

"The more I see, the less I know for sure"
John Lennon

PASSENGER LIST

a mystery fiction podcast series
from PRX's Radiotopia

Episode 1.02 - "Flock of Geese"

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An intercepted recording of conversation in the cockpit or before the plane took off.

We hear THICK CHATTER in the offing. Overhead compartments CLOSING. Passengers settling.

Pilot HELEN MCPHERSON (40's, American, normally very on top of things but here she's a bit... distant, or cold) radios in to the tower for departure clearance.

HELEN

Heathrow Ground, Atlantic 702.
Boeing 737-800, stand 110 with
information KILO, 1,015 millibars,
request IFR clearance to JFK.

A BRITISH MAN's voice filters through. We only pick up half of what he says through the CRACKLE of the radio.

GROUND CONTROL

Atlantic 702, Heathrow Ground. Good
evening to you. Cleared JFK, WOBUN
3G, squawk 5879.

HELEN

Cleared JFK, WOBUN 3G departure,
squawk 5879, Atlantic 702.

GROUND CONTROL

Atlantic 702, read back correct.

HELEN

Roger that.

The door to the cockpit CLOSES, immediately sealing away the sounds of the flight crew and milling passengers. Co-pilot ZAHID NEJEM (30's, American, a smooth flirt) surprises Helen.

ZAHID

Not a bad evening, right? I'm
Zahid.

HELEN

Hi. Where's Jackson?

ZAHID

He the usual co-p?

HELEN

Yeah.

ZAHID

Yeah, they called me to stand in. I
think they tried to call you.

Beat.

ZAHID (CONT'D)

Everything OK?

HELEN

I suppose it'll need to be. We're already running tight.

ZAHID

Sorry 'bout that – got here as soon as I could. You wanna run through the list?

HELEN

Yeah, here, I already got started.

This gives Zahid pause...

ZAHID

You started the list without me?

HELEN

Do you want us to be later than we already are?

We hear Zahid FLIP THROUGH some PAPERS – the flight binder.

ZAHID

OK. Parking brake?

HELEN

Set.

ZAHID

Throttle?

HELEN

Idle.

ZAHID

Fuel flow?

HELEN

Cut off.

ZAHID

Flaps?

HELEN

Flaps up.

ZAHID

Spoiler?

HELEN

Did they say what was wrong?

Beat.

HELEN (CONT'D)

With Jackson.

ZAHID

Uh, said he called in sick. Maybe he got the flu that's goin' around. I'm Zahid by the way.

HELEN

Oh. Helen McPherson.

ZAHID

Nice to meet you.

A KNOCK at the pilot door. We hear it UNLATCH and OPEN.

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We've got the manifest for you, Captain.

HELEN

Oh thank you, Linda. How we doing back there?

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

All set. The sick lady's off the plane.

HELEN

Her bags off too?

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(positively beaming)
Yeah!

HELEN

Ground personnel cleared? Everybody buckled up?

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yep!

HELEN

Lovely, then let's arm the doors and cross-check.

AMERICAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yes, Captain!

The cockpit door CLOSES again. Silence.

ZAHID

The list.

HELEN

What's that?

ZAHID
We haven't finished.

HELEN
("this isn't necessary")
I know that. What's left?

ZAHID
Spoiler?

HELEN
Retracted.

ZAHID
Fuel quantity?

HELEN
Full up.

ZAHID
Heading indicator?

HELEN
Set.

ZAHID
Radios and avionics?

HELEN
Set for departure. All good?

ZAHID
(mimicking Flight
Attendant)
Yes, Captain!

HELEN
(amused, warming to him)
Oh, so you're a funny one? Shall we
comfort our sheep?

Helen GRABS the PA.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.
This is your captain speaking. My
apologies for that slight delay. We
had a sick passenger to escort off-
board and we were waiting for my
hilarious co-pilot to arrive, but
we're all settled now and cleared
for take-off.

Helen DOCKS the PA.

ZAHID
Just so you know, I *am* hilarious.

HELEN

Oh, I have no doubt. Hey, can I try your headset? Mine's a little fuzzy.

ZAHID

It's not working?

HELEN

No, it's working it's just... fuzzy. Just gimme yours.

ZAHID

Here ya go.

Helen puts on the headset.

HELEN

Heathrow ground, Atlantic 702 ready to taxi.

The British Ground Control's voice filters through again.

GROUND CONTROL

Atlantic 702, you can go ahead and taxi to delta two-niner, should be a company seven-three-seven you can line up behind.

HELEN

Roger that, ground.

We hear the ENGINE perk up a bit

ZAHID

I love night flights.

HELEN

Yeah?

ZAHID

Yeah. Flying west especially. When you land it's still night, and you get to sleep in your own bed.

HELEN

That sounds bleak.

(off his silence)

What, you're the only one who can make jokes?

ZAHID

(chuckling)

You're dry - I like that.

HELEN

So where you from?

ZAHID

Jersey.

HELEN

Any kids?

ZAHID

A 4-year-old boy and a 7-year-old girl. What about you?

HELEN

Nope. I did the husband thing. Didn't work for me.

ZAHID

(darkly comic)

I'm not so sure it's working for my wife, either.

HELEN

Excellent. Sounds like we got something to talk about for eight hours.

ZAHID

... We'll see if we make it that long.

GROUND CONTROL

702 clear for take off.

HELEN

Roger that...

(into PA)

Cabin crew prepare for take-off...

The engines start to ROAR. The plane starts to move.

ZAHID

(beat)

What about you? Got anyone waiting for you back home?

HELEN

No one.

The plane accelerates along the runway...

The noise gets LOUDER and louder, then cuts off.

2.2 TITLE SEQUENCE NEWS MONTAGE

2.2

A shortened version of the title sequence with the following extra clips:

NEWS ANCHOR

(In studio)

Atlantic Airlines has today confirmed reports that the co-pilot of the missing Flight 702, Zahid Nejem, was a last-minute replacement. He was called in after the scheduled co-pilot...

MUSLIM WOMAN

(A heated studio debate)

Every time something like this happens the first question anyone asks is, "Were there any Muslims on board? Who were they? Why were they there? -"

OTHER GUEST

But there's a reason why we ask these questions -

MUSLIM WOMAN

No! No! We are not the terrorists and yet you insist on implying we are...

JACKSON

(talking outside his house, camera shutters clicking)

I keep thinking what would have happened if I hadn't been sick. Would things have turned out different? I guess we'll never know... I'm - I'm sorry, that's all I have to say.

Reporters shout questions. Music fades out.

TITLE: "PASSENGER LIST - EPISODE 2 - FLOCK OF GEESE"

2.3

INT. HUGE HANGAR. AIRCRAFT TESTING FACILITY - DAY

2.3

BEEP at start of recording. FOOTSTEPS. Kaitlin walks with FRANK GARZA (50's, engineer who talks like a mechanic, gruff, not very delicate). Kaitlin is playing the role of politely interested student.

KAITLIN

So... what do you do here?

FRANK

Well, we have to test anything the planes could come into contact with when they're up in the air.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

So, it's mostly water and ice -
like, a lot.

KAITLIN

How much?

FRANK

Five tons of water per minute,
almost two tons of ice per minute.
More than they experience when
they're flying, just to be safe.

KAITLIN

That's insane. And you do birds,
too?

FRANK

Yeah. We shoot them in there
frozen, whole, to make sure the
engines can handle it. Otherwise
you'd have planes going down left
and right.

KAITLIN

And you can actually show me this?

FRANK

Kaitlin, I'm just glad a young
engineer like you is interested.
Here. FIRE IT UP, BOYS.

BEEPING, ALARMS. Then, a GROWING HIGH-PITCHED SCREECH that
becomes AN IMPOSSIBLY LOUD WHIRRING ROAR, LIKE A VACUUM THE
SIZE OF A SCHOOL BUS. IT'S A JET ENGINE.

ENGINEER 1

Engine's on!

ENGINEER 2

Engine's on!

ENGINEER 1

All go! Fire in the hole!

FRANK

(screaming)

THAT CANNON'S GOT 10 BIRDS IN IT.
YOU READY?

KAITLIN

YEAH.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. With each boom, there's a
corresponding, FLASH-QUICK CRINKLE SOUND.

The engine TURNS OFF, it goes from vacuum roar to high-
pitched scree to whoosh to silence.

KAITLIN (CONT'D)

The engine turned them into powder.

FRANK

Yeah! A 20-pound bird's like a gnat for a jet engine.

KAITLIN

OK, but birdstrikes do bring down planes sometimes, right? Isn't that why, uh, Atlantic 702 crashed?

FRANK

I mean, yeah, it's possible.

KAITLIN

(playing it cool)

You don't think there was a birdstrike?

FRANK

I mean, it coulda been a birdstrike. But, look, doesn't mean the birds are what brought down the plane. I mean, you just saw what these engines can take. When birdstrikes result in a crash, it's usually the pilot freakout that brings it down. They hear the sound, they feel the plane lurch and they overcorrect.

KAITLIN

OK, so, it was the pilot? Then why blame the birds then?

FRANK

Well, definitely wasn't just birds. My personal opinion is they didn't want to blame the pilot 'cause she was a woman. Not good for PR, you know?

KAITLIN

Uh, I guess.

FRANK

Oh, hey, I'm not saying women are any worse as pilots than men.

KAITLIN

No, I know.

FRANK

Just like I don't think women are any better or worse than men as engineers.

KAITLIN

Frank, it's fine.

FRANK

Just, I don't wanna, like, discourage you from engineering. 'Cause, you know what? This job is pretty great.

KAITLIN

Yeah I – I get it... So with 702, maybe the geese hit, and the pilot panicked, and then...

FRANK

She coulda hit the damaged engine with too much thrust, or over-applied the rudder, or tried to climb altitude to give herself time to test the engines, or decreased the speed, lost airflow. Any of that can cause a stall, and then there's more panic. If she was still running one engine and things were too asymmetrical, the plane coulda spun out. There's a lot that could go wrong. Most crashes, at least three-quarters of 'em, it's pilot error. Or co-pilot error.

KAITLIN

What's co-pilot error?

FRANK

When the co-pilot doesn't tell the pilot they're doing something stupid. See, that's why you see more crashes in Asia than you do in the west. Co-pilots there don't like to challenge the pilot's authority – it's a cultural thing.

KAITLIN

(offended)

A "cultural thing"?

FRANK

(off Kaitlin's look)

Not like that. There were some articles a few years ago...

KAITLIN

(skeptical)

Right. So you think Zahid Nejem wouldn't challenge Helen McPherson because he was Asian?

FRANK

Atlantic 702 was a 737 that was only four years old. I've tested that exact engine hundreds of times. It'd take a whole lotta turkeys to bring that bird down. Dozens, all at once, with the worst luck in the universe. So, yeah, if you're askin' me, it was the people in the cockpit.

KAITLIN

OK, well, if that's true, then the question's whether it was an accident or not.

FRANK

Yup. But that question's way over my pay-grade.

2.4 EXT. SUBURBS – DAY

2.4

Kaitlin approaches a house. We hear the sound of kids PLAYING inside.

KNOCK KNOCK.

LITTLE BOY

Someone's at the door!

LITTLE GIRL

Mom, a lady's at the door!

DONNA NEJEM (30's, a mom you would trust with everything).

DONNA

Hi. How can I help you?

KAITLIN

Ms. Nejem?

DONNA

... How can I help you?

KAITLIN

My name's Kaitlin Le.

(she freezes)

Um... I don't really know how to... I'm sorry. Could you – could you come outside?

Door OPENS.

DONNA

Are you here about Zahid?

KAITLIN

Yeah, I am.

DONNA

Please tell me you're not a fucking reporter. 'Cause I thought we were done with all that.

LITTLE GIRL

Mom, you said a bad word!

DONNA

Go to your room, both of you.

LITTLE BOY

Who is that?

DONNA

It's one of daddy's friends.

That shuts them both up promptly.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Just give Mommy a minute, OK?

LITTLE GIRL

(sweet & obedient)

Come on Logan, let's go upstairs.

KAITLIN

I'm so sorry, Ms. Nejem. But I'm not a reporter. My brother was on 702.

DONNA

Oh.

(closes door)

I'm sorry for your loss. But, what are you doing here? How do you know where I live?

KAITLIN

I know, I'm sorry, it's just... It's been really hard for me to move on. Because I feel like there's still so much we don't know.

DONNA

I understand.

KAITLIN

You do?

DONNA

I'm a therapist. But even for me this has been...

(she sighs)

(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

It's not easy for anyone to process when they haven't found the plane or the bodies.

KAITLIN

Exactly. And I can't help but feel like we still don't know what happened.

DONNA

You don't think it was birds in the engine?

KAITLIN

To be honest, I don't.

Beat.

DONNA

What you're doing isn't healthy. You know that, right? How old are you Kaitlin?

KAITLIN

21.

DONNA

Why aren't you in school?

KAITLIN

I am. Kind of. Technically, I am.

DONNA

I don't think you're in school.

KAITLIN

(rushed)

Zahid was Muslim, right?

DONNA

(offended)

Excuse me?

KAITLIN

I just have a few questions about the nature of... how he was Muslim.

DONNA

You're lucky you're a kid, otherwise I don't know what I'd be doing right now.

KAITLIN

I'm sorry - I know this must be hard to talk about.

DONNA

(furious)

Must be hard to talk about? Are you doing this to all the other families? Making accusations about their husbands being terrorists –

KAITLIN

I –

DONNA

Do you want me to give you DNA evidence that Zahid wasn't an extremist? Do you wanna maybe take a look through the house?

KAITLIN

No, no –

DONNA

'Cause I think there might be a few boxes in the attic that the FBI didn't look through.

KAITLIN

I didn't come here to upset you.

DONNA

Really?

(off her silence)

I went through all this with the investigators, and the reporters, and every asshole who tweeted at me and invaded my email account.

Dogs BARK in the background.

KAITLIN

Look, I had to deal with the FBI, too. So I understand what you're going through, 'cause... that's what I'm going through. It's just – for me, I feel like I should be asking questions. There are things that I didn't know about my brother. Things that I – Are you gonna tell me you never wondered? You never wondered if maybe there was something about him that you didn't know?

She's hit a nerve. Donna softens, turns a bit sullen.

DONNA

I'm a wife. You wonder what you don't know about your husband all the time.

KAITLIN

Well, then that's what I'm here about. Those... dark spots.

DONNA

He had been spending more time at the mosque before the plane went down, but not because he was radicalizing. It's because we were separated. Because I found out he'd been sticking his dick in a British hooker during his overnights in London. Now, does that sound like someone who's very devout to you?

KAITLIN

I'm - I'm sorry. But people... people can be hypocrites. You know, they say they believe in one thing and then the way they act... says... something else.

Donna goes silent for a beat. She starts to get emotional.

DONNA

He begged me over and over to forgive him. He said if I didn't then he could never forgive himself.

(beat)

The worst part of it is I was going to let him come home after a few more weeks. I just wanted him to stew in it a little bit longer, you know? And I didn't want him around to see me crying and crying. And now he's just gone.

(beat)

I'm sorry. I need to go and... check on our kids.

The door CLOSES. We hear the children through the door.

KAITLIN

... Jesus Christ.

We hear her walk down the steps. Suddenly we:

CUT TO:

2.5 INT. MOSQUE - DAY

2.5

We hear MEN SPEAKING ARABIC. Laughing. Being convivial.

KAITLIN

Hello?

The men go SILENT. It's eerie.

IMAM KASSAB
(warmly)
Hello, miss, how can I help you?

KAITLIN
Um, I'm looking for Yousef Kassab.

IMAM KASSAB
I am Imam Kassab. Why don't we step outside?

The men LAUGH.

KAITLIN
Is there something wrong?

IMAM KASSAB
Generally women don't enter this part of the mosque. Please excuse my friends.

KAITLIN
... You're excused.

IMAM KASSAB
Right this way.

We hear them WALKING. A DOOR OPENS. They walk through it.

IMAM KASSAB (CONT'D)
Right through here. So, what brings you our way?

KAITLIN
Uh, look, listen, before we talk, I just - I want you to know, I respect your religion. I am not here to offend you.

IMAM KASSAB
I'm very interested to hear what comes next. But why don't we start with your name?

KAITLIN
I'm Abby. Abby Connors.

IMAM KASSAB
It's lovely to meet you, Abby. Is this your first time to a mosque?

KAITLIN
No, actually. It's not.

IMAM KASSAB

You didn't mention who you worked for...?

KAITLIN

I um... freelance...

(beat)

New York Times, Washington Post... Time... you know.

IMAM KASSAB

I see. You've done well for someone so young.

KAITLIN

I know you previously spoke to the authorities about Zahid Nejem.

IMAM KASSAB

I see...

KAITLIN

Please don't walk away, I'm sorry. I just, I have a few -

IMAM KASSAB

I'm not moving, Abby. I have nothing to hide, because Zahid was absolutely not an extremist. You can ask me whatever you like.

A bell RINGS in the background.

KAITLIN

I spoke to Zahid's wife. She said the reason Zahid was spending more time here is that they were separated. But I don't know if that's true.

IMAM KASSAB

We often don't know what's true between husbands and wives.

KAITLIN

So, do you think it's true?

IMAM KASSAB

As a matter of fact, I know it's true, to the best of my ability, because Zahid spoke endlessly to me about his guilt over his family. But I think it's wise of you to be suspicious, because in my experience spouses usually keep secrets from each other.

KAITLIN

Do you think Zahid could have felt so guilty that...

IMAM KASSAB

That he would want to take down a plane? No, I don't.

KAITLIN

How can you be sure?

IMAM KASSAB

Why don't you trust the authorities to do their job?

KAITLIN

Because they haven't given us enough information.

IMAM KASSAB

You mean they haven't told the public the details of Zahid's marriage? That he sinned as all of us do, and that he happened to attend this particular mosque?

KAITLIN

I'm just trying to get answers.

IMAM KASSAB

I ask you this without judgment: Why do you believe that you are better suited to getting these answers than the government?

KAITLIN

I don't. I might be the only one who's still asking. Is it possible that Zahid started attending a mosque in London, and did they maybe have a more radical interpretation of Islam than the one you teach?

IMAM KASSAB

I would say that if the authorities did not explore that option, then they would be very bad at their jobs. And I would be willing to bet that no passenger received as much scrutiny from the investigators as Zahid, due to his being a Muslim in the cockpit of a plane that crashed.

KAITLIN

We don't know that it crashed,
and... you didn't really answer my
question.

IMAM KASSAB

I did, but you have a very specific
frame, and you are looking for my
answers to fill.

KAITLIN

I don't understand what that means.

IMAM KASSAB

... No, to my knowledge, Zahid was
not attending a mosque in London.
Please, Kaitlin, if there are any
other questions, I would be glad to
answer them, but -

KAITLIN

How do - how do you know my name?

IMAM KASSAB

Don't look so scared. Donna called
me. She told me you might be coming
by. Next time you're doing this, I
might recommend that you not let on
that you've spoken to someone I
might know.

(beat)

Have you considered that this
tragedy may not be the product of
undetected malice, Kaitlin? Have
you considered that maybe it really
was just an accident?

KAITLIN

Of course I have.

IMAM KASSAB

But that doesn't work for you?

KAITLIN

Look, you may be at peace with how
little we know, but you didn't lose
someone. You don't know what this
feels like -

IMAM KASSAB

I think you'll find that I did lose
someone, Kaitlin. Zahid was a part
of my congregation.

KAITLIN

Right... of course. But you did everything you could, and you don't have to deal with this - this guilt

-

Kaitlin stops herself.

IMAM KASSAB

Guilt? Kaitlin, you are not responsible. Surely you must understand that.

KAITLIN

I'm responsible for what I do now.

IMAM KASSAB

You look scared, Kaitlin. Can I call someone for you?

KAITLIN

I'm not scared. And no, I'm fine. I... I will be OK.

IMAM KASSAB

Inshallah.

She WALKS away.

2.6 INT. CAFE - DAY

2.6

Kaitlin sits in a cafe. She placing an outgoing call. BEEP... BEEP... then.. the distorted voice of Dylan...

DYLAN

Kaitlin.

KAITLIN

It wasn't birds. Even if they hit the birds, that isn't why the plane went down.

DYLAN

You really shouldn't call me unless it's an emergency.

KAITLIN

I thought you said this app was safe - we couldn't be traced.

DYLAN

That's when I initiate. Your phone could be traced if you call me on an unprotected network.

KAITLIN

We're fine, OK?

DYLAN
(sighing)
What's going on?

KAITLIN
I don't think it was Nejem. He
would've been the number one
suspect, and if this was a cover-up
they would've scapegoated him in a
second.

DYLAN
Mhm.

KAITLIN
What do we know about this pilot,
Helen McPherson?

DYLAN
"We" don't know anything, "we" are
not a team.
(Dylan says something
garbled away from the
phone)

KAITLIN
Where are you?

DYLAN
Getting coffee.

KAITLIN
Oh, right.

DYLAN
What?

KAITLIN
Nothing. It's just - I guess I sort
of forget you're a real person, not
just a weird voice on a phone.

DYLAN
It's probably best if you keep on
thinking of me that way, though -
as a disembodied voice.

KAITLIN
Yeah, you're right.

Dylan sighs.

DYLAN
She was Air Force, single, didn't
have much of a life. I've done a
little poking around, but - so,
what, you think she brought the
plane down?

2.7 INT. DINER – DAY

2.7

Kaitlin speaks with HENRY JACKSON (30's, nice guy who's a bit wounded). We hear RESTAURANT SOUNDS in the background.

HENRY

You swear you didn't tell anyone
you were talking to me?

KAITLIN

Mr. Jackson, I swear. You've got
nothing to worry about.

HENRY

'Cause Atlantic made me sign a
bunch of papers. And they... If
they ever found out I talked to the
press or anyone else about the
crash, they – they can ruin me.

KAITLIN

Then why agree to talk?

HENRY

Because I'm a human being, and
sometimes you need to talk about
the thing that almost killed you.
(beat; admitting:)
I can't believe I signed those
papers. They... they gave me money.

KAITLIN

Don't let them make you feel like
you did something wrong.
(beat)
Why couldn't you fly on 702?

HENRY

Well, I woke up in the hotel in
London, and I could barely move. My
throat felt like sandpaper, had a
fever. Was either a really bad
cold, or maybe the flu... I called
in sick.

KAITLIN

Lucky call.

HENRY

No one 702 touches is lucky. Now I
got my own stuff going on in my
head.

KAITLIN

What do you mean?

HENRY

I wonder about Helen.

(beat)

I think about it a lot, what it must have been like for her at the end. We flew that route together for a long time.

KAITLIN

Has the, um, airline gotten you help?

HENRY

I don't work for them anymore. I quit a month after the accident.

KAITLIN

Because of your mental health?

HENRY

My mental health is fine. It's normal to be a bit screwed up after something like this. I can still do my job - I'm probably better at it now.

KAITLIN

So why'd you leave?

HENRY

I didn't like the way the management handled things.

KAITLIN

After the accident? What do you mean?

HENRY

... Before the accident.

WAITRESS

More coffee?

HENRY

Uh, yeah, sure. Thanks.

We hear coffee POUR into a mug.

WAITRESS

Can I get you guys anything else?

KAITLIN

(quietly, to waitress)

No thanks.

(after a beat, addressing Henry)

Henry, do you think they could have stopped it?

HENRY

I don't want to speak bad about her. Helen's a good pilot. Was.

KAITLIN

You're not speaking badly about her.

HENRY

I did speak badly about her though. I told management she wasn't doin' the checklist. I told them she had this... dark edge.

KAITLIN

As in - like - depressed dark?

HENRY

I don't know. She was cold. She snapped a lot. And I think she was really lonely. She was a great pilot, but she was just too... used to being in charge, I guess. She took shortcuts.

KAITLIN

And you told the airline this?

HENRY

A few times, yeah. They never did anything about it. Look, lots of pilots don't take the checklist seriously.

KAITLIN

OK, well, what's the kind of thing you can miss if you don't do the list?

HENRY

Oh, god, I mean... How much time do you have? The preflight checklist has like 30 different things to check, and 12 of them could bring down a plane on their own if they failed. But it wasn't just the list - she was - she just... Helen was very comfortable in that cockpit. Kind of... too comfortable. She was more interested in... talking.

KAITLIN

About what?

HENRY

Anything and everything. But mostly - she wanted to talk about our lives. My life.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Who I was, you know, who I was, you know... dating. All of it. Pilots and co-pilots – they get to know each other insanely well. Imagine having eight hours to talk with someone four times a week. It's... a weird thing. For some people it can become its own relationship. At least, I know it was for her. She didn't really have anyone else in her life – at least since her husband left a few years back.

KAITLIN

Did Helen seem OK to you? Like, mentally?

HENRY

I don't think she'd ever hurt anyone. But a couple of times, she made a joke about depressurizing the cabin.

KAITLIN

What does that do?

HENRY

It knocks everyone unconscious. That's how the pilot on Malaysia 370 brought the plane down. Helen – Helen would say, "What if we put the sheep to sleep? We could have the sky to ourselves." But I think she was joking. I'm pretty sure she was joking.

(beat)

But if she skipped one of those steps on the preflight list and the oil pressure was off or the de-icers weren't working, the –

KAITLIN

So, the airline said it was birds, but really it could have been –

HENRY

It could have been a million things. A million ways to die.

(beat)

Look, I tried to warn them. I did.

2.8 INT. OFFICE. ATLANTIC AIRLINES – DAY

2.8

A KNOCK at the door. Kaitlin sits down with JENNIFER WONG (30's, an Atlantic Airlines executive whose job it is to liaise with and comfort the families of 702, the sky could be falling and she'd encourage us that things will be OK).

JENNIFER

Kaitlin!

KAITLIN

Hi...

JENNIFER

Please have a seat.

Kaitlin SITS.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

It is so nice to see you, Kaitlin.
How've you been?

KAITLIN

I've been holding up.

JENNIFER

I'm really, really happy to hear that. We missed you at the survivors' meeting. Oh - can I get you something to drink?

KAITLIN

I've already been offered bottled water by eight different people.

(beat)

Look, Jennifer, I wanted to talk because I have questions. I mean, I still have questions.

JENNIFER

Of course you do. I totally understand.

KAITLIN

I have questions about the pilot and the co-pilot.

JENNIFER

I hear you. That makes total sense, Kaitlin. I would, too. But Atlantic Airlines has to be really careful, because we have to follow legal guidelines for privacy, and those guidelines include -

KAITLIN

No, Jennifer, I know you're just doing your job. But I know that Henry Jackson filed complaints with the airline about Helen McPherson - complaints that went unanswered. And then the plane crashed.

(MORE)

KAITLIN (CONT'D)

So should I try talking to a reporter or do you maybe wanna tell me a little bit about the pilot and co-pilot?

JENNIFER

(typing)

... One sec, I need to, um...

KAITLIN

(sighing)

Look, you don't need to do that. You don't have to email your superiors, OK? I'm not going to cause a problem for you if you just treat me like you'd want to be treated.

JENNIFER

(finding her firmness)

You just threatened me, Kaitlin.

KAITLIN

I didn't threaten you, Jennifer. I told you I'm going to talk to a reporter about Atlantic Airlines making a big fucking fuck-up. That wasn't your fault, so I'm not threatening you, but I know you know about the investigation. So if you can just tell me what's going -

JENNIFER

You spoke to Henry Jackson? He told you he made a safety complaint about Helen McPherson?

KAITLIN

Yes.

JENNIFER

... These incidents - when something terrible happens with a plane - they don't just affect the families of the deceased. The impact can ripple throughout all kinds of people, especially people who work for airlines, and people who work in cockpits most of all, I imagine. Henry - unfortunately I think Henry may have been a survivor, in his own way.

KAITLIN

I don't think he invented that complaint, Jennifer. He said he made it before the flight. He said he complained a few times.

JENNIFER

He told you that he was sick? He said that's why he couldn't fly the day of the accident?

KAITLIN

Yeah, he did.

JENNIFER

Huh. I'm only telling you this because... I would have questions, too. And I'm kind of impressed that you won't stop asking them.

(beat)

Henry Jackson found out a formal complaint had been made against him. By someone.

KAITLIN

Wait, the – the pilot made a complaint about him?

JENNIFER

I can't answer that question. But the relationship between pilots and co-pilots can get very... layered.

KAITLIN

Are you saying Jackson and McPherson had a relationship?

JENNIFER

No, I'm saying they flew together for three years, and I don't really know what it was like between them.

KAITLIN

OK, but whatever it was ended up with each of them making complaints about the other.

JENNIFER

Those are your conclusions.

KAITLIN

So you think they had a relationship, and it went bad, and maybe –

JENNIFER

I don't know what happened. And now we'll never know.

KAITLIN

And we'll never know if she was skipping her checklists.

JENNIFER

Helen McPherson was a pro, like all our former Air Force pilots. They don't crack. I know it's not satisfying to hear that it was a birdstrike, Kaitlin. But that's what it was. No pilot would have been able to save a plane in the one-in-a-million chance that both engines blew over the Atlantic.

KAITLIN

Birds can't blow both engines.

JENNIFER

It's happened before, Kaitlin.

KAITLIN

Not over the Atlantic flying at 30,000 feet.

JENNIFER

Barnacle geese migrate over the flight path at that altitude, Kaitlin. The scientists wrote that report, not us.

KAITLIN

Then why didn't they radio for help?

JENNIFER

Because Helen would have spent every last second trying to keep them up in the air.

We hear Kaitlin SCOOT her seat back and stand.

KAITLIN

... Right.

JENNIFER

You don't need to go. We can talk as long as you like.

KAITLIN

No, I - I have to go to class.

JENNIFER

I really would love to see you at the next survivors' meeting. 'Cause Kaitlin - everyone has these questions. And there aren't answers for a lot of them. But sometimes it's nice just to ask them together.

KAITLIN

Yeah. No thanks.

CROSS FADE TO:

2.9 INT. COCKPIT. FLIGHT 702 – NIGHT

2.9

As recorded from a way station. The RECORDING – with a good deal of STATIC and CRACKLE.

HELEN

Gander Radio, Gander Radio,
Atlantic 702 on five-eight.

GANDER ATC

Atlantic 702, Gander. How's the sky
lookin'?

HELEN

Sky's beautiful, and the company's
not bad either.

ZAHID

(in background)
Why thank you!

GANDER ATC

(chuckles)
Glad to hear it, Atlantic 702. Go
ahead.

HELEN

Gander Radio, Atlantic 702. SelCal
Papa Tango, New York next, over.

GANDER ATC

Atlantic 702, here's your SelCal.

We hear CHIMES that indicate the connection between the cockpit and Gander Oceanic Control is working.

HELEN

Gander, Atlantic 702, SelCal OK.

GANDER ATC

Atlantic 702, roger that. What's
your condition report?

HELEN

We had a little run-in with some
geese 'bout 200 miles back, but I
shut down the second left engine as
a precaution. We seem to be nice
and balanced.

GANDER ATC
Atlantic 702, roger that.

ZAHID
(in background, mimicking
flight attendant again)
Thank you, Captain!

We hear Helen and Zahid CHUCKLING, then the sound CUTS OUT.
The recording is over.

2.10 INT. VASSAR CAMPUS. KAITLIN'S LODGINGS — MORNING 2.10
A BEEP.

DYLAN
You got the recording?

KAITLIN
Uh, yeah. It was... eerie, hearing
them so soon before the...

DYLAN
Yeah. But it definitely didn't
sound like she was suicidal.

KAITLIN
Suicidal people can still joke
around.
(beat)
Thanks... for sending it. It was...
weirdly comforting to listen to.
How'd you even get it?

DYLAN
Don't worry about it.

KAITLIN
(quietly)
Right.
(beat)
Dylan, why are you doing this?

DYLAN
I care about the truth, just like
you.

KAITLIN
Yeah, but I have a reason to care.
Are you involved, somehow, in all
of this?

DYLAN
I have... access, and a conscience.
That's all you need to know.

KAITLIN

What kind of access are we talking about, here?

Kaitlin's phone begins to RING, interrupting her conversation with Dylan.

KAITLIN (CONT'D)

Shit. That's the Google number I set up for tips. I -

DYLAN

Take it. We'll talk later.

KAITLIN

Oh, wait, but -

Dylan HANGS UP. Kaitlin SIGHS and answers the phone.

KAITLIN (CONT'D)

(annoyed and distracted)

Yes. Hi, hello, this - this is Kaitlin.

On the other end of the line is DOLORES (40's, your favorite aunt who never had her own children, doting and sweet, Jersey accent).

DOLORES

It's actually you. I'm talking to you. You poor girl.

KAITLIN

Who's this?

DOLORES

Flight 702. I should have told someone. I was just... they didn't look that bad.

KAITLIN

What do you mean? What are you talking about?

DOLORES

It's my fault. It's my fault the plane went down.

End of Episode 2.