

UP IN THE AIR

SCRIPT OUTLINE



by **Script Reader Pro**

Up in the Air

Screenplay by Walter Kirn, Jason Reitman and Sheldon Turner

Sequence A — Ryan meets Alex

I

Montage: Employees getting fired. Each one expresses their disbelief and anger at being let go. Reveal: the person firing them is Ryan Bingham. Ryan explains who he is: someone who fires people—but in a very professional way.

II

Montage: Ryan prepares to travel. In Voice Over, he says “this is my world” as he checks in at an airport with military precision.

On the flight, he mishears a stewardess as she offers him a can of Coke. He thinks she asks if he wants “the cancer.”

Ryan gives a talk in a conference hall about a backpack. He asks the attendees to add everything they own into it. All the things we weigh ourselves down with. Let everything burn and imagine waking up with nothing. He says it’s kind of exhilarating.

Ryan arrives at another airport and calls his PA. He receives a great opportunity—to speak at GoalQuest in Vegas. His boss, Craig, calls and says he needs him back in Omaha for a “game changer.”

III

Ryan arrives in Dallas. At a hotel he strikes up a conversation with a woman at the bar: Alex Goran. She’s just like him—a fellow lone business traveler.

Later, they compare cards. She can’t believe he has an American Airlines concierge card. They flirt discussing how many miles he’s done and swap stories about the Mile High Club. Later, they arrive at his room.

After sex, Ryan and Alex agree they need to do this again and book it in their calendars. Alex returns to her room and they kiss goodnight.

Sequence B — Ryan is forced to show Natalie the ropes

I

As Ryan shops for ties, his sister, Kara, calls. She says he's too isolated and asks him a favor for Julie's wedding—to get a photo of Julie and her fiancé's cutout in Vegas. He says he'll do his best.

II

Ryan arrives home in Omaha. His neighbor gives him a package. He asks if she wants to come over later but she's started seeing somebody.

At work, Ryan listens as Craig introduces everyone to perky newcomer Natalie Keener. Natalie gives a presentation on how inefficient the company is. She does a role play via video chat with an "employee" and fires him. She says the guys on the road will get to come home.

Later, Ryan confronts Craig over Natalie's proposal. Craig says everyone's grounded. Natalie arrives and Ryan asks her to pretend to "fire" him. They do a role play and Ryan "wins."

III

Later, Craig tells Ryan to take Natalie on the road and show her the ropes.

Sequence C — Ryan shows Natalie he's still needed on the road

I

At home, Ryan packs, including Julie's cardboard cutout.

At the airport, Ryan sees Natalie saying goodbye to her boyfriend. She arrives with a rickety suitcase.

Ryan makes Natalie buy a new case.

He supervises her as she repacks her stuff.

II

They check in. Ryan gives Natalie the lowdown on what line to join but she slows him up.

On the airplane, Natalie tells him about her workflow on firing people. Ryan explains what they really do.

In St. Louis, Ryan receives a call from Alex. She says he doesn't have to worry about manners with her and they agree to meet on a layover.

Ryan preps Natalie before he fires someone.

Montage: Employees react to Ryan firing them.

Natalie interjects with the "positive effects" of getting fired, but it doesn't go well. Ryan manages to salvage the fraught situation by telling the employee that now he has an opportunity to do what he really wants to do.

III

Ryan cuts in a line at the airport thanks to his special account.

At dinner, Ryan tells Natalie about the 10 million miles he wants to hit and she thinks he's nuts—she'd actually *go* somewhere.

In his hotel room, Ryan receives a text from Alex. They begin flirting.

Sequence D — Ryan starts to fall in love with Alex

I

Next day, Natalie takes a picture of Ryan's cutout.

In Wichita, an employee freaks out after being fired.

Natalie fires a woman who wants to know what she'll get. Then, she says she's going to jump off a bridge...

Ryan consoles Natalie outside. He says it's just "talk."

II

Montage: Ryan and Natalie stare at an empty shell of an office. He overhears her call him old. Ryan hooks up with Alex. Ryan and Natalie fire more employees. Natalie collects herself and leaves with Ryan.

Ryan gives a speech about a new backpack—filled this time with all the *people* you know. He explains how relationships are the heaviest aspect of someone's life.

Natalie watches this speech and sees him handout his card afterward.

On a bus, Natalie can't believe Ryan doesn't want to get married. He's adamant—no wife. No kids. Nothing. There's no way she's selling it to him.

As Ryan and Natalie walk, he says we all die alone. She cries—her boyfriend just broke up with her. Alex appears.

Later, they all discuss Natalie's ex. She says how she followed him to Omaha and thought she'd be engaged by now. She describes her perfect man. Alex does the same and Natalie says she doesn't want to settle.

III

Later, Ryan and Alex admit to Natalie that they're going to gatecrash a boat party.

At the party, everyone dances. Natalie meets a guy on the dance floor and takes photos with him.

Later, Ryan gives Alex his hotel card. Natalie sings karaoke. Outside, Alex asks Ryan about his backpack analogy. They kiss... The boat's electricity dies and they arrive back on shore.

Sequence E — Ryan gets pulled off the road for good

I

Next morning, Ryan wakes up to find Alex getting dressed to go. He says he really likes her.

At breakfast, Natalie admits she just left her one-night-stand without waking him up.

II

Natalie takes photos with the cutout and asks Ryan if there's a future with Alex. She gets angry that he calls his relationship with her "casual."

In snowy Detroit, Ryan and Natalie drive in silence. He preps her before they go inside to fire some more employees.

Inside, they find Craig on a video call. He says Natalie's going to take this one. Ryan preps her.

Natalie fires a man via video chat. He gets angry. Ryan and Natalie realize the employee is actually just in the room next door. She goes through the motions and he cries.

Ryan talks on the phone to Craig as Natalie waits by the car. Craig says she did a good job and is pulling them off the road for good.

III

In an airport, Natalie asks Ryan if he's going to be okay. He doesn't know. He goes to catch a different flight.

Sequence F — Ryan realizes Alex is married

I

Ryan takes a photo of the cutout in Vegas with Alex. He asks her to be his plus-one at his Julie's wedding.

In Milwaukee, Ryan and Alex check into a simple hotel. He runs into Kara who asks if they're dating. Kara admits she's on a trial separation.

II

At dinner, Ryan and Alex greet Julie and Jim, her fiancé. Jim puts Ryan's pictures with the hundreds of others on a wall map.

Later, Jim tells Ryan about his company. Ryan says his life is "good."

Later, Ryan asks Julie if she'd like him to walk her down the aisle, but Jim's uncle is going to do it. Ryan's a little put out.

Montage: Ryan shows Alex around his old highschool. They watch basketball. She says she's really happy she came. Kara calls saying Jim's having a meltdown.

Ryan rushes to the church to find Julie crying. Jim's got cold feet and he has to talk him round.

Jim tells Ryan he got to thinking about what's the point of it all. Ryan tells him there is no point... but to think about the best moments in his life. "Were you alone?" This resonates with Jim and he goes to Julie to apologize.

Montage: Julie and Jim get married. Ryan holds hands with Alex as they watch. At the reception, Ryan dances with Julie and with Alex.
At the airport, Ryan and Alex say goodbye. He says she should come visit him.

III

Back home, Ryan looks at his empty apartment...

Montage: Natalie shows Ryan the new software and procedures. Ryan looks at the GoalQuest website. Back home, he drinks.

At the GoalQuest conference, Ryan gives his backpack speech, but falters... He can't do it and hurries off the stage with a wry smile.

Montage: Ryan runs through an airport. In Chicago, he rents a car. He drives, looking for Alex's address.

Ryan arrives at her house. Alex answers the door but he sees she has kids and a husband...

Ryan drinks alone in a hotel, depressed.

Sequence G — Ryan winds up back where he started: alone

I

Chicago. Ryan arrives at the airport and checks in.

On a transit train, he takes a call from Alex. She says she thought their relationship was perfectly clear and calls him "a parenthesis." She's open to seeing him again but he's crushed.

II

During the flight, Ryan hits 10 million miles. The pilot congratulates him and says he's the youngest yet to reach this milestone. He gives Ryan the elite club card: No.7.

In his office, Ryan transfers his miles to Jim and Julie. Craig arrives and tells him the woman Natalie fired killed herself. Ryan says he doesn't remember her. Craig also tells him Natalie quit by text message and that he needs him back in the air—the video conferencing thing didn't work out after all.

III

Natalie sits in an interview for a new job. Flashback: Ryan writes a great letter of recommendation for her. She gets the job.

Montage: Employees who've been fired talk about their experiences—how life isn't all about money: it's about family.

Ryan arrives at an airport and looks up at the destination board. He's alone but a changed man. Finally he's going to choose somewhere random.

The End