brandon's mum ... Well, we all  
know how she felt when she first  
got on

this elevator with me.

LAURA opens her mouth to object, but NAHLA stops her.

NAHLA  
No, it's all right. I understand. I  
don't blame you. It's not your  
fault.

THOMAS  
Give me a break. I don't need a  
lecture.

PHILLIP  
Well ...

NAHLA  
(smiling)  
And you, Captain James. You've been  
nothing but kind to all of us.  
Because of the story you told, I  
want to find out what else Jesus of  
Nazareth had to say.  
(shaking her head)  
Maybe it's best that my parents  
aren't around to hear me say that.  
(chuckles halfheartedly)

LAURA reaches over and squeezes NAHLA'S arm.

BRANDON'S light stick goes out.

BRANDON  
(his voice shaking)  
Nahla, can I have another light  
stick, please?

NAHLA  
Of course. Here you are.  
(hands another to BRANDON)

LAURA  
(speaking to PHILLIP)  
You've been quiet.

PHILLIP  
I was just remembering when I  
promised to check out what God had  
to say in the Bible.

NAHLA  
You haven't always been a  
Christian?

PHILLIP  
No, my mum took me to Sunday School  
and church, but I thought it was  
all make-believe.

THOMAS  
(quietly, to himself)  
The first smart thing I've heard  
him say.

PHILLIP  
(ignoring THOMAS)  
When I was taking my first solo  
flight, my plane went into a  
nose-dive.

BRANDON  
(gasps)  
What did you do?

PHILLIP  
I did everything I was supposed to,  
but the plane didn't want to  
cooperate.

BRANDON  
Were you scared?

PHILLIP  
I sure was, Pal, but I remembered  
something my mum used to say. You  
should always listen to your mum.

BRANDON  
I try.

LAURA  
(smiles at BRANDON)  
You do a good job, Buddy.

BRANDON

So what happened in the plane?

PHILLIP

I remembered some of the verses my mum taught me in Sunday School class. I didn't really believe what she'd said about Jesus and sin and being saved, but I promised to find out all I could if God helped me, if He spared my life.

BRANDON

And He did. That's so cool!

LAURA

Brandon, honey, why don't you tell Captain James about all the places you want to go. Mummy wants to talk to Nahla.

BRANDON goes over to Phillip and begins to chatter about his plans.

NAHLA tries her cell phone.

NAHLA

I can't get any reception.

LAURA picks up the emergency phone but shakes her head.

PHILLIP

Would it be all right if we prayed together?

LAURA smiles and nods.

NAHLA

(hesitantly)

I don't know. I guess it would be all right.

BRANDON

Cool! Can I pray first? Daddy always said I was a good pray-er.

PHILLIP

What about you, Thomas? Will you pray with us.

THOMAS shakes his head and retreats farther into the corner.

PHILLIP and the others gather into a circle.

BRANDON

Mummy, is it OK with you if I stand  
between Nahla and Captain James?

I wanna hold their hands.

LAURA

Only if it's all right with them.

NAHLA nods and takes BRANDON'S hand.

PHILLIP

Sure, Pal. I'd like that.

PHILLIP takes BRANDON'S other hand.

BRANDON

Hold Nahla's other hand, Mummy, and  
Captain James's, too.

LAURA takes the outstretched hands.

Those in the circle bow their heads and close their eyes.

BRANDON

Dear God, thank You for my mummy  
and my new friends, Nahla and  
Captain James  
(more quietly) )  
and Mr. White, too. Captain James  
is a pilot, and he's gonna take  
Mummy and me to 'stralia sometime.  
God, Nahla's sad cuz they took away  
her baby. Please let Nahla meet her  
little girl. Every little boy and  
girl needs their mummy. And God,  
please take care of Mr. White. He's  
real sad. Make him happy again, and  
let him believe in You again. A-  
men!

After a moment's silence, LAURA prays.

LAURA

(her voice shaky)  
God, please forgive me.  
(squeezing NAHLA'S hand) )  
Forgive me for my wrong thoughts.  
Thank You that we're here on this  
elevator for Your purposes. Please  
bring our new friend to saving  
faith. And, God, I pray for Mr.  
White, as well.

(MORE)

LAURA(cont'd)

Please heal his hurts, and may He find comfort in Your love as I am learning to do. Amen!

PHILLIP

Lord, this isn't exactly what I had in mind when I came to New York, but I thank You for every minute. Thank You that You love each one of us. If everything turns out the way we would like it to, I pray that we will always remember that You made it possible and, Lord, if it doesn't ...

NAHLA

(tentatively)

Allah ... I don't know if it's all right to call You Allah, but that's the only name I've ever known. Christians say Jesus is the Son of God. Captain James and Laura and Brandon

(squeezing his hand) )

have been very kind to me. If the Christian God is the true God, if Jesus is His Son, I pray that I will be saved. If Jesus really loved me enough to die for me, I pray that I will have the chance to learn more.

BRANDON / LAURA / PHILLIP

Amen!

The lights flicker on.

BRANDON

Hurray!

After another shudder, the elevator begins to move.

LAURA

(laughing)

Double hurray!

The doors open. Emergency personnel are buzzing around the lobby.

FIREFIGHTER

Someone up there was certainly watching out for you?

LAURA

What ... What do you mean?

FIREFIGHTER

(glancing at BRANDON,  
speaking quietly)

A small bomb went off. It looks like it was meant to ... Well, let's just say, I don't think this elevator was supposed to make it safely to the lobby.

PHILLIP

What happened?

FIREFIGHTER

We're not exactly sure, but it looks like whoever placed it was an amateur. Thankfully, they didn't do their homework very well.

BRANDON

See, Mummy. Captain James was right. God took care of us.

THOMAS

(brusquely)

I have to be going. Brandon, you're a good boy. You keep drawing those pictures.

(glancing at LAURA and  
NAHLA)

They make lots of people feel better.

BRANDON shyly gives THOMAS a quick hug. THOMAS pats him awkwardly on his back.

THOMAS

Well ... I've gotta go.

THOMAS walks away. An officer stops him to take a statement.

The others exchange hugs, handshakes and good-byes.

Officers approach them to take their statements as well.

An officer leads PHILLIP to a place near THOMAS and the officer who is taking his statement. PHILLIP overhears THOMAS, whose back is to him, talking to the officer.

OFFICER  
Thank you for the information, Mr.  
White. You may go.

THOMAS  
Before I do, could you tell me  
where the nearest church is?

PHILLIP smiles.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD:

Six months later ...

FADE IN:

INT. CHRISTIAN TALK SHOW SET - DAY

THOMAS, LAURA, BRANDON AND NAHLA are sitting on a couch  
across from JOSH AND SARA on the set of a TV Christian talk  
show.

SARA  
How can being trapped on an  
elevator with four strangers change  
your life? Our next guests are here  
to tell their story.

JOSH  
That's right, Sara. Laura Samson  
and her son Brandon  
(camera pans the guests; Brandon  
waves to the camera),  
Thomas White and Nahla Abdallah  
were trapped together in an  
elevator at the Empire State  
building when an explosion  
occurred, six months ago.

SARA  
I know we all look forward to  
hearing their story, but first this  
report from Nate Snowden and his  
interview with Captain Phillip  
James who was also with our guests  
that day.

NATE and PHILLIP appear on a TV monitor. They are standing in  
front of a recognizable Australia landmark.

NATE  
Nate Snowden here with Captain  
Phillip James of Qantas Airlines.

Welcome, Captain James.

PHILLIP  
Glad to be here.

NATE  
So, tell us why you were in New  
York six months ago. What made you  
decide to visit the Empire State  
building?

PHILLIP  
Well, Nate, I was on a layover, and  
I decided to take in some of the  
sights.

NATE  
Were you at all leery after what  
happened on September 11?

PHILLIP  
To be honest, not really. You've  
got to remember I fly planes for a  
living.

NATE  
That's true. Let me ask you ... how  
did your faith help you to continue  
flying after 9/11 and when you were  
trapped on the elevator?

PHILLIP  
It all started on my first solo  
flight.  
(Phillip chuckles.)  
More years ago now than I care to  
remember.

NATE  
Tell our viewers what happened.

PHILLIP  
To make a long story short, as they  
say, I lost control of my plane not  
long after take-off.

NATE  
Wow! Not the way anyone wants to  
start out.

PHILLIP

Definitely not. I tried to radio for help, but I'd didn't get anything but static.

NATE

Sounds like the making of a disaster movie.

PHILLIP

If it hadn't been for God's grace, it could have been.

NATE

What happened next?

PHILLIP

I began to remember scripture verses my mum taught me in Sunday School.

NATE

So you were raised in a Christian home?

PHILLIP

My mum was 100 percent committed to the Lord and His Word. My pop went to church each week and did his best to live a good life.

NATE

So you believed in Jesus ever since you were a child?

PHILLIP

(shakes his head) )  
No, I wasn't that smart.

NATE

What made you change your mind?

PHILLIP

There's something about facing a crash landing that brings things into perspective.

NATE

I'd imagine, but you're here with us today. Obviously, you didn't crash.

PHILLIP

I know it sounds like a cliché, but as I struggled to regain control of my plane, I asked God for His help. And here I am.

NATE

Tell us about being trapped in the elevator. What did you think was going on?

PHILLIP

Well, a lot of things were going through my mind, but I can't say I was particularly worried. I knew God had a purpose and a plan.

NATE

What did you do?

PHILLIP

I struck up a conversation with the others on the lift and did my best to put their minds at ease.

NATE

The others will be in the studio when this is aired. Would you like to say anything to them?

PHILLIP

Sure. Thomas, I hope you found your way back to the Lord. Nahla, I've been praying for you every day, asking God to send good Samaritans into your life. Laura, I trust the God of all comfort is holding you close. And last but not least, Brandon, it was an honour meeting you. I hope to see you someday on my plane. I would love to show you around Australia. Keep on drawing those pictures. I have the ones you sent to me in a special album. Thank you, Sport.

NATE

Thank you, Captain James. Now I'm off to do some sightseeing of my own.

Back in the studio ...

JOSH

Captain James said he felt God had a purpose for what happened that day. Would you agree, Mr. White?

THOMAS

Call me Thomas. And I'm beginning to think God does have a plan after all.

(THOMAS briefly glances at LAURA.)

SARA

Laura, you lost your husband on September 11. Has that affected your faith?

LAURA

(nods) )

My faith has grown since that day.

SARA

How so?

LAURA

Well, before the attack, I was a believer, but I trusted in my husband and his strength a lot more than I did in God.

JOSH

And that's changed?

LAURA

When I didn't have Brandon's father to lean on, I learned God could get me through even on the darkest days.

JOSH

Nahla, I understand you work at the Empire State building.

NAHLA nods shyly.

SARA

It has been very hard on you, hasn't it?

NAHLA

Yes, it has.

BRANDON  
Nahla's from Egypt. She's seen the  
pyramids.

ADULTS laugh.

NAHLA smiles at Brandon.

SARA  
You were raised in a Muslim home.  
Are you still a practicing Muslim?

NAHLA  
Thanks to Captain James and Laura,  
I began to see Christians  
differently.

JOSH  
How so?

NAHLA  
They didn't just talk about love  
and forgiveness. That day, in the  
elevator, they showed me what it  
was.

SARA  
How did they do that?

NAHLA  
Captain James told Brandon about  
the Good Samaritan. I always  
thought it was just a nice story,  
but Captain James said that's the  
way Jesus wants us to live. We're  
supposed to love and care for  
everyone.

(more quietly)  
Even our enemies.

SARA  
You also mentioned that Laura  
demonstrated God's love to you.

LAURA  
(looks at Nahla) )  
May I?  
(NAHLA nods.) )  
When I got on the elevator that  
day, I saw Nahla as a threat. I  
know that's not what God wants, but  
I couldn't help it.

(MORE)

LAURA(cont'd)

My husband was taken from me, and I was lonely and afraid.

JOSH

You told us earlier that your faith has grown since 9/11.

LAURA

It has ... by leaps and bounds. But I couldn't help the way I felt. God was still working on me; He still is.

SARA

He's working on all of us.

JOSH

Tell us what changed your mind about Nahla.

LAURA

At first, she kept to herself. She just watched the rest of us and listened to our conversation. But after a while, she started to enter in? She asked questions. And I guess, as a mother, the biggest thing was how she treated Brandon.

BRANDON

Nahla's nice. She gave me candy and a light stick, and I drew her a picture ...

LAURA puts her hand on BRANDON'S knee and gives I a gentle squeeze.

SARA

Was Nahla's kindness to Brandon what changed your mind about her?

LAURA looks at NAHLA then back at SARA.

LAURA

Not completely, but it was a beginning.

JOSH

God is all about new beginnings.

BRANDON looks up at his mum.

BRANDON

Like you and Thomas, right Mummy?

LAURA blushes and THOMAS jumps into the conversation.

THOMAS

I'm glad God gave me a chance to reconsider my decision to walk away from Him. That day was really a new beginning for me. But I don't think Nahla is done with her story yet.

SARA

Nahla, is there anything else you would like to share with the viewers?

NAHLA

Well, I do have exciting news.

BRANDON bounces up and down on his seat and claps his hands.

BRANDON

Is she here? Can I meet her?

LAURA raises her finger to her lips to shush her son.

NAHLA smiles at BRANDON and nods.

JOSH

Can you tell us who's here, Nahla?

NAHLA

(tears welling up in her eyes) )  
My ... my daughter.

SARA

Can you tell us where she was before?

NAHLA

She was with my family in Egypt.  
(quietly) )  
They wouldn't let me bring her when I came to America.

JOSH

What made them change their minds?

NAHLA

Aleesa was living with my aunt and uncle, but my uncle recently passed away. My aunt always wanted to give my little girl back to me, but she couldn't.

JOSH  
What changed?

NAHLA  
After my uncle died, my aunt moved to America. She lives with me now, and my daughter is getting to know me.

BRANDON  
I've gotta meet her; I've just gotta.

SARA  
Brandon, can you tell us why you want to meet Nahla's little girl so badly?

BRANDON squares his shoulders and sits up taller.

BRANDON  
'Cuz I drew a picture of her.

JOSH  
When did you do that, Brandon?

BRANDON  
When we were stuck on that stup ...  
(looks up at LAURA)  
on that silly elevator.

SARA  
Why did you draw the picture, Brandon?

BRANDON  
'Cuz Nahla was sad. She missed her little girl lots and lots. I thought it would make her feel better if she had a picture.

NAHLA  
And it did, Brandon. I have it on my refrigerator at home.

JOSH  
And now, Thomas, we'd like to hear more of your story.

SARA  
I understand you lost your family some time ago.

THOMAS nods his head.

SARA  
That must have been difficult.

THOMAS  
It was. It was the worst thing that  
ever happened to me. Well ... maybe  
the second worst.

JOSH  
Do you mean being trapped on the  
elevator?

THOMAS  
No, that was actually a good thing -  
though I didn't know it at  
the time.

SARA  
What could be worse than losing  
your family?

THOMAS  
Losing my faith.

JOSH  
Thomas, tell the viewers what you  
did before the accident that  
claimed the lives of your wife and  
two young children.

THOMAS  
I was a pastor.

JOSH  
And you lost your faith?

THOMAS  
At least I misplaced it for a  
while. That day in the elevator  
helped me find my way again.

SARA  
Who or what specifically?

THOMAS  
Well, there was Captain James. I  
had actually flown on his plane  
with my family.

SARA  
Did he remember you?

THOMAS nods.

JOSH  
What did you think of his efforts  
to make others feel better?

THOMAS  
(shaking his head) )  
If I'd been a violent man, I think  
I would have beaten him silly.

BRANDON gasps.

THOMAS tossles his hair.

THOMAS  
Don't worry, Buddy, I wouldn't  
really hurt Captain James. I just  
felt like it is all.  
(turning his attention  
back to JOSH and SARA)  
God was speaking to my heart  
through the captain's words, and  
at that point, I didn't want to  
listen. You know the old saying,  
"When God is trying to reach you,  
it makes you sad or mad or  
glad." Well, I was definitely in  
the mad category.

JOSH  
What made you change your mind?

THOMAS  
Captain James.

SARA  
How so?

THOMAS  
No matter how I treated him or what  
I said, he just kept at it. He  
wasn't pushy or arrogant, just  
sincere. He made me face the truth,  
and he encouraged me to reconnect  
with God.

SARA  
Did everything change right away?

THOMAS

Oh no. I'm stubborn by nature. Once I've made up my mind about something, it takes a long time to change it. You have to be very persistent. And God is nothing, if He isn't persistent.

BRANDON starts to doze off. He slumps over and lands on THOMAS'S knee. LAURA goes to shake BRANDON'S shoulder, but THOMAS shakes his head.

JOSH

Brandon seems quite attached.

THOMAS nods his head.

SARA

Do you see much of the others?

LAURA blushes slightly.

LAURA

Well ... Thomas has kind of taken Brandon under his wing. Brandon needs a father figure ...

THOMAS

And I'm sure Jayden and Brandon would have been friends if they'd had the chance to know one another.

JOSH

Jayden was your son?

THOMAS nods.

SARA

Have you kept in touch with Nahla?.

THOMAS

I have been back to visit her at work a couple of times, but I must admit, I'm still uncomfortable riding in the elevators ... any elevators actually.

JOSH

That's understandable.

The scene changes. PHILLIP is shaving. We see the reflection of the TV in his bathroom mirror.

NAHLA  
And I've visited Thomas's church a  
couple of times.

PHILLIP stops shaving and turns toward the TV.

THOMAS looks at NAHLA and raises his eyebrow.

THOMAS  
You have?

NAHLA nods.

LAURA  
I didn't know that. That's great.  
When did you come?

NAHLA  
I came the first two Sundays this  
month. I came to the second  
service so I could slip in and out without being noticed.

SARA  
You really are investigating what  
it means to be a believer, aren't  
you?

NAHLA smiles widely and nods again.

THOMAS  
(deep in thought )  
That means ... let's see ... that means  
you heard me preach.

NAHLA  
I was happy to see the change in  
you. When we were on the elevator,  
you seemed so lost, so angry.

THOMAS  
I was. It's taking time to heal,  
but God is faithful.

LAURA  
He sure is. Next time you want to  
come to church, let me know, and  
you can come back to my house  
afterward for lunch.

Tears begin to roll down NAHLA'S face.

SARA

What is it? Why are you crying?

NAHLA

When we were on the elevator ...  
Well, at first Laura didn't even  
want to borrow my cell phone. The  
more I think about it, the more I  
realize you all have something  
that's missing in my life.

JOSH

It sounds like God has given you  
the gift of faith. You just have to  
accept it.

(turning toward the  
camera) )

And all you at home have to do is  
ask God for that same gift of  
faith. The Bible says, "For God so  
loved the world that He gave His  
only son - Jesus - that whosoever  
believes in Him will not perish but  
have everlasting life."

SARA

That's right, Josh. And we pray  
that there are many "whosoever"  
watching today. Those like Nahla  
who are beginning to see that even  
though being a Christian doesn't  
mean life is always easy, it is the  
only way to find the peace and love  
that we all want.

JOSH

Feel free to call our phone lines.  
They are open 24/7. I want to thank  
our guests: Nahla Abdallah, Thomas  
White, Laura Samson and her tired  
little boy, Brandon.

INT. PHILLIP'S HOUSE - DAY

PHILLIP hits the remote and goes back to shaving. Blank TV  
screen visible in the mirror.

PHILLIP

Well, God, You sure are full of  
surprises.

He makes a few more strokes, then rinses the razor in the sink full of water.

PHILLIP

Thomas and Laura, huh? I didn't see that coming.

He smiles and finishes shaving. He sets his razor aside and lets the soapy water out of the sink. He runs warm water over a facecloth.

PHILLIP

That will be so good for Brandon.  
And Thomas is back in the pulpit.  
Thank You, God.

He wipes the remaining shaving cream off his face.

PHILLIP

God, You are so good. I'm sure  
Nahla gave her life to Jesus as  
soon as that broadcast was over.  
I'll have to get in touch with her.  
I'll have to get in touch with all  
of them.

Camera shows PHILLIP'S uniform laid across the bed with the TV in the background.

PHILLIP

(offscreen)

It's a good thing my next flight is  
to New York.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

THOMAS is sitting at his dining room table, drinking coffee and reading an Australian newspaper. He comes to an article about a plane crash and does a double-take.

THOMAS

Oh, dear God, I can't believe it!

THOMAS picks up the cordless phone beside him and calls LAURA.

LAURA

Hello?

THOMAS

(softly)

Hi, it's me.

LAURA

What's wrong? Can't you come for lunch? I know Brandon will understand if something has come up.

THOMAS

No, it's not that. I have something to tell you.

LAURA

If you think things are moving too quickly, I'll understand. It will be hard to explain to Brandon though ...

THOMAS

(getting frustrated)

Laura, it's nothing like that.

LAURA

Well, what is it? Couldn't we discuss it when you come over?

THOMAS

(more gently)

Laura, getting to know you and Brandon better is about the best thing that has happened to me in ... in years. This has nothing to do with that. You know that newspaper I subscribed to, the one from Australia?

LAURA

Yeah, I know the one you're talking about. You've given Brandon lots of pictures for his scrapbook. Now he's even more anxious to visit. I wonder if Phillip will be flying from New York to Sydney this summer. Maybe we could go then.

THOMAS

That's what I wanted to talk to you about.

LAURA

Before you say anything else, I just want to say that I really like you, Thomas. Brandon thinks you're the greatest. He loves having you around. I just think it's too soon to travel together.

THOMAS

(chuckles uncomfortably)  
You are one infuriating woman. You know that?

LAURA

(sighs)  
My husband used to say that all the time.

THOMAS

(Hey, I didn't mean to make you sad. Well, not about that anyway ...)

LAURA

What's that supposed to mean?

THOMAS

There was an article in the paper this morning. There was a plane crash.

LAURA

That's awful, but what does that have to do with us?

THOMAS

It was a private plane, Laura. It was Phillip's plane.

LAURA

(gasps)  
Is he ... is he all right?

THOMAS

Laura, he ... he died in the crash.

LAURA

(starting to cry)  
No, Thomas ... They must have it wrong. Are they sure it was him?

THOMAS

I'm afraid so.

LAURA

Can you come over early? I think we should tell Brandon together. He's been sending drawings to Phillip every week or so since that day on the elevator.

THOMAS

I have to stop by the church, but I'll be there as soon as I can.

LAURA

You're preaching your first sermon this coming Sunday, aren't you?

THOMAS

I called it "Faith in the Furnace". It seems more appropriate than ever now.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THOMAS, LAURA and BRANDON are sitting around Laura's dining room table.

BRANDON

Look at all pictures I drew this week, Mr. T.

THOMAS and LAURA smile.

LAURA

(quietly to THOMAS)

It always makes me laugh when he calls you that.

THOMAS nods.

LAURA

Brandon, could you put your drawings under your chair until after lunch, please?

BRANDON

Could I show Mr. T just one ... pleeeeeeease?

LAURA

Just one. Then it's your turn to pray.

(MORE)

LAURA(cont'd)

Remember you have to eat every bite  
before we can go out for ice cream.

BRANDON immediately bows his head and folds his hands.

BRANDON

Dear God, thank you for lunch ...  
even if it is yucky tuna fish.

LAURA clears her throat and THOMAS snickers quietly.

BRANDON

Sorry. God, please bless Mummy and  
Mr. T. Bless Nahla and her little  
girl. And, oh God, don't forget to  
bless Mr. James. I wanna fly in his  
plane real soon. I 'specially want  
to thank You for the ice cream  
we're getting after the yuc... I mean  
yummy tuna. Amen.

LAURA has tears running down her cheeks, and THOMAS looks  
very sombre.

BRANDON holds up a picture of a pilot standing beside a  
plane.

BRANDON

This is Cap'n James. And that's the  
plane  
(pointing at the picture)  
Mummy and me are going to fly to  
'stralia on. We're goin' real soon,  
right Mummy?

BRANDON notices their faces for the first time.

BRANDON

Hey, what's wrong with you guys?  
Don't you like tuna either?

THOMAS reaches over and squeezes BRANDON'S arm.

LAURA

(wiping the tears away)  
No, honey, it's not that. We have  
something to tell you about Captain  
James.

THOMAS

Something bad has happened.

BRANDON crosses his arms and huffs.

BRANDON

I don't want nothin' bad to happen.  
There's been too much bad stuff.

THOMAS

I agree with you, Big Guy.

LAURA

There's been an accident, Brandon.

BRANDON

So?

THOMAS pushes his chair back from the table and pats his lap.

THOMAS

Come sit with me.

BRANDON shakes his head defiantly.

BRANDON

I'm a big boy. Just tell me.

LAURA

Brandon, there was a plane crash ...  
in Australia.

BRANDON'S eyes get big.

THOMAS

(gently)

It was Captain James's plane.

BRANDON

(horrified)

Did lots of people get hurt ... or ...  
or die?

LAURA

No, Honey, it was Captain James's  
private plane. You know ... the  
little one.

BRANDON

Is he ... is he in heaven with Daddy  
now?

LAURA gets up and goes around the table. She crouches beside  
BRANDON and pulls him into her arms.

LAURA  
(whispering)  
Yes, Sweetie, he's with Daddy.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - LATER

THOMAS is saying good-bye to LAURA at the door.

THOMAS  
Do you think Brandon's going to be  
OK?

LAURA  
He's had to deal with so much in  
the last year. I hope he can get  
through this.

THOMAS  
He'll be OK. He has you ... and he  
has God. I don't know why this  
happened, but I'm learning to trust  
even when I have more questions  
than answers. I'm thinking of  
flying over to visit family and  
attend the funeral. I know you said  
it was too soon to vacation  
together ... but this wouldn't really  
be a vacation. What'da you think?

LAURA  
(shaking her head)  
I don't want Brandon's first trip  
to Australia to have such sad  
memories.

THOMAS gives LAURA a quick hug and a kiss on the cheek and  
leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

THOMAS enters a travel agency.

AGENT  
Good afternoon. May I help you,  
Sir?

THOMAS  
I'd like to book a flight to  
Sydney, Australia, please.

AGENT  
Certainly. When will you be  
travelling?

AGENT pulls up a screen on her computer.

THOMAS  
Tomorrow or the next day, if there  
are any flights available.

AGENT  
There are several flights. There  
are morning and afternoon flights.  
Which would you prefer?

THOMAS  
As soon as possible, actually.

AGENT  
There is a Qantas flight leaving  
tomorrow morning at 9:00. Would you  
like me to book a seat for you?

THOMAS  
(nodding)  
That would be great. Thanks.

AGENT  
Will you be flying business class  
or economy?

THOMAS  
Economy is fine.

AGENT  
Do you have an up-to-date passport?

THOMAS nods.

AGENT  
And how will you be paying for  
that?

THOMAS pulls out his Visa and hands it to the agent.

AGENT  
I'm sorry, Sir, but we don't take  
credit cards any longer.

THOMAS

I'm afraid I don't have enough cash for the flight.

AGENT

That won't be a problem. We have connections with a very unique credit company, as do most of the travel agencies in the city. If you qualify for credit, which you obviously do, you're guaranteed to be accepted.

THOMAS

(sceptically)

And their interest rate?

AGENT

That's what makes them unique. They don't charge interest.

THOMAS begins to fidget in his seat. He is getting very uncomfortable.

AGENT

I understand your reluctance. All the arrangements can be made over the phone. The representative will explain it all to you.

THOMAS

I guess I can look into it.

AGENT shows THOMAS to a small office.

AGENT

If you'll be seated at the desk, I will connect you from my office. When the phone rings, just answer it and the credit representative will fill you in on all the details.

THOMAS sits down. AGENT leaves the room and closes the door. There is a faint red light visible in room.

THOMAS

(looking around)

Lord, I'm not comfortable with this, but I have to get to Australia before the funeral, and the agent said it's the same all over the city. There's nothing to worry about, right?

The phone rings.

THOMAS

(picking it up)

Hello?

CREDIT REPRESENTATIVE'S voice is pleasant enough but has an odd quality to it.

REP

Mr. White? I understand you are interested in flying to Sydney in the morning.

THOMAS

That's right. May I ask who I'm speaking to?

REP

By all means. My name is Smith, Jonathan Smith.

THOMAS raises his eyebrow.

THOMAS

OK, Mr. ... Smith. Yes, I would like to fly out in the morning. A friend of mine died recently, and I need to get there in time for the funeral. I understand this travel agency doesn't accept Visa any longer.

REP

Actually, very few of them do.

THOMAS

And why is that?

REP

Wouldn't you agree that a 0 percent interest rate is much more appealing?

THOMAS

Call me a sceptic, but how can you offer credit with no interest?

REP

I ... that is my company wants to make it as easy on travellers as possible.

THOMAS

I certainly don't mean to be rude, but there must be a catch.

REP

The borrower, of course, agrees to certain obligations.

THOMAS

Mm, hmm. And just what are those obligations.

REP

We forward the money directly to the travel agency. So you never actually handle the funds.

THOMAS

That's reasonable. And what else?

REP

You are an insightful man, Mr. White.

THOMAS

Very few people offer something for nothing. I'm just waiting for the proverbial other shoe to drop.

REPRESENTATIVE laughs a mildly sinister laugh.

THOMAS

(quietly whispers)  
Lord, help me.

REP

(gruffly )  
What was that? What did you say?

THOMAS

Oh, excuse me. I wasn't talking to you.

REP  
 (sarcastically)  
 I gathered that.

THOMAS  
 Now, about those obligations ...

REP  
 What line of work are you in, Mr. White?

THOMAS  
 I'm a pastor, actually. Well, I'm on the road to becoming one again anyway.

REP  
 I see. Well, Mr. White ... or is that Reverend White?

THOMAS  
 Thomas will be fine.

REP  
 Well, Thomas, my supervisor just asks that you agree to do us a favour at some point in the future.

THOMAS  
 What sort of a favour?

REP  
 (chuckling)  
 Don't worry, Thomas. It's nothing illegal. We wouldn't

stay in business long if it was.

THOMAS  
 I have to tell you, this whole arrangement makes me very uncomfortable, but I do need to get to Australia, and I don't have time to traipse all over the city to make other arrangements ...

REP  
 Well, it's settled then. I'll set things up, and we'll be in touch. Have a good trip.

Before THOMAS can object, REPRESENTATIVE hangs up.

THOMAS is on the plane to Sydney. He is seated by the window. No-one is in the seat next to him.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Can I get you anything, Sir?

THOMAS  
No, thank you. I'm just going to close my eyes and get some rest. It has been a hectic few days.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Certainly, Sir. Can I offer you a pillow?

THOMAS  
That would be wonderful. Thanks.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT hands him a pillow and leaves to check on the other passengers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE / THOMAS'S DREAM

THOMAS dreams he has returned from Australia and goes to see LAURA.

LAURA opens the door to her home.

LAURA  
Thomas, you're back early. How did it go?

THOMAS  
Oh, you know. One funeral's the same as the next.

LAURA  
How can you say that? Phillip was our friend.

THOMAS  
Friend? We hardly knew him. He was just some crazy pilot. I don't know why I even bothered flying all that way. The only person I could think about while I was gone was  
(pushing the door closed  
and taking a step closer)  
you.

LAURA  
(stepping back and  
laughing)  
I think you're suffering from  
jetlag. You're definitely not  
yourself.

THOMAS  
Sure I am. (looking around) So  
where's the kid?

LAURA'S jaw drops, and she shakes her head.

LAURA  
I think you better head home and  
get some sleep. Brandon is with a  
friend for the day.

THOMAS  
(with an unpleasant grin  
on his face)  
Good.

LAURA  
Just what do you mean by that?

THOMAS  
It's just that we never get any  
time together - alone, I mean.

LAURA  
You knew that when we started  
seeing each other. Brandon is my  
number one priority.

THOMAS  
Sure ... I know that.  
(voice softening)  
It's just ... well, you know  
(hanging his head and  
stepping close)  
little guy ...  
(reaching out his hand for  
LAURA)

LAURA takes a step closer and takes THOMAS'S hand in her own.

LAURA  
I know you do. He loves you, too,  
Thomas. I don't want to see him  
get hurt.

THOMAS

(quietly)

I promise I won't hurt him ... or  
you.

THOMAS pulls her into an embrace. LAURA comes willingly. When THOMAS first kisses her gently, she responds willingly. When the kiss becomes more passionate, she begins to pull away. THOMAS scoops her up and heads for the bedroom despite the look of shock and horror on her face.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(shaking THOMAS'S  
shoulder)

Sir, Sir, wake up. You were having  
a bad dream.

THOMAS

(sweat glistening on his face)  
What? ... I, uh ... Where am I?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sir, you're on a flight to  
Australia. You were having a bad  
dream and saying something about a  
woman named Laura.

THOMAS

(turning red)

I remember now ... Oh, I'm sorry ...  
Did I disturb anyone?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Um, well ... you did get a little  
loud.

THOMAS

(resting his head against  
the back of the seat and  
sighing)

I'm sorry ... so sorry.

Camera pans a chapel full of people attending PHILLIP'S funeral. The several flower arrangements surround the coffin, which is closed. A framed 11 x 17 headshot of PHILLIP in his uniform rest on an easel behind the coffin.

PASTOR

Welcome, family and friends. It's  
obvious that Phillip touched many  
lives. He would be thrilled that  
you're all here today.

(MORE)

PASTOR(cont'd)

Before we get any further into the service, I would like to introduce Mr. Thomas White from New York. He has definitely come the farthest to be here today. Mr. White ...

THOMAS walks to the front of the chapel and takes his place behind the podium.

THOMAS

Thank you, Pastor Stevens. I appreciate the opportunity to share with all of you. It is a sad occasion. We've lost a very special family member, co-worker, friend ...

THOMAS nods toward or sweeps his hand across each group as he mentions them.

THOMAS

We may be sad today, but I know for sure that Phillip would want us to rejoice. I've never met anyone more certain about his eternal destination. While he may be looking down on us right now, I think he's probably far too busy worshipping the God he loved so very much. And he would want us to do the same. We'll miss him; there's no doubt about that. But he would want us to rejoice in the good God accomplished through his life. He wouldn't want us to praise Captain Phillip James. He would want us to spend this time praising the Lord Jesus.

Verbal affirmations from the congregation.

THOMAS

You may have noticed a child's drawing when you entered the chapel. That picture was drawn by a very special little boy. His name is Brandon. Brandon and his mom, Laura, were trapped on the elevator with Phillip, Nahla and myself. Brandon took to Phillip right away. You see, he desperately wants to travel. When he found out Phillip was a pilot, he wanted to book a flight right then and there to "Australia."

Chuckles from the congregation.

THOMAS

Brandon loves to draw. He used them to make other people feel better. No wonder Jesus taught us that we had to become like children. Brandon asked me to bring the picture you can see outside the chapel as his way of saying good-bye to Phillip. If you've already seen it, you'll notice two men standing on a cloud. One man is Phillip. The other is Brandon's father. He died in the Towers on September 11.

THOMAS sighs deeply.

THOMAS

That little boy has been through a lot. (slight pause) You will notice a number of people standing below the cloud. There is a lady with a little girl. Nahla was recently reunited with her daughter. Just an aside ... Nahla was raised Muslim, but because of Phillip, she has begun to seriously consider the claims of Christ.

Camera shows family members, many of whom are smiling through their tears.

THOMAS

Laura is holding Brandon's hand in the picture. The other man is a picture of me. Phillip definitely made an impact on my life, but so did Brandon. Some of you may know that I used to be in ministry. I walked away from the Lord, however, when my family died in a car crash. I used to fly with my family to Australia. Amazingly, Phillip remembered me. He was the pilot on at least one of those flights. God really is remarkable. Who would have thought I'd end up stuck on an elevator in New York with the same man?

PASTOR STEVENS  
 God loves doing things like that.

THOMAS nods.

THOMAS  
 That day, in that elevator, Phillip  
 just wouldn't let up. From what  
 I've heard that characteristic  
 marked his life from way back.

Nods of ascent and amens from the congregation.

THOMAS  
 (chuckling)  
 If I had been a violent man, I  
 think I would have popped him one.  
 He didn't direct all of his  
 comments to me, of course. But it  
 was hard to tune him out since he  
 was standing less than two feet  
 from me. As I said earlier, Phillip  
 wouldn't want me to stand up here  
 and praise him. I guess the Holy  
 Spirit really does know what He's  
 doing. God was working in my heart  
 despite the fact that I didn't want  
 to acknowledge it. To wrap things  
 up, I just want to thank you again  
 for letting me share with you.  
 Because of Phillip's persistence  
 and insight, instead of running  
 away from God, I've turned around.  
 I have a long way to go. But  
 because of Phillip and other caring  
 Christians, brothers and sisters in  
 Christ who are willing to give  
 me a chance I certainly don't  
 deserve, I'm back on the Narrow  
 Road. Phillip would want me to  
 challenge each of you ... If you  
 don't know Christ as your  
 saviour, don't let another day go  
 by without seriously considering  
 it. Pastor Stevens ...

THOMAS takes his seat, and PASTOR STEVENS returns to the  
 podium.

PASTOR STEVENS  
 Thank you, Thomas.  
 (directing his attention  
 to the congregation)  
 (MORE)

PASTOR STEVENS(cont'd)

Phillip has impacted people like Thomas all over the world. I have a stack of letters that will be read at the reception. Others of you who want to share what Phillip meant to them will be invited to do so after the letters are read. But now, instead of giving a devotional, I want to show you something Phillip prepared in the event of his death.

PASTOR switches on the DVD player and asks for the front lights to be dimmed. PHILLIP appears on the screen seated on a picnic table in a local park.

PHILLIP

If you're watching this, it probably means two things: 1) You may be missing me or wondering who will take your flight so you can be home for your daughter's birthday. Right, Colin? ...

A pilot in the congregation clears his throat. Other individuals chuckle.

PHILLIP

And 2) I'm having the time of my life.

(smiling)

I've been to enough funerals to know that it would be wrong of me to say, "Don't be sad." We are sad when we lose someone we love. We may even be sad when we've lost someone who has pestered the heck out of us ...

THOMAS squirms somewhat uncomfortably in his seat.

Laughing children run behind PHILLIP.

PHILLIP

(nodding toward the children)

And that's why I chose to make this recording here in the park.

Funerals are usually quiet times. There isn't a lot of laughter at the average funeral, but I do have one request ... I don't want an average funeral. I hope there are plenty of reasons for you to laugh. At least be happy for me;

(MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

I'm with Jesus. Obviously, my job on earth was done. At least I hope I accomplished all He wanted me to do. I made kind of a late start ... I guess I should tell you about that. Some of you might not know the story. My parents raised me to be a believer, but I didn't clue in until later. I can't count how many times I found my mum down on her knees. I just know she was praying for my salvation. It was her voice I heard that day on the plane, the day I took my first solo flight. My Cessna went into a dive. To this day, I don't know what happened. But I did know that it would be the end of my flying career, the end of my life, if I couldn't pull out of it. I was struggling with the controls and trying to reach the tower on my radio. And that's when I heard my mum. At first, I thought I was losing it. But I soon realized she was quoting Scripture. As a boy, she was my Sunday School teacher. I heard her read many passages. She would try to get us to commit at least one verse each week to memory. Until that day in the plane, I didn't know I'd actually been listening ...

More chuckles from the congregation.

PHILLIP

It's funny how we don't want to let our mothers down. Even as an adult, I felt bad that I couldn't believe the way she wanted me to. That all changed that day. I didn't make any elaborate promises, but I did pray - probably for the first time ever. I told God if He got me out of my predicament, I would check it out: this faith thing. I wasn't very spiritual. I don't think the phrase "faith thing" appears anywhere in the Bible, but it was the best I could do.

A ball lands at PHILLIP'S feet.

YOUNG GIRL

Could you toss that back, Mister?

PHILLIP lobs the ball back to her.

YOUNG GIRL

Thanks!

PHILLIP smiles and nods.

PHILLIP

As I was saying, I asked God for help. And He came through. He does that, you know? He meets us in the most unexpected places. Hopefully, my funeral is one of those places. I hope each of you senses God's Spirit right there with you. I don't want to bore you to tears.

(shaking his head)

Sorry for my choice of words. Many, maybe all of you, knew me well. But if there's even one person who hasn't heard my story, I want you to know it has nothing to do with me and the life I lived. It may sound cliché, but it really is all about Jesus. That day, in a Cessna on a collision course with the ground, I realized maybe I couldn't deal with everything that came along without some help. You probably all know I was very independent and just a touch stubborn ...

MALE VOICE

(in the congregation)

No? ... Sorry about that.

PHILLIP

Needless to say, I didn't crash. My plane came out of the dive, and I flew it back to the airport. The mechanics checked it over, and there didn't seem to be a thing wrong with it. As soon as I got home, I found the Bible my mum had given me, blew the dust of the cover and started my search. I started in Matthew. I knew the stories, but for the first time, I actually believed them.

(MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

I asked God to forgive me for being so bull-headed, and, from that moment on, I knew for sure that Jesus died for me. I knew that if I was ever in another plane that was out of control, I'd be safe - even if the plane crashed ...

There is a catch in a female family member's voice, and she blows her nose and sniffs.

PHILLIP

As a commercial pilot, my daily prayer has been that I would go down in a private plane, it that's the way my life was going to end. I hope I am never responsible for taking anyone's life. (shaking his head) Enough of that. I met many wonderful people throughout my life. My family. Friends. Co-workers. And my passengers. I hope you'll all forgive me if I centre out some people who are on my heart today.

(holding up a child's drawing and laughing)

Brandon drew this picture. I'm sure you've heard that I was trapped in a lift at the Empire State Building. Brandon was there, too. He sends me pictures almost every week. He wants to come to Australia so much. Hopefully, I'll have the chance to fly the plane when he does. His dad was killed on 9/11. He used to read to Brandon about a little boy who rode in a roo's pouch. Brandon's mum, Laura, told him it was just a story, but I don't think he believed her ...

(holding up the drawing again)

as you can see. Brandon, if you ever get to see this video, I want to thank you for all the pictures. You are a very smart little boy. Keep letting God's love shine through. Laura, you're doing a remarkable job. Keep looking up. God will get you through, even the toughest of times.

(MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

Nahla ... Nahla was the young Muslim woman who worked at the Empire State Building. She was on the lift as well. Nahla, I hope you found your daughter. But even more importantly, I hope you found the Lord. And Thomas ...

THOMAS leans forward in his seat.

PHILLIP

... I hope you're back in the pulpit before you see this. I know your family is safe and sound in heaven. By now, I probably will have met them. I'm sure they would want you to go on with your life. Theirs has only begun, and I know they look forward to the day when you'll all be together again. To the rest of you, I hope you forgive me for that little aside. I got Brandon's drawing today, and I don't believe anything is a coincidence. For some reason, God wanted me to acknowledge these four special people. My family should know by now that I've left them personal letters in my safe deposit box. To my fellow pilots, I pray that you'll come to know Jesus before your next flight. You're all highly qualified, but there are times when things are beyond your control. To all of you ... if you know Jesus, keep walking with Him. Never blame him when something unpleasant happens. Look for the bright side. God can bring good out of any situation. If you haven't committed your life to Christ, please pick up a Bible. I've given Pastor Stevens enough for each of you. I would like to leave you with my favourite Psalm. Psalm 91 says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover

(MORE)

PHILLIP(cont'd)

thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walked in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." God has saved me from many things, but the most amazing thing He ever did was save my soul. I'm with Him now, and I pray that each one of you will one day experience the joy that is mine today and for all eternity.

PASTOR STEVENS stops the DVD.

PASTOR STEVENS

The family would like to invite you to the reception to be held downstairs. I look forward to hearing how Phillip has impacted your lives. Shall we pray? Dear God, thank You for this faithful man and his words of challenge to each of us.

(MORE)

PASTOR STEVENS(cont'd)

May we look to You, knowing You  
can, indeed, bring something  
wonderful even out of our sorrow.

The congregation files out of the chapel.

THOMAS remains in his seat. He pulls the airline ticket out  
of his pocket.

THOMAS

(quietly)

God, I know I messed up on this one  
big time. Please forgive me. Thank  
You for Phillip's friendship and  
words of challenge. Thank You that  
You are well able to keep me safe  
from any terror that might come my  
way. I can't always go around it,  
but together we'll make it through.

Lights fade, but the sun streaming through the stained glass  
window envelops THOMAS.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun shines into Laura's house. But it's a dim, dusty  
sunlight. Thomas, Laura, and Brandon sit around the dining  
room table. They finish eating a meager dinner of potatoes  
and cabbage.

BRANDON

Thanks for dinner, Mister T.

THOMAS

I... You're welcome. I just wish I  
could've brought more.

LAURA

Don't be silly; we're just happy  
you're here.

THOMAS

Me too.

LAURA

Brandon, can you be a dear and  
clear the table?

BRANDON

Sure, mommy.

As Brandon takes the dishes into the kitchen, Thomas turns towards Laura. He's clearly troubled.

THOMAS

It's getting worse, Laura. More and more of my flock have strayed.

LAURA

I'm so sorry.

THOMAS

They're buying into that obscene, zero percent credit whatever-it-is. Not that I can blame them... First it was plane tickets, then insurance, then utilities --  
     (he glances at the row of  
     candles in front of the  
     lamp)  
 -- now the grocery stores... My poor flock will starve if they don't go along with this abominable credit nightmare.

LAURA

I'd rather starve than let them stick one of those chips in my wrist...

THOMAS

(shakes his head,  
 dismayed)  
 That devilish chip...

LAURA

Where did you get this food, by the way?

THOMAS

One of my congregation was keeping a garden; she believed the end times are upon us --  
     (looks up)  
 May we be ready, Lord. Keep us strong...

Someone KNOCKS on the front door.

LAURA

Excuse me a second.

THOMAS

If it's *them*, let me handle it.

LAURA  
Don't worry, everything will be  
okay.

As Laura leaves the dining room, Brandon sits back down.

BRANDON  
Is everything okay? I liked dinner.

Thomas pats Brandon on the head.

THOMAS  
God always provides, doesn't He?

LAURA  
(calling from the front  
door)  
Thomas!

Thomas gets up and runs to the front door.

THOMAS  
What's going on?

LAURA  
Them again...

Thomas sees two men standing outside the front door, dressed in slick, designer suits. One of them carries a mechanical device (the machine that inserts credit / computer chips in wrists).

LAURA  
I asked them politely, but they  
just won't leave.

THOMAS  
(getting angry)  
Is that right?! And who do --

Just as he's getting mad, Thomas sees a framed funeral / pilot photo of Phillip on a nearby coffee table.

THOMAS  
(calms down)  
-- I'm sorry. We know you're here  
to offer us the "chip," but we're  
not interested. However, I would  
love to interest you in a story.  
It's about a man who lay abandoned  
on a roadside.

One of the CREDIT OFFICERS smirks.

CREDIT OFFICER

We're not here to "offer" you the chip. We're here to offer you a choice between the chip and jail.

As Thomas steps between the Credit Officers and Laura, he sees that two police officers were standing out of sight.

THOMAS

What's going on?!

Brandon walks up to one of the Credit Officers.

BRANDON

Be nice to Mister T!

CREDIT OFFICER

We are. We're offering the deal of a lifetime.

THOMAS

My life belongs to God, not your company -- I choose jail.

LAURA

No! Thomas!

The police officers step forward, then force Thomas to the ground. Just then, a vicious light sparks across the sky, followed by a thunder clap.

The police ignore the first stroke of lightning, but they can't ignore the second, third, and fourth thunder-claps. In just moments, lightning rips across the entire sky, seeming to rip the atmosphere into pieces.

Thomas looks to the sky.

THOMAS

Do you see? Do you see Him?

The police officers and the credit officers look to the sky -- but all they see is lightning.

POLICE OFFICER

Forget it, he's crazy.

But when they look back down, Thomas is gone.

They race into the house, but Laura and Brandon have vanished too.

An inhuman SCREAM sounds out, louder than the thunder --

SCREAM  
Come FORTH!!!

The scream deafens the police and credit officers.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

The lighting casts garish shadows across a cemetery. People seem to be rising from the very earth --

CLOSE-UP: PHILLIP JAMES'S TOMBSTONE

We see Phillip's tombstone; some dead flowers rest in a vase. The lawn splits open, and a coffin lid explodes from the ground.

GOD  
Phillip James, Come forth!!!

Phillip rises from the grave. He's dressed in his pilot's uniform, and he glows like an angel.

He rises into the sky.

EXT. CITY SKY - CONTINUOUS

As Phillip rises into the atmosphere, closer to the lightning storm, we see distant MUSHROOM CLOUDS sprouting from the earth as the Apocalypse begins. Phillip doesn't seem to notice the devastation, however, because his eyes are fixed on the heavens.

He passes through the lightning storm, which gives way to an ethereal space of cloud and light. Others join him, in particular:

BRANDON  
Captain Phillip!

PHILLIP  
Brandon!

Phillip comes face to face with Brandon, Laura, and Thomas. Filled with joy, they rise together into the sky.

THOMAS  
God, thank you for your mercy.  
Thank you for your grace.  
(MORE)

THOMAS(cont'd)

Thank you for Captain Phillip, who was your instrument in showing me your truth.

Phillip smiles.

PHILLIP

You turned your life around -- I knew you had it in you.

They move, with a crowd of angelic people, towards a beautiful, peaceful man: Jesus. Surrounding Jesus, His people pray, give thanks, and worship. Some sing hymns, others ask Jesus questions.

LAURA

(tears streaming down her face)

Praise Jesus.

Phillip moves away from their little group.

PHILLIP

I need to ask the Lord about Nahla.

Just as the words leave Phillip's mouth, Jesus suddenly turns towards Phillip. Phillip is awed by the majesty and power of Jesus.

JESUS

Phillip James, you are a caring man, and were a good friend to Nahla; but she has backslidden. She chose to return to her Muslim faith, to be judged by the law rather than be saved by grace.

PHILLIP

No, Lord.

JESUS

It is my will that she face the Great Tribulation that cometh on all the Earth.

PHILLIP

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your grace and mercy. Your will be done.

Phillip is suddenly back with Thomas, Laura, and Brandon.

PHILLIP

Nahla lost her faith.

LAURA

Poor girl, it seemed like she had found her way. I felt so proud for her...

THOMAS

We know from the bible that she will have to endure three and a half years of Armageddon, after which Christ will destroy the beast with the Word of His mouth. We don't know the Lord's ways; maybe he needs her on earth during his tribulation...

BRANDON

Please, Jesus, keep Nahla safe...

They hold hands, and pray together.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSLIM BOOKSTORE - DAY

Lighting claps and shockwaves echo through a Muslim bookstore as Nahla tries to pull her daughter to safety.

NAHLA

What have I done?!

DAUGHTER

Did you do this mommy?

Nalha sees a book that lays open on the ground. The color plate in the book shows a picture of Armageddon.

NAHLA

I lost my way.

DAUGHTER

Can we find it again?

NAHLA

I hope so. I pray to God we can.

As SCREAMS and EXPLOSIONS echo through the bookstore --

FADE TO BLACK.