

"AFTER BLOW"

An original screenplay
by
J. Brian King

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FADE IN:

EXT. NHC-DAY

(SUPER) "The National Hurricane Center, Miami, Florida"

Building with catwalk, antennas, satellite dishes.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Robert Malloy, the DIRECTOR(50) of the National Hurricane

Center in Miami is looking over the shoulder of MAX Tuttle(45), deputy director and hurricane specialist who is watching several computer monitors. William P. DUCKWORTH(35) nurdy meteorologist is at a computer.

CLOSE on a monitor showing a satellite picture of a hurricane approaching the Florida panhandle.

DUCKWORTH

The pressures dropping, that's not good.

MAX

This storm you're tracking, what's the latest?

DUCKWORTH

Upper level steering, looks like a closed circuit circulation. It's down to twelve miles an hour. That's not good. Blank degrees Longitude, blank degrees Latitude, predicted landfall- Apalachicola!

MAX

Are you sure? Is that your best guess on it right now? Is it gaining strength? Are all your elements in synch?

DUCKWORTH

I've been monitoring this baby from ground zero. It's been following a North Easterly about twelve degrees for the past four hours. My forecast is dead on!

The NHC Director goes live on television and broadcasts the storm update.

DIRECTOR

A hurricane warning is now in effect for the central Florida Panhandle, concentrating on Gulf, Franklin, Wakulia and Taylor counties. Predicted winds of up to one hundred and twenty miles per hour are expected, and evacuation of coastal areas are mandatory! We are right at the threshold of a category three, with gale force winds, traveling North East at eighteen knots, and increasing in speed.

REPORTER

What kind of time frame do people have before they have to make a decision on evacuation?

DIRECTOR

In all actuality, there's not much time left for that. If they haven't done it in the next two hours or so, it will be too late.

CUT TO:

INT.ROOM-DAY

(SUPER)."Florida Emergency Management Operations Team, Tallahassee,Florida"

A SHERIFF (45),a National Weather Service METEOROLOGIST, The black MAYOR(50) of Tallahassee, two Florida Marine Patrol OFFICERS(30) three Florida State TROOPERS (30), a Red Cross female SUPERVISOR (40), An emergency management team LEADER(35), the Fire MARSHALL and several members of the PRESS are crowded into a civil defense bunker. The room has a dozen phones, a map of Florida, computers, and stacks of manuals on the table. The radio and television monitors report the storm.

LEADER

The waiting game is over. It's heading straight for Apalachicola. Mayor, I don't have to tell you that Tallahassee is right next door.

METEOROLOGIST

It's going to come ashore a little East of the original track, putting it right on top of us.

LEADER

For all of you that's been here before, and knows the strike probability, we are number one on the chart at eighty-six per cent. We need cooperation from everyone. We have a potential disaster on our hands.

SHERIFF

Based on the storm probability, we are looking at some kind of evacuation. I don't think there's any question about it.

TROOPER

We'll have to shut down the bridge and close highway ninety-eight, it always floods.

MAYOR

This is a very dangerous situation. Sheriff, initiate the master evacuation plan, and Fire Marshall Davis- you coordinate emergency services, and let's save some lives out there!

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

MAX

At sixteen hundred hours we've got reported land fall at blank degrees Latitude, and blank degrees Longitude.

Max points to Pensacola, Florida on the map hanging on the wall, mapping the storm's coordinates in hourly movements.

DUCKWORTH

What? That's impossible!

MAX

Congratulations Duckworth, you just wiped out Pensacola. Almost ten thousand people homeless, with an estimated body count of one hundred and forty.

DUCKWORTH

My calculations from the storm model put it ashore right at Apalachicola!

MAX

What's a hundred and forty miles between friends?

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM-DAY

You hear the NHC Director broadcasting from the television monitor. The room is still full of the emergency management team.

DIRECTOR

(OS)

Ladies and gentlemen this exercise is over. Thank you all for your cooperation in this simulation, in the event that this was indeed a real storm, hopefully we will do a better job of early prediction.

The group gets up, happy that the exercise is over.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

MAX

Better luck next time.

DUCKWORTH

I don't understand. My computer said...

MAX

(interrupts)

You must also know when the computers are likely to be wrong! That computer science degree you have can only get you so far. What happens if the computer breaks down? How many credits did you take in actual meteorology?

DUCKWORTH

Six hours.

DIRECTOR

As forecasters, we can't afford to forget the basics, or neglect the obvious. A human being has to make the life and death decisions to evacuate those people, and made in time. That's our job- hurricane specialists. We have to make those decisions ourselves, not mister Cyber over there.

CLOSE on Cyber 205 main frame computer.

DUCKWORTH

(humbled)

Yes Sir.

MAX

I'll bet you believe everything you see and hear on television too! Remember, forecasting is still an inexact science!

CUT TO:

INT- HOUSE DAY

Duckworth comes down the stairs to have breakfast with his pregnant wife JULIE (30) and his daughter CAMILLE(6). He is wearing a checkered short-sleeved shirt, thick glasses and a bow tie.

JULIE

(to Duckworth)

Good morning honey.

CAMILLE
I'm hungry. Mommy!

Duckworth kisses Camille on the cheek as he sits down at the table.

DUCKWORTH
Just coffee darling, thanks.

CAMILLE
I'm hungry. Can any one hear me?

JULIE
For the third time, would you like cereal or
an egg bagel?

DUCKWORTH
Maybe you're using the wrong approach.
Camille honey, what would you like for
breakfast?

CAMILLE
Mickey D's.

JULIE
Nice approach dad.

DUCKWORTH
I'm sorry sugar lips but daddy doesn't have
time for a happy meal this morning.

Camille starts crying and throws a temper tantrum.

CUT TO:

INT. McDONALD'S-DAY

Duckworth and his daughter Camille are sitting having breakfast. She is happily eating a bagel and playing with a cheap toy "Twister" possibly from the Wizard of Oz resembling a tornado.

CAMILLE
Daddy why do you always look like the
weatherman on TV?

DUCKWORTH

This isn't a costume sweetie, it's just the way I dress. Eat your breakfast.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

Duckworth enters a squad-room like area carrying a McDonald's bag.

He is greeted by Max.

MAX

Duckworth. How can you eat that crap?

DUCKWORTH

Survival tactics. Looks like we've got a live one brewing.

MAX

Leave the forecasting to the pro's. Would you get me a cup of coffee?

DIRECTOR

What have you got?

CLOSE on Satellite monitor showing cloud movement.

MAX

Disturbance. It's got it all. Positive conditions exist- particularly between Africa and ugh, the windward Islands. Pretty soon they're gonna pop, but it's surprising us at this moment.

DIRECTOR

'Tis the season. Nineteen names storms so far this year! Keep your eye on it.

Duckworth looks at the hurricane tracking maps latitude and longitude lines, keeping score of this year's storms.

DUCKWORTH

(excited)

The roaring forties and the screaming
fifties!.

CUT TO:

EXT.DAY-BEACH

Thousands of tourists are jammed into the overcrowded beaches of Miami Beach. It's a picture postcard day.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Max calls the director over to the computer satellite picture.

MAX

Bob!

(a beat)

Eight hundred eighty-five millibars,
twenty-six point one three inches of
mercury. It's gonna be a big blow.

INT.NEWSROOM-DAY

The Director is giving a live storm update
to the television cameras, from the
newsroom. There is a full court press
jamming the NHC.

DIRECTOR

As of twelve O'Clock noon, Tropical Storm
Charley has been updated to hurricane
Charley, whose co-ordinates are blank
degrees North and blank degrees West.

He points to it's location on the storm tracking map on the wall.

REPORTER

How big is the storm?

DIRECTOR

If you can imagine a storm being so tight
knit, and covering such a large area and
organizing so rapidly, it has the
characteristics that we fear.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

The fact that this storm generated its own atmosphere means it's likely to strengthen, like some of the storms that evaporated the Gulf. On the Fujita-Pearson scale, we're looking at a damage classification right now of a category four, and perhaps even up to a category five, although I must stress that that is a very rare occurrence.

REPORTER

When was the last storm of this size?

DIRECTOR

There was the Labor Day storm in thirty-five, and ugh, some of the storms that evaporated the Gulf...

We had hurricane Elicia, hurricane Friedrich in the Mobile area; Hurricane Elena back in eighty-five, a category four; you have to go back to Carla. Now Carla was also a large hurricane in 1961. And let's not forget Andrew in Ninety-Two.

REPORTER

What are the chances of hurricane Charley hitting South Florida?

DIRECTOR

The landing of these storms is very critical as to where the center of the hurricane passes relative to populated areas. As the population begins to increase along the coastline, a major hurricane is bound to strike the most vulnerable areas sooner or later.

REPORTER

What do you attribute your success in predicting a storm's path?

DIRECTOR

If it wasn't for satellite technology, we'd be in the dark. Over the Atlantic ocean, the birthing grounds for most violent storms it's basically data void. The satellite tells us where the storm is developing, so we can track its movements, and try and predict its landfall.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

Now with better information and excellent hurricane preparedness programs, we hope to keep the death count down.

REPORTER

If you are calling for mandatory evacuation of coastal areas...

DIRECTOR

(interrupts)

We have not said anything about evacuating anybody yet.

REPORTER

(continues)

I'm sorry. If evacuation of coastal areas is ordered, what advice do you have for those who want to stay and ride it out?

DIRECTOR

If you didnt want to evacuate? I have only one thing to say. Who's your next of kin?

(a beat)

The next storm up-date will be in one hour. Thank you.

REPORTER

Well there it is. You've been listening to Bob Malloy, the director of the National Hurricane Center. Reporting live for channel four, this is blank.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOLLOPS-NIGHT

(SUPER) "Satellite Down Link Receiving Station,

Wallops Island, Virginia"

A heavily guarded military structure surrounded by Barbed wire and attack DOGS. There are several down-link satellite dishes, and massive antennas within the compound. Two U.S. MARINE SENTRYs are patrolling the perimeter.

A camouflaged Hummer vehicle approaches the gatehouse and is stopped. Inside is L.A.(23) black male and HELMUT (32) a German rocket scientist. Both are dressed in Navy fatigues.

SENTRY # ONE

Good evening.

L.A.

Good evening, Corporal. We have some documents for Colonel Gray to sign.

SENTRY # ONE

Identification please-

HELMUT

For God's sake son, can't you see this bird on my lapel?

The sentry leans down and sees the full bird on Helmut's uniform.

The sentry quickly snaps to a very sharp salute.

SENTRY # ONE

Sir! I'm sorry- I've got orders to verify every occupant and every vehicle entering the compound- sir!

HELMUT

What's your name soldier?

SENTRY # ONE

Williams. Frederick J. Sir.

The second sentry suddenly appears next to the passenger side of the Hummer.

SENTRY # TWO

Williams, is there a problem here?

HELMUT

Not at all sergeant, I was just asking Corporal Williams here who his next of kin was...

Helmut pulls out a nine millimeter pistol with a silencer on it and shoots Sentry # Two in the head. L.A. puts a bayonet knife in the gut of Sentry # One. Both fall to the ground. The Hummer enters the compound.

(O.S.)

You hear dogs BARKING, the sound of two silencer bullets, then quiet.

CUT TO:

EXT. DISHES-NIGHT

You see several large satellite dishes and antennas.

CUT TO:

INT.WALLOPS-NIGHT

A war room filled with computers, radar screens, and satellite data manned by three WATCH KEEPERS. There is a large horizontal plexiglass map of the world indicating the position of satellites deployed in the upper atmosphere.

CUT TO:

EXT.WALLOPS-NIGHT

Helmut and L.A. move stealthily into position for assault.

They enter the doors of the compound.

CUT TO:

INT.WALLOPS-NIGHT

L.A. storms the control room. Three Watch Keepers are gunned down in a spray of bullets.

HELMUT follows with a leather laptop computer case.

CLOSE on computer image of the Earth sent from Space.

L.A.

(into radio)

Skywatcher, skywatcher, this is Gale Force leader, over.

SKYWATCHER

(O.S.)
Go ahead Gale Force.

L.A.
Sat com secured.

SKYWATCHER
(O.S.)
Well done.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

(SUPER) "GOES8 Weather Satellite, 22,300 miles above the earth."

NASA view of satellite in space.

CUT TO:

INT.WALLOPS-NIGHT

Helmut inputs diskettes into the computers, and busily types data on the keyboard using his laptop.

CUT TO:

EXT.SATELLITE DISH-NIGHT

Down-link satellite dishes slowly rotate towards the sky.

CUT TO:

INT.GCN-NIGHT

(SUPER) "Global Communications Network, Office of Space Tracking and Data Systems, Washington, D.C."

You see a WATCH KEEPER asleep at a computer station as the changes are being made.

CUT TO:

EXT.GCN-NIGHT

CAT LADY scales the outside wall and disconnects the security system.

CUT TO:

INT.GCN-NIGHT

She takes over the facility and kills the Watch Keeper and two SCIENTISTS. She breaks the computer's passwords and starts feeding data into their computers. She removes her diskettes and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT SATELLITE-SPACE

CLOSE on telemetry equipment aboard satellite being recalibrated and turning towards deep space, away from the Earth during normal 30 minute re-calibration cycle.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLEPS-NIGHT

HELMUT

Apogee kick motor now firing. Raising the perigee- adjusting the apogee...

CUT TO:

EXT. SATELLITE-SPACE

Small gas jets rotate the satellite and change it's position.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLEPS NIGHT

HELMUT

(continues)

Lowering twenty-seven degree orbital inclination point zero nine degrees, bingo!

CUT TO:

INT.WALLEPS-NIGHT

CLOSE on computer monitor showing satellite's telescope being manually turned by Helmut's joystick. When telescope is turned away to the void of deep space, the satellite feed goes black.

The satellite signal goes down and Helmut now inputs new video loops and signals of his own.

CUT TO:

INT.NOAA-NIGHT

(SUPER) "NOAA National Weather Service Control Center, Suitland, Maryland"

WATCHKEEPER sees satellite feed go blank. He calls NASA in Washington.

CUT TO:

INT. NASA-NIGHT

(SUPER) "National Aeronautics And Space Administration, Washington D.C."

A Space ENGINEER(50) answers the phone.

ENGINEER

Nasa-

WATCHKEEPER

This is NWS Suitland. We seemed to have lost our satellite picture.

ENGINEER

I'll get a tiger team right on it. We'll get you back up in a few nano seconds.

WATCHKEEPER

Appreciate it. We feel kind of naked without it.

ENGINEER

We'll keep those pretty pictures coming.

WATCHKEEPER

Standing by...

CUT TO:

INT. STATION- NIGHT

Helmut feeds false raw real time data into the satellite signal's direct computer feed.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH TOWER-NIGHT

An old fashioned weather vain is mounted above the bell tower of an old church.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH-NIGHT

In the basement of the church is SKYWATCHER's (68) Satellite Control headquarters, filled with computers, monitors, hurricane charts, photos, etc. He pushes a few buttons on his control panel-

EXT. SPACE

View of satellite showing laser signals from Earth bouncing off of it's antenna.

CUT TO:

EXT. NWS-NIGHT

The satellite picture comes back on line. Watch Keeper picks up the phone and dials.

WATCHKEEPER

You guys are good! Cancel the tiger team,
we're back on line.

ENGINEER

Thank the outer limits-
(a beat)

It was a lunar eclipse- an annual anomaly
of nature that fades us to black once a year.
We'll log it in.

CUT TO:

EXT. NHC-SUNRISE

View of satellite dishes and catwalk antennas at the NHC in Miami.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

The storm appears on the NHC computers in Miami.

CLOSE on computer satellite image.

MAX

We're looking good again from twenty three thousand miles out. Check your hair and make-up.

DUCKWORTH

Big brother is showing some strength.

DIRECTOR

It's taken a more Northerly course.

MAX

It looks like Charley's heading out to sea, away from the mainland!

DUCKWORTH

It's a little too early to tell. Wind speed is down to twelve miles an hour.

DIRECTOR

The depression is setting in- winds have increased, and the pressure is dropping.

MAX

According to my calculations, the Eastern seaboard is home free.

DIRECTOR

Well, this is where science takes a back seat to politics. We more or less have to forecast the worst kind of weather, rather than take a chance and have things deepen and go bad on us. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

DUCKWORTH

Excuse me sir, but crossing our fingers
into the wind, there must be a better way.

MAX

This is not an exact science. Sometimes we
have to go with our basic instincts.

DIRECTOR

I loved that film.

CUT TO:

EXT.POLES-DAY

Telephone poles and transmission lines along the coast.

CUT TO:

INT.TV STATION-NIGHT

Duped radar film loops of the storm are seen on local television.

First Alert.

CUT TO:

EXT.AFB-NIGHT

JESUS infiltrates Keesler Air Force Base and sneaks inside two C-130's
and plants explosives on board, then departs.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

Director doodles hurricane thumbnail sketches on a desk note pad. He
looks up at the monitor.

DIRECTOR

Charley's definitely heading North, thank
our lucky stars.

MAX

Just like I thought. Heading out to warmer
pastures. We can all breathe a little easier
now.

DUCKWORTH

What about the barometric pressure? It seems to be holding!

MAX

Why don't you get back on the dock, and let the big boys handle this one.

DUCKWORTH

Aren't we all on the same team here?

MAX

First you have to be a player, then we'll talk about teamwork. Maybe you should get that interface of yours out of digital land and look up at the sky once in awhile.

DUCKWORTH

There aren't any windows in here.

MAX

That's right. Hurricane proof! And speaking of hurricanes, I've got a job to do.

DUCKWORTH

But I've always thought that looking out the window was still the best way to see if it's raining.

CUT TO:

EXT.BLDG-DAY

(SUPER) "Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, Key Biscayne, Florida."

SCIENTISTS study the storm model.

CUT TO:

EXT.PORCH-DAY

Duckworth comes home and is greeted by his daughter on the front porch. She has a tea setting for two on the table.

DAUGHTER

Hi daddy!

DUCKWORTH

Hi sugar lips. How's daddy's favorite little girl?

DAUGHTER

I've been busy cooking all day. Would you like some tea?

DUCKWORTH

Oh I'd be delighted!

The daughter pretends to pour a cup of tea into her miniature cup and saucer.

DUCKWORTH

This is delicious.

DAUGHTER

Daddy why do you have weeds growing on the porch?

The daughter reaches for a clump of seaweed hanging from the wooden porch rail.

DUCKWORTH

That's seaweed, it comes from the ocean. Long before you were born sailors with big wooden ships would hang seaweed outside their homes. If it was wet to the touch, it meant that there was a storm coming, sort of a natural barometer. If it was dry, the weather would be nice and sunny.

The daughter reaches over and squeezes it.

DAUGHTER

Eeeewh! It's wet!

DUCKWORTH

(surprised)

What? Let me try.

Duckworth squeezes the seaweed. He then looks up at the clear blue sky and sees several seagulls flying inland.

DAUGHTER

Daddy, does this mean it's going to rain?

DUCKWORTH
Sweetheart, you are a genius!

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

Director picks up the phone and calls for aerial reconnaissance of the storm.

DIRECTOR
Recon., we need a fly-by into Hurricane Charley. The latest co-ordinates as of ten hundred hours is blank degrees North and blank degrees South.

CUT TO:

EXT. AFB-DAY

?(SUPER) "Hurricane Hunters, 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, Biloxi, Mississippi."

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT ROOM-DAY

PILOT #ONE and a CREW of six are briefed about the storm, and the plan of attack. A FLIGHT METEOROLOGIST(32) studies the latest satellite print out.

PILOT #ONE
I think what they want us to do is parallel the coast to a point West of the storm before we enter in.

FLIGHT METEOROLOGIST
Once we get a good heading for the storm, we should be able to paint the eye really well on the radar, and once inside we can mark the wind speed of the storm, the barometric pressure, and hopefully bring back some good news for the East coast as far as pinpointing it's position.

CUT TO:

EXT.RUNWAY-DAY

A C-130 "Hurricane Hunter" weather plane lifts off.

CUT TO:

INT.PLANE-DAY

PILOT #ONE

Heading looks good.

CO-PILOT

Hope we're not in for a roller coaster ride.

PILOT #ONE

What's the matter? A little under the weather?

CUT TO:

EXT.ENGINE-DAY

CLOSE on turbo-prop POV of the CO-PILOT (30) as a small explosive detonates and ignites the engine.

The plane starts to shake like a roller coaster inside.

CUT TO:

INT.PLANE-DAY

CO-PILOT

We've got a burn-out on the starboard side!

PILOT#ONE

This is Tango, Juliet One. We've lost engine number three! We've got to abort., We are returning to base. I repeat. We have lost engine number three. Please have emergency vehicles standing by.

CUT TO:

EXT.RUNWAY-DAY

The plane touches down safely, surrounded by fire trucks, who immediately put the fire out.

CUT TO:

INT.WALLOPS-DAY

Wallops Island facility is vacated by Helmut and L.A. with the computers on automatic pilot as satellite information is continuously being fed.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Max forces the Cyber 205 computer to read the simulated storm. The computer re-adjusts itself.

MAX

Come on baby, come to papa. That's it. I'll lead the way, you just follow.

CUT TO:

EXT.BALLOONS-DAY

A weather balloon is launched from outside the NHC.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

Director is informed of the planes aborted mission, and calls for a second C-130 Hurricane Hunter aircraft to take off.

CAPTAIN

This is Captain Davis with the fifty-third weather recon squadron- we had a little problem with hurricane hunter Tango Juliet One, we lost an engine and had to abort.

DIRECTOR

We need more data. It's East of the main shipping channels, and everyone is steering clear of the storm, we haven't been able to get any data on this one, and you guys are the only ones crazy enough to fly into it! This one is bothering me, how soon can you get another one up?

CAPTAIN

Two to three hours.

DIRECTOR

ASAP. Do your best Captain.

CUT TO:

EXT.AFB-DAY

Hurricane Hunter aircraft number two takes off and heads towards the storm.

CUT TO:

INT.PLANE-DAY

PILOT # TWO

This is Tango Romeo four, clear of runway two-niner-

AIR CONTROLLER

(OS)

Roger Tango Romeo four, head East two hundred and twenty degrees and climb to seven thousand feet.

PILOT#TWO

That's a roger, heading East two hundred twenty. Squawking one hundred nine point five.

CONTROLLER

(OS)

Roger one hundred nine point five. Have a safe flight.

CUT TO:

INT.PLANE-DAY

FLIGHT METEOROLOGIST #TWO

You're not going to believe this! I've got the storm on the radar already!

PILOT #TWO

What the hell? That storm is supposed to be four hundred miles West of here!

NAVIGATOR

Good job, good job! You're the bomb!

PILOT #TWO

Who's the bomb?

FLIGHT METEOROLOGIST

I'm the bomb! Pressure is nine six seven decimal nine! Winds two six five, two seven zero, moving at eight knots!

CO-PILOT

Stand by to mark! And we're going to mark it -now!

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH-DAY

Skywatcher pushes a small radio transmitter.

CUT TO:

EXT.PLANE-DAY

The C-130 explodes over the Atlantic.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH-DAY

CLOSE on radar screen, as the blip disappears from view.

SKYWATCHER

Now who's the bomb?

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Duckworth approaches the director. The satellite shows the storm heading out to sea on the computer.

CLOSE on computer screen

DUCKWORTH

Sir, what would you say if I told you that I think the storm may be heading our way.

DIRECTOR

What evidence are you basing this professional forecast on?

DUCKWORTH

There simply isn't enough data out there that we can rely on! Our radar system is from the sixties, the satellite keeps malfunctioning, and NOAA keeps cutting back funds-but the seaweed tells me there's a storm coming!

DIRECTOR

What? Seaweed?

DUCKWORTH

Uugh, yes sir. The seaweed on my front porch. It's wet.

DIRECTOR

You really amaze me. Just when I think I've heard it all, you come up with another wife's tale.

The phone rings. Duckworth picks it up.

DUCKWORTH

(into phone)

National Hurricane Center...

(a beat)

One moment please.

(to director)

We've lost Tango Romeo. Twelve minutes into the flight and it just disappeared from the screen!

DIRECTOR

Jesus Christ! What happened? Any survivors?

DUCKWORTH

(into phone)

Are there any survivors?

(a beat)

I see. keep us informed.

(to director)

The Coast Guard doesn't want to put any one else in harm's way, and won't start air or sea rescue attempts until the storm clears the area.

DIRECTOR

Something really stinks around here, and it's not the seaweed! We've got to inform NOAA in Washington.

DUCKWORTH

According to the latest co-ordinates, Charley is heading out to sea. Sir, don't you think that the chances of losing two planes in a matter of hours flying towards the same storm is highly suspect? We lost six men up there!

DIRECTOR

We really don't know that yet. They may have had to ditch the plane, and God forbid, they're floating around out there. All we can do now is wait and see what happens next.

CUT TO:

EXT.NHC-DAY

Duckworth steps outside just as a bolt of lightning and thunder explodes nearby. It scares the shit out of him. He crawls into the corner of the doorway and curls up like a baby, covering his ears in total fear of the lightning.

CUT TO:

EXT.SEA-DAY

Wild winds and huge waves churning the stormy seas in th open Gulfstream.

CUT TO:

EXT.MONUMENT-DAY

It is raining as Skywatcher places flowers on the hurricane monument of the no-name storm of 1935 in the Florida Keys.

SKYWATCHER

There's something wrong about being in the right place. You and mother had no time, yet I survived. Why? For what reason? Rain is simply the condensation of blood, sweat and tears of warriors slaughtered on the battlefields. I will never forgive mother nature for leaving your stripped, skinless bodies blasted to death by the merciless wrath of her powerful winds. Retribution is near.

CUT TO:

EXT.OCEAN-BUOY

A sea buoy covered with white bird shit and a rusted out antenna is violently churning from high winds in the middle of the Gulfstream.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Duckworth prints out the sea buoy data and brings it to Max.

DUCKWORTH

Sea Buoy ten degrees North, forty degrees West. Elevated levels indicating storm activity!

MAX

Rust never sleeps. Unreliable information. Who knows how many years that things been floating out there. It's probably covered with pelican shit. Look at the computers! There's nothing there!

CLOSE on satellite image of storm.

DUCKWORTH

But what if the computers are wrong?

MAX

Forecasting one o one- innacurate observations are worse than no observations at all! Let the hurricane specialists handle this one. We go by the book!

INT.NHC-DAY

Director is handed a print out by Duckworth.

DUCKWORTH

The Ocean water temperature is rising. An unusual global warming effect is...

DIRECTOR

(interrupts)

Oh Christ, That's all we need. For every two degrees the Ocean temperature goes up , it fuels the storm and could increase the winds an additional hundred miles an hour. When was the last reading?

DUCKWORTH

Two degrees in the last hour And climbing.

CUT TO:

INT.HANGAR-NIGHT

Jesus, L.A., Cat Lady, Helmut Nuckey and Skywatcher assemble weapons and gear unloaded from air freight containers. They change into Army fatigues posing as National Guardsmen and load into Hummers.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

Director calls his friend JACK (50) at the NWS in Suitland.

DIRECTOR

Jack, it's Bob. How's the wind blowin'?

JACK

Robert, you tell me! Don't rub it in. You're the one in the tropics. It's probably ninety degrees down there. It's cold as hell up here and the leaves are all gone. How's the new bunker?

DIRECTOR

Solid as a rock. I think it may actually be hurricane proof. Speaking of hurricanes, Charley has us all baffled. One minute it's heading for the Coast, the next minute it's heading out to sea.

JACK

Thank goodness!

DIRECTOR

Yeah. Have you had any problems with your computers?

JACK

We lost our satellite feed for a little while, but it came back on. Probably a malfunction during the calibration sequencing. Other than that, everything's purring like a fat cat.

DIRECTOR

Have you heard anything from Wallops Island? Maybe it's our phone lines, but I can't seem to get through.

JACK

They were going to send a tiger team over there to see about the satellite feed, but it came back on line. With the Federal budget crunch the way it is, I wouldn't be surprised if it was fully automated, with no funds to pay watch keepers. What's bothering you?

DIRECTOR

My big toe hurts.

JACK

Don't start with that natural barometer crap of yours, you're just getting old. If I hear of any other glitches, I'll let you know.

DIRECTOR

Thanks for your support.

JACK

If it'll make you feel better I'll take a ride over to Wallops Island for you. Say hello to Charley for me.

DIRECTOR

Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT.WALLOPS-DAY

Watch Keepers are at their stations, slumped over the computer monitors.

You hear the telephone RINGING continuously.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

Duckworth keeps studying the path of the storm, and watching old video loops of previous storms in the research library.

DUCKWORTH

Charley is taking the exact path of Hurricane Donna in 1960, almost forty years ago, with the same tight wind intensity of Andrew in 1992, and the same velocity of Gilbert in 1988, with a projected storm surge identical to that of Camille in 1969. That's impossible! Could someone have taken the worst scenarios of these previous killer storms, and combined a simulated version of all four storms built into one?

INT.NHC-DAY

Duckworth side steps Max and goes straight to the director and interrupts him during a television storm update in front of the media.

DIRECTOR

As of six O'Clock, Hurricane Charley's coordinates are Latitude, and longitude. We are happy to report that the storm has suddenly taken a turn for the North, which is good news for the East Coast. Once again South Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas can breathe a little easier for now.

DUCKWORTH

(interrupts)

Excuse me,sir...I have very good reason to believe that the data you have is incorrect.

News people start to whisper and then turn the cameras on Duckworth.

MAX

This better be real good Duckworth.

DIRECTOR

What are you talking about? This better not be another one of your folly's, Duckworth!

DUCKWORTH

I believe the satellite picture that you are looking at right now is over a decade old.

(OS)

You hear the entire room voicing their reaction.

DIRECTOR

That's impossible!

DUCKWORTH

We lost our satellite feed thirty-six hours ago for a short time. Long enough for someone to shut down GOES 8 and input false 'real-time' data through the land lines via computer.

Questions from the press begin.

NEWSWOMAN (28)

Are we talking satellite fraud?

NEWSMAN (32)

Are we looking at a simulated storm?

NEWSWOMAN # TWO(30)

Is there a storm out there, or not?

DIRECTOR

(chuckles)

Duckworth, you've been watching too many unsolved mysteries.

DUCKWORTH

I'm telling you the storm's path is identical to that of Hurricane blank in nineteen eighty-five, which spared the US. Someone is...

MAX

(interrupts)

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, that will be all for now, thank you.

DIRECTOR

What was that little stunt of yours out there? We have a hard enough time as it is getting people to listen to us without you putting doubts in the public's minds about the entire system!

MAX

(to Duckworth)

Listen Duckworth, you better crawl back into that little cubicle of yours and stay there!

Believing in his theory, Duckworth begins to accurately predict the storm's every move, before it happens.

DUCKWORTH

Sir. Just listen to me. At eight O'Clock this evening, two hours from now, I predict that the storm will travel North East three degrees and the winds will decrease twenty-three miles an hour down to one hundred ten Miles per hour.

DIRECTOR

You've embarrassed me enough for one day.

MAX

Your presence is not appreciated here. Shouldn't you be at home with your family? It's after five.

Duckworth leaves.

DIRECTOR

(rubbing his neck)

Something just doesn't feel right about this one. My back hurts, my corns ache...

MAX

The old natural barometer is acting up again?

DIRECTOR

What's your gut feeling? Do you think the storm is headed our way?

MAX

It's out there, but it's not coming here.

The director walks outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. NHC-DAY

The director looks up at the blue skies

DIRECTOR

I guess they're right.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE-NIGHT

You see Mrs. Duckworth reacting to the sound of several WIND CHIMES as the wind begins to pick up.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-NIGHT

Duckworth and the director hover over some computers.

DUCKWORTH

You see? it's moving exactly as I said it would! Do I have to predict the next twenty four hours? Someone is trying really hard to keep us from the truth!. How many planes and satellites do we have to lose before you'll listen to me?

DIRECTOR

Either this is one hell of a coincidence, or...

DUCKWORTH

Somebody takes out Wallops Island, feeds in false satellite data and in nano-seconds the data gets crunched into the main computer banks in Suitland. Bingo! We're looking at ten year old re-runs!

MAX

What makes you the expert all of a sudden?
 Didn't you learn your lesson about
 computers? This business about reading
 yesterday's newsreels is archaic. The
 government has spent millions of dollars
 updating our computers, so read 'em and
 weep!

DIRECTOR

Are we over-reacting?

MAX

I think his scenario is absolutely absurd!

DUCKWORTH

If we didn't look at all of our options sir,
 we'd be charged with gross negligence.

Max slips out and disappears from the NHC.

EXT. Max calls Duckworth via VHF radio and tells him that if he
 continues to support his hurricane theory, that he'll never see his family
 again.

INT.NHC-DAY

Duckworth apologizes for his 'folly' theory
 and supports the real storm policy of the
 NHC. However, the bug is planted firmly
 inside the director's head, and now he
 believes Duckworth's theory. Now
 Duckworth has to talk him out of it to gain
 safety for his family.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLOPS-DAY

US Marines enter and find the massacre inside.

INT.NWS-DAY

Marines break into NWS computer room
 and discover the 'Suitland Interrogation'
 device.

CUT TO:

INT.PENTAGON-DAY

COLONEL DAVIS (50) telephones the Director of the NHC.

COLONEL

Bob, this is Colonel Davis from the
pentagon.

DIRECTOR

Yes Colonel, what can I do for you? Is this
about the aircraft incident?

COLONEL

No, Bob. I'm afraid we have a major inside
leak out there.

CUT TO:

EXT.MIAMI-DAWN

There is a strange orange-yellow glow behind the skyline at sunrise.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH-DAWN

Skywatcher looks at the sky, and talks through a microphone.

A short monotone radio signal is heard.

SKYWATCHER

This is not a test of the emergency...

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

...broadcast signal coming to you from
Skywatcher.

(a beat)

Thought for today- red sky in morning,
sailor take warning.

Duckworth looks at the latest radar picture.

DUCKWORTH

Sir- the Dopplar radar. Two hundred and fifty miles out, at a speed of

eighteen miles an hour. It's Charley!

CLOSE on radar screen showing monster storm heading right for downtown Miami.

DIRECTOR

What?

The satellite feed goes black then static and a new picture comes on. This one showing a huge storm heading right for Miami, just off the Florida coast.

DUCKWORTH

The satellite! Holy shit!

DIRECTOR

Jesus Christ!

DUCKWORTH

Where did that come from?

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

Say hello to my windy friend!

DIRECTOR

Where is that coming from?

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

Robert, how do you feel?

DIRECTOR

What?

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

How do you feel? I don't know about you but my corn's are jumpin' and my shoulder's are nigglin'- and I feel a drummin' in my ears.

DIRECTOR

Who is this?

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

Do you have any misery in those old
broken bones of yours?

CLOSE on satellite image of monster storm.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH-DAY

Skywatcher is pacing inside the basement of the church talking into a wireless microphone.

SKYWATCHER

(continues)

The wind blows where it wishes, and you
can hear the sound of it, but cannot tell
where it comes from, or where it goes. So
is everyone who is born of the spirit.

DIRECTOR

Who is this?

SKYWATCHER

Call me skywatcher.

DIRECTOR

What do you want?

SKYWATCHER

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child-
and then all of a sudden, there it is. The
mother of all storms. I've been waiting a
long, long time for this.

DUCKWORTH

You're the one responsible for altering the
satellite!

SKYWATCHER

Do you like roller coasters? It's a love hate
thing.

(MORE)

SKYWATCHER (cont'd)

Some people you couldn't pay them enough
to get on one, yet others just live for the
thrill of it all.

DIRECTOR

What do you have to gain by putting so
many people in harm's way? You know
there's not enough time to evacuate!

SKYWATCHER

When the winds are in the East, tis neither
good for man or beast! Buckle up and
enjoy the ride!

The radio broadcast goes silent.

DUCKWORTH

This guy is really out there!

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-DAY

The director is giving a live storm update to the full court press.

DIRECTOR

A hurricane warning is now in efect for
Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and the
Florida Keys. Gale force winds exceeding
two -hundred and fifty miles per hour can
be expected. Tidal surges in the coastal
areas could reach up to twelve feet above
sea level. Please take safe shelter. Do not,
I repeat do not try and evacuate.

CUT TO:

EXT.AERIAL DAY

A mass exodus of crowded highways and clogged clover-leaves.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-DAY

DUCKWORTH

Sir, we've got a dangerous situation here. Charlie is running on all cylinders- people are on the beaches, tourists unfamiliar with the roads- this could be the big blow. Thousands could die!

DIRECTOR

(To Duckworth)

Category six and climbing. Winds gusting near the three hundred mile an hour mark. You were right all along!

CLOSE on television monitor.

The director watches a television news screen showing the mass exodus of vehicles on the clogged expressways.

DIRECTOR

My god, look at that! People out there are killing themselves to get out of town. Don't they realize that there just isn't enough time?

They both look at the real satellite image of the monster storm.

DUCKWORTH

Even a well planned evacuation would take a minimum of ninety-six hours- We've got less than twelve! It's time to dig in!

DIRECTOR

After Andrew, I don't blame them for not sticking around for this one. It's natural for anyone to be afraid, but knowing you're not alone during the storm can keep fear from escalating into terror.

CUT TO:

INT.STORE-DAY

CITIZENS in a frenzy fight over the last jugs of water, candles and canned goods.

CUT TO:

EXT.FLAGS-DAY

CLOSE on two gale force hurricane flags blowing violently from the winds.

CUT TO:

EXT.PLANT-NIGHT

(SUPER) "Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant, Dade County, Florida"

You see the ominous nuclear towers that provide electricity to South Florida. Hummers with antagonists arrive at the Nuclear power plant.

They take over the facility.

CUT TO:

EXT.MIAMI-DAY

The storm hits the coast. You hear CLANGING from sailboats and howling WIND, a storm surge breaks walls of water on South Beach's Ocean Drive Art Deco hotels.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-NIGHT

DUCKWORTH

Sir, we've got gusts over the three hundred mile an hour mark!

DIRECTOR

We can't measure winds that high!

EXT.NHC-NIGHT

Winds blow the antennas and satellite dishes off the roof of the building. Transformers on power poles are exploding, power lines go down as wooden poles break like toothpicks.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

The lights go out.

DUCKWORTH

We've lost power!

Duckworth lights an emergency candle.

DIRECTOR

Start the emergency generators! Re-boot the computers! Get back on line as soon as you can!

DUCKWORTH

The land lines are down sir!

DIRECTOR

Twelve God damned lines coming in here all dead, no power, no satellite feed, no radar..

CUT TO:

INT. GENERATOR ROOM-NIGHT

A WORKER starts the emergency deisel power generator.

CUT TO:

INT. NHC-NIGHT

Emergency power is restored inside. You hear a voice coming from the emergency radio broadcast.

SKYWATCHER

(OS)

It's ten P.M. Do you know where your batteries are?

DUCKWORTH

If you can hear me asshole, fuck you!

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH-NIGHT

SKYWATCHER

Is that you, Duckworth? I just love that name. My my, aren't we getting a little hot in there. Please!

(MORE)

SKYWATCHER (cont'd)
I'm trying to keep a G rating for this
project. After all, the greatest show on
Earth should be experienced by the entire
family, don't you think?

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

DUCKWORTH
(whispers to director)
He's got this place wired!

DIRECTOR
What are you some kind of fucking weather
freak? A real nature boy? I'll bet you get
off when it rains real hard!

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH-NIGHT

SKYWATCHER
No man can have absolute property over
fire, light, air or water, because of their
vagueness. I believe they call it 'fugitive
nature'. Each breath of air belongs to us
only as long as we breathe it, and then it
moves on. A raindrop belongs to everyone,
don't you think?

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

DUCKWORTH
Wherever you are are, We'll find you. I'll
track you down and...

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH-NIGHT

SKYWATCHER
(interrupts)
Really?
(MORE)

SKYWATCHER (cont'd)

From what I've seen, you can't even track something that's two hundred and fifty miles wide coming right at you!

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

DUCKWORTH

Don't fuck with mother nature! Just like Charley, you may feed on water, but you're gonna die over land!

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH-NIGHT

SKYWATCHER

My, my, my foul weather friend do you like paybacks? I'll give you one.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

DUCKWORTH

I'll take a rain check.

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH-NIGHT

SKYWATCHER

An eye for an eye. Enjoy the show.

Skywatcher, dressed like a National Guardsman puts on foul weather gear and leaves the church.

CUT TO:

INT.NHC-NIGHT

DIRECTOR

An eye for an eye...

DUCKWORTH

Revenge of some kind. I don't know what or why, all I know is we're right in the middle of it!

DUCKWORTH

(a beat)

An eye for an eye! Whatever he's going to do, he's going to do it in the middle of the storm! Who else would be crazy enough to go out into the storm? The eye of the hurricane! My last calculations give us about forty-five minutes of calm before the back side of the storm hits again!

DIRECTOR

We don't even know who this guy is. Sky watcher. Sounds like some kind of star gazer, or astrology nut.

DUCKWORTH

Yeah, I'll bet his moon rises in Cleveland! When will the eye reach downtown?

DIRECTOR

In about forty minutes.

DUCKWORTH

I've got to stop him.

CUT TO:

EXT NHC-NIGHT

Duckworth puts on yellow foul weather gear and heads out into the storm.

He jumps into a grey government pick up truck with NOAA logos and wind meters and antennas attached to the vehicle.

CUT TO:

EXT STORM-NIGHT

As Duckworth drives through the stormy, vacant streets, he is dodging trees, branches, fallen traffic lights and downed power lines. As he stops at one intersection, half of a gas station flies by in front of him, almost killing him.

The wind and waters are rising as the asphalt gives away beneath the truck, swallowing the road as he drives through the mountain of water in front of him.

He looks out and sees a boat helplessly burning in the Bay.

CUT TO:

EXT.MARINA-NIGHT

A storm surge leaps over the seawalls, and sends sailboats and power boats flying in the air, like toys.

Dead fish wash up on the sidewalks, eaten by stray dogs.

CUT TO:

INT.TRUCK-NIGHT

You hear a weather report broadcast on the truck radio.

(O.S.)

CUT TO:

MORE TO COME

Timeline has now been established. Duckworth has forty minutes to the target, and only forty-five minutes of calm before the storm comes back around. Duckworth figures out what Skywatcher's target is, and with no form of communications working, has to save the city himself.

EXT. AERIAL-DAY

POV of helicopter showing massive destruction of property: Houses with no roofs, trees downed, boats in the middle of the road, U.S. Army soldiers on patrol, looted store fronts, etc.

(O.S.)

You HEAR Buffalo Springfield singing "There's something happening here..."

FADE TO BLACK