

Script Analysis: "Flight" — Scene By Scene Breakdown

[Scott Myers](#)

Here is my take on this exercise from a previous series of posts — [How To Read A Screenplay](#):

After a first pass, it's time to crack open the script for a deeper analysis and you can do that by creating a scene-by-scene breakdown. It is precisely what it sounds like: A list of all the scenes in the script accompanied by a brief description of the events that transpire.

For purposes of this exercise, I have a slightly different take on scene. Here I am looking not just for individual scenes per se, but a scene or set of scenes that comprise one event or a continuous piece of action. Admittedly this is subjective and there is no right or wrong, the point is simply to break down the script into a series of parts which you then can use dig into the script's structure and themes.

The value of this exercise:

* We pare down the story to its most constituent parts:
Scenes.

* By doing this, we consciously explore the structure of the

narrative.

* A scene-by-scene breakdown creates a foundation for even deeper analysis of the story.

This week: *Flight* (2012). You may download the script [here](#).



Written by John Gatins, starring Denzel Washington, directed by Robert Zemeckis.

IMDb plot summary: An airline pilot saves almost all his passengers on his malfunctioning airliner which eventually crashed, but an investigation into the accident reveals something troubling.

Flight

Scene-by-Scene Breakdown

By Sharita Gopal

GoIntoTheStory.com

Page 2: NICOLE MAGGEN has earned money with massage. She makes a call, hangs up and gives in to answer the ringing phone.

Page 3–4: In a commuters hotel near the airport, WHIP WITAKER wakes up with TRINA, his young colleague. Empty beers, vodka and wine around. Phone call, he argues with his ex-wife about tuition for their son. Whip drinks beer and sniffs coke before he and Trina leave for the airport.

Page 5–6: On the plane, we meet MARGARAT THOMASON, a religious mature flight attendant and CAMELIA SATOU, young flight attendant. Whip meets KEN EVANS, young first officer. It's their first flight together. Whip is tired and asks Margaret for coffee and aspirin. There are 120 souls on board.

Page 8–11: Nicole visits Othello porn set in mansion and asks KIP for heroin. She refuses when Kip asks her to play Desdemona. Kip reminds her she was clean. He gives her for free 'Taliban', heavy stuff she may only smoke, not shoot.

Page 11–15: Back in cockpit. Bad weather: heavy rain, lightning, heavy wind gusts, yet Whip is ready to take off, while Evan is nervous. Severe turbulence at the take off. Evan indicates wind shear. Whip remains confident and doesn't want auto-pilot but fly self. Passengers are afraid and scream, bags and coats fall

out of the luggage bins. Attendants sooth the passengers.

Page 16–21: Whip sings and feels confident. They are cleared to flight level one. Plane takes another violent dip. Whip levels off to get out of the bad air.

Passengers scream but Whip is cool. Plain approaches maximum speed. Evan warns Whip for over-speeding. For Whip, he lies to ATC that they are climbing. He's anxious. Shaking of plane gets violent. Passengers scream. Evan warns they are going too fast. Whip keeps the plane climbing till it breaks through the cloud and he turns on the auto-pilot. Passengers and Evan are joyful, Whip, however, is shaky, and gives Evan order to take the plane home. He leaves the cockpit.

Page 22: Nicole finds FRAN the building manager in her apartment with her camera in his hands. She's angry. He wants rent and tries to seduce her. Nicole tricks him out of her apartment and says she'll bring the money after a shower. When she tosses her bag onto the floor, a needle comes in sight.

Page 23–24: Whip empties a bottle of orange juice half and fills it with the liquid of three small vodka bottles whilst he addresses the passengers. He throws the three empties in the galley trash and downs nearly half of the juice-vodka liquid.

Page 25: Nicole uses the drugs she got with a needle.

Fran smells the stuff outside and bounds on her door.

Page 25–26: *Whip has been passed out in the cockpit for nearly half an hour. Margaret suggest to wake him up right when the ATC orders to descend to flight level 30 thousand. When Evan dials 30000 into the auto-pilot and switches the thumb switch to 'descend' position, the plane suddenly pitches sideways. Whip awakes and Evan says the stabilizer feels stiff, he has very little trim control. Whip tells not to force it. We hear a mechanical SNAP. Margaret tells the passengers to strap themselves.*

Page 27–35: *THE PLANE PITCHES DOWN*

VIOLENTLY AND BEGINS A NOSE DIVE. Evan has no trim at all. They have lost their hydraulics and horizontal stabilizer. Whip alarms ATC that they are in an uncontrolled descend. ATC asks if they wish to declare emergency. Whip manages to get back some control. He gives Evan orders to lose fuel. Evan hesitates but follows orders. They are still in an uncontrolled dive and Whip declares an emergency and a heading to the nearest airport. Whip orders to dump the flags because he can't hold the yoke. The plane slows a bit and balloons up. Whip wants to revert to manual control but Evan is panicked, and gives in. Nothing changes. No control. They ask Margaret for help to reach Whips reversal pull handle.

Whip gives Evan order to drop everything that is

holding the plane down: more fuel. Whips declares an emergency and asks for a heading to the nearest airport. The plane continues to drop. Whip ROLLS THE PLANE OVER. Passengers are afraid and scream.

Meanwhile Nicole is rushed out of her apartment on a stretcher when the plane rolls over the building.

Page 36–40: Trina helps a boy get back in his seat when he falls out of his seat and brings him to his dad.

Engines are on fire en plane lose engine power. Whip has to put the plane down in the nearby field. Whip is in control. While the plane rolls over, Trina cracks her head and Camelia is hurt badly. The plane crashes down in an open field. Nearby is a church and people are praying outside. They witness the crash.

Passengers scream and shout. People come to help. Whip is carried out of the plane. Evan's head bleeds. Passengers are badly hurt.

Page 41–48: Whip awakes in hospital with Charlie Anderson at his bed. He congratulates Whip for saving many lives. 6 died, 2 crew. 2 NTSB officers visits Whip. Whip has a concussion and other ailments but nothing serious. He hears that Trina and Camelia has died. Mr. Anderson is the rep for the pilots Union and the contact person for NTSB. Margaret is okay, nothing severe. Co-pilot is held in coma due to brain trauma. Whip weeps. Whip doesn't call his family to visit him.

Whip calls HARLING for clothes, cigarettes and other stuff.

Page 49–53: The press waits in front of the hotel. Harling brings smokes and clothes for Whip. He dotes on how big a hero Whip is.

Page 54–60: Whip escapes to the fire stairwell to smoke and meets Nicole there. They smoke together a cigarette. Later a young man joins them who recognizes Whip. Nicole tells she's a heroin addict. She was a photographer, masseuse and washes hair in a salon. Her mother died of cancer. She cries. Nicole tells Whip where she lives when he asks for it. There is attraction between them.

Page 61–63: Harling picks Whip up from hospital, money and clothes with him. They pass the media circus in front of the hospital. He brings Whip to bring to his father's farm where he wants to be alone.

Page 64–67: Whip is at his father's farm. He ignores the media messages on his phone and cleans his house. He gets rid of medicine, beer, vodka, and weed. Whip is in the barn where photos, his stuff from before his divorce and his father's plane are stored. He gets rid of the alcohol in the barn.

Page 67–72: Whip meets Charlie Anderson and Hugh Lang, criminal negligence lawyer, at breakfast in St. Regis Hotel. NTSB runs the investigation. Hugh tells

Whip his tox report states that he was drunk and high on cocaine. Hugh is going to kill his tox report. Whip is not worried, he knows he landed the plane right.

Page 73–77: *Whip watches TV in the lounge of a hotel. Later, Whip buys 12 packs of beer and vodka. He drinks the vodka in the car.*

Page 78–82: *Whip visits Nicole in her apartment and stops the landlord Fran from hitting Nicole who owes him money. Whip pays him 400 dollars and takes Nicole to his farm. They spend an intimate night together.*

Page 83–86: *Hugh and Whip visit the crash site. Whip tells Hugh he drank the night before the flight and before the flight and used coke to straighten up but that's not the reason the crash happened. They see Ellen Block, the head of the investigation for the NTSB. Hugh is going to fight to place 'act of God' on the probable causes list. He wants Whip not to drink. Whip says he can stop. Hugh has arranged a meeting with the owner of the airline, Avington Carr.*

Page 87–90: *Avington Carr and his lawyers, the Union's boss, Charlie and Hugh discuss the legal side of the plane crash and their position. Carr is convinced Whip will go to jail. He wants to save his business.*

Page 91–92: *Whip watches home movies and has been drinking and smoking. Nicoles comes from AA*

meeting and finds Whip drunk in front of the TV. He passes out when he tries to move. Nicole takes care of him and the room.

Page 93–94: Nicole addresses Whip's drunk state much to Whip's frustration. They let it go and moment later, they share stories about their past. Nicole about her sick mum and how she got the camera. Whip about the farm, his dad and the plane.

Page 95–98: Whip visits church after the service for Trina has taken place. He meets Margaret and her son. He asks Margaret to say that it was an ordinary day and he had had only two drinks the night before. Margaret knows it's a lie and cries.

Page 99–101: Whip asks Nicole to have dinner but she can't because of her AA meeting. She asks Whip not to choose between the meeting and him. She invites Whip to come and he does, but he leaves early and visits the bar of a restaurant. He sees on TV his co-pilot Ken Evans being interviewed and leaves.

Page 102–105: Whip visits Evan and his wife in hospital to get a sense of what Evan thought caused the crash. Evan is angry at Whip for getting on the plane drunk. He can't fly again and his legs are crushed. He lets Jesus be the judge and asks Whip to pray with him and he does.

Page 106–109: Nicole finds Whip in the barn,

emerging from the Cessna cockpit. He wants to start over with her in Jamaica but she can't. She says he needs rehab. Whip is angry and says he chooses to drink and is happy. Nicole is afraid she'll start using again. She wants Whip to get help. Whip wants to clean up in Jamaica with her.

Page 110–111: *Nicole leaves Whip without saying goodbye and leaves behind a letter. Whip is angry at this.*

Page 112–114: *Whip drinks orange juice-vodka before he visits the NTSB hangar. Hugh is happy that in ten days there will be a hearing and it's about the condition of the plane, not Whip's condition. He has managed to get an act of God added to the list of probable causes. Remaining problems are two empty vodka bottles that were found in the trash bin. These could only be Whip's or Trina's. Whip, feeling guilty, reacts cynically, he had three. Hugh and Whip get in an argument. Hugh can't show up to the hearing with Whip in his current state. He asks Charlie to clean him up. Whip walks away from the meeting.*

Page 115–120: *Whip visits his ex-wife Deana drunk. She asks him to leave. His son WILL backs up his mum and asks him to leave. Will yells he doesn't know who the fuck he is. Whip leaves and finds outside the press waiting for him. He gives a short press statement and asks to leave his family alone.*

Page 121–122: Whip visits Charlie's house for a safe place. Charlie is angry at him for his behavior and doesn't believe anymore in Whip. Whips wants to heal and fly again. He begs Charlie to let him stay there till the meeting. Charlie allows if he stays sober. Whip promises.

Page 123–124: Whip and Charlie arrive in St Jerome Hotel, a day before the hearing. Whip is sober for 9 days and will stay there for the night with a security guard in front of his room. Hugh hands him a file on him and the investigation, to prepare him for the hearing tomorrow.

Page: 125–126: Whip can't sleep. He finds out the connecting room door is open. He studies the alcohol bottles in the refrigerator. For a moment he can resist their call but finally grabs a vodka bottle and more.

Page 127–134: On the morning of the hearing, Hugh and Charlie find empty alcohol bottles in the adjoining room and Whip's body lifeless body in the bathroom but he still breathes. Hugh wants to save the case. On Whip's suggestion, they call Harling who brings cocaine to straighten up Whip. They succeed at it.

Page 135–136: Before the hearing Whip gets mad at Charlie who instructs him how to lie about his drinking, something he knows very well and has been doing his whole life

Page 137–146: *Ellen Block says that research shows the accident was caused by technical problems. Whip lies under oath that he hadn't been drinking before the accident and on the day itself, and, he hasn't got a problem with alcohol nor drugs. When Ellen Block brings up Katherina and her drinking habit, and asks if she had been drinking on the flight, Whip's guilt speaks up. He confesses he drank on the flight, and also the days before the flight and on the day itself. He admits he's an alcoholic. He has reached his limits of lies.*

Page 147: *Whips tells his story in an AA meeting in Federal Prison. He feels free for the first time in his life and is grateful to be sober.*

Page 148: *Will visits Whip, his father, in prison to write an essay on the most fascinating person he has never met, his dad.*

Writing Exercise: I encourage you to read the script, but short of that, if you've seen the movie, go through this scene-by-scene breakdown. What stands out to you about it from a structural standpoint?

If you'd like a PDF of the *Flight* script scene-by-scene breakdown, go [here](#).

Major kudos to **Sharita Gopal** for doing this week's breakdown.

For an in-depth analysis of the movie, go [here](#).

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