



Airless

A Novel

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Detailed Synopsis & Chapter Analysis

Airless: the story of four extraordinary women, two-living, two in-between worlds, and a struggling airline that has more regard for profit than human lives. Told in seven interwoven chapters, seven being a divine number representing completeness, perfection and wholeness, “Airless” takes the reader through the astral planes of the past, present and the future to reveal conspiracies, sinister truths, and ultimately, the power of the individual to overcome virtually any circumstances through love, faith and fortitude.

The Seven Chapters

I. A-Attendants: Our story begins during a sleepy-evening flight to Denver International in the present day. The weather is clear and calm as Southland Air, Flight 269, finishes its third leg of a cross-country trip that started at dawn. A-attendant Chrissy Cooper is responsible for serving first class and also supervising the two junior attendants working the cabin. Already exhausted from many hours airborne, while preparing the entire cabin for their descent into Denver, Chrissy thinks she sees a mysterious senior flight attendant resting in one of

the two aft jump seats, special areas in the plane used only by crew members during takeoffs and landings. This is particularly odd because the cabin crew consists of only three, and no deadheading crewmembers are on the trip manifest. After Chrissy makes a shocking and terrifying identification, Flight 269 plummets from cruise altitude seemingly uncontrollable; the freefall is an absolute nightmare for the passengers and crew.

Once Flight 938 finally levels at a safe altitude, there is a flashback to Southland Air Flight 593, two years earlier, when that flight was required to make an emergency landing in Chicago. For those who survived the impact and fire, their lives were forever changed. Senior A-flight attendant Maggie Lund walked away from the accident without a scratch. However, she suffers from chronic nightmares and PTSD made more profound by her firm belief that greedy-airline executives, with no regard for human life, purposely “retired” an outdated, fuel-guzzling 737-400 aircraft in what should have been a survivable, wheels-up landing on foam. Instead, Flight 593 ended in disaster with the death of fifty passengers and crew. Frustrated by the fact that no one will believe her story, Maggie eventually has a nervous breakdown while working a trip; she dies that night in her hotel room, a victim of an *alleged* suicide.

II. Alexis: Alexis Stevens, a young, new-age-spiritualist, is a newer Southland Air employee. Fresh out of flight attendant training or what is affectionately known as *Barbie boot camp*, Alexis is eager for work; however, as the airline struggles, she only gets a few trips a month, mainly when other more senior flight attendants need sick leave. Alexis spends most of her free time helping to provide daycare for her niece, Astrid, as the whole Stevens-Stern family struggles financially. After Flight 593 survivor Maggie Lund has her psychotic episode on a trip, and needs to be replaced, Alexis dead-heads a flight from her tiny apartment in Los Angeles to join Maggie’s former crew in Phoenix.

When Alexis’s trip out of Sky Harbor is then grounded for increasingly-common Southland Air mechanical problems, and the crew faces a long delay, she decides to leave the airport and visit a college roommate who lives in the area. The two spend the morning reminiscing and discussing the meaning of life over a few glasses of wine. As the time speeds by, Alexis realizes she has to get back to the airport and join her crew. She leaves with a heavy heart, realizing that her roommate, who married into wealth, has become imprisoned by the same luxurious circumstances. During her cab ride back to Sky Harbor, Alexis appreciates how lucky she is in life as an independent, spiritual woman, despite her bills and lack of work. Ironically, at this precise moment Alexis notices the cab driver speeding up at an intersection to beat the light; “a terrifying eternity seemed to pass until, finally, metal met metal, and then everything faded to blackness when flesh met blunt force . . .”

III. Addison: Addison Stevens-Stern is an A-flight attendant for Southland Air, surviving sister of Alexis, and the wife of the disgraced Flight 593 first officer, Michael Stern. Michael was the copilot of Flight 593 during their fateful, final approach to the airport. After the landing gear wouldn’t properly lower, a combination of wind shear and bad luck caused the aircraft to careen off the runway, break apart and then catch fire. With the captain having died in the crash, the investigation was complicated. Authorities relied on witness interviews, flight data and cockpit recordings to piece together what actually went wrong. The NTSB stopped short of calling the crash “pilot-error”, but Michael Stern suffered a painful leg fracture, endured months of physical therapy, and ultimately lost his job at the airline when it was discovered that he had been seen flirting with an attractive-female passenger in an airport lounge just minutes before Flight 593 was scheduled to depart. And although there was no actual proof of his wrongdoing, the implication was that he had a few drinks before the flight, thus impairing his skills as an aviator and his judgement in landing.

IV. Astrid: Addison met her soon-to-be husband on a trip and after a torrid night together at the crew hotel, Addison became pregnant; playboy, jet-jock Michael Stern became a father and husband almost overnight. Seven years later, their daughter, Astrid, has been exhibiting incredible artistic talents yet she has difficulty socializing, leading Addison to believe her daughter maybe a savant, or possibly autistic. Astrid is enrolled in a very expensive private school for exceptional children; it is also an outstanding school that Addison and

Michael can barely afford. Further, Addison lacks a maternal closeness with Astrid that she blames on her work schedule and so many trips from home. In reality, Addison secretly harbors a little resentment towards her sister and childcare provider Alexis, because Astrid seems to be more endeared to her loving, free spirit. When the family discovers Alexis has been killed in the car accident, Addison is wrought with sorrow and guilt, while Astrid is simply devastated, nearly to the point of complete denial. Astrid's emotional struggle becomes more troubling for Addison and Michael as their daughter firmly believes she is being visited by her beloved aunt.

V. Aries: In the years following the tragedy of Flight 593, Southland Air is attempting to upgrade its aging fleet, but it is slow-going and costly. While the Stevens-Stern family attempts to cope with their loss, while at the same time helping Astrid manage with her delusions, officials at Southland Air are dealing with a disturbing situation as well. Another one of the airline's older 737-400 jets, registration number N013SL, is wreaking havoc with its pilots, flight attendants and passengers. Somehow, it seems, this aircraft has a mind of its own, and after countless inspections, it is deemed safe and cleared to resume service. To make matters more mysterious, it's not only the airplane's unresponsive flight controls, there are also reports of a ghostly stowaway haunting the cabin and then disappearing, leaving only puddles of freezing-cold water on the carpets and seats. Publically, the ghost stories would be a PR nightmare and a Southland employee can be fired for even mentioning the strange occurrences. However, when a veteran Southland captain suffers a fatal-heart attack while trying to save his aircraft from an inexplicable and uncontrollable dive, airline upper management is forced to take action.

As Southland Air employees struggle to keep their airline safe and profitable, Percy Pierpont, the new company CEO has an agenda of his own. After wresting control of the company from its aging founder, Tony Horan, Pierpont's cost-cutting, bottom-line approach to business helps the end Southland's economic free-fall; he is rewarded with profit sharing, unrivaled authority and a golden parachute should the airline ever be taken-over by a rival carrier. However, Horan, a flying veteran who started the airline with a single airplane, believes the cost-cutting will lead to more catastrophes like Flight 593. After his ouster, as a majority shareholder Horan wills all of his common stock to everyday employees provided there are no additional accidents before his death. This multi-million dollar gifting is meant to be a safety incentive, to insure public confidence about Southland's commitment to its passengers. This generous gift ultimately earns him the trust and loyalty of the people who make the airline work. But there's an important stipulation; if another accident occurs due to poor maintenance or pilot error, prior to Horan's death, the stocks will revert to his estate and be sold off, leaving the airline highly vulnerable to corporate acquisition. And the only Southland individual who would profit from this scenario is CEO mogul, Percy Pierpont.

Notwithstanding the professional challenges for all Southland employees, including Addison and Michael, if the tragedy of Flight 593 hadn't truly tested their marital relationship, the loss of Alexis, and the profound effect it had on daughter Astrid, puts the entire family into an emotional tailspin. Seemingly unable to accept her aunt's death, Astrid is convinced that Alexis is an angel who visits her at home and in school. Further, her classroom artwork depicts witches, demons and plane crashes, greatly frightening her classmates and concerning her teachers. For Michael, already stressed by his inability to find work as a pilot, when Addison brings their daughter to a child psychologist without his consent, he's had enough and walks out on the family. Feeling disrespected and eager to regain his self-esteem, Michael embarks on soul-searching path that may have deadly consequences for him, his new crewmembers and for passengers who will entrust him with their lives.

VI. Airless: Soon, the forces of the moral and malevolent will collide with innocent lives hanging in the balance. Several weeks after Alexis's death, Addison used most of her emergency leave time. Before her return to work, Addison is desperate to find a way to help her daughter heal. Hoping that maybe just a change of circumstances and perspective is the solution, Addison decides to take Astrid on a trip to Florida for much-needed vacation. After receiving free-employee passes from Southland Air, the week before Thanksgiving, they board a morning flight to Orlando, on the ghostly 737-400 with tail number N013SL. With the identity of the

pilots unknown to Addison and Astrid, once airborne something bizarre occurs on the flight deck that causes great concern for everyone at the mercy of the flight crew. Minutes into the flight, the emergency oxygen masks drop, yet the aircraft is still climbing, leaving is question, who or *what* is flying the plane. Soon, the synergies of man and his machines, reality and dreams, forlorn love and a hunger for revenge, merge at altitude when the living encounters the dead. In order for the passengers and crew to survive, a mother, a husband and a daughter must overcome the wrath of a vengeful spirit, possessed with remorse and vengeance, blinded by rage and oblivion, obsessed with making an ominous truth known to the world.

VII. Avengers: Ultimately, Addison and Astrid travel through astral planes, witnessing past lives, tragic events sinister conspiracies that opened the portal to purgatory and the restless deceased. Although they are able to finally quell the rage of the entity, thus saving themselves, and the passengers, when the plane finally lands, Addison is left to ponder whether she had actually traveled to the great-beyond, or was if just hypoxia sickness, and a miracle that she was able to remain conscious in her efforts to control the aircraft. However, the ghostly 737-400 with tail number N013SL has one last flight to make. In the final pages of the novel, those unscrupulous men responsible for the conspiracy, and still only interested in profit, meet their fates under the most brutal yet fitting circumstances.