

Willa B's Letter Character Breakdown

Principals

WILLA BROWN — Black woman, 27–32

- **Essence:** Brilliant, driven, irreverently charming; a strategist who leads from the front.
- **Core traits:** Visionary, quick-witted, mechanically fluent, guarded-then-vulnerable, persuasive under pressure.
- **Arc:** From lone architect who hoards strategy → collaborative leader who delegates, risks vulnerability, and claims public space.
- **Voice/tempo:** Crisp, authoritative; gear-shifts between cool control and heat when challenged.
- **Skills:** Confident prop business with tools/logbooks; basic aircraft-mechanic mime; letter-reading with emotional modulation.
- **Notes:** Must command the stage; chemistry with Coffey essential; comfort delivering historical/political text.

CORNELIUS “COFFEY” COFFEY — Black man, 30–38

- **Essence:** Master craftsman with a tender core; prideful, practical, principled.
- **Core traits:** Skilled mechanic/pilot, protective, occasionally insecure, deeply loyal.
- **Arc:** From threatened supporter → equal co-architect who claims expertise without diminishing Willa.
- **Voice/tempo:** Grounded, tactile; warmth beneath gruffness; humor in dry lines.
- **Skills:** Convincing tool handling/torque business; physical specificity around engines; comfort with grease, rags, shop detail.
- **Notes:** Needs chemistry with Willa; can carry simmer → rupture → repair in Act 2.

JANET HARMON — Black woman, 25–32

- **Essence:** Nurse-turned-aviation-ally; empathetic truth-teller with quiet backbone.
- **Core traits:** Intelligent, observant, wry, loyal; learns to own the room.
- **Arc:** From confidante → visible co-strategist (lands key bookings, fronts college pitch).
- **Voice/tempo:** Gentle but sure; gains propulsion across the play.
- **Skills:** Letter handling; persuasive mini-pitches; period poise.

ENOCH WATERS — Black man, 28–40

- **Essence:** Sharp newspaper man; a catalyst with ink-stained hands.
 - **Core traits:** Curious, fast-talking, principled, deadline-minded; equal parts skeptic and booster.
 - **Arc:** From gatekeeper to partner—raises stakes (“3 pilots by Sunday”) and helps legitimize the movement.
 - **Voice/tempo:** Quick, musical typewriter rhythm; can flip from charm to steel.
 - **Skills:** Typewriter business; camera/press choreography beat.
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Featured

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT — White woman, 45–55

- **Essence:** Calm gale-force; fearless curiosity wrapped in etiquette.
- **Core traits:** Decisive, empathetic, unsnobbish, quietly radical.
- **Arc:** A decisive cameo that converts doubt into national leverage; her letter catalyzes the endgame.
- **Voice/tempo:** Measured patrician cadence, never fussy; humor glints.

- **Skills:** Onstage “flight” sequence (chairs/ladder with balance, trust).

CHIEF CHARLES “ALFRED” ANDERSON — Black man, 30–42

- **Essence:** Unflappable flight master; teacher with quiet confidence.
- **Core traits:** Precise, patient, wry; steel in a velvet glove.
- **Arc:** Embodies proof; his competence makes history undeniable.
- **Voice/tempo:** Calm authority; steady airman’s pace.
- **Skills:** “Cockpit” mime, crisp movement in flight choreography.

AGENT PETTIGREW — White man, 30–45

- **Essence:** Duty-first secret service; anxious protocol mind.
- **Core traits:** Tense, by-the-book, not malicious—simply risk-averse.
- **Arc:** From obstruction to chastened witness of excellence.
- **Voice/tempo:** Radio-check precision; staccato urgency.
- **Skills:** Radio prop handling; crisp blocking.

MONROE ABBOTT (Photographer) — Black man, 20–30

- **Essence:** Eager-eye photojournalist; respectful fanboy energy.
 - **Core traits:** Warm, quick, observant; takes in history through a lens.
 - **Arc:** Framing history—literally—at the finale.
 - **Voice/tempo:** Light, enthusiastic.
 - **Skills:** Camera handling; tableau composition instincts.
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Supporting / Cameos

WHITE MAN (Café Customer) — White man, 35–55

- **Essence:** Everyday enforcer of Jim Crow norms.
- **Core traits:** Smug, entitled, brittle when challenged.
- **Arc:** A pressure spark that defines Willa/Coffey's courage and choice.
- **Voice/tempo:** Casual menace; keep it real, not cartoonish.
- **Skills:** Period café business; precise escalation then exit.

CADET DEBOW — Black man, 18–24

- **Essence:** Proud trainee; esprit de corps.
- **Core traits:** Competitive, optimistic, clean military bearing.
- **Arc:** Brief—but his confidence amplifies Tuskegee's ethos.
- **Voice/tempo:** Snappy cadet cadence.
- **Skills:** March/formation; quick "Yes, sir/ma'am" precision.

CADET HOTESSE — Afro-Latino man, 20–28 (Dominican)

(Historical nod to Sgt. Pilot First Class and Dominican-born Staff Sgt. Domingo "Tony" Hotesse; accent optional but respectful.)

- **Essence:** International dimension of Black excellence in flight.
- **Core traits:** Focused, proud, warm camaraderie.
- **Arc:** Presence signals the breadth of the program.
- **Voice/tempo:** Light bilingual color acceptable; clarity first.
- **Skills:** Formation/stage flight business.

