

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN AERIAL SHOT (1977) - DAY

A helicopter circles **Citicorp Center** at Lexington and 54th. A 59-story tower, with alternating bands of glass and aluminum, capped by a roof slanted at a 45-degree angle.

The building has support legs in the centers of the sides, rather than at the four corners. It seems almost impossible that this unusually beautiful design could actually stand up.

TITLE: October 14, 1977

I/E. BELL JET RANGER HELICOPTER (1977) - DAY

Two men sit in facing seats by the chopper windows, transfixed by the view. **HUGH STUBBINS** (61, thin, like an aged JFK) and **BILL LE MESSURIER** (52, balding, beard, glasses)

BILL

I honestly never expected it to dominate Manhattan like it does.

HUGH

Started out just solving a problem for a client, but we seem to have created an new icon. A landmark... like the Chrysler or Empire State.

BILL

This design's never, ever gonna be duplicated, that's for damn sure.

HUGH

You'd have to be crazy to try. And to think it's the brainchild of a couple of Red Sox fans.

BILL

Hugh... If you value your life, do NOT say that out loud today!

They laugh and enjoy their views of the tower.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN AERIAL SHOT (4:3 RATIO - 1977) - DAY

Live Shot from Helicopter, which circles Citicorp Center.

TV CHYRON: Chopper 2 - LIVE

TESH (V.O.)(PRELAP)

We're at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 54th Street.

(MORE)

TESH (V.O.)(PRELAP) (CONT'D)
Citicorp has just dedicated their
new fifty-nine-story tower.

EXT. CITICORP PLAZA (4:3 RATIO - 1977) - DAY

ON CAMERA: WCBS-TV reporter **JOHN TESH** (25, tall, blond, dark suit) holds a microphone with a (2) logo.

TV CHYRON: **John Tesh**

TESH
But it's not the height of the top
that makes this building special,
it's the height at the bottom.

B-Roll shots of St. Peter's Church beneath the Citicorp tower, show the nine-story-tall atrium, and the giant T-shaped supports at the center of each side of the building.

TESH (V.O.)
The most unique part is this atrium
under the tower, nine floors high,
which makes the building look like
it's... floating, above St. Peter's
Church, tucked in under the corner.

Tesh now stands with Hugh and Bill in front of tower.

TESH
We're speaking with the magicians
behind this design, the Architect,
Hugh Stubbins, and William Le
Messurier, the Structural Engineer.
Who came up with this crazy idea?

TV CHYRON: **Hugh Stubbins, William Le Messurier**

The two men each point to the other, and they both laugh.

HUGH
We did it together, really.
Sketched it on a napkin at lunch.

BILL
Seriously. I even brought it with
me today, in case anyone doubted.

Bill delicately removes from his jacket pocket, the actual napkin with black pen lines sketching the design. The breeze suddenly grabs ahold of it, almost yanks it out of his hand.

HUGH
Careful! You need to frame that.

The two men laugh, as the building looms behind them.

FADE OUT.

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA HOTEL BALLROOM (1978) - NIGHT

Annual Award Dinner of the **NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING**. A banner crosses the proscenium, with their name and logo, and hangs over a lectern. The movie screen has a slide show.

Round tables fill the room; each seats eight **ELEGANT GUESTS**, after their banquet dinner. **WAITSTAFF** brings coffee.

TITLE: Five Months Later

INT. BALLROOM STAGE - NIGHT

The Waldorf-Astoria logo adorns the front of the lectern.

The **EMCEE** (40s, tuxedo) wraps up his introduction. Slides of modern skyscrapers of his design, fill the screen behind him.

EMCEE

... and that's why tonight, we're
all here to honor this man.

SHOT: Bill sits at the head table onstage, listens proudly.

EMCEE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

A lifetime of brilliant engineering
achievements, throughout New
England. And now, just a few blocks
uptown from where we sit...

SHOT: The slide changes to a pic of Citicorp Center. The crowd erupts into applause. Bill grins from ear to ear.

EMCEE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

... his crowning masterpiece, the
unique, 59-story Citicorp Center.
When you hear other engineers say
"How'd he do that?" Well that's
sayin' somethin' right there.

Bill chuckles and turns his head to look at his wife. **DOROTHY LE MESSURIER** (48, flame copper hair, very fit, with a healthy outdoor glow) reaches her hand over and squeezes his.

SHOT: Hugh Stubbins waves at Bill. Two younger associates, nod their heads and smile.

SHOT: BALLROOM STAGE - CONTINUOUS

EMCEE

The National Academy of Engineering
is honored to induct, for the year
Nineteen-Hundred Seventy Eight...
Mr. William LeMessurier!

The Emcee starts the applause and the room joins in as they
rise to their feet. Bill stands and moves to the lectern.

He accepts a plaque from the Emcee, who sits. Audience sits.
Takes out a paper, flattens it, and prepares to read it.

BILL

Can't tell you how much it means to
get this kind of recognition from
all of my comrades in structure. So
many people in my life are all
responsible for me standing here.

Bill adjusts his glasses to read. He looks down to see wife
smiling up at him. He takes off glasses and puts paper down.

BILL (CONT'D)

Hell with the list. I'll tell you
all the most important part of my
success. She's been by my side
through everything. We met singing
in Harvard Glee Club, and have been
in perfect harmony ever since. My
better-half, Dorothy Le Messurier.

Bill stands away from lectern and claps toward Dorothy. The
rest of the audience claps along with him. She stands, waves
to the crowd. When applause stops, she speaks toward mike.

DOROTHY

I've always known that Bill was
talented, and thank you for
recognizing that. But what I can
tell you, is that besides being a
hopeless romantic...

Laughter from the guests.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Aside from that, Bill's best trait
is that he's as honest as the day
is long.

(MORE)

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

What you are acknowledging tonight are not just his skills with a slide rule, but his choice to do what's right, not just what makes money. Here's to you, my darling!

She raises her champagne glass to toast him. The guests applaud. Then she sits. Bill looks at her proudly. His eyes leak a bit at the corners. He dabs, then blows her a kiss.

BILL

I don't deserve her, you know. She was a fancy Grand Rapids debutante. I, however, was born in Pontiac, along with quite a few automobiles.

Snickers from audience.

BILL (CONT'D)

But I decided instead to design things that stand still, forever. Which people would marvel at, and use, for decades. Centuries. I'm incredibly lucky to have been taken under the wing of a true master architect, Mr. Hugh Stubbins.

He claps. His Cambridge group applauds Hugh in agreement.

SHOT: Hugh Stubbins gives a "Centurion" fist/chest salute.

BILL (CONT'D)

To all the people who have stood by my side. My team from Cambridge. Everyone to whom I delegated tasks, who allowed me to shine because of their work on our projects... from the bottom of my heart, thank you!

Dorothy jumps to her feet and starts applauding, and the rest of the room joins in the standing ovation.

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA HOTEL BALLROOM - LATER

Bill and Dorothy sit at their table, in conversation with several **PEOPLE** seated around them there. **AVERY LYMAN** (40s, obsequious, snappy dresser) walks over to Bill, lightly touches his shoulder, then leans down to speak into his ear.

LYMAN

Excuse me, Mr. Le Messurier? I'm the Deputy Mayor, Avery Lyman.

(MORE)

LYMAN (CONT'D)
 Might I steal you away from your
 lovely wife for a few minutes?

Bill looks up at Lyman, then over to Dorothy, who nods, impressed. He stands and follows the deputy offstage.

INT. SIDE AISLE OF BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lyman leans toward Bill, while walking and talking.

LYMAN
 Seriously, Bill. Mayor Koch is a
 huge fan. Loves what you did with
 that open pedestrian plaza through
 the ground floor, connecting the
 avenues. He wants you to help him
 revitalize Midtown. Humanize it.

BILL
 Would be an honor.

LYMAN
 The boss still can't figure out how
 you hung that tower over the top of
 the church. Or why. But you're his
 golden boy now. Ever need anything,
 gimme a ring, OK?

Lyman gives him a card; handshake. Bill walks to his table, with a spring in his step. A huge smile lights up his face.

INT. LE MESSURIER CONFERENCE ROOM (1978)- DAY

Bill sits at a conference table with a contract spread out around him and a multi-line phone next to him. On the other side of the table are two of his young engineers, **BOB MC NAMARA** (20s) and **GREG SHREVE** (20s).

TITLE: July, 1978

BILL
 Looks fine, Bob, but, I need field
 specs. Waiting on the call back.
 But it's a Friday in the Summer.

MC NAMARA
 Until then, can we at least assume
 that what we have here is close?

Bill thinks for a second, but is interrupted by the two-toned line ring and the flashing red light. He picks up the receiver and hits the flashing button.

BILL

This is Bill. Whatta you got? Huh?
This is William LeMessurier. And
just who is this? Hummmph. I see.
Where are you studying engineering?

Bill listens and nods while the voice explains what he wants.

BILL (CONT'D)

Listen, I want you to tell your
teacher that he doesn't know what
the hell he's talking about,
because he doesn't know the problem
that had to be solved. Look, I'm
sorry but I'm waiting for an
important call, and I thought you
were them. Give me your number.
I'll call you back later. Yes. I
promise! Good bye!

Bill drops the phone hard on the cradle, jots a note, then
holds both his palms out, like "Can you believe that?"

BILL (CONT'D)

College engineering student from
New Jersey. Their architecture
professor claims my design for
Citicorp Center is all wrong, and
there's no way it can ever work.
And yet... there it stands.
So... where were we, Bob?

MC NAMARA

Sir. Looking at the ratio of
aluminum curtain-wall to double-
paned glass. And you were waiting--

Bill yanks his glasses off. Angrily drops them on the table.

BILL

Goddamn it... pardon my French...
but that just makes me mad. How
dare he? Know what I'm gonna' do?
Gonna' show my work, that's what!
This will make an excellent lesson
for my class at Harvard Grad. Just
need to dig out some old data.

Bill picks up the receiver, and pushes the intercom button on
the phone. Shreve rolls his eyes at McNamara.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Janie, will you please get me
 Stanley Goldstein in our New York
 office. Thanks, I'll hold.
 (hand over mouthpiece)
 You know boys, I should have done
 this a long time ago. Turned that
 whole project into a paper.

They wait a beat, silently. Bill gets connected to Stan.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Stan! It's Bill. How are you?
 Great. And the wife? Terrific. Say,
 Stan? Do me a huge favor and round
 up some calcs I did for Citicorp.
 Don't need drawings, just some
 numbers I worked up... for wind
 loading, opposing forces and the
 overturning moment. What? Wait a
 sec, I'm putting you on speaker.

Bill hits the speakerphone button. It's not hard to hear the
 loud **STAN GOLDSTEIN** (50s, smoky Long Island fry).

GOLDSTEIN (O.S.)
 I said... why now? This have
 anything to do with that college
 student who keeps calling us?

BILL
 You mean they called there too?
 What an annoying little gnat!

GOLDSTEIN (O.S.)
 Look, all I know is that Joel
 Weinstein has been working with
 some Jersey architecture student
 for a couple months now. Senior
 thesis, I guess. Asked whether we
 had factored in Quartering winds. I
 told Joel it wasn't relevant.

BILL
 City doesn't even require checking
 Quartering forces. And as I recall,
 the anomalies were only specific to
 small areas in the middle. Overall,
 nothing to lose any sleep over!

GOLDSTEIN (O.S.)
 Right. Look Bill, I'll have my girl
 FAX you those docs, ASAP.

BILL

Thanks, Stan. Appreciate it. Hope to see you on the Fourth! Bye.

Bill hangs up the receiver and thinks for a moment.

SHREVE

Sir... Uh, we're not going to get to our discussion today, are we?

BILL

Sorry, guys. This is totally distracting me now. Pick up where we left off next week?

They all stand, and pick up their papers.

BILL (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what. I'm gonna give that student some facts to take back to the professor which are going to make one of them feel very dumb, and one look extremely smart!

INT. BILL'S OFFICE - LATER

Bill sits in his office, surrounded by papers with scribbled math equations. He stops writing, crumples a paper and throws it at a wastebasket, which is surrounded by a pile of misses.

He takes off his glasses, buries his face in upraised palms, elbows on desk. Gives a very long exhale.

INT. BOSTON "MTA" SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Bill is standing, hanging on strap with one hand, holding plans with the other. The train goes around a sharp corner, and he loses his grip on a large sheet of plans.

The plans fall across the top of the head of a seated woman. Bill grabs the sheet and removes it, revealing a VERY pissed **SUBWAY WOMAN** (80s) with her arms crossed, shaking her head, giving him stink-eye.

INT. HARVARD SQUARE SANDWICH SHOP - DAY

Bill eats, does calculations. The **WAITRESS** (20s) brings him a cup of coffee. He picks up the sugar dispenser and pours it in, but is so distracted, that he forgets to stop pouring.

EXT. COLONIAL THEATRE, BOSTON - NIGHT

The theater marquee advertises **HEAVEN CAN WAIT**, starring Warren Beatty. Bill stands facing a poster, depicting Beatty in a track suit, sporting wings and holding a saxophone.

Bill turns, gets a look on his face that is almost.. content.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. QUEENS BOULEVARD - DAWN

A Yellow Checker Cab drives west. On tracks above, subway trains covered with spray-painted names pass each other.

TITLE: Three days later in New York

INT. CHECKER CAB - DAY

A summer sunrise in New York City. In the back of the yellow taxi, a less-confident Bill slumps, stares ahead, unsmiling.

A **CABBIE** (50s, stocky Italian man) sits on his wooden-beaded seat cover. He is westbound across Queensboro Bridge.

CABBIE

Youse was real smart flyin' into La Guardia. JFK's a pain in the ass... always road work on the Van Wyck.

They crest the bridge. Manhattan's silhouette fills the sky.

CABBIE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

This way, we zip right over the Queensboro and bingo... midtown.

In the distance, just off the left fender of the cab, the angled top of the Citicorp Center slices the dawn.

CABBIE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You believe that weird new bank building? It kinda... floats. What do you think holds it up?

Bill eyes Citicorp Tower; tight-lipped, brow furrowed. His fingertips nervously beat atop the briefcase on his lap.

BILL

At the moment?
God.