

Screenplay

EXT. FARM COUNTRY - EARLY MORNING

TITLE READS: INDIANA, 1908

Miles of corn as far as the eye can see. Freight train angles from the distance across the expanse. Dark clouds menace the horizon. In the foreground a farmhouse, an island in this sea of green.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
You'll pardon me if I wax a little poetic, story like this deserves the full color of words because that was one miracle baby.

INT. NURSERY - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Morning light filters through open window along with the sound of birds singing as a **BABY** lay in a crib.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Typical farmhouse with a giant oak tree growing nearby.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
Started out a morning like any other.

Discarded piece of paper flutters improvisational dance in jagged morning breeze that eddies the structure.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
The five-fifteen out of Ferguson rumbling towards Rhodesburg on a rendezvous with destiny. Or maybe it was fate.

The train rides its rails, thundering across the fields.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
That's the problem, there is a difference between fate and destiny.

The house, tranquil as the paper flutters about.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
Fate chooses you. You choose destiny. Or is it the other way around? Anyway...

In concert, birds cease song, drowned out by a growing thunderous sound even louder than the train.

(CONTINUED)

MASTER WU (V.O)  
...what some view as good others  
view as bad. Now that's context.

Air grows still. Paper, losing accompaniment, pulls towards ground.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
Like this idyllic image...

Atmosphere sucks away, vanished to vacuum while paper dissipates without a trace.

The house vanishes, bag and baggage, completely from sight.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
...ripped asunder. Which actually  
seems mild given what happens next.

The Ferguson locomotive crashes nose first into the vacant footprint of the farmhouse. A beat later, giant oak smashes like a hammer to pound the engine further to ground.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
Creating another kind of context  
when viewed through the lens of  
destiny. Or maybe fate.

Turning from this spectacle reveals a path of destruction unlike any imagined as ground and a town are jaggedly ripped apart. In the distance the tornado can still be seen dancing havoc with its devilish wrath.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
On those rare occasions where fate  
and destiny cross paths legends can  
be born out of context.

People, like zombies, begin to appear from shelter.

EXT. CABBAGE FIELD - DAY

A young **FARM WOMAN** walks the field carrying a wicker basket of cabbage in her arms. An indistinct sound catches her attention and draws her towards a small rise in the field.

Her eyes go wide at what she sees before her.

MASTER WU (V.O)  
Now fate had it so they found that  
baby in a cabbage field unscathed.

The woman drops her basket, cabbages scattering, and stoops to pick up the baby who seems none the worse for wear.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EDGE OF CABBAGE FIELD - DAY

The woman runs up the road holding the baby tightly to her bosom. Tears trace down her countenance to meet a huge smile that lights up her soul.

FARM WOMAN

It's a miracle! Look what I found!

A **GROUP OF FARMHANDS** milling about some equipment in a staging area turn towards the commotion. The woman runs up and they rally around her, jumping for joy.

EXT. MAIN STREET - RHODESBURG - DAY

**TOWNSPEOPLE** swell into what's left of the main street and surround the farm woman, baby in arm, and her entourage of farmhands as they make their way proudly up the street.

They stop in front of a dais where the town **MAYOR** happens to be making a speech about rebuilding the town. The farm woman holds the baby up and the mayor takes the bundle.

The mayor holds the baby out, offering it back to whomever it belongs. One after another people shrug or shake no.

MASTER WU (V.O)

Yet no one claimed the baby since  
its familiars had literally been  
scattered by the four winds.

The mayor pulls the baby back, tucks it into the crook of one arm and sweeps the crowd with the other.

MASTER WU (V.O)

Then destiny made a village of  
survivors rally to lovingly raise  
this child their communal own.

The crowd raises a cheer along with many hats in the air.

MASTER WU (V.O)

From that day, forever  
rechristened, Tornado Rider Rhodes.

The mayor bangs his gavel on the lectern, sealing the deal.

An old codger, in a battered, bent, and dusty top hat, at the rear of the crowd, turns to address us. It is **MASTER WU**.

MASTER WU

And that's just the beginning of  
this legend.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

TITLE READS: "SOMEWHERE OVER SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA - 1938  
- 30 YEARS LATER"

Heavy clouds buffet and batter each other and the Douglas DC-2 Cargo Special that bullies its way through wind and rain. On the nose of the plane a painted logo - a pin-up girl astride a tornado and the words "Tornado Rider Rhodes".

INT. COCKPIT - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

We see the backs of pilot and co-pilot - their distressed leather bomber jackets sport the same tornado logo peaking above the top of the crew seats with their names embroidered above. The co-pilots' reads: Callahan - the pilot: Rhodes.

CALLAHAN

Feels like cargo shift. Gonna check  
it out.

**RHODES** gives thumbs up before taking over the controls as **CALLAHAN** climbs out of his seat, exits.

INT. CARGO BAY - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

Callahan picks his way through a jumble of wooden crates all seemingly stenciled with the innocuous "Machine Parts", righting boxes as he goes.

Towards the rear of the bay several tall crates set apart. One has its side panel partially coming off. It creaks with the sway of the plane.

The creaking catches Callahan's attention as he passes and he turns to re-affix the panel. When he does it bursts open, forcing him back with a crash.

A **JAPANESE SOLDIER** pushes his way out and clobbers Callahan on the noggin - out for the count.

**MORE SOLDIERS** and an **OFFICER** emerge from the other crates.

INT. COCKPIT - DC-2 - MOMENTS LATER

Rhodes flies the plane, oblivious to the goings on in the cargo bay until the cockpit door opens and a gun cocks.

JAPANESE OFFICER

You will kindly fly myself and my  
men where we need to go.

(CONTINUED)

Rhodes doesn't flinch, instead, matter-of-factly cinches two cords to the steering yoke, kicks a couple of blocks under the pedals - makeshift auto-pilot. Gets up and removes the leather and shearling flight cap while turning around. A whirlwind of fire red curls untangle from the cap.

RHODES

Who the hell are you?

JAPANESE OFFICER

So, our pilot is a woman. This will make the trip much more enjoyable.

RHODES

Enjoyable? That's your second mistake.

JAPANESE OFFICER

Second?

RHODES

First, was getting on my plane without bein' on the manifest.

Punctuation lands her right cross to his chin, KAPLOWY! The intruder stumbles backward as Rhodes grabs for his gun arm, rolls into him, putting herself between him and the weapon. A shot explodes from the firearm, ricochets round the cabin.

Rhodes pushes her opponent backwards out the cockpit.

INT. CARGO BAY - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

Rhodes swings the officer and gun around towards the horde of troopers charging forward to help.

RHODES

What the hell? Nobody move!  
Callahan, use a little help here.  
Got more passengers than Pan Am.

The gang of Tojo's finest stop dead in their tracks.

JAPANESE OFFICER

Get her, you fools!

Troops back on the march as Rhodes grapples at the gun hand and another bullet hastens to delivery. Men dive for cover.

Callahan shakes off grogginess, picks himself up, goes after the closest soldier, BAM! Works his way forward one by one.

(CONTINUED)

CALLAHAN

On it, Tornado.

The officer swings Rhodes back around as another shot rings off and hits one of the steering cinch cords, snapping it. The plane lurches to one side as everyone takes a tumble.

Rhodes scrambles back into the cockpit to right the plane.

The officer picks himself up and goes after Rhodes but stops short at the door when his face meets the heel of Rhodes' boot. He falls backward into the cargo bay.

RHODES

And that's three. Hard and fast,  
you're not on this plane unless  
you're a package, 'cuz we don't  
take passengers.

He starts to get back up and Rhodes is on him punching hard, sending him down for the count, but not before the gun fires, piercing the fuselage, hitting the left engine.

Rhodes grabs the gun and dives back into the pilots' seat.

RHODES

Callahan, stop monkeying around!

Callahan, holding two soldiers by their heads, gives them the coconut treatment before heading towards the cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

Callahan slips into his seat.

CALLAHAN

What's the "sitch", Skipper?

RHODES

Want the good or the bad?

CALLAHAN

Gimme the bad.

RHODES

Lost a crap load of altitude.  
Number one took a bullet and caught  
fire. Top it off, we got a mountain  
range somewhere in front of us.

CALLAHAN

What's the good?

(CONTINUED)

RHODES  
It's Friday.

Callahan flips a switch for the extinguisher. Nothing.

CALLAHAN  
Good enough. Extinguisher's shot.

RHODES  
Damn it, Callahan, told you to service that thing. Gotta work twice as hard in this world just to break even. Not like I got superpowers here to keep things from going sideways. And you know I hate when things go sideways.

CALLAHAN  
Yeah. No, it's literally been shot.

A bullet hole on the panel just below the switch.

RHODES  
Right. Guess we'll do it the old fashioned way. Hang on to your hat.

CALLAHAN  
Crap, not the Calcutta Corkscrew.

JUST THEN! A Japanese soldier, awoke from nappy time, bursts into the cockpit, goes for Rhodes - hands at throat.

RHODES  
Feel free to roam about the cabin.

Rhodes cranks the wheel hard, one way then the other, slamming her assailant's head against both walls of the cabin which sends him down, out for the count.

RHODES  
Hell am I supposed to fly the plane you let the cargo crawl all over?

CALLAHAN  
Check. Soon as we're done here.

Rhodes scans the horizon.

RHODES  
There you are. Strap in.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The DC-2 begins corkscrewing through the air heading towards a particularly dark looking cloud while flames trail out one engine compartment. The cloud envelopes the plane.

INT. COCKPIT - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

A murkiness invades the cockpit.

RHODES

Popping the cork on this baby.

CALLAHAN

Really hate this move.

In the back, soldiers flop about as if in a clothes washer.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Plane pops out the other side of the cloud - a vortex of water follows behind while lightning bolts stab after.

INT. COCKPIT - DC-2 - CONTINUOUS

Callahan bracing against the wall and ceiling of the cabin. The plane stops corkscrewing, noses upwards.

RHODES

And she's out.

CALLAHAN

Think I'm gonna be sick.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The plane pierces the clouds revealing a star encrusted sky, left engine trails smoke as they sail into the night.

INT. CARGO BAY - DC-2 - LATER

Callahan is packing the Japanese soldiers back in their crates. He holds the officer in a bear hug by the chest. Rhodes walks back from the cockpit, cups in hand.

RHODES

Java?

Callahan drops the officer like a sack of old laundry.

CALLAHAN

Oh, cup of the bean.

He grabs a cup, slurps at the liquid covetously.

(CONTINUED)

Rhodes stoops, goes through the officer's pockets, pulls a map from one. Unfolds it on top of a crate.

RHODES

See where he was headed.

The map, mainland China, red circle shows a destination.

CALLAHAN

Qinghai Province. Gateway to Tibet.  
No fighting going on there.

RHODES

Pop a crate.

Callahan gets a crowbar and pries the lid off one of the smaller crates marked "Machine Parts". Inside, weapons.

CALLAHAN

Huh? Guns. Who'd a thunk?

RHODES

There ever a crate marked "Machine  
Parts" wasn't full of guns?

CALLAHAN

What's in crates marked "Guns"?

RHODES

Gonna need a new manifest.

CALLAHAN

Bet you never dreamed you'd end up  
carrying this lot?

RHODES

You're right, cuz I don't dream.  
That's one thing in life will let  
you down. There's our spot.

She points out a town on the map.

CALLAHAN

Lhasa, what's there?

Rhodes heads back to the cockpit.

RHODES

Got a guy.

CALLAHAN

Yeah? Which number's this one?

RHODES

278. Always be number one to me.

CALLAHAN

You say that about all of them.

Callahan, distracted, picks up the Japanese officer and drops him in a crate.

CALLAHAN

(to himself)

Must be where machine parts go.

EXT. SILVER MINE - GROOM LAKE, NEVADA - DAY

Rugged unquenchable earth hosts building and accoutrement standard to the industry of mining as operatives go about their trade.

TITLE: THOMPSON SILVER MINE, GROOM LAKE, NEVADA - FUTURE SITE OF AREA 51

A **CADRE OF PROFESSIONAL/MANAGEMENT TYPES**, led by mine manager **TED MATHEWS**, rush to meet the Pitcairn PCA-2 Autogyro that's landing in an open expanse of the work area.

Just as the flying contraption kisses earth **BLAZE THOMPSON** launches himself from the passenger compartment and strides purposely towards the group.

BLAZE

Better be worth my time. Price of silver ain't doing me any favors.

MATTHEWS

We found something, sir.

Thompson pushes right through them and continues towards the mine. This now puts Matthews at the rear of the group as everyone turns to follow like a hatch of ducklings. Matthews vainly tries to regain his position.

BLAZE

Unless you found the Hope Diamond, gonna be hell to pay shutting down this mine.

FREDRICKS

What we found is probably more valuable than the Hope Diamond.

This pulls Thompson up short. He turns to **FREDRICKS**, the only person not kowtowing, and the engineer in the group.