

THE AERONAUTS

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Throughout history, dreamlike stories and adventures have always attached themselves to balloons. Some are factual, some are fantasy.

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This one is a mixture of the two.

*

Inspired by true events.

*

AMELIA WREN

Antonia, please, just give me a moment.

*

ANTONIA frowns and nods.

ANTONIA

Last piece of sisterly advice -
doubt is there to be listened to.

*

She re-enters the carriage.

AMELIA looks up at the sky. She thinks. She lies back on the pavement, she takes a moment.

A man walks by and tuts disapprovingly, but AMELIA doesn't care. She looks up, ever up, and then she smiles.

TITLES OVER:

Behind AMELIA, in the back of shot, we see A BOY RUNNING ALONG THE STREET.

3

EXT. VAUXHALL STREETS. LONDON. CONTINUOUS -

3

TITLES CONTINUE:

And now we're with the 9 year old, a boot black in uniform, as he runs, this is CHARLIE. He runs alongside dilapidated slum terraced houses. He has a look of intensity on his face.

He approaches an intersection of busy streets. Filled with carts, carriages, cows and horses. He runs straight across - causing a carriage and a cart to take evasive action.

COACHMAN

Oi!

CHARLIE stops and turns, he dances this way and then dances that. A smile on his face.

COACHMAN (CONT'D)

You little...

CHARLIE runs on.

On the other side of the road, he runs alongside a long queue of people beside a wooden fence.

He runs through and past them all. He sees what he's looking for - a big sign 'HISTORY MADE. HERE. TODAY. HOW HIGH CAN THEY GO?' Above the sign sits a painted picture of a gas balloon.

TICKET TOUT

The Widow Wren takes to the skies
to break the world record. Get your
tickets!

Next to the sign is a tall hedgerow. CHARLIE checks that he's not being watched, and then he ducks down through a gap in the hedge, pushes through a hole in the fence behind, and sneaks into the Gardens.

4

EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS -

4

TITLES CONTINUE:

Everywhere there are hordes of people - all moving in one direction. There's an air of anticipation and the chatter of excitement.

CHARLIE weaves and dodges, passing food sellers, Waveswingers, Revolving Chairs and Merry-Go-Rounds - stalls and entertainment all put on to make the most of the occasion (and maximize the money taken). But CHARLIE runs through it all, determined.

Until he gets to the only thing he wants to see - the only thing everyone wants to see - he looks up in awe towards:

An enormous red and white striped, silk air balloon. Bigger, better, bolder than the picture on the sign.

93,000 cubic feet, 80 feet tall, and 55 feet wide, covered in a vast rope webbing... It towers over the top of the fair. This is the MAMMOTH. It is unlike any gas balloon you've seen. And it is magnificent.

Charlie's mouth gapes open, and then he smiles.

THE AERONAUTS

And we travel past CHARLIE, towards the balloon, it rests at the centre of an amphitheatre type structure, filled with the VAST CROWDS that have gathered to see the balloon rise.

Around the circumference of the balloon, 16 men hold guide ropes to keep the Mammoth in place, with further ropes tied to stakes in the earth. The basket has a temporary platform surrounding it.

4A EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS

4A

We settle on a man in the basket of the balloon stowing a series of instruments and trying to ignore the fact that he is at the centre of all the attention. This is JAMES GLAISHER, 35, a man whose forensic attention to detail belies the adventurer within.

He looks at his pocket watch, irritated, and then checks and rechecks that the bindings on one of his barometers are securely fastened - a job he's clearly done a hundred times already this morning.

Another man, JOHN TREW, bookish and loyal, ascends the temporary wooden steps to the platform.

JAMES GLAISHER

She's late.

JOHN TREW

She is, but that is the least of your problems.

JAMES GLAISHER

We'll lose the light...

JOHN TREW

James, do the clouds not look ominous to you?

But JAMES doesn't look at the clouds, he's consumed, he climbs out of the basket and checks his watch.

JAMES GLAISHER

I repeatedly explained the importance of catching the right light and the right wind at the right time and -

JAMES turns to his bag, he begins to check further instruments inside. Amongst them we see a compass, two thermometers (a "dry" and a "wet" one, which is wrapped in a muslin and submerged in water), a spectroscope, a magnet, a barometer, and a hygrometer.

JOHN TREW

James. Look up.

JAMES looks up. He sees the dark clouds, he frowns.

JAMES GLAISHER

Not a concern, John, the readings I took this morning were quite clear that...

He bends to another basket. He puts some feed into it. The pigeons inside coo appreciatively.

JOHN TREW

Far be it from me to doubt you, but your weather predictions have been wrong in the past and it's just possible...

NED (O.S.)

Don't even think of it.

NED is a tall bald man with a dour face. JAMES looks at him and smiles to mask a grimace.

JAMES GLAISHER

Ned Chambers, John Trew, my very good friend. John this is Ned, one of the hardy entrepreneurs who has invested in our expedition -

JOHN leans down from the platform to shake NED's hand. But NED pays him no attention, he ascends the stairs to the platform, looming over JAMES ominously.

NED

Don't even think of telling me flight is not possible.

JOHN TREW

Mr Chambers, we are scientists of the air, and we can tell you the one thing no-one can control is - well - the air -

NED

I have paid for gas, I have paid for silk - and is this balloon not the strongest and largest that's ever been?

JOHN TREW

But even so it can't fight the weather, you do not want to be responsible for a tragedy, Sir.

NED

I don't wish to be responsible for refunding the ten thousand who've come here 'cause you promised them history and -

JAMES GLAISHER

(cutting in)

We'll fly, Ned. We'll fly.

JOHN TREW looks at his friend concerned, NED smiles. JAMES GLAISHER meets eyes with NED.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

We only need the sky to hold for ninety minutes - once we're above the cloud line, it will be fine.

NED

Good. That's fixed. Now - did you not promise me a five o'clock ascent?

JAMES GLAISHER

I did. I am merely waiting for the pilot. It's not the first time she's kept me waiting.

*
*

NED smiles and walks away through the crowds. JAMES watches him go and then looks up anxiously at the clouds.

JOHN TREW

What a truly pleasant man -

JAMES - deliberately not looking up - starts to load a series of sample jars into the balloon, wrapping each one in cotton and then placing them into the case.

JAMES GLAISHER

One must make compromises in order to achieve greatness my friend....

He hears a ROAR from the crowds, he turns towards it, as does JAMES.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

And he's merely one compromise.

5

EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS -

5

Fast approaching, standing on top of a carriage drawn by 4 horses - getting cheers from all sides - AMELIA is now resplendent in a dress festooned with feathers. It's a complete transformation from the woman we saw earlier, the woman almost cowed by the world is now wild and fabulous. She has the crowd in the palm of her hand and has a look of utter delight on her face.

As the carriage pulls alongside the balloon, one of the men holding the ropes passes one to her. She SWINGS from it onto the rostrum. She does a cartwheel on landing, and turns that cartwheel into a flip. She lands, and presents to the crowd.

JAMES GLAISHER

You're incredibly late.

AMELIA WREN

Lesson number one of Aeronauting-
we are creatures of the skies and
have no respect for landlocked
clocks.

She walks around to the steps leading to the basket, and
speaks loud enough for everyone to hear her.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Mr. Glaisher, are you really not a
gentlemen at all? Hold out your
hand to me.

JAMES holds out his hand. She takes it. And then she tumbles
from the steps into his arms.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Naughty.

The crowd cheers.

NED pushes through the crowd to see her, AMELIA smiles at him
beguilingly.

JAMES GLAISHER

Are you ready?

AMELIA WREN

Mr Glaisher, you have no conception
of how ready I am.

NED smiles at her shyly. She gets into the basket with a
flourish, and then waves to the crowds. She whistles -

5A EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS

5A

- and jumping from the carriage window comes a dog in a small
coat. She holds out her hands, he jumps into her arms.

JAMES GLAISHER

No. Absolutely not. Under no
circumstances are we taking a dog.

AMELIA WREN

I told you we'd need to put on a
show for takeoff, and the crowd
prefers my dog to your boxes.

*
*
*

She indicates the scientific instruments being loaded into
the balloon.

JAMES GLAISHER

These are essential meteorological
instruments.

AMELIA makes eyes at one of the men holding the balloon down, they nod at her authoritatively, she nods back.

AMELIA WREN

And this is an essential dog. She's called Posey. The essential Posey.

She puts Posey down, and he enters the basket through a little opening in the side.

The crowd cheer. JAMES grimaces.

She pulls herself from his arms onto the edge of the balloon. She balances along the edge, all nimble beautiful energy. She raises her hands in the air. The crowd whoop. She is astonishing. She raises her hands again for silence.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentlemen. Today myself - Amelia Wren - my naughty scientist Mr. Glaisher - and my wonder dog Posey - are going to change the world. Are you ready for us to do so?

There are loud cheers.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

This balloon on which I stand - the Mammoth - is a balloon like no other and will allow us to ascend higher into the air than any man or woman has ever gone.

She raises her hands in the air. The crowd laugh and cheer again. She looks out in the crowd and sees a man she recognises: PIERRE. She looks at him a moment and then controls herself.

*
*
*

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

The French rose to 23,000 feet. Today, we will break their record and reclaim it for these fair shores. Who knows, we may reach the moon and bring back star dust!

(beat)

Today is a day when history will be made - and you will all be part of it.

(to Glaisher)

Mr Glaisher, now's your moment. Up you get.

There are yet more cheers. AMELIA pulls JAMES upwards, so he too balances on the basket. AMELIA raises both her hands into the air. On cue, FIREWORKS go off around the park.

Brilliant sparkling eruptions of colour surround the amphitheatre. The crowd ROAR.

5B EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS

5B

JAMES looks around at them all - a bemused smile on his face - whilst AMELIA quickly and efficiently checks the rigging and valves surrounding the basket.

JAMES GLAISHER
Fireworks?

AMELIA WREN
Are you ready?

JAMES GLAISHER
I just need to retake my ground readings and then a final check of the equipment....

She counts the sand bags, she checks the appendix and finally she checks the valve line. She's fast, precise and magnificently efficient.

AMELIA WREN
Well, my equipment was all prepared in advance. Now, don't touch that rope, Mr Glaisher - it'll let out the gas. *

JAMES GLAISHER
I do know how a balloon works.

She signals to the men on the ground - who let go of the ropes and kick out the stakes.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

AMELIA WREN
We fly.

JAMES GLAISHER
Ground readings are essential - if they're not accurate, then everything I take from now on -

The balloon rises up. JAMES looks around, slightly bewildered, he starts desperately to take temperature and pressure readings.

AMELIA WREN
The sky awaits.

AMELIA takes a handful of sand and deposits it off the side of the balloon which falls to the floor beneath.

There's a moment of stasis and then - with a jerk and a creak or two - the balloon begins to rise up. Slowly at first, but with gathering speed. It's majestic.

JOHN TREW
God speed, old man.

JOHN TREW calls up to the basket. But JAMES GLAISHER doesn't even notice him, he's too intent on getting his notations down.

The crowd watch in wonderment as the Mammoth silently ascends. Amongst them we pick out the face of CHARLIE.

6 EXT. BALLOON. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. CONTINUOUS - 6

400ft. Rising 400ft/min. 25C / 77F

AMELIA has a business-like air that we haven't seen before. She pulls herself up onto the netting on the side of the balloon.

JAMES GLAISHER
What are you doing?

AMELIA WREN
Giving the people their money's worth.

She leans out and waves, the crowd cheer. The balloon rises to sixty feet and then a hundred. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE watch from below, all with their faces turned upward to the sky. She climbs further up the side of the balloon.

JAMES GLAISHER
Won't you damage the integrity of the balloon?

AMELIA WREN
Perhaps.

She pulls a cord on the side of her dress and the feathers fall from it from all sides leaving her half the size.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
I LOVE YOU ALL.

JAMES GLAISHER
This is insane.

The feathers twinkle down in the wind, and are gathered enthusiastically by the crowd below.

She leans out further, keeping good hold of the netting as she does, but she leans too far, she loses her grip, and she suddenly SLIPS -

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

No!

She SCREAMS - and then spins athletically around the hoop and smiles. The crowd cheer below.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

For God's sake.

AMELIA WREN

It's what they call entertainment,
Mr Glaisher.

JAMES GLAISHER

Well, I'm not finding it
particularly entertaining.

AMELIA WREN

Yes, it requires a sense of humour.
Which you seem to..lack.

She hangs nonchalantly in the air, her arms outstretched,
welcoming the applause, her smile wider still.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Oh, don't look so sour. The dog.
Give me the dog. *

JAMES GLAISHER

What do you mean give you the dog?

AMELIA WREN

Pass me Posey, Mr. Glaisher.

JAMES GLAISHER

I'm not handing you the dog.

JAMES wrestles with this notion.

AMELIA WREN

Posey, now. Before we lose them.

He scrabbles around in the basket for the dog.

Eventually he's able to grab POSEY and passes the dog up to
her. But as he does, she lets POSEY slip from her grasp.

She screams and he hollers out in astonishment - as the dog
plummets past him, falling towards the earth with a yelp, she
looks down after it - anguished - and then the dog's
parachute opens.

A parachute?

The crowd cheer ever louder. She smiles.

She spins round on the hoop and kisses the air extravagantly. JAMES looks at her - unsure what has happened here, but sure he doesn't like it.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
Oh, well done Posey! Well done.

She watches as POSEY is caught in NED's arms below and then breathes in a tremendous breath, she is high on exhilaration. She sees JAMES looking up at her. *

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
Mr Glaisher, you are airborne for the first time in your life, I suggest you spend less time frowning at me and more taking in the world we've just left.

JAMES looks down and suddenly it seems all of London is laid out below.

7 EXT. BALLOON. SKY OVER LONDON. CONTINUOUS - 7

1,200ft. Rising 400ft/min. 23C / 73F

AMELIA looks at JAMES, she smiles quietly at his astonishment.

AMELIA WREN
(soft)
Quite something isn't she? London. When we're further up, we'll be able to see across to Windsor and down to Brighton. With current bearing, we should end up somewhere south of Canterbury. But anything is possible in this weather. *

JAMES says nothing. AMELIA looks at him a moment more and then is a hive of energy balancing their equipment. From entertainer to businesswoman in two short breaths.

JAMES GLAISHER
It all looks so -

AMELIA WREN
Insignificant?

With one final look down, she pulls herself down to the basket, flashes him a smile and then turns back to her equipment.

JAMES GLAISHER
Do you take anything seriously?

JAMES shakes his head.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Those people gathered to see an act of science, to witness us break the height record, they didn't need to see a flying dog.

AMELIA WREN

Still stuck there, are you?

AMELIA pulls her sleeves down and starts to take her make-up off.

JAMES GLAISHER

I have spent much of my life being laughed at for what I do Miss Wren, I did hope today of all days might prove an exception.

He returns to his books. She watches him carefully.

AMELIA WREN

Tell me, what determines your reputation?

JAMES GLAISHER

My reputation?

AMELIA WREN

Your standing in the scientific community?

JAMES frowns, considering sincerely.

JAMES GLAISHER

I am aware what reputation means. The papers I've written, the discoveries I've uncovered.

AMELIA WREN

Your reputation is built on paper. My reputation is built on screams. Those people below came to be entertained. And they - if you didn't know - are the ones paying for this trip.

*

*

JAMES looks at her, then shakes his head, as he takes a pair of opera-glasses out of a pocket in the side of the basket.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Off to the opera?

He ignores her and uses the glasses to look up at the sky - the darkening clouds - he frowns, but then dismisses his worry.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Don't try and pretend that cloud
isn't a concern.

*
*

JAMES GLAISHER

I am the scientist. You're the
pilot Miss Wren. Let's stick to our
roles shall we?

*

He looks down at Greenwich Observatory, hundreds of feet
below.

8 OMITTED 8

9 EXT. GREENWICH OBSERVATORY. CONTINUOUS - 9

A younger JAMES GLAISHER is climbing fast up a sloping roof,
wearing a large shoulder bag. He is being pursued by JOHN
TREW.

JOHN TREW

JAMES. James.

JAMES GLAISHER

I will not miss this, John.

JAMES opens a window, climbs out of it and is gone.

JOHN TREW

For God's sake.

JOHN makes a face to himself. And then cursing his better
nature, crawls up the roof after his friend.

JOHN TREW (CONT'D)

It is in the air, we could have
stayed on the ground and looked up.

JAMES GLAISHER

We must see it from the best
vantage point, Johnny.

JAMES pulls himself onto the roof.

JOHN a few windows behind him, with one more despairing look
to the ground, pulls himself after.

10 EXT. GREENWICH OBSERVATORY. ROOF. DAY 10

JOHN lies flat on the roof, panting deeply.

Bells can be heard striking in the distance. JAMES turns
towards them with a smile.

JAMES GLAISHER

The sky is clear. I predict a clean take-off. Which means in precisely sixteen seconds precisely we should see....

*

JAMES unpacks his shoulder bag - revealing within it a large telescope and then a stand to place it upon.

JOHN TREW

You are aware he might not get off the ground?

He fits the telescope into the stand.

JAMES GLAISHER

Charles Green will get it off the ground.

*

He moves the stand to the very edge of the building. JOHN sees plaster crumble away.

JOHN TREW

Maybe not quite so close to the edge of the building.

JAMES GLAISHER

John, stop scowling at me. Do I clock the hours I spend helping you pin butterflies to a board?

JOHN TREW

Pinning butterflies is not a dangerous pursuit.

JAMES GLAISHER

Five, four, three, two, one.

*

There's a long pause. JAMES slowly deflates, JOHN looks at his friend with sympathy.

JOHN TREW

It could be anything. The gas valve ruptured, the silk tore -

JAMES smiles as suddenly - clear as a day across London, a balloon starts to rise up.

*

JAMES looks at JOHN with the largest of smiles.

JAMES GLAISHER

He has rethought his balloon shape. Wider at the top, like a parachute.

JOHN TREW

May I look?

JAMES reluctantly lets JOHN look through. JOHN looks intently.

JAMES GLAISHER

Mr Trew, if you've had time enough...

JOHN steps away with a smile, JAMES retakes his perch.

And then thinks and then lifts the equipment and repositions himself towards the outside of the building.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

He's broken cloud.

He refocuses the telescope.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

I've lost him.

He looks up to the sky. He squints. JOHN TREW looks at his friend.

JOHN TREW

You'll get your chance you know. They'll realise your worth.

JAMES GLAISHER

I think they know what I'm worth well enough.

10B INT. ROYAL SOCIETY LECTURE THEATRE. DAY.

10B

JAMES GLAISHER stands at a lectern, in front of him assorted scientists.

JAMES GLAISHER

We know more now about the world around us than we have at any time in history, but still we are limited by our ignorance as to what is truly above us. With the progress we have made in balloon travel here at the Society, pioneered by Charles Green, we could advance meteorology by decades. Analysis of the Earth's magnetic field, the solar spectrum, knowledge of the dew point, an understanding of oxygenation of the atmosphere...

CHARLES GREEN
He wants my balloon!

Laughter breaks out again.

JAMES GLAISHER
No sir, I want funding for my own
expedition into the skies -

CHARLES GREEN
We are scientists, not fortune
tellers! You talk of weather
prediction.

There's laughter. JAMES rides over it.

JAMES GLAISHER
Is that not our responsibility as
scientists - to bring order to the
chaos...

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
- if we can understand what's
above us -

CHARLES GREEN
- you are no closer to
predicting the movements of
the weather than the
movements of a frog in a jar.

*
*

He makes to walk out of the lecture theatre, others follow.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
With your financial support I
believe we are on the precipice of
great change - the possibility of
advance weather prediction might
allow for -

He sees them all departing.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
Please - please -

*

10C	EXT. ROYAL SOCIETY. DAY	10C	*
	JAMES stands in the courtyard alone, as snow falls all around him.		* *
10A	INT. UPSTAIRS. WATCH SHOP. EAST END OF LONDON. DAY.	10A	*
	James's father, ARTHUR GLAISHER is reading a newspaper article.		*

ARTHUR GLAISHER
"James Glaisher spoke this week at
the Royal Society of his plans to
make a science of the weather. -

JAMES GLAISHER
I've read it, Pa.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
"To the accompaniment of much
laughter, he laid out -"

ETHEL GLAISHER
Arthur. Stop it.

JAMES GLAISHER
They're wrong, by the way.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
Many more think you are.

JAMES GLAISHER
Many didn't believe Newton.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
Oh, James. Newton changed the way
we saw the Earth and the planets.
You think you can predict when it
might rain.

JAMES takes the bullet. He holds hard to his dignity.

ARTHUR GLAISHER (CONT'D)
What they say about you - it
doesn't hurt?

JAMES GLAISHER
I wish it didn't hurt you.

10Ab EXT. WATCH SHOP. DAY

10Ab

JAMES walks away from the shop. He looks up back at his
father's window.

11 EXT. BALLOON. SKY OVER LONDON. DAY.

11

5,700ft. Rising 400ft/min. 18C / 64F

We re-join Wren & Glaisher, high above London, as they drift
upward towards the thick cloud bank above them.

WREN is dressing herself thoroughly in warm weather gear. A
sort of precursor to flying leathers. She does so
discreetly, and JAMES makes sure to look away. She's
striking, practical and in control - she knows what is
coming.

JAMES, still in his wool suit, continues to take his
measurements.

JAMES GLAISHER

Nine minutes and sixteen seconds.
Height 5,700 feet.
Air temperature, 64 degrees
Fahrenheit.

*

AMELIA WREN

How delightful.
(motioning to her corset)
Could you?

He awkwardly helps her to undo her corset. She takes it off and puts on her jacket.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

You should put on your oilskins, Mr
Glaisher.

Ignoring her, he writes something on a piece of paper.

He ties it to a pigeon and lets it go, it flies shakily away and then down.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

What are you attaching to those
pigeons?

JAMES GLAISHER

Our readings.

AMELIA WREN

Oh, so reassuring to know you've
contemplated our deaths.

JAMES GLAISHER

Just - insured against them.

AMELIA looks at him, she frowns, amused, but this time she doesn't challenge him, she looks up at the dark sky above them.

AMELIA WREN

Cloud ahoy.

12 EXT. BALLOON. CLOUDS. CONTINUOUS -

12

6,100ft. Rising 400ft/min. 15C / 59F

The balloon is swallowed by the heavy, still clouds, and as AMELIA looks over the edge so the earth disappears from view.

AMELIA WREN

What more felicitie can fall to
creature
Than to enjoy delight with
libertie,

PIERRE

And to be lord of all the workes of
Nature,

She turns and sees PIERRE with his back to her, looking out
at the clouds. She smiles.

AMELIA WREN AND PIERRE

To raine in th'aire from earth to
highest skie,
To feed on flowres and weeds of
glorious feature.

She approaches PIERRE, he turns, and it's - JAMES.

JAMES GLAISHER

To take whatever thing doth please
the eye.

AMELIA looks at him - astonished. He smiles shyly.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Spenser. The Fate of the Butterfly.
One of my favourite poems.

AMELIA swallows, dealing with her complicated emotions.

AMELIA WREN

Surprising. Didn't have you down as
a literary man.

JAMES GLAISHER

Men of science can enjoy words,
Miss Wren.

AMELIA WREN

My husband loved that poem.

Beat. JAMES tries to retain his dignity.

JAMES GLAISHER

I would have liked to have met your
husband.

*

AMELIA WREN

I'm not sure he'd have liked you.

JAMES GLAISHER

Really?

AMELIA WREN

He disliked people who studied
rather than practiced.

JAMES takes the dig as he reaches out and feels the air on
his fingers. A roll of **THUNDER**.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

We are still sure this weather will hold - because my instinct tells me

-

JAMES GLAISHER

Instinct has no place in weather prediction.

AMELIA WREN

- that you're lying to me.

JAMES GLAISHER

Every reading I took this morning -

AMELIA WREN

And there are no advantages in concealing concerns - we're trapped here no matter what you say.

JAMES thinks and then looks at her. He looks back at his measuring apparatus.

JAMES GLAISHER

The air pressure is - changing faster than I anticipated.

There is a flash of LIGHTNING - AMELIA turns towards it as JAMES scans the sky - truly concerned now.

AMELIA WREN

Your readings were wrong. We are about to get wet.

JAMES GLAISHER

Quiet.

He holds out a hand. He's listening for something else. We wait with him - the silence is powerful and oppressive.

AMELIA looks at her hands. Moisture is clinging to her gloves. There is another rumble of **THUNDER**.

AMELIA WREN

You're discerning how close we are to the storm.

JAMES says nothing - clearly panicked, he turns to his equipment and consults numbers in his book. Suddenly the balloon **JOLTS**. The balloonists grab the side of the basket.

Then there is calm again. AMELIA looks to the West and the East. She smiles.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

And so it begins.

13 EXT. SKY. CONTINUOUS - 13
We're in a pocket amongst the cumulonimbus clouds. We linger on the churning sky.

Lightning illuminates hidden crevices. A rapidly shifting and darkening landscape.

We see moving through it - the Mammoth.

14 EXT. BALLOON. CLOUDS. CONTINUOUS - 14
7,200ft. Rising 400ft/min. 10C / 50F
And then we're back inside the balloon. JAMES is taking readings.

AMELIA WREN
We need to batten down.

He takes out his Spectroscope. He twirls it around. He makes notes in his book.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
I'm not sure your instruments are much use to us now.

JAMES looks at her, and then checks the hygrometer.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
There are no prizes for obstinacy.
James -

THUNDER.

They both turn towards it.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
If you won't listen to me. Listen to that.

JAMES GLAISHER
Not one of my readings suggested a storm -

AMELIA WREN
Well that's what it is, and we're inside a cumulo, which is precisely where we shouldn't be.

He takes more readings. He's more skittery now, less focused. She sees another flash of LIGHTNING. A roll of THUNDER only seconds later.

JAMES GLAISHER

Don't worry, The Mammoth is not made of conductive material - we won't attract lightning.

AMELIA WREN

And if we do, the gas keeping us afloat is fifty per cent hydrogen, thirty-five percent methane, so we won't live long enough for me to point out how wrong you were...

15 EXT. BALLOON. STORM. CONTINUOUS -

15

7,600ft. Speed of ascent constantly changing. 9C / 48F

Suddenly both balloonists are **THROWN** to the floor, an agitation in the air causes a **WHIRLWIND** - which turns the giant balloon three times from the right to the left.

There is another **SMASH OF LIGHTNING** closer to the balloon this time, and with it comes the **RAIN**.

Rain which lashes down and which seems to suggest worse.

JAMES returns to his instrumentation, writing down a series of readings.

AMELIA WREN

Get that equipment put away now -

JAMES GLAISHER

The equipment will give us the information we need to survive this

-

They are **THROWN** again, violently this time, horrifically this time. JAMES is slammed into the side of the basket.

AMELIA hauls him to the floor and uses her legs to pincer him into position -

AMELIA WREN

Stay still and keep calm - I need to get us out of here.

And then they are **THROWN** again - and this time JAMES is thrown on top of AMELIA, smashing his head on the pigeon box in the process. BLOOD pours from the wound.

JAMES GLAISHER

We cannot descend - this may be our one and only opportunity -

AMELIA WREN

Of course we don't descend.

JAMES looks at her, shocked.

JAMES GLAISHER

We don't?

AMELIA WREN

There are two ways to break a storm. One is to travel beneath it, the other - to travel above it. The safest way is up.

Another fork of **LIGHTNING STRIKES**.

The **THUNDER ROARS** immediately afterwards.

AMELIA looks across at JAMES - a smile spreads across his face.

JAMES GLAISHER

The safest way is up?

AMELIA WREN

Who did you think you got in a balloon with?

AMELIA smiles and then pulls off her wet and slippy gloves and grabs a knife from her small bag and leans over the side of the balloon - seemingly immune to the raging storm - to slice off some bags of ballast.

16

EXT. STORM. CONTINUOUS -

16

9,000ft. Falling 4000ft/min, then rising 600ft/min. 7C / 44F

Then the balloonists hit a pocket of cold air and the balloon suddenly **DROPS 1000 FEET**.

This has the effect of sending AMELIA and JAMES and everything that isn't bound to the basket of the balloon up in the air. JAMES's leg hits the underside of the table on his way up, **BREAKING IT** and sending his equipment everywhere. We watch almost in slow motion the detritus float away - her gloves arcing gracefully out of the balloon and away.

AMELIA and JAMES hit the underside of the balloon, bounce off, and fall back towards the basket again.

JAMES lands **HARD** in the basket, but AMELIA misses the basket, clawing desperately at the wicker as she does. JAMES looks for her but everything is obscured by the mist. He's blind.

JAMES GLAISHER

Amelia! Amelia.

AMELIA's legs dangle helplessly in space. She clings to the rope that holds the gnapnel, the rain **LASHING** around her.

The mist clears and her perilous position becomes very clear. She's on the verge of oblivion. Then the mist returns and the blindness is intoxicating.

JAMES grabs a central rope and reaches out a hand -

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Take my hand. Take my hand.

He grabs at one of the toggled ropes holding the basket to the hoop, but in quick succession three of the **TOGGLES SNAP** and the balloon is massively destabilized, everything tumbles towards him as the basket falls into a slant. This loosens AMELIA's grip and she falls further. Screaming as she does.

AMELIA WREN

I can't - I can't get...

JAMES GLAISHER

Hold on. HOLD ON.

He grabs another rope, then quickly ties a rope around his waist and secures the other end to the hoop above his head.

He steels himself - overcomes his fear - and leans out.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

On three. One. Two.

They grab hands.

They dangle for a moment, him holding her as firmly as he can.

And then he starts heaving her back into the balloon. She scrabbles up, gets a foothold. It's hard.

The rain continues to lash their faces. AMELIA manoeuvres her way upwards.

She lands beside him in the bottom of the basket, both BREATHING DEEPLY.

17 EXT. STORM. CONTINUOUS -

17

9,600ft. Rising 600ft/min, then 1000ft/min. 5C / 41F

As the storm buffets around them, AMELIA pulls a ROPE next to JAMES, releasing a sandbag which plummets into the cloud.

She pulls another ROPE on her side of the basket: another bag of ballast FALLS.

AMELIA WREN

Hold tight, it's not over yet.

They look at each other, clinging on for dear life, as the storm rages around them.

There's a particularly large **JOLT** and then there's silence. They both breathe out. The grey mist surrounding them begins to brighten as we start to get wispy definition in the clouds.

Then, almost magically, sunlight pours into the basket. They both smile as a golden-tinged blue starts to emerge.

A calmness floods both over them and the balloon.

AMELIA unties the rope, and they both lie there a little more. Then JAMES stumbles to his feet and looks out.

18 EXT. BALLOON. ABOVE THE CLOUDS. CONTINUOUS - 18

11,500ft. Rising 1000ft/min. 3C / 37F

The basket is tilting at a desperate angle. But the sky - the sky bears no scar of what they have just been through. He looks down at the storm, and then up at the tranquil air.

JAMES GLAISHER

We rose above it.

AMELIA gets to her feet slowly, she looks around herself. She looks at the dripping wet balloon, ropes and at the wet prone basket.

AMELIA WREN

Well. We mostly did. This is one broken bird.

She looks at him, she smiles.

29 EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. DAY 29

JOHN TREW stands looking through a telescope. He thinks, frowns, and puts the telescope away. CHARLIE approaches.

CHARLIE

May I look through your spyglass
Sir?

JOHN TREW

There's nothing to see. I lost them
when the storm passed over.

CHARLIE

I would like a look all the same
Sir.

JOHN looks him up and down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I won't steal it.

JOHN TREW

I didn't presume you would. You have interest in the air?

CHARLIE

Don't you wish to be up there with them?

JOHN TREW

I'd be an unnecessary weight.

CHARLIE

All the same...

A look of intense sincerity passes across JOHN TREW's face.

JOHN TREW

Some reach for the stars, and some push others toward them.

CHARLIE looks at him like he thinks he's mad.

CHARLIE

I wish I was up there.

JOHN TREW

And you're not afraid of the clouds?

CHARLIE

Clouds are just water.

JOHN TREW

What about the birds that may attack you?

CHARLIE

May I look through your eye glass?

JOHN TREW smiles, he pulls the eye glass out.

We look upwards. Lurching this way and that with CHARLIE's eyes.

We twitch this way and that - looking for something - anything - and then we see something - a speck -

*

CHARLIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I can see them, Sir.

JOHN TREW looks over, surprised.

JOHN TREW

Not possible.

CHARLIE

I can see them Sir, I can.

CHARLIE hollers with joy as we ascend quickly towards a speck that becomes a balloon that becomes the Mammoth.

21 EXT. BALLOON. ABOVE THE CLOUDS. DAY.

21

13,500ft. Rising 350ft/min. 1C / 34F

And we're back in the balloon and looking down, a magnificent sea of cloud lies beneath it, its surface being varied with endless hills, hillocks, mountain chains and many snow white masses rising from it. Towering pillars of Cumulonimbus rise upwards to the heavens all around them. The balloon is dwarfed by the enormity of the cloudscape.

The thunder, now far below them, rumbles beneath the car.

JAMES and the equipment are now on the other side of the basket, trying to rebalance and re-angle the basket. AMELIA is above him, perilously balancing on the edge of the balloon, lashing a rope from the basket to the hoop in order to re-engineer the broken toggle.

AMELIA WREN

Now pull hard. Hold it. There.

JAMES GLAISHER

There?

AMELIA WREN

There. I believe we've - done it.

She looks at it.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

It should keep.

She smiles. She bangs on the hoop.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Stronger than she looks.

She stays on the edge of the basket. She looks out, a strange smile on her face. JAMES immediately busies himself resetting his equipment.

AMELIA WREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mr Glaisher.

We pull up to see JAMES collecting readings.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

James. You will miss it.

She indicates an aureole - a full-circle rainbow to their East.

JAMES turns.

A myriad of colours that glitters in the light.

It's mesmeric.

And reflected in the centre of it, the Mammoth.

A ghost balloon with a multi-colored halo.

A dazzling sight.

JAMES GLAISHER

(awed)

An Aureole. Have you...ever seen one?

AMELIA nods.

AMELIA WREN

You haven't.

JAMES GLAISHER

Only in books.

JAMES reaches out almost to touch it. She smiles to see his glee. There's a long moment of silence. *

AMELIA WREN

I believe you should be checking your instruments, Mr Glaisher. You can't have taken a good reading in quite some time.

JAMES looks at the full-circle rainbow. And then back at her.

JAMES GLAISHER

You do so enjoy being amused by me.

AMELIA WREN

I am amused by your enjoyment of something that has nothing to do with numbers.

JAMES looks out, he smiles. And then he looks down.

JAMES GLAISHER

Have you noticed? It's completely silent. *

There's a silence. Then JAMES raises his hands in the air and HOLLERS LOUDLY. AMELIA laughs. *

He raises his hands and HOLLERS again.

JAMES takes a deep breath in.

He stands swaying a moment. He HOLLERS a third time.

She thinks and then HOLLERS herself.

The two look at each other and smile.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Cloud ahoy.

23

EXT. BALLOON. CLOUD COLUMN. CONTINUOUS -

23 *

15,250ft. Rising 350ft/min. -2C / 29F

The balloon drifts into the upper section of one of the large cumulonimbus columns. They're surrounded by mist again.

And then there's the sound of a church bell. AMELIA looks around - as if searching for it.

Then we hear whispers of voices that transfigure into workmen calling to each other.

As if by magic, we are surrounded by the crystal clear sounds of a London street. It's as if we're right there.

JAMES GLAISHER

Would you listen to that?

AMELIA WREN

But that sounds like -

JAMES GLAISHER

Horses. Bells. People. It is the sound of the streets.

AMELIA WREN

We have flown through a storm and still London follows us.

JAMES checks his instruments. A look of delight on his face. He doesn't see AMELIA's discombobulation. One voice pierces through the others.

PIERRE (O.S.)

Thank you for giving me somewhere I belonged.

AMELIA looks down as if desperately searching for it.

JAMES GLAISHER

The Hygrometer reading is phenomenal.

(MORE)

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
I suppose the humid conditions must
be conducting the sound.

JAMES thinks and then shouts down.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
We have no interest in you London.
Please leave us alone, you damn -
ants.

She feels dizzy a moment, and slumps to the floor of the
basket.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
Are you well?

AMELIA WREN
It'll soon pass. *

24 INT. AMELIA'S HOUSE. DAY

24 *

AMELIA is asleep on a rug beside a deep armchair. A bottle
beside her.

Posey looks up at her, watching her snore.

There is a loud knocking at the door.

She ignores it, until it suddenly opens.

AMELIA WREN
I didn't lock it.

ANTONIA
No. You did not.

AMELIA turns and looks at ANTONIA. They look similar. They're
sisters.

ANTONIA (CONT'D)
You're not dressed.

AMELIA WREN
And yet I am wearing clothes.

ANTONIA
When was the last time you changed
them?

AMELIA WREN
You break down my door to tell me
to wash?

ANTONIA
When was the last time you opened
any curtains?

AMELIA WREN

Sunlight ages - I want my
furnishings to retain their glow.

ANTONIA

Which ones are glowing? The ones
with your food upon them or the
ones covered in dirty clothing?

AMELIA WREN

I do not need to see it to know
it's there.

ANTONIA

Well, much as you might enjoy your
self-pity, I am not here to freshen
anything. Phillip has invited us to
a small gathering -

*
*

AMELIA WREN

No.

ANTONIA picks up a glass, she sniffs it. She recoils.

ANTONIA

Amelia....

AMELIA WREN

I do so hate how you say my name.
Like a priest imploring me to
confess my sins.

ANTONIA

It's been two years.

AMELIA WREN

And that's time enough?

ANTONIA

Do you think Pierre would have
wanted this?

AMELIA turns and looks at her.

AMELIA WREN

That is beneath even you.

ANTONIA

(imploring)

I'll help you change. Come. Sisters
together. And then I'll let you
rot.

*

25

INT. ELEGANT HOUSE. NIGHT.

25

AMELIA stands in the middle of a floor.

Around her moves society. And it does seem like all of society is here. The finest gowns, the fiercest laughter, the tinkliest conversation.

AMELIA looks swallowed up within it.

AUNT FRANCES
Your sister is proud as punch she pulled you here.

AMELIA WREN
Hello, Auntie. *

AUNT FRANCES
She keeps trying to persuade men to take you onto the floor.

POPPY walks past them both, a chiselled man either side of her, hanging on her every word, she turns and grins at AMELIA, who looks back.

AMELIA WREN
And they refuse her?

AUNT FRANCES
I think they're intimidated by you. *

AUNT FRANCES indicates, ANTONIA is talking to a young man, he looks over at AMELIA, and then looks away - blushing as he does. AMELIA laughs. *

AUNT FRANCES (CONT'D)
Still, hard to be the woman that provokes fear.

AUNT FRANCES touches her niece's neck, and then moves on into the crowds.

AMELIA looks over as ANTONIA is talking to another young man. She looks down at her feet.

JAMES GLAISHER (O.S.)
You're the Widow Wren.

AMELIA turns to be faced with JAMES.

AMELIA WREN
I dislike that title.

JAMES GLAISHER
You're Miss Wren.

AMELIA WREN
Amelia Wren. And who might you be?

JAMES GLAISHER
Glaisher. James Glaisher.

AMELIA WREN

It was a pleasure to meet you, Mr
Glaisher.

She nods, she makes to walk on. JAMES calls after her
desperately.

JAMES GLAISHER

What brings you here?

AMELIA WREN

The selfish needs of a sister. You?

JAMES GLAISHER

The mercenary needs of a friend -
he needed accompanying to his
"romance" -

He indicates across the hall, a handsome man dancing straight
backed with a woman.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

She is apparently worth thousands
of pounds a year. I am trapped
here, just as you.

AMELIA WREN

Well, we needn't trap each other.

She makes to walk on. But JAMES is still not letting her go.

JAMES GLAISHER

I am a scientist, an astronomer, a
meteorologist, and -

AMELIA WREN

A scientist, an astronomer and a
what? *

JAMES GLAISHER

A meteorologist. I believe weather
can be predicted.

AMELIA looks disbelievingly at him.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

I need to make studies of the air
and I need to be in the air

She turns and nods and makes to walk away. JAMES pursues her.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

- and I need you to take me.

AMELIA steps back - surprised. There's a pause.

AMELIA WREN

Do you even have a balloon?

JAMES GLAISHER

Not yet, no.

*

AMELIA WREN

So you make an invitation to me
when it is I should be inviting
you?

JAMES GLAISHER

I need us to - I need you to fly us
higher than anyone has ever
travelled before.

AMELIA considers. She looks up, she looks at JAMES, she sees
her sister circling another man.

AMELIA WREN

Dance with me.

JAMES GLAISHER

Dance with you?

AMELIA WREN

Dance with me and we may converse
more.

26

INT. BALLROOM. ELEGANT HOUSE. NIGHT

26

AMELIA and JAMES are now turning around the dance floor.
Around them others move elegantly, AMELIA is determined not
to, slipping her feet into the wrong place, kicking her hair
back in the wrong manner. Not ostentatiously, if it weren't
for the fact that we're studying her we wouldn't notice, but
it's there.

Yes, even in dance she finds small ways to rebel.

*

JAMES GLAISHER

I presume there is a game you're
playing with others in the room -

AMELIA WREN

You think I'm trying to make
another jealous? You're not that
handsome.

JAMES GLAISHER

Every man in this room is petrified
to be seen talking to you, let
alone dancing with you. No, your
game is with another.

Those words hurt AMELIA, but she won't let them show. She
looks across, she sees ANTONIA, who is watching her with a
careful smile.

AMELIA WREN

You're clever.

JAMES GLAISHER

Merely observant.

AMELIA WREN

Or presumptuous. And equally, there are certain things - if I may - that I feel safe in presuming about you.

JAMES says nothing, but is that fear on his face?

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Perhaps that you don't have an invitation for tonight's events. Would that be a fair presumption?

JAMES GLAISHER

On what basis do you make that assumption?

AMELIA WREN

Your suit is two years out of fashion, your shoes abominable, your dancing ridiculous, I'm leading, you are not, and, finally, because this man clearly doesn't know you at all.

*

She has steered them to the handsome man he claimed he was here with. She spins him to a stop in front of him.

JAMES looks at the man, who frowns back. His secret has been exposed cruelly.

But AMELIA doesn't care.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Thank you for the dance.

She disconnects from him. He pulls her back towards him.

JAMES GLAISHER

I didn't realise appearances were so important to you. I'm sorry they do not live up to your society standard.

AMELIA WREN

I don't care what shoes you wear. I care that you're lying to me.

JAMES GLAISHER

It will be your balloon. All I want is to help with the design and be given the freedom to undertake the experiments that -

AMELIA WREN

I am not a coachman for hire.

JAMES GLAISHER

Good. I'm looking for a fellow scientist. To understand the weather is to understand how to make ships and sailors safer, farms more productive. We can prepare ourselves and our world for floods, drought, famines.

*
*

He can see he's getting to her. She opens her mouth to speak, and then pulls back.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

I want to rewrite the rules of the air, Miss Wren, and I need your help. So will you? Help me?

*
*

We close on AMELIA's face. She smiles.

36

INT. BALLOON FACTORY. DAY

36

*

AMELIA is examining a balloon as it is partially inflated. ANTONIA walks up behind her, dragging her children behind her.

ANTONIA

You're punishing me.

AMELIA turns and frowns at ANTONIA, and looks particularly surprised to see her children.

AMELIA WREN

I'm not sure a factory full of flammable gasses is the safest place for children -

ANTONIA

You're punishing me for dragging you to that ridiculous evening.

AMELIA WREN

I'm grateful to you for dragging me to that ridiculous evening, I would not have made the acquaintance of Mr Glaisher otherwise. Now, girls, I believe we have some macaroons somewhere -

ANTONIA

And if that is not proof of
punishing me then I don't know what
is.

AMELIA WREN

Not here.

AMELIA walks away from the balloon, past a selection of
baskets being woven to her specifics, she doesn't want this
conversation to happen in front of the engineers. She walks
quickly, and ANTONIA walks quickly beside her. ANTONIA's
children have to fight to keep up with them both.

ANTONIA

I hated you going in the air with
Pierre, but why you would go up on
your own - I can't even -

AMELIA WREN

With Mr Glaisher.

ANTONIA

You are my only sister, I do not
wish to lose you to any more
foolishness.

AMELIA WREN

You'd rather I found a man prepared
to marry me, to devote myself to.

ANTONIA

I'd rather you'd find a way to make
yourself happy rather than the
pursuit of frivolous history
making. You can't just fly away
from your problems! You have to
face them here - on earth - with
the rest of us.

*
*
*

AMELIA pushes their way into a corner where reams of material
lie ready for stitching.

AMELIA WREN

Antonia, I believe there are
answers in the sky -

ANTONIA

Let somebody else find them.

AMELIA WREN

Pierre believed it too - and this
Mr Glaisher -

ANTONIA

- sounds barely capable of
anything!

AMELIA WREN

But I am capable - I am a really good aeronaut - and I want to use what I'm good at -

ANTONIA

You are a highly accomplished woman. You could be good at so many things. You could have the most beautiful life amongst society - if only you'd try.

AMELIA WREN

And if that isn't what I want?

ANTONIA

Then you have to learn to want it. Fight the important battles, so you may find a life you can be proud of.

AMELIA WREN

Up there - it's where I've found the greatest happiness.

ANTONIA looks at her sister, cold.

ANTONIA

He was the happiness, not the damn balloon.

(she calls out)

Come on girls, we're late for lunch.

The words sink into AMELIA's face as she watches her sister pull her children from the room.

27 EXT. BALLOON. BLUE SKY. DAY.

27

18,600ft. Rising 400ft/min. -4C / 25F

We rejoin the aeronauts as they soar higher. They are sitting together on the floor of the balloon. JAMES has assembled his instruments on top of the campaign chest, and is using the top of his ruined table to write on.

The clouds roll in their glittering masses beneath them and the balloon throws a large shadow on this heap of clouds.

JAMES's suit is wet through and he is cold - the only thing preventing hypothermia is the fierce sun - which is keeping him moderately heated (and causing his clothes to steam).

*

JAMES GLAISHER

Have you been up this high before?

*

*

AMELIA WREN

Only once.

JAMES GLAISHER

With Pierre?

She says nothing. JAMES looks at her face, she looks overwhelmed.

There's a silence. JAMES is unsure how to break the silence.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

We have time enough for it, why don't you tell me about him?

AMELIA takes a swab from a pocket in the side of the basket.

AMELIA WREN

Ashamed as I am to not stick to your conversational schedule, I have nothing to tell. Does your forehead not hurt?

JAMES GLAISHER

I can't feel it. I didn't mean to - what happened to you - I didn't mean to make light of it.

AMELIA nods, and then starts to clean his cut. He lets her.

AMELIA WREN

It will heal.
(beat)
You won't have a scar.

28 EXT. BALLOON. BLUE SKY. CONTINUOUS -

28

19,400ft. Rising 500ft/min. 0C / 32F

As AMELIA tends to JAMES' wound, a YELLOW BUTTERFLY flutters past them and lands on a piece of JAMES' equipment. They both look at it in surprise.

AMELIA WREN

At this height?

JAMES GLAISHER

That's exactly what I was thinking.

Then another YELLOW BUTTERFLY floats past. Soon they are surrounded by a swarm of butterflies, brilliant yellow against the clear blue sky. It is a sight to behold.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

He was right! The fool was right!

AMELIA stands watching the butterflies - her emotion palpable.

JAMES laughs in delight, as a BUTTERFLY lands on his head, and then another on AMELIA's arm.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Of all the amazing things -
My friend John Trew - he's made
study of them. He theorised -
beyond the birds - an air current
on which only the insects travel...
I never believed him and I
certainly didn't think we'd prove
him right.

The butterfly on his head flies away. He smiles reaches out a hand and gently lifts the butterfly from her arm. This feels like a new intimacy. We lean into that moment and then they both flick it away.

AMELIA WREN

They are wonderful.

JAMES GLAISHER

Where are they heading, do you think?

AMELIA WREN

Perhaps they trust the wind to decide.

He smiles at her, she smiles back, and then her expression changes.

She reaches out her hand and places it within the butterflies.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

He'd have liked these. Pierre.

*

They dance around her and away. She turns and watch them go.

Then she turns back to JAMES, with tears in her eyes.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

My husband was the bravest man I knew. He saw possibilities others could not, but his most enduring quality was a deep and true love for the beauty of the world.

She waits a moment. He looks at her.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Thank you. Others would have pushed me further. Thank you for not.

JAMES GLAISHER

I cannot quantify what you lost.

She looks at him a moment more.

AMELIA WREN

No. You can't. Return to your instruments, Mr Glaisher. James.

JAMES looks at her a moment more, unsure whether to say anything else. She looks back, proud but with a vulnerability we haven't seen before.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

I said, return to your instruments -

JAMES GLAISHER

I shall.

He does, and then he looks back at her, and then he returns to his instruments.

53 INT. AMELIA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

53

AMELIA is sitting on her own.

A look on her face of pure contemplation.

And contemplation for her is pain.

She looks over a collection of newspaper clippings; a history of her past life in the air. Headlines saying 'BELLE OF THE BALLOON!' A wedding picture of her and Pierre. And an article about Pierre's death in a balloon accident.

37 EXT. COLONNADE. ROYAL SOCIETY. DAY

37

AMELIA's feet click to the sound of scandal. This is a men-only establishment. Not that any of the men she passes have the confidence to say so. AMELIA knows she's breaking the rules and is very much enjoying doing so.

AIRY (O.S.)

Wren isn't it? Amelia Wren?

AMELIA turns to see AIRY walking with CHARLES GREEN.

AMELIA WREN

I'm looking for James Glaisher -

AIRY

You are very welcome to wait
outside while we fetch him to you.
We have a policy you see about the
fairer sex and -

AMELIA WREN

Then I'll find him myself.

She nods at CHARLES.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Lovely to see you again Charles.

38

INT. ROYAL SOCIETY. DAY

38

JOHN TREW is staring at a watch.

JAMES is anxiously packing the crate we will later see on
board the Mammoth. We're close on him to see the speed and
precision with which he works, his hands a flurry through his
instruments. *

JOHN TREW

Come on James, imagine you're
hurtling toward the ground.

JAMES GLAISHER

Time?

JOHN TREW

Seventeen seconds. Hurry man, your
equipment is going to be destroyed.

He finishes fitting the final pieces.

JAMES GLAISHER

Done. *

JOHN TREW

Twenty six seconds. Well done. *

JAMES GLAISHER

And you thought I couldn't break
thirty.

Amelia enters. *

AMELIA WREN *

My senses deserted me -

JAMES stands up.

JAMES GLAISHER

Miss Wren, this is an honour -

AMELIA WREN

I do not wish to abandon you but -

JAMES GLAISHER

May I give you a tour -

AMELIA WREN

I'm afraid I must.

There's a silence.

JAMES GLAISHER

Abandon me?

JAMES keeps himself under control, but only just.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

The build is already under way. The largest balloon ever on order...

AMELIA WREN

I don't want to climb inside the balloon, Mr Glaisher. I don't want to climb into a balloon ever again.

JAMES is heartbroken. And angry.

JAMES GLAISHER

No. No. This is unacceptable - a vast amount of money has already been spent -

AMELIA WREN

I am sorry Sir, I've made my decision.

She walks away.

55

INT. WATCH SHOP. EAST END OF LONDON. NIGHT

55

JAMES GLAISHER enters the shop, he stands unsure.

JAMES GLAISHER

Hello Ma.

ETHEL GLAISHER

The wanderer returns. You were due last week.

JAMES GLAISHER

Yes, I'm sorry. I've been busy.

ETHEL GLAISHER

Yes. We've been reading all about you in the newspaper.

There's a silence. JAMES can't meet her eyes.

ETHEL GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Of all the people, James. Women don't belong in balloons, on show - and she makes such a show of herself. Your reputation risks ruin.

JAMES GLAISHER

Well, you'll be pleased to hear that the expedition is off, Ma.

ETHEL says nothing.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

But it was her who did not want to risk flight with me. Is he upstairs?

ETHEL GLAISHER

He had a fall - I don't know quite what caused it - but he is not -

JAMES GLAISHER

It's got worse?

ETHEL GLAISHER

It comes and goes. Tread carefully with him.

56

INT. UPSTAIRS. WATCH SHOP. NIGHT

56

JAMES enters a room. ARTHUR is sitting reading. A brass telescope sits in the corner of the room.

JAMES GLAISHER

Hard at it.

ARTHUR looks up. He looks petrified.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

Ethel! Ethel!

JAMES GLAISHER

Pa. Pa. It's me. James.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

Ethel? Ethel!

JAMES GLAISHER

Ma knows I'm here. Remember, your son, I'm your son.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

My son is ten years old.

JAMES GLAISHER

I got older.

ARTHUR looks at him carefully, JAMES stands under the light so he might examine him. His face softens. JAMES walks over to the telescope.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
What have you been looking at?

ARTHUR GLAISHER
Get away from that.

JAMES peers through the telescope.

JAMES GLAISHER
Pallas. You're looking at Pallas.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
No. Juno.

JAMES GLAISHER
You're looking at Juno? You can't be. The correlation is all wrong.

ARTHUR smiles. He's playing a game they both remember.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
You're entirely right, it's not Juno, it's Vesta.

JAMES smiles - he looks through the telescope.

JAMES GLAISHER
You're playing games with me old man.

ARTHUR joins him at the window. He takes out a pair of opera glasses from his day coat, we recognise them as the pair on the balloon.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
Of course I'm looking at Pallas.
Good spotting.

JAMES looks up at his Father.

JAMES GLAISHER
Please don't pretend you can see anything through those.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
You may have moved on to grander things James, but I...

JAMES GLAISHER
Pa...

ARTHUR snorts with laughter. JAMES smiles. He leans down through the telescope. ARTHUR peers up through the opera glasses behind him.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

These were the glasses I taught you to stargaze through, they are quite sufficient, for some - work...

JAMES GLAISHER

You've lined her up well. A good sighting.

ARTHUR looks closely at JAMES. Fighting his mind.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

Your trip. You're taking a trip. In a balloon.

JAMES GLAISHER

Well...

ARTHUR GLAISHER

To see the stars.

JAMES GLAISHER

I'm trying to. *

ARTHUR GLAISHER

I used to dream of taking my bed sheet, catching a gust of wind and dancing in a parachute amongst the stars.

JAMES GLAISHER

I know you did. You told me. *

ARTHUR GLAISHER

There is nothing more mysterious, nor more beautiful, than the stars in the sky.

They look up at the sky, and see something impossible - a tiny, faraway man floating under a bedsheet, dancing among the stars. Arthur looks at JAMES. We see his mind fade from him.

ARTHUR GLAISHER (CONT'D)

What are you doing in here?

JAMES GLAISHER

No.

ARTHUR GLAISHER

You know the rules. Not in my room. Now, you step away from the spy glass. It's very valuable James.

JAMES GLAISHER

I know, I bought it for you -

ETHEL GLAISHER (O.S.)
He's tired. Probably best not to
overdo it.

JAMES turns to his Mother. Who is standing in the door.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
Thank you. Can you get this boy out
of here?

ETHEL GLAISHER
Of course.

She smiles at JAMES.

ETHEL GLAISHER (CONT'D)
Leave it when you're on the up, eh?

JAMES nods. And then leans down and kisses his Father.

JAMES GLAISHER
See you next week, Pa.

He makes for the door, his Dad pats his arm.

ARTHUR GLAISHER
James. James!

JAMES turns towards him. He holds out the opera glasses. He
gives them to him.

ARTHUR GLAISHER (CONT'D)
For your trip. Prove them wrong.
Prove me wrong.

JAMES nods. Deeply moved.

JAMES GLAISHER
Thank you. Next week.

57 EXT. EAST END. NIGHT

57

JAMES walks quickly from the shop, his pain clear.

He looks up at the sky, as if seeing it for the first time,
and then pulls his coat tight around him and walks on.

24A INT. ROYAL SOCIETY. DAY

24A *

CHARLES GREEN and AIRY are walking fast through the columns
at the front of the Royal Society. JAMES catches up with
them.

JAMES GLAISHER
Mr Green.

CHARLES GREEN

If it isn't Mr Glaisher, the weather sleuth.

AIRY

I believe he prefers to be described as a meteorologist Charles.

CHARLES GREEN

Of course he does, well, best of luck with it.

He walks on.

JAMES GLAISHER

Sir, as you know I cannot attract the funds that I need to fly.

CHARLES GREEN

It is an expensive preoccupation.

JAMES GLAISHER

And I've heard you're looking to make another balloon flight.

CHARLES GREEN

I am.

JAMES GLAISHER

I would like the opportunity to be your second. You know I can't promise funds but I will prove a willing accomplice, and I do have ideas of how to increase the level of hydrogen in the coal gas - and I think it might be your unlocking Sir. You might finally be able to break the height record.

CHARLES GREEN walks indignantly up to him.

CHARLES GREEN

'Finally' break? I did not realise my attempts were such a bore.

AIRY

They're not. Of course they're not.

CHARLES GREEN

Have you ever even been in a balloon?

JAMES GLAISHER

I have studied them extensively.

CHARLES GREEN

Do you have any experience of frostbite, low air pressure, the mind-altering effects of a lack of oxygen on the brain -

JAMES GLAISHER

How else does one learn but by partaking -

CHARLES GREEN

Exactly what I need in a second, a theorist who knows nothing of the true dangers of the air.

JAMES has nothing to reply to that.

CHARLES GREEN (CONT'D)

Find another madman to get in a balloon with. Perhaps the French. Or better yet - give up!

*

He laughs, and walks away. JAMES looks after him.

*

33

EXT. BALLOON. BLUE SKY. DAY

33

22,300ft. Rising 600ft/min. -6C / 21F

The balloon is now coated in a thin layer of ice.

JAMES is watching his dials intently.

JAMES GLAISHER

22,300.

AMELIA is distractedly checking the thermometers.

AMELIA WREN

Do you have faith in these thermometers?

JAMES GLAISHER

22,400.

AMELIA WREN

If so, we're at 21 degrees and that is...cold.

JAMES GLAISHER

22,500. Would you note the temperature down?

AMELIA WREN

You'd trust me to write in your book? I'm honoured.

She writes in his book, looking at him all the time. Finally, she looks up, meeting his knowing look.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Have we slowed? Are we not at 22,600.

JAMES GLAISHER

So you are interested. Yes. We have passed 22,600.

AMELIA WREN

You're insufferable.

JAMES GLAISHER

You're excited.

She turns and watches the dial with him.

AMELIA WREN

And that is 22,700.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

The French are under attack. History will be rewritten.

JAMES GLAISHER

22,800.

They both watch the dial in silence.

AMELIA WREN AND JAMES GLAISHER

22,900. 23,000.

He looks at her, quite overwhelmed.

JAMES GLAISHER

And now we are higher than any man or any woman has ever been.

She looks at him, he smiles, she smiles.

He looks around himself, his eyes full of emotion.

She looks around herself, as overwhelmed as he is.

There's a perfect silence.

The perfect silence of achievement. Of doing something greater than you ever felt possible.

And it's combined with a perfect hollowness for them both.

He looks back at the dial, it now says 23,300.

He looks at her. She looks back at him.

He reaches out a hand. She takes it. She shakes it.

AMELIA WREN

Thank you for taking me up in your
balloon, Mr Glaisher.

JAMES GLAISHER

Thank you for taking me up in your
balloon, Miss Wren.

They look at each other for a moment.

And then JAMES looks out at the world around them.

He looks up. He looks down.

She just watches him. She laughs.

AMELIA WREN

It doesn't feel different at all
does it? You're disappointed.

JAMES GLAISHER

On the contrary, this is the moment
I've waited for my entire life.

AMELIA WREN

Yes. I rather suspect I've been
waiting for it too.

There's a moment's pause. Then he goes over to the pigeon
box.

34

EXT. BALLOON. BLUE SKY. CONTINUOUS -

34

23,500ft. Rising 600ft/min. -7C / 19F

JAMES writes something on a piece of paper.

He ties it to a pigeon and lets it go, it flies shakily away
and then down.

AMELIA WREN

Still think we won't make it back?

JAMES GLAISHER

Just sending a message to Charles
Green.

He looks at his instruments, for a second his vision blurs,
and when he writes the readings down his hands are shakier
than they were.

AMELIA WREN

The Mammoth is expanding.

JAMES GLAISHER
- because the air is thinner. And
we're rising ever more quickly, did
you know? Could you tell?

AMELIA WREN
We should think of slowing -

But JAMES is too excited.

JAMES GLAISHER
The air is aiding our ascent, isn't
that outstanding?

He swings around the balloon, full of endeavour.

AMELIA WREN
James, surely now is the time to
put your oilskin on -

JAMES GLAISHER
Ah, I don't have an oilskin
I needed my equipment more -

AMELIA WREN
I have no spare clothes to give
you.

JAMES GLAISHER
The weight limit was essential. My
equipment was essential. If I am to
get a little sick -

AMELIA WREN
A little sick?

JAMES walks around checking the gauges. She looks at him as
he does, astonished at his casual behaviour.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
You carry four thermometers. You
carry this strange box. But you
would not bring sufficient clothing
for the cold and wet?

JAMES GLAISHER
Don't stop. The cold will only
catch you if you let it.

AMELIA's face hardens.

AMELIA WREN
James, you're behaving very
strangely. We need to go down now.

She makes to go over to untie the valve line, only to stop
when JAMES cries out.

JAMES GLAISHER

No. No, we're not descending, not yet. We need to set a target no others can reach. 23,500 won't do. We need to break the 30,000 the French tried to hit.

AMELIA WREN

I thought this was about study.

JAMES GLAISHER

It is.

AMELIA WREN

So why does it seem you're more concerned with height than safety?

JAMES GLAISHER

The best way to break a storm is to travel up - I quote you dear Lady - maybe the best way to break a cold -

AMELIA WREN

And which science do you base that upon?

JAMES GLAISHER

The science that says that with every layer of air we're travelling into an unknown -

AMELIA WREN

I believe we've already accomplished -

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

- with every layer of air we're travelling closer to the sun. The findings we're still to discover could be overwhelming.

*

*

AMELIA WREN

- you are freezing -

JAMES GLAISHER

Please. What have we to lose?

AMELIA WREN

Our lives.

JAMES GLAISHER

This could be more important than our lives.

He looks at her - full of imploring.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Please. I know you want this as much as I do.

AMELIA WREN

I'm descending.

She starts untying the valve line. JAMES tries to stop her.

JAMES GLAISHER

This balloon has defied everything
we've thrown at it -

AMELIA WREN

This is not about the balloon. This
is not about science. This is about
your war with those who Lord it
over you - well, I've fought them
too and I tell you -

JAMES GLAISHER

No. This isn't about them. It's
about that.

He indicates the stars in the sky above them.

AMELIA looks to where he's indicating - the sky above them.

The balloon pushes through the thin layer of cirrus that lay
above them; the final barrier before the heavens.

It ascends into a magnificent icy blue.

They look up to the deep Prussian blue of the sky above.

There are stars everywhere.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

There is nothing more mysterious,
nor more beautiful, than the stars
in the sky, and look at us, we're
dancing amongst them.

AMELIA digests this with a soft smile. She thinks.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

You wanted the writing on the
balloon, Amelia: 'Caelum certe
patet, ibimus illi'.

AMELIA WREN

'Surely the sky lies open, let us
go that way!'

JAMES GLAISHER

The sky is open -

AMELIA WREN

You understand there will come a
time when we go no further?

JAMES GLAISHER

I do.

AMELIA WREN

You understand that decision will only be mine?

JAMES GLAISHER

Yes. I do.

She looks at him, assessing whether he's telling the truth, and then she nods. She empties a sandbag over the side.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

AMELIA WREN

(darkly)

Tell me when we land if I deserve your thanks.

JAMES GLAISHER

You deserve my thanks.

The sand falls away beneath them before being whipped off by the wind.

54 EXT. AMELIA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

54 *

AMELIA opens her front door. JOHN TREW is standing on the other side. Her face falls.

JOHN TREW

Good evening Miss Wren.

AMELIA WREN

I've made my decision Mr Trew.

JOHN TREW

And I understand that. I just wanted to gift you this book before we parted.

He hands her a book.

JOHN TREW (CONT'D)

I only ask if you could open it in front of me.

AMELIA looks at him a moment, sighs and opens the door.

54A INT. AMELIA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

54A *

AMELIA opens the book. Inside are exquisite studies of the formation of snowflakes. JOHN TREW watches her.

They're very beautiful.

AMELIA WREN

These are beautiful.

JOHN TREW

They're pictures of snowflake formation. A study of the mathematical possibilities of nature. A study undertaken by -

AMELIA WREN

James Glaisher.

JOHN TREW

He believes the sky can be understood.

AMELIA WREN

Of this I am well aware.

JOHN TREW

He is, sadly, occasionally wrong, he predicted it would snow tonight would you believe? But more often than not - he finds remarkable truths. Travel with him and you will discover this. I have.

AMELIA WREN

I'm sorry, I've clearly told him no, he should not have sent you to convince me -

JOHN TREW smiles.

JOHN TREW

Oh, he didn't send me, he would consider me a poor persuader, I am here on my own account.

AMELIA WREN

You will not dissuade me from my path -

JOHN TREW

James believes there's something extraordinary up there -

AMELIA WREN

So this is an opportunity I should not miss?

JOHN TREW

(interrupting)

You misunderstand me. It is not an opportunity but an obligation.

(MORE)

JOHN TREW (CONT'D)

In this life, very few are given opportunity to change the world. You've been assigned a responsibility, Miss Wren. You have to meet it.

AMELIA listens to this keenly. He looks at her a moment more, and then bows.

JOHN TREW (CONT'D)

Enjoy the book, Madam.

He exits the house, putting on his hat as he does. AMELIA stares after him.

58 EXT. GRAVEYARD. NIGHT

58

AMELIA walks up between a set of graves.

It's dark, and the lantern barely lights her way, but she knows the grave which she's aiming for.

She sits in front of it.

It's a simple grave, but Pierre's face can occasionally - flickeringly - be made out engraved on the stone - and his name - PIERRE RENNES.

She says nothing. But her face says a thousand things.

And then she feels something and looks up. She sees the snowflakes spiralling down around her.

She thinks, she touches the stone, she smiles.

39 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. DAY.

39

27,600ft. Rising 600ft/min. -15C / 5F

The sky is so dark now it seems almost night. The balloon sits amongst the stars rising up and up and up.

AMELIA is shivering, she looks across at JAMES who is desperately trying to conceal how cold he is.

He takes a series of readings. But every step he takes, every inch he moves, costs him dearly and he is really struggling to lift his head.

AMELIA looks up at the balloon, it looks like it's bursting at the seams.

She moves alongside him to help with his instrumentation.

JAMES GLAISHER
57 minutes afloat.

AMELIA WREN
26,500ft.

He looks at her, surprised, she moves on.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
Air temperature, 5 degrees
Fahrenheit.

JAMES looks at her surprised, then turns back to the instruments. He has to look at them hard, his eyesight is starting to fail.

JAMES GLAISHER
Do you know - it's quite the
strangest thing - the higher we fly
- the lower the humidity - there is
barely any water vapor here at all -

AMELIA WREN
There is still ice.

JAMES GLAISHER
And the temperatures -
unprecedented - freezing ranges
that nobody has ever predicted.

JAMES tries to write down the readings but has difficulty controlling his hands.

He looks at his hands - exasperated and then tries again.

He looks up at the instruments. He blinks so as to see them.

He tries to write something a third time, but it's a scrawl that's barely decipherable.

He attaches it to a pigeon's leg. A pigeon that seems barely alive. He throws it out of the balloon - it drops like a stone.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
No concern necessary. We have
another.

He opens the final door in the pigeon box. It's got a Pigeon lying prone at the bottom of it.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)
We don't have another.

JAMES laughs. He picks up the dead pigeon. He throws it out of the balloon.

AMELIA WREN

What are you doing?

JAMES GLAISHER

Losing weight.

AMELIA WREN

The pressure on the material could lead to rips - and at this altitude - these rips could be fatal -

JAMES picks up the pigeon box and tries to heave it over the edge.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

What are you doing - ? We can't lose weight!

39A EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. CONTINUOUS

39A

28,200ft. Rising 600ft/min. -16C / 3F

AMELIA immediately tries to stop him, dragging him down into the car. JAMES tries to escape her grasp but Wren is surprisingly strong and agile.

The two twist over in the bottom of the basket.

It's an ugly fight, desperate and full of passion. These two are inexperienced (and not particularly accomplished) fighters and the altitude is sapping their strength.

But eventually JAMES manages to pin AMELIA down.

AMELIA WREN

You gave me your word. It is time to descend.

JAMES GLAISHER

I will not stop - because you can't withstand a little pressure.

AMELIA WREN

Can't you see what's happening - we're going to die unless we descend now.

JAMES looks at her, and then he feels his nose start to bleed, a drop of blood falls onto her cheek, he touches his nose and looks at his blood. He blinks.

He rolls over, freeing her. She stays beside him. Both are exhausted by their efforts.

40 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. CONTINUOUS - 40 *
29,600ft. Rising 700ft/min. -18C / 0F

JAMES GLAISHER *

The man you married risked your
life for his own recklessness. I -
do the same. But for science.

She slaps him hard across the face.

AMELIA WREN

You know nothing of my husband's
death.

JAMES GLAISHER

It is well known that he pushed
harder than he should have.

AMELIA WREN

Now imagine the story again - and
this time - imagine that I am the
pilot. He told me to stop, that I
was risking the balloon, but that I
was intent. The seams ripped apart
and -

JAMES is stopped by this. He looks up at her.

42 EXT. PIERRE BALLOON. DAY 42

And we're with PIERRE and AMELIA and their balloon is
spiraling to the ground.

Amelia looks up at a huge tear in the fabric of the balloon.

PIERRE

We need to lose more weight.

Flashes of the two of them throwing things out of the
balloon.

AMELIA WREN

It's not enough.

They embrace. She's still trying to think of a way out.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Concentrate now, think. Think.

PIERRE is thinking. Desperately hard. Then he makes a
terrible decision.

PIERRE

Thank you for giving me somewhere I
belonged.

And then in one swift move, he dislocates from her and tips backwards over the side of the basket and he's gone.

AMELIA WREN

No....No....

She screams.

40A

EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. CONTINUOUS -

40A

AMELIA WREN

Do not be responsible for the death of another, it is one mistake you will never forgive yourself for.

These words sink in deep.

He waits a moment. He's struggling to breathe.

JAMES GLAISHER

I'm so sorry. I really am

AMELIA WREN

Let's get this balloon down -

AMELIA struggles to her feet and unwinds the VALVE LINE from where it had been tucked away. JAMES is finding it difficult to get up.

JAMES GLAISHER

I think we've discovered that oxygen - grows short - in the heights of the - brain may - I'm sorry -

He takes a breath.

She pulls on the line. It doesn't move. She puts all her weight on it. Nothing.

AMELIA WREN

No. No.

She looks around the balloon.

She looks up.

AMELIA looks back to JAMES lying prostrate.

She bends over him, she shakes him.

He surfaces.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

You have to keep moving. If you lay still the hypoxia will set in.

She tries to pull him to his feet. He fails. He raises his hands in mock surrender.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

The gas release valve is frozen - I need to climb up and open it -

He looks at her.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Stay alive.

JAMES collapses backwards to the floor.

She looks down at him.

She thinks.

At this height, every movement is a struggle, but she knows she must find a way to reach the valve.

She grips one of the ropes and slowly manoeuvres herself onto the edge of the basket.

She looks down, the layer of cirrus now far below.

41 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. CONTINUOUS -

41

32,400ft. Rising 1000ft/min. -22C / -8F

Slowly but surely she hauls herself up onto the hoop above the basket, which is now covered in a thick hoar frost.

Her foot slips and she nearly falls backwards into the nothingness.

She looks down at the horrors of emptiness below.

She takes a breath. She controls herself. She takes another breath.

Now standing on top of the hoop, Wren reaches up into the rigging - but she cannot get her hands to grip - she looks at her hands - they're white and beginning to blacken - frostbite has set in.

She stares at her hands in disbelief.

She thinks. She thinks again.

She hooks her hands over the rigging, uses her wrists as leverage and begins to climb up the side of the balloon.

The rigging keeps her protected until she reaches the equator of the balloon.

She hesitates a moment...and then...

She swings out so she can continue climbing up the outside of the balloon. Nothing is protecting her now.

It's arduous.

It's terrifying.

It's undoubtedly perilous.

But she's dogged. She's merciless with herself. Every piece of pain she ignores. She tries to grab a nearby tether rope, to tie herself to the balloon, but it's just out of reach. She stretches for it.

She loses her grip, and her hands fall backwards - she screams out in fear and pain but stays hooked on the rigging by means of one ankle, which is wedged into a joint of the rope binding.

43 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. DAY.

43

34,600ft. Rising 1100ft/min. -26C / -15F

AMELIA hangs a moment -

Looking down towards the earth.

The drop is terrifying.

She swings as if in death.

She shuts her eyes and then opens them again, trying desperately to control her brain.

She looks down at JAMES's body, he lies still, she considers her own.

She considers just dropping.

She swings for a moment more.

She shuts her eyes.

*

45 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. DAY

45

35,800ft. Rising 1200ft/min. -28C

And then she grits her teeth and she pulls herself together.

She reaches out for the tether rope and slowly ties the end around her waist. She hooks her wrists around the rope she's on and pulls herself back to vertical.

She begins to climb again.

And this time every breath hurts.

We watch her climb - inch after painful inch.

Her sheer determination is a sight to behold.

46

EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. CONTINUOUS.

46

37,000ft. Rising 1200ft/min. -30C / -22F

She summits the balloon.

She crawls to the valve. She tries to push it open.

It won't budge.

She thinks, and then - majestically - she gets to her feet.

She is standing on top of a balloon that is flying higher than anything has ever flown.

She is literally on top of the world.

A tiny figure on top of a Mammoth which sits against a vast star-filled sky.

She looks around herself, admiring it all.

And then she brings her foot down hard upon the vent.

She smashes down again and again.

And the ice cracks.

From all sides gas billows out.

AMELIA almost disappears within it.

We close on her face, she's oxygen deprived and now breathing in coal gas but she has something left.

Or does she?

She sways, she looks down at the vent, she realises it needs holding open.

She takes a knife from her belt. She bends down, coughing wretched coughs as she does, and cuts the laces from her boot.

She pulls her foot clear. Her boot remains lodged in the vent. She smiles.

She stands a moment more.

And then collapses. For a while, she lies on top of the balloon as it gradually slows its ascent, and begins to descend. And then, gradually at first, her body begins to slide off the top of the balloon. She wakes up just as it's too late to stop; as she falls, she lets out a long scream.

*
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*
*

47 INT. BLACK. 47

30 INT. ANTONIA'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 30 *

A clock pounds out a heavy chime on the room. ANTONIA sits in the corner, full of pensiveness.

AUNT FRANCES sits looking at a cold cup of tea.

AUNT FRANCES
Should we have heard anything by now?

ANTONIA
No. We'll hear if there's a disaster. The less we hear, the better her chances.

AUNT FRANCES
So we pray for silence?

ANTONIA walks over and looks out of the window.

ANTONIA
Yes, we pray for silence.

*

31 INT. GREENWICH OBSERVATORY. DAY 31

CHARLES GREEN looks up through a mighty telescope. Around him are a crowd of academics.

CHARLES GREEN
Lost them.

AIRY looks on anxiously. CHARLES GREEN searches a moment more, and then walks to a glass of port.

AIRY
You know, I have the strangest feeling he's not coming back to us.

AIRY looks up through the telescope.

*

48 EXT. BALLOON. TOP OF THE WORLD. DAY 48

36,000ft. Falling 600ft/min. -28C / -18F

We're close on AMELIA's face. She's unconscious and thoroughly inert.

Her eyebrows and eyelashes grow frost on them. It forms quickly.

We pull back, to see she's still hanging from the Mammoth on a single rope.

We look - in the stillness - at this extraordinary balloon with gas plumbing its escape out of the top.

We twist and turn with AMELIA for a moment, and it's almost like she's a bird as she drifts around the balloon. *

51 EXT. BALLOON. DAY 51

35,000ft. Falling 1000ft/min. -26C / -15F

And suddenly, she gasps a large in breath as she regains consciousness.

She looks around herself at the deep blue of her reality.

She hangs still, focuses and refocuses, and then realises where she is and what she's in the middle of.

She thinks.

AMELIA WREN

James!

She coughs repeatedly.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

James! James!

She looks down to JAMES in the basket below - but he doesn't move - his mouth and nose full of blood.

She swings this way - she swings that - completely severed from a hold on any part of the balloon - completely unable to get hold.

She looks around herself - she's hanging about 10 feet away from the basket.

Slowly, ever so slowly she starts to swing herself to and fro. Soon she is swinging enough to reach out to grab one of the ropes connecting the netting to the hoop.

She tries once -

She tries a second time.

The third time she gets a decent hold - but it slips away.

The fourth - she makes her bind.

She pulls herself up the rope - and then she grabs hold of the basket.

Using everything she cuts the rope, pulls herself over the edge of the basket and slumps down to the bottom.

52 EXT. BALLOON. THIN CLOUD. DAY.

52

32,000ft. Falling 1000ft/min. -22C / -8F

She looks up.

She looks around herself - astonished that she's still alive.

She sees JAMES.

She pulls herself across the basket to him.

She checks his heart.

He's still alive.

She checks his breathing.

AMELIA WREN

James....

He doesn't respond.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

James, we've survived. We're going down.

He doesn't stir. She begins to cry.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Please. Please. I can't have this happen again.

He doesn't stir.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

James. Please.

JAMES opens an eye. She looks at him and smiles.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Your strange two tube device is doing something very peculiar you know.

He coughs. He looks at her. He speaks in a woozy drawl.

JAMES GLAISHER

You're meaning the hygrometer.

AMELIA WREN

It's bubbling. Could that not be significant?

JAMES GLAISHER

It could.

His eyes roll back, and he closes them again. Then he opens them once more. He's forcing himself back to consciousness through sheer will.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

We're descending.

AMELIA WREN

We are.

JAMES GLAISHER

I have been insensible.

AMELIA WREN

You have.

JAMES GLAISHER

I lost my head.

AMELIA WREN

It does seem that way.

He thinks. Tries to remember.

JAMES GLAISHER

How high did we rise?

AMELIA WREN

I don't know.

JAMES GLAISHER

Why did you not take the readings yourself?

AMELIA WREN

I was busy elsewhere.

JAMES GLAISHER

Busy how?

AMELIA WREN

Your readings Sir.

JAMES looks at her. He smiles. He draws up his legs.

He groggily gets to his feet.

He takes his pencil, and leaning against the internal ropes, he begins to take readings.

JAMES GLAISHER

One hour, eleven minutes and six seconds.

*
*

AMELIA WREN

Height?

JAMES GLAISHER

Twenty nine thousand six-hundred feet.

AMELIA WREN

Good. Temperature?

JAMES GLAISHER

Unknown. That equipment has been lost to us. And the hygrometer has had better days.

He picks up the Spectroscope.

He looks through it. He puts it down.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

That has no great use either. The readings on our descent will be less - significant.

AMELIA smiles. He smiles back. He looks at her. He looks at her hands.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Your hands.

AMELIA looks down at her hands, they're black and purple.

AMELIA WREN

I lost my gloves at some - I lost my gloves.

JAMES opens one of his boxes. He pulls out a bottle of brandy.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

You did not have room for oils -
but you did for brandy.

JAMES GLAISHER

Yes. Well. A scientist is nothing
without his equipment.

He smiles. She laughs.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Hold them out.

AMELIA WREN

What are you going to do?

JAMES GLAISHER

This is going to hurt.

AMELIA looks at him. She holds out her hands. JAMES pours
brandy over the top of them. This stings. She grits her teeth
to the pain.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Better?

AMELIA WREN

Worse.

JAMES GLAISHER

I don't know what you did for me up
there but I have no doubt it was a
great act.

He takes her hands in his.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Your poor hands.

He rubs them gently.

It's beautiful.

She looks up at him.

He looks back. It begins to snow.

He looks around at the snow falling all around them.

He grins at her.

She smiles back.

AMELIA WREN

And now snow, as if we haven't had
enough.

JAMES GLAISHER

It will pass.

She smiles again.

He takes out a sample glass. He catches the snowdrops. She looks at him.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Possibly interesting to analyse the melt water.

She nods. And then she picks up a glass and tries to catch them too. He laughs. She does too.

The two of them continue in their complicity. And it is beautiful.

And then AMELIA looks back at JAMES, a strange smile on her face. JAMES watches as snow flakes land on her shoulders, her cheeks, her eyelashes.

59 INT. BALLOON. SNOW. EVENING

59

19,500ft. Falling 2500ft/min. -5C / 23F

The two sit - battered to within an inch of their lives, exhausted and as broken as the basket that holds them.

There's an almost perfect silence between them as they watch the snow fall around them as the balloon descends.

AMELIA WREN

They say that ballooning is about going up, but I've always enjoyed the descent just as much. The feeling of the world coming back to you.

She looks at JAMES.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

And we've returned with important science, am I right?

JAMES GLAISHER

We have.

AMELIA WREN

My sister wanted to know why I would fly in a balloon again. I think it was because I wanted - all that I knew - all that he taught me - all that I lost - to be for something.

JAMES thinks, desperate to give her the meaning.

JAMES GLAISHER

It seems the air gets colder the closer we rise to the sun. The humidity gets less dense despite us floating through clouds, which is also odd. There is a clear lack of oxygen at the upper reaches -

AMELIA WREN

That's not what I mean.

JAMES GLAISHER

Newton said - "we build too many walls and -"

AMELIA WREN

I don't want to hear from Newton, I want to hear from you.

JAMES thinks deeply.

JAMES GLAISHER

All my life, I've found comfort in science. It helps give meaning to the many things we cannot control... Brings a degree of order to the chaos that surrounds us. But whilst we may be able to explain the science behind an aureole, or the falling snow, it is not possible to account for its beauty. No amount of data could have helped me predict that the only person who could have taken us to the heights we reached today - was you. Together, we have brought the stars closer.

This line penetrates deep. AMELIA softly smiles.

AMELIA WREN

We have brought the stars closer.

*

AMELIA sits for a moment. Then she looks up. We watch her do so.

60

EXT. BALLOON. SNOW. CONTINUOUS -

60

16,000ft. Falling 3500ft/min. -1C / 30F

She looks at the snow, she frowns.

The snow is floating around them, neither moving down nor up.

She checks a gauge. She looks up at the balloon.

AMELIA WREN

Do you notice something about the snow?

JAMES GLAISHER

No.

AMELIA WREN

It's hovering. It's static.

JAMES looks at it, she sees she's right.

JAMES GLAISHER

That is strange - what might -

AMELIA WREN

We might, if we were travelling at the same speed as it.

JAMES GLAISHER

The same speed as - snow?

AMELIA looks up at the balloon. She frowns. She looks down at her uncovered shoe.

AMELIA WREN

The gas, it's still escaping, this - combined with the decrease in pressure means -

She grabs the valve line and pulls hard.

JAMES GLAISHER

- the balloon is collapsing.

AMELIA WREN

Help me. Pull.

The balloon comes out of the cloud. He grabs the valve line with her and together they tug hard.

Her boot is dislodged and falls down hard through the interior of the balloon, it lands with a thud in the basket.

JAMES GLAISHER

What on earth was that?

AMELIA WREN

My shoe. Probably best not to question it.

JAMES GLAISHER

But that was - if your shoe was up there that means...

AMELIA WREN

We need to lose weight. A lot of weight.

She takes out a knife and starts to try and cut at the ballast. But her hands won't allow her. JAMES takes the knife from her. He cuts it quickly and throws it.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

The chest!

They throw the chest out together. She tries to take her oils off but her hands won't work

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

Jackets!

JAMES throws off his heavy jacket and then starts throwing out his instruments. He stops - he looks at his pocket watch and then his glasses. He throws out the watch and then looks at the glasses. He keeps them in his hand.

JAMES GLAISHER

(full of decisiveness)

Climb up into the hoop. Do it now. Quickly.

AMELIA looks at him, surprised.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

The car. We lose the basket.

AMELIA looks at him and then the fast approaching ground.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

It is the heaviest weight. It's our only option.

JAMES climbs into the hoop, but he can't do it with the glasses in his hand, he throws them over, shutting his eyes for a moment, and then clambers up. He holds down a hand to help AMELIA inside, she frowns at him and climbs inside.

61 EXT. BALLOON. HOOP. CONTINUOUS -

61

7,500ft. Falling 4,500ft/min. 5C / 41F

JAMES lays down on the hoop, wrapping his legs round it to secure himself. He leans down and cuts one of the ropes from the hoop to the basket. It pings away.

The basket LURCHES from side to side as the weight distribution changes. AMELIA barely manages to stop herself from falling. She rights herself.

AMELIA WREN

Quickly!

JAMES shuffles on and cuts the next rope. And then the next. The basket now hangs precariously, held by a single rope.

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)

James!

He slashes at the rope but doesn't manage to sever it.

The basket swings mightily underneath them, causing the balloon to lurch at an uncomfortable angle.

JAMES GLAISHER

Ready?

She nods. He leans in and slashes again and the basket falls away from under them.

61A EXT. BALLOON. HOOP. CONTINUOUS -

61A

2,500ft. Falling 2000ft/min. 15C / 59F

It hurtles down towards the ground.

Their descent slows. JAMES and AMELIA are still clinging on.

AMELIA looks up and then down desperately.

AMELIA WREN

It's not enough. We're still too fast.

JAMES GLAISHER

It will be enough.

AMELIA WREN

I'm not sure I was ever meant to survive this.

JAMES looks at her, horrified to hear this.

And then he realises why she's telling him.

JAMES GLAISHER

Amelia, what are you doing? No.

She pulls herself up onto the hoop and prepares to jump. JAMES desperately looks up, he sees the balloon flapping. A thought occurs.

JAMES GLAISHER (CONT'D)

Amelia. Bed sheets.

AMELIA WREN

Bed sheets?

JAMES looks up, a smile on his face now.

JAMES GLAISHER

We sever the cord that holds the balloon in shape, the silk will be sucked up to the top of the netting, and act as a parachute.

AMELIA WREN

It won't work.

JAMES GLAISHER

I will not return alone. It will be both of us, or neither of us.

AMELIA looks at him with a startled smile and then begins to wrap her arms and legs in amongst the ropes.

The descent is getting really fast now. The envelope of the balloon is almost entirely collapsed. The noise is overwhelming, everything is overwhelming.

He smiles at her, thinks, shuts his eyes and then cuts the cord.

And the balloon is free -

61B EXT. BALLOON. CONTINUOUS -

61B

800ft. Falling 1000ft/min. 20C / 68F

The material flaps open - and spreads - and they are yanked upwards - both shouting out in pain as they are violently wrenched by the ropes.

They look at each other, has it worked?

It looks like it has. The parachute is holding and they are floating downwards. JAMES looks up astonished.

The ground comes at them rapidly: the wind is carrying them at quite some speed and it whips the balloon through the fields.

JAMES looks at AMELIA - a final moment of connection - he smiles and then they smash hard into a copse of trees.

62 EXT. COPSE OF TREES. EVENING

62

We travel fast and brutally through it.

The ring snaps and JAMES is thrown off.

But we stay with AMELIA who clings on for dear life to her partial parachute as the balloon is torn through hedges.

And then she's free of the trees.

63 EXT. FIELD. EVENING

63

The balloon now acts like a sail and drags Wren across the ground spitting up stones and debris as it goes.

It hits the ground and bounces up again.

It flies for a moment more. We can almost feel the rush of the wind.

Then it hits the ground savagely again. She loses consciousness.

Her seemingly lifeless body is dragged further across the ground a further ten - fifteen - feet. And then - eventually the balloon comes to a standstill.

And there's silence.

64 EXT. FIELD. EVENING

64

AMELIA opens her eyes.

Her skin is battered, bloodied and bruised.

She closes her eyes again.

And then she opens them again.

She looks around.

*

AMELIA WREN
James? James?

No answer.

*

AMELIA WREN (CONT'D)
JAMES!

*

*

She stops and listens. And then, faintly, in the distance:

*

JAMES GLAISHER
Amelia!

*

*

She laughs. They've made it. Then she struggles to her feet, and hobbles towards James. He's crawling on his hands and knees, clearly in pain.

*

*

*

AMELIA WREN
James.

*

*

JAMES GLAISHER

I was just coming to find you.

AMELIA WREN

Not very quickly, it seems.
Can you stand?

*
*

JAMES GLAISHER

I'd rather not.

AMELIA WREN

And if I help you....

JAMES GLAISHER

Then I will stand.

She smiles and helps him up. They look around for a moment,
and then - slowly - begin to walk across the field.

*
*

AMELIA (V.O.)

It was estimated that we rose to a
height of 37,000 feet that day - 5
miles high.

65alt INT. ARTHUR GLAISHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

65alt *

ARTHUR GLAISHER lies in bed, while ETHEL reads from a copy of
The Times.

ETHEL GLAISHER

"Two aeronauts have been nearer, by
some miles, to the moon and stars
than all the race of man before
them..."

ARTHUR GLAISHER

Our boy.

*
*

ARTHUR squeezes ETHEL'S hand.

*

66 INT. ROYAL SOCIETY LECTURE HALL - DAY

66

JAMES is delivering a report on his record breaking balloon
ascent. JOHN TREW looks on proudly.

*
*

AMELIA (V.O.)

James Glaisher's meticulous
recording of data led to the
discovery that the atmosphere has
different layers within it that
govern our weather.

*
*
*
*
*

JAMES GLAISHER

The fact that we were able to come back at all to present this is due to some luck and Amelia Wren's courageous flying. And so, we tell our story not for the purposes of pleasure, but for the advancement of knowledge and the good of us all. Thank you.

The members of the Royal Society begin to rise and start to clap, until the whole room is full with the sound of applause.

AMELIA (V.O.)

He was elected head of the Meteorological Society 5 years later.

CHARLES GREEN is still sat as the people around him applaud. He reluctantly gets to his feet and, aware of the people around him, puts his hands together forces a smile.

67

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

67

AMELIA is with ANTONIA and ANTONIA'S DAUGHTERS, running up a wet and windy hillside. The girls are carrying kites. Despite the weather, everyone's laughing.

AMELIA (V.O.)

My own discovery was more personal - I found my way back into the world again.

AMELIA WREN

Come on! I've flown in worse weather than this. We'll make pilots of you yet.

ANTONIA

We won't!!

AMELIA (V.O.)

We took to the skies in the name of discovery, to find something new. To change the world. But you don't change the world simply by looking at it. You change it by living in it.

68

EXT. SKY - SUNSET

68

In the basket, JAMES silently takes his measurements and AMELIA pilots the balloon. JAMES looks up for a moment to take in the beauty that surrounds him. He makes eye contact with AMELIA. She holds his look.

AMELIA (V.O.)

We fly not only for ourselves, but
to inspire those who come after us.

*
*

We cut wide to see the balloon sailing up and away,
silhouetted against the setting sun.

AMELIA (V.O.)

Look up. The sky lies open.

*

CREDITS.