

Scene 7

The El Paso Airfield. Early the next morning. WILL at the mic.

WILL

I'm sorry, folks, we still have not heard from Miss Marvel Crosson. Some ranchers said they saw a plane going down in a mesquite jungle near Wellton, Arizona. A search is in progress. We'll let you know the moment we hear more.

(Lights fade on WILL and rise on the PILOTS, who quietly, sleepily move to and fro with oilcans and rags, preparing their planes for flight. FRANK enters, shaken, ashen faced.)

FRANK

Ladies, I need to speak with you. Could everyone join me over here, please?

LOUISE

What is it?

(FRANK can barely manage to speak.)

FRANK

Marvel is... gone.

OPAL

What?!

FRANK

Her body was found two hundred feet from her wrecked plane.

(Gasps and cries from the women.)

LOUISE

Oh, my God!

AMELIA

What happened?

FRANK

We don't know for sure, but it may have been carbon monoxide poisoning, same as Louise.

THEA
How could that be?

PHOEBE
The planes were inspected!

GLADYS
Why wasn't her plane fixed like Louise's?

PANCHO
You told her that her plane was safe!

FRANK
That's what the mechanics told us.

EDITH
Maybe someone wanted to see Marvel crash!

FRANK
Please, Mrs. Foltz. I'm sure the mechanics did their best. It's a brand-new model, and there are obviously some serious design flaws.

BLANCHE
My plane is a new model, too. How can I be sure it's safe?

FRANK
I'm afraid you can't. No one is going on today. I've called cabs to take you back to the hotel. I need to talk with the sponsors and figure out what to do.

PANCHO
What do you mean, "Figure out what to do?" We're still going on.

FRANK
I'm not sure about that.

PANCHO
When we started this race—when we started flying—we knew we were staring death in the face. That hasn't changed. So why give up now?

LOUISE
It's Marvel we're talking about!

AMELIA
If I'd crashed, my worst nightmare would be that I'd caused the race to stop. Marvel would tell us to carry on where she left off.

LOUISE

How do you know what she would have wanted?!

AMELIA

She was my friend, too.

LOUISE

So how could you jump back into your plane as if nothing has happened?

AMELIA

I never said nothing happened!

OPAL

When a male pilot dies in a race, do they call it off?

THEA

Never.

FRANK

The public sees you differently.

EDITH

We are different. We can't just shove our grief aside and plough ahead.

OPAL

You'd give up all the ground we've gained?

BLANCHE

Any ground we've gained has come at too high a price!

AMELIA

Are we going to live the rest of our lives in fear? Are we willing to give up everything we've worked so hard to achieve?

PHOEBE

No.

OPAL

We couldn't!

PANCHO

Not a chance!

VERA DAWN

I'm not.

FRANK

Please, ladies. Go back to the hotel. I'll let you know when the sponsors have made their decision.