

HYDRA

Screenplay by

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Based on the book:

'Johnny: Canada's Greatest Bomber Pilot' by Dave Birrell

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WGA East Registered

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FADE IN:

INT. PEENUMÜNDE RESEARCH BUILDING - NIGHT

Sleeping and Living Quarters. Rows and rows of beds -- NAZI SCIENTISTS are sound asleep. There's a large SWASTIKA painted on the back wall.

INSERT: Peenumünde - August 17, 1943.

A small TREMOR in the ceiling. One of the Nazi Scientists opens his eyes. Another TREMOR, longer this time. A light flickers.

The Nazi Scientist sits up, staring at the ceiling as it begins to SHAKE. A constant RUMBLE -- More Nazi Scientists wake from their slumber. They all stare up at the ceiling.

Suddenly, all is quiet. The rumbling ceases. Replacing it is a fast-as-lightning ZIPPING sound from beyond the infrastructure; Something falling from the skies.

A random Nazi Scientist leaps from his bed, petrified.

NAZI SCIENTIST

Laufen!

A stir of *panicked commotion*. Then-- Everything goes BLACK.

Silence. Nothing.

FROM THE BLACK--

JOHN (V.O.)

Cut the head off the snake, and the body dies.

A FLASH OF ADOLF HITLER AT A PODIUM, SPEAKING TO THE REICHSTAG (GERMAN PARLIAMENT).

FADE IN:

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, OFFICE - DAY

An empty Study. 1980's decor. Somewhere, a clock ticks - Like a timed device on a bomb that has yet to go off. There is a FRAMED PICTURE on a mahogany desk, facing away from us; An unknown photo within.

Beyond the mahogany desk, more FRAMED PICTURES hang on the wall. Aerial photos from World War 2. Airplanes; Twin-engine and four-engine heavy Bombers.

On the ground, AVIATORS pose heroically for the camera. The Royal Canadian Air Force - The elite group known as 'The Dambusters'.

JOHN FAUQUIER, 72, grey hair, skin weathered by time, steps into view, dressed in a suit in his own home. He has a lit cigarette in his right hand and a glass of liquor in his left.

INSERT: Toronto, Ontario. April 2, 1981 - One Day From Immortality.

John takes a sip of his drink and places the glass down on a coaster. He reaches for the frame on the desk, adjusts its angle slightly, staring at the photo within for several moments. Then, his eyes move to a small, BLACK FELT CASE.

He takes a puff of his cigarette, COUGHS, covering his mouth with the back of his free hand. Somewhere, a clock ticks.

KNOCKING at the front door - The reverberations echo off the walls of the empty home. John takes another puff before dropping the cigarette in the liquor glass. He leaves the office to answer the door.

The framed picture next to the liquor glass is of a much younger John and a Woman, MARY. They are posing for a wedding photo.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FOYER - DAY

John makes his way into the Foyer and opens the front door. A Young Man, ETHAN, 18, stands on the front stoop, looking nervous. He locks eyes with John and tenses up further.

JOHN
Can I help you?

Ethan swallows and shifts his weight.

ETHAN
Yeah, um... Sorry to bother you, sir. But I, um... I think that--

JOHN
Come on now, out with it. I don't have all day.

John's tired eyes flick past Ethan, gazing out into--

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

-- the damp Toronto streets as the last snowfall of the year melts away into the sewers.

 ETHAN (O.S.)
My name's Ethan.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

John turns his attention back to the Young Man.

 JOHN
Okay.

 ETHAN
I think you're my father.

John goes still. He sizes up this Young Man in front of him - Dark hair and dark features. Tall and thin. Much like himself in his youth.

 JOHN
Your father?

 ETHAN
Yes.

John collects himself, shaking off a nagging suspicion.

 JOHN
Young man, I believe you're a day late.

 ETHAN
What do you mean?

 JOHN
April fools was yesterday.

Ethan shakes his head, incredulous.

 ETHAN
This isn't a prank. My mom said she would tell me where you lived when I turned 18. She said I'd know for sure when I saw you...
(beat)
She was right.

 JOHN
Who is your mother?

Ethan looks about to speak. John quickly holds up a hand, stopping him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't answer that. What do you want?

ETHAN
What do I want?
(beat)
I wanted to meet my dad.

JOHN
Then I suppose you should keep looking, because I'm not him.

John starts to close the door.

ETHAN
Wait! Please...

John keeps the door open for a moment, hesitating.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Can we just, you know... talk for a bit? Maybe we'll make a connection or something. Who knows.

JOHN
A connection? I have shoes older than you, young man.

ETHAN
I get it, okay? This is weird. But I came a long way for this. I chose to spend my 18th birthday sitting on a crowded bus... to meet you...

John considers something.

JOHN
You realize, that if what you say is true, and I'm not saying it is, but that would make me 54 years old when you were born?

ETHAN
Yes, sir. And married too, I believe. At the time.

JOHN
Who have you spoken to?

ETHAN

Look, you don't have to invite me in or anything. That's not why I'm here. I was thinking maybe we could go for a walk? I know you'd prefer to be outside rather than, you know, being all couped up.

(beat)

I know all about you, sir.

John doesn't look pleased. He just nods, starts to shut the door.

JOHN

Wait here.

He shuts the front door.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FOYER - CONTINUOUS

John lowers his head, presses his fingers into his eyes and rubs them. He EXHALES a pent up breath.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Ethan is stuck in the exact same pose, head lowered, rubbing his eyes. He shakes his head.

ETHAN

(under his breath)

Stupid...

He waits at the closed door, looking back over his shoulder towards the street--

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

-- as a brand new 1982 Toyota Land Cruiser drives by.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Ethan turns back toward the door. He waits. Fidgets. Waits some more. The front door opens - He snaps to attention like a soldier in the presence of a commanding officer.

John stares at the Young Man in front of him for several seconds. He holds out an ENVELOPE.

JOHN

Take this.

Ethan looks down at the envelope being offered to him.

ETHAN
What is it?

John continues to hold it out towards him, unflinching. Ethan cautiously takes it.

JOHN
It's all I can offer you.

Ethan slowly opens the envelope - It is stuffed with Canadian 100 dollar bills. He quickly closes it and offers it back.

ETHAN
I can't take this.

JOHN
Yes, you can.

ETHAN
I don't want your money.

JOHN
Give it to your mother then.

ETHAN
No, I... that's not what--

Ethan EXHALES a deflated breath, the arm offering the envelope back drops to his side, defeated.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
You must feel it too... to give me this. I mean, it's not something someone does for a stranger who just shows up on their doorstep.

JOHN
I can't help you.

ETHAN
I didn't come here looking for help.

JOHN
I was being polite. I don't want you here.

ETHAN
Why?

John clenches his jaw, lost in thought. He gazes through Ethan, through his striking resemblance to his own early years, like he's not even there.

JOHN

As we passed over lakes we drew our own maps, otherwise we would have never been able to return...

John snaps back to reality, smiling sadly at Ethan.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Draw your own map, kid.

He closes the door. The lock *clicks* into place. Ethan nods to himself, tears in his eyes. He pockets the envelope then turns and walks away.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, OFFICE - DAY

John grabs the drowned cigarette from within his drink and tosses it aside. He gulps down the rest of the liquor with a shaky hand and wipes his mouth. A clock *ticks*.

He looks at the small, black felt case and opens it slowly, revealing a GERMAN LUGER inside. There's an ETCHING in German along the side of it. It reads, '*Scheiß auf diese Welt*'. John glances at the framed photograph of himself and Mary--

JOHN

Don't look at me like that.

-- before turning around and facing the wall with the many hanging framed pictures. His eyes skip over each one; The memories flooding his brain as quick as it takes his eyes to process them.

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of the back of Winston Churchill, watching a distant Short Sterling four-engine heavy Bomber about to takeoff. A quote below it: "*The Navy can lose us the war, but only the Air Force can win it.*"

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of a youthful King George the VI and Queen Elizabeth as they present the Distinguished Service Order to a younger John.

- A framed NEWSPAPER portrait and article from March 30, 1944. The headline: "*King of the Pathfinders*" Is Johnny Fauquier's Title.'

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of John and a large blond Man, TINY WILSON, standing beside each other, hands in pockets, smiling for the camera. A bush plane behind them on the rugged terrain of north Quebec.

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of John kneeling down beside Butch, a mangy dog with sad eyes. John looks happy to have Butch around.

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of John in full uniform, much younger, sitting cross-legged on a bomb and grinning for the camera.

- A framed PHOTOGRAPH of a twin-engine Bomber flying through the cloudy sky.

John focuses in on this picture -- We ZOOM IN towards it as the SOUNDS of WHIRRING ENGINES and ZIPPING PROPELLERS slowly infiltrate our ears... Continue to PUSH INTO the framed photograph until it becomes--

EXT. SKY - DAY

-- deafening and real. The Vickers Wellington Mk II twin-engine Bomber cuts through the clouds in the blue sky and tips its wings slowly as it banks to the right.

INSERT: August 16, 1941 - 40 Years From Immortality.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

JOHN, 31, youthful with determined eyes, is at the controls.

In the plane with him is Navigator CLIFF MYERS, 26, Bomb Aimer LLOYD CAMPBELL, 21, Wireless Operator MARTY AITKEN, 23, and Air Gunner HUGH GRASSICK, 24.

CLIFF

A bit different that you're used to
huh, Johnny?

John levels out the plane.

JOHN

She's just a little heavier...
Nothing wrong with that.

LLOYD

Not at all. Got a set of big ol' ta
ta's too.

LAUGHTER in the cockpit. John just grins.

HUGH
Twin .303 machine guns in the nose.
Fully loaded during missions.

JOHN
Aren't they loaded now?

HUGH
Not for training.

John shakes his head.

JOHN
Then I'm not really training, am I?

MARTY
Folk-ee-air here is the type to
dive right into the deep end of a
pool then wonder why he can't stand
up.

JOHN
It's Foe-key-eh, that's your one
free slip up, pal. And I just want
to feel her in all her glory...

A CREAKING noise along the side of the plane.

CLIFF
Trust me, you are. She may have old
bones but they are tried and true.

LLOYD
They don't call these birds
'Wimpys' for nothing...

JOHN
I'm requesting a crew of one next
time.

MARTY
Denied, *Foe-key-eh*. Crews go up to
seven when you get to the four-
engine.

JOHN
Tell me something I don't know...
Might as well be flying commercial.

HUGH
I hear Boeing is hiring.

LAUGHTER.

JOHN

Okay, okay. Simmer down, children.
I'm going nose down. Let's try to
catch some additional air speed. I
want 250 miles per hour to feel
like a luxury cruise.

CLIFF

Roger that.

LLOYD

You know what else felt like a
luxury cruise?

HUGH

What?

LLOYD

Titanic.

HUGH

Except the iceberg rears its ugly
head when we're flying high
altitude at night with rain in the
cockpit and frozen instrumentation.

LLOYD

You know it.

MARTY

Hoping the stars will guide us
home...

CLIFF

Dead reckoning.

John pushes down on the stick, adjusts rudders, gaining speed
as--

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

-- the twin-engine Bomber dives down through the clouds.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

CLIFF

Easy, there. We're at 250.

JOHN

Check. Let's go for 275.

MARTY
Yeah, let's not.

JOHN
We'll have to be well over 300 if
we're ever coned by a spotlight,
gentlemen. Only way out of that is
fast and down.

John closes his eyes as he dives, testing himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(eyes closed)
And we won't be able to see a
thing...

CUT TO:

A FLASHBULB GOING OFF -- FOLLOWED BY A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

The Evening Telegram, Toronto. Tuesday, December 30, 1941.
'They Gave Huns a "Noisy New Year"'. The picture below is of
SIX AVIATORS from the elite 617 bomb Squadron.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - NIGHT

John blinks from the light of another FLASHBULB going off. He
is being interviewed by a REPORTER for the Ottawa Citizen.

JOHN
I saw more searchlights over France
than I had ever seen before. They
sure were throwing up flak when we
reached St. Nazaire. To add to the
party there were plenty of aircraft
about. One passed right over my
head. When we bombed they shoved up
the stuff at us. There were a
number of fires burning when we
left...

EXT. JOHN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

INSERT: 'Ardvar'. Rockcliffe Park, Ottawa.

John's Mother, JESSIE, 57, is being interviewed by another
REPORTER in front of the huge mansion known simply as
'Ardvar'. Beside her is John's wife, MARY, 26, from the
wedding photo.

JESSIE

We have received no information from John in over a month. It's as if my mail doesn't seem to be reaching him...

Mary gently places her ring-adorned left hand on Jessie's arm, halting her.

MARY

My husband is a bit of a rolling stone, but we are both very proud.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

John is having drunken sex with a Young Woman, JEAN, 19, on top of a kitchen table that is covered with liquor bottles and unopened mail - Presumably, one or two from his wife and mother.

The table BREAKS. Glass SHATTERS. John and Jean fall to the floor, still intertwined and LAUGHING. They keep going.

JESSIE (V.O.)

Proud, of course. I just wish we had more updates. In fact, as of late, all that we hear concerning him are the newspaper reports about his bombing flights over the continent...

EXT. SKIES OVER BREMEN - DAY

The 405 Squadron's Vickers Wellington Mk II tears through the blue sky, miles of sea below with a land mass approaching in the distance. A harbor comes into view - Docks. It gets cloudy quick.

INSERT: Bremen, Germany.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

John is at the helm. Cliff is marking the map with a pencil.

CLIFF

Say your goodbye's to the clear skies.

JOHN

As my pal Tiny would say, "That rhymed". Eyes peeled. It's close.

Marty glances up from the comms station.

MARTY

Six others have reported thick clouds over the north sea. They've abandoned the mission and are headed back to base.

HUGH

Guess it's our lucky day.

JOHN

Lowering altitude. Keep a look out for the docking area targets, I don't want to drop too low and risk exposure to the ground.

MARTY

I'm more concerned with the destroyers.

CLIFF

No visible threats.

Lloyd rubs his hands together anxiously.

LLOYD

We got a 4000 pound cookie on board, boys. Excuse me if you catch me with my hand in the cookie jar.

CLIFF

Docking area targets visible. There's Bremen...

EXT. SKIES OVER BREMEN - CONTINUOUS

The Vickers Wellington Mk II dives towards the docks below before levelling out.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

John adjusts his airspeed.

JOHN

Slowing velocity.

CLIFF

Steady over the docks.

JOHN

Holding steady. Lloyd--?

Lloyd is lying flat in the nose of the aircraft.

LLOYD
Acquiring targets. Talk to me,
baby...

He locks on to an area below.

LLOYD (CONT'D)
There you are you fickle whore.
Here we go, boys.

HUGH
Give 'em hell, kid.

Lloyd places his hand on a nearby lever.

LLOYD
Speak of the devil...
(beat)
And you've got God's ear.

He pulls the lever, releasing the bomb.

EXT. SKIES OVER BREMEN - CONTINUOUS

An aerial, birds-eye view of the Mk II as it flies gracefully over the docks of Bremen. The BOMB falls away from the plane's undercarriage until it is just a speck below. For a moment, it vanishes. Nothing happens. Then--

A BRIGHT FLASH as the 4000 pound bomb EXPLODES, leveling the docking area in seconds.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The FLASH lights up the interior for a brief moment like a flashbulb from a camera.

JOHN
That's a bullseye. Great work,
gentlemen.

HOOTING and HOLLERING. High fives all around.

LLOYD
Adios, you Nazi fucks!

MARTY
Reporting the successful strike to
base.

HUGH

Ay, Johnny, don't forget to give all the credit to the ground crew when we land for their continued dedication!

LAUGHTER.

JOHN

I'll do just that, Hugh.

LLOYD

I don't know about you guys but I feel like I just dropped a 4000 pound shit!

EXT. SKY - DAY

The Mk II has nothing but endless sea below it as it flies above the greying storm clouds. Suddenly, the cloud cover breaks wide open, revealing a DESTROYER battleship below. It takes aim.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Cliff looks below.

CLIFF

Eyes on destroyer.

JOHN

It's friendly.

EXT. SEA - CONTINUOUS

SEA LEVEL. One of the Destroyer's turrets finishes its rotation and takes aim - It FIRES, just missing the plane's wing.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

John adjusts the plane's course as the flak BUZZES by.

LLOYD

What the hell?!

CLIFF

Friendly, huh?

John keeps his calm amidst the commotion.

JOHN
Marty, get on comms.

MARTY
On it. What the hell are they
doing?!

More storm clouds roll in, darkening the cockpit.

JOHN
Their view is obscured by the storm
clouds, that's why they fired *and*
why they missed... We won't get
that lucky again. Prepare for
evasive maneuvers, gentlemen. Hold
tight.

John leans on the sticks, banking the plane hard out of the
line of fire.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The turret on the Destroyer below pivots and keeps FIRING.
BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! The Mk II dodges it all, tipping its
wings and changing altitude expertly.

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

John levels out on the sticks. EXHALES a breath.

JOHN
Well, they're nothing if not
persistent...

HUGH
What the hell do I do? Return fire?

JOHN
Do two wrongs make a right?

Marty hops on comms.

MARTY
Cease fire! We're friendly! I
repeat, cease fire!

John yanks back on the sticks.

JOHN
Ups-a-daisy...

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Mk II elevates quickly, avoiding the turrets FIRE that BUZZES BY below. The plane vanishes into thick clouds just as the turret stops firing. *Message received...*

INT. VICKERS WELLINGTON MK II, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Relief radiates throughout the cockpit.

MARTY

Whew! God damn.

CLIFF

I think we're in the clear.

JOHN

Famous last words.

LLOYD

We should bomb them on general principle.

HUGH

It's so nice to have friends, ain't it?

JOHN

You can say that again.

PULL IN close to John's face as he levels out the airplane, focused... Hugh's words echoing in his ears...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BUSH, NORTH QUEBEC - DAY

INSERT: 6 Years Earlier.

Dense trees. Not an airport or runway for miles. A small motor BUZZING is heard before it is seen - A bush plane appears and lands on the rugged terrain.

A younger John, 25, waits, leaning against his own bush plane, smoking a cigarette.

LATER

TINY WILSON, 20, a big husky build, blonde hair, well over six feet, exits the bush plane that just landed. He stops, turns, offers a hand out to someone.

A pretty Female Reporter, JANICE, 28, takes it and hops out. She smiles her appreciation at Tiny. Tiny smiles back and makes his way over to John as Janice adjusts her bag and checks her press camera.

JOHN
Still can fly, big guy.

Tiny smiles.

TINY
That rhymed.

JOHN
Good to see ya.

TINY
Likewise.

They shake hands, Tiny's paw swallowing John's whole.

TINY (CONT'D)
How'd I know I'd find you here?

JOHN
I'd live out here if I could.

TINY
I believe you.

JOHN
Beats trading stocks all day.

TINY
Not in pay but yeah, I hear you.
What's new, my friend?

John EXHALES some smoke into the air.

JOHN
Same old. Just dropped off my
cargo. What's with the dame?

TINY
Her name's Janice.
(whispers)
She's 28.

JOHN
That's good. You'd do well with an
older broad.

TINY
She's a reporter for the Quebec
Gazette.

JOHN
Say that three times fast...

TINY
I can barely say it once.

John smiles.

JOHN
You never do interviews.

TINY
Her newspaper wants to do an
article on bush pilots. Who am I to
say no?

JOHN
If the reporter had a beard I have
a feeling you would have.

TINY
Well, what can I say? I'm turning
over a new leaf.

JOHN
Doesn't matter if it's all from the
same tree, Tiny.

John nudges Tiny playfully, and takes a puff of his
cigarette.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Just wait until we're flying for
Boeing in a few years... We'll have
the pick of the litter.

TINY
If we get that far.

JOHN
I'll get that far. And I'll bring
you along with me, co-pilot.

TINY
I'll hold you to that, Captain.

Tiny looks around the area, taking it in.

TINY (CONT'D)

Kind of funny that we left our mining business to take our business up in the air, don't you think? It's about as polar opposite as you can get.

JOHN

Highs and lows, my friend... it's what life is all about. It's the middle ground that gets you.

Tiny nods at this.

TINY

No Mary this time out?

JOHN

She couldn't make it. Tied up with the hotel. Business meetings and the like.

TINY

She's always been the smart one.

John glances at Janice, who is kneeling down rummaging through her bag.

JOHN

You bringing her for drinks later?

TINY

Only if you're on your best behaviour.

JOHN

I always am.

Tiny flashes John a look.

FLASH CUT:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

John is scrapping with some DRUNK GUY. Fists are flying. Bottles SHATTER. The Drunk Guy's BUDDY steps in. They team up on John who doesn't back down -- He just fights harder.

Tiny grabs John by the back of the neck and yanks him out of harm's way. The Drunk Guy throws a punch at Tiny, who quickly dodges and levels him, knocking him out cold.

Tiny flashes his Buddy a look that could kill. Buddy backs up, hands in the air.

John and Tiny leave the bar LAUGHING, arms over each other's shoulders.

BACK TO:

EXT. THE BUSH, NORTH QUEBEC - DAY

John grins and puffs his cigarette.

JOHN
Point taken.

Janice strolls up with her press camera.

JANICE
Picture, gentlemen?

TINY
But of course, Janice.

John doesn't roll his eyes, but looks like he wants to.

LATER

John and Tiny pose in front of Tiny's bush plane as Janice lines up the shot.

JANICE
Can we get one without the
cigarette, John?

JOHN
Of course.

John takes one final pull and burns his hand in the process. He shakes it off quickly, flicks the cigarette away, and puts his hands in his pockets. Tiny does the same.

JANICE
Perfect. Now give me two big
smiles.

They comply. The FLASHBULB *clicks*.

TINY
How'd we look?

JANICE
Dashing.

Tiny smiles wider. John takes his hands out of his pockets and inspects the small burn mark on his palm. He seems hypnotized by it... ZOOM IN on the burn--

EXT. SKIES OVER COLOGNE - NIGHT

FIRE everywhere below.

INSERT: Cologne, Germany.

The Halifax Mk II four-engine Bomber flies high over the city of Cologne. The entire area is doused in flames after a massive bombing. Only one building remains impervious to the destruction - A cathedral. It is miraculously untouched.

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

John gazes down through the cockpit window at the war-torn hellscape below.

LLOYD

We dropping our payload or what?

JOHN

And where would we do that exactly, Lloyd?

LLOYD

Anywhere. Take your pick and add to the carnage. This new bird needs to lose its virginity somewhere.

MARTY

Sort of like you, huh?

Lloyd flashes a mock 'Ha ha' look.

JOHN

It's overkill, our boys already did the job.

CLIFF

And then some.

HUGH

Damn. I was really looking forward to some action today.

MARTY

Aw, suck it up, buttercup.

LLOYD

No one wants you to have to do anything, Hugh. Just sit there at your turret and look pretty.

HUGH

Looking pretty is easy for me, kiddo. You, on the other hand...

Lloyd maneuvers himself up into the nose of the plane. Looks down below.

LLOYD

Everything got scorched except that cathedral...

John stares at the cathedral below.

CLIFF

If that's not a sign from above I don't know what is.

JOHN

We are above. We're all there is.

MARTY

Your mouth to God's ears.

John focuses up ahead.

JOHN

Cliff, chart us a course back to base.

CLIFF

Roger that.

Cliff puts pencil to map. Lloyd looks like someone just told him that Santa Clause doesn't exist.

LLOYD

Whoa, whoa, whoa... we have two cookies on board. We're gonna return with *both*?

JOHN

Affirmative.

MARTY

It's not like we're going to offend the baker, kid.

LLOYD

Can't we just drop one--

HUGH

Can it, Lloyd. It's Johnny's call.

John maneuvers the plane away from the inferno below.

JOHN (V.O.)

I might say, that it has always amazed me to realize that this thousand aircraft raid on Cologne literally burned the whole city. I was asked to stay behind after the raid and report on the effects of the raid itself and I had two 4,000 pound block busters on my Halifax. To my amazement, I couldn't find a single spot to drop these bombs that wasn't already on fire...

INT. MILITARY VEHICLE - DAY

Jean, in a military uniform, is driving. Last time we saw her she was naked on a table. She glances in the rear view at John, in full uniform, seated in the backseat. His borrowed dog, the mangy mutt Butch, is seated beside him.

JOHN

Now I ask you to consider how we missed the cathedral. It would seem to me that there must be something in religion after all, because there was the whole city just completely covered in flames, and yet the cathedral wasn't damaged. I never could understand how this happened.

Jean watches John from the rear view mirror.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I'm not a religious man, but to me that meant something.

JEAN

Perhaps then, John, you are a religious man...

John pets Butch. Butch's tail wags.

JOHN

Perhaps.

They drive in silence for a moment.

JEAN

I saw Tiny at the base the other day. He asked about you. How you were doing...

JOHN

What did you say?

JEAN

Same old.

(beat)

Tiny knows about us, John. At least I think he does...

JOHN

Wouldn't come as a surprise. He knows me better than most.

JEAN

He's asking Janice to marry him.

JOHN

That's swell. She's good for him.

JEAN

Like Mary's good for you.

JOHN

Perhaps.

John leans forward and kisses Jean on the cheek as she drives. She smiles. He kisses her neck.

JEAN

Stop. I'm driving.

John sits back, a devilish grin on his face.

JOHN

Butch wants a kiss too.

JEAN

Well, Butch can focus on licking up scraps from the Mess, okay?

John scratches Butch behind the ear.

JOHN

He's a good boy.

Jean drives on in silence for a long beat. She looks in the rear view, studying a distant John.

JEAN

I've always wondered...

John meets her eyes in the rear view mirror then looks away.

JEAN (CONT'D)

What makes you tick, John?

John thinks this over while gazing out at the moving scenery beyond the window. He doesn't have an answer.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - DAY

John is looking over a dismantled BOMB on the runway with two members of the maintenance crew, STANLEY and CHRISTIAN, late 20s. There is a case of beer and several packs of cigarettes on the tarmac. Christian rummages through them.

A four-engine Halifax Mk II is undergoing routine maintenance behind them.

STANLEY

Well, we got three of the four engines up and running. That's... something.

JOHN

We're going to need all four for the payload we'll be carrying.

STANLEY

We're on it. Thanks again for the beer and cigarettes, John.

John ignores this. Keeps staring at the bomb.

JOHN

It's all about timing.

STANLEY

What's that?

JOHN

What we need is a timed explosive. We drop it but it doesn't go off. Seems like a dud. Then, a few days later, when the enemy is collecting their dead, salvaging what they can...

CHRISTIAN

Boom?

John nods at Christian.

JOHN

Boom.

Christian finishes his rummaging and turns to John.

CHRISTIAN

Hell of a job that last raid,
Johnny. Heard the charred remains
of Cologne stunk to high heaven.

Stanley points a finger at Christian.

STANLEY

Now *that's* irony.

JOHN

I wasn't directly involved.

CHRISTIAN

Sure you were. Those guys with you
follow your lead. We all know it.
Word is you're getting recommended
for the Flying Cross for what you
did in Bremen.

JOHN

Not sure for what. It was a team
effort.

CHRISTIAN

Only success is. Failure always
falls on one man's shoulders. Every
time. So, you know, lap it up while
you can.

John waves this off.

JOHN

Don't fuss. Listen, I appreciate
the extra horsepower in this four
engine, but not at the cost of
stalling if we drop to three. So
whatever issue it is you're having
here? Let's just say it doesn't
exactly fill me with a ton of
confidence.

STANLEY

We're working hard on it, John.
It'll get done.

JOHN

Work smarter, not harder. Planes
are crashing. Men are dying.

John glances back at the Halifax Mk II behind him. He turns
back to the bomb and shakes his head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Right now, the only way to get out
of a stall is to apply both
opposite engines and both feet on
one side of the rudder. It takes
all your strength and even then,
you *just* get out. It's more about
luck than skill. We can't have
that.

STANLEY

Understood.

John pats Stanley on the shoulder.

JOHN

It all starts on the ground. But if
you fellas don't iron out these
kinks... it'll end there too.

LATER

John watches with his hands on his hips as Christian finishes
painting '*J for Johnny*' on the side of the plane. Christian
glances back for John's approval - John nods.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

John stands in the exact same pose at the front of the room,
a large MAP OF BERLIN behind him with flightpaths and bomb
targets filled in with black marker. The chairs facing him
are filled with young AIRMEN watching and listening intently.

JOHN

Now I want you to go right in as
close as you can and drop those
damn bombs right down the
smokestacks. And don't be worrying
about any of that survival crap,
because if you survive this raid,
I'll be taking you out on another
one and another one after that.

A scattering of CHUCKLES. *Typical John*... John looks over the
many young faces staring back at him. His face softens
slightly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 But, just know, I'll never ask you
 guys to do anything I wouldn't do
 myself. You have my word on that.

The young Airmen nod. *They fucking believe him.*

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Now let's go blow some stuff up,
 shall we?

EXT. SKY - DAY/NIGHT

MONTAGE: The Hamilton Mk II rips through the skies, flying
 low and fast as it drops BOMBS and FIRES its turrets.

BOMBS EXPLODE, week after week, decimating various targets on
 the ground... Buildings and ships and enemy vehicles and
 encampments... One after the other. It's incessant and never
 ending. Pure hell from the skies.

A bomb EXPLODES near the BIELEFELD VIADUCT, shaking the
 ground but missing the target.

JOHN (V.O.)
 Bielefeld Viaduct remains in
 tact... Again. Guess we'll get 'em
 next time.

INT. HALIFAX MK II - NIGHT

John is on the sticks, pulls the plane level. Pitch black
 outside the windows.

JOHN
 Steady at 12,500 feet. Everyone
 ready?

Thumbs up from Cliff, Hugh, Lloyd and Marty.

LLOYD
 Let's turn the world upside down
 and rain hell.

Suddenly, two SEARCHLIGHTS pierce the sky and light up the
 cockpit.

CLIFF
 We're spotted.

LLOYD
 Fuck!

Hugh jumps into the gun turret.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

FIRE from multiple light FLAK GUNS below -- They just miss the plane but are honing in with the SPOTLIGHTS...

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

Here we go, boys. Hold on tight.

John pushes down on the sticks.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Halifax Mk II nose dives away from the flak guns, slicing through the black sky and heading toward the ground. The SPOTLIGHTS give chase. The plane levels out a few hundred feet from the ground, maintaining velocity.

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

MARTY

That's how you fly a fucking plane, Johnny!

JOHN

Don't celebrate just yet. You got your targets, Hugh?

HUGH

Oh yeah... I got 'em.

Hugh aims through the scope at his target -- He FIRES. The sound is DEAFENING.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The gun from the mid-turret FIRES in rapid succession, lighting up one of the flak guns, destroying it. The mid-turret swivels and FIRES at one of the searchlights -- BAM! The searchlight EXPLODES.

The Hamilton Mk II begins its ascent back into the black clouds.

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

John pulls back on the sticks, avoiding the remaining FLAK from below.

LLOYD
Fucking eh, Hugh!

Hugh ejects an empty ammo belt from the turret.

HUGH
Need help on a reload!

Marty hops down from the com position and assists Hugh, both men loading the turret with a new ammo belt.

CLIFF
I think we're clear.

LLOYD
I just shit my pants.

LAUGHTER throughout the cockpit.

MARTY
What's with you and shitting yourself?

Lloyd flips Marty the finger with a grin and turns to John.

LLOYD
Were you scared, Johnny?

JOHN
A man who isn't frightened lacks imagination.

CLIFF
That's damn right.

LLOYD
You see, Marty? I'm imaginative.

MARTY
You're something...

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

An unnoticed flak gun spins to track the Mk II as it levels out above.

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

Hugh finishes loading the turret as Marty heads back to coms. Hugh makes a finger gun and points it up at his mouth, blows it off. *Shooter.*

LLOYD

That was some expert shooting, pal.

CLIFF

Well done, buddy.

JOHN

We missed our target on the ground, fellas. Not sure why you're celebrating.

MARTY

Missing that viaduct is starting to become a tradition for us. You can celebrate a tradition.

John's eyes flick to the side - *He senses something.*

GUNFIRE ERUPTS in the cabin, rupturing the hull. Hugh quickly spins back around to take aim just in time for shrapnel to tear through his chest. Tiny EXPLOSIONS of blood burst outward. Hugh slumps over his turret, dead.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Hugh! Shit!

JOHN

Goddammit!

John leans on the sticks. Evasive maneuvers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We're losing speed. The engine took a hit.

Lloyd's eyes widen.

LLOYD

Not good!

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Halifax Mk II is SMOKING, it's side now a damaged husk from the gunfire below. The plane slows noticeably, dipping and beginning to NOSEDIVE--

INT. HALIFAX MK II - CONTINUOUS

A STALL occurs.

LLOYD

We're stalling, John! We're fucking stalling!

John *knows*. He keeps his focus, works the rudders.

JOHN

(under his breath)

Come on. You know what to do, old girl. You know what to do... I'm right here with ya.

FRONT WINDSHIELD: The ground closes in quickly; SPINNING and SPIRALING towards us at a dizzying rate.

MARTY

Fuck!

CLIFF

We've got to get up, John!

John strains against the sticks, works the rudders, fighting it with everything he has.

JOHN

Hold on!

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

A Canadian flag is draped over a closed coffin.

Cliff, Marty, Lloyd, Tiny and Jean are there amongst a mass of other ATTENDEES. Their heads are hung low. John is nowhere to be found.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM, AIRBASE - NIGHT

Smoke fills the room. A needle SCRATCHES on a vinyl.

John is seated on the edge of his bed, smoking a cigarette. He looks a million miles away; An empty shell lost in a smoky haze, like a plane in the clouds. The ashtray on the side table is filled with cigarette nubs.

A SONG plays on the radio. Fred Astaire sings, "*Heaven... I'm in Heaven...*"

A door opens as a SHADOW overtakes John, a large one - Tiny takes a step inside the room, stopping in the doorway.

TINY
How you holding up?

John glances at Tiny then looks away. He puffs on his cigarette.

JOHN
Couldn't be more down.

Tiny nods slowly. He enters the room and sits down beside John on the bed.

TINY
It's not your fault, you know...

JOHN
We can agree to disagree on that.

TINY
You're too hard on yourself. Always have been.

John taps some ash off the end of his cigarette into the ashtray.

JOHN
Those are my men up there. It's my responsibility to protect them and bring them home.

TINY
And you did. Ground crew said maybe one in one hundred pilots could've landed a plane in that state...
(beat)
Don't forget about the lives you saved up there.

JOHN
A hundred success stories will never be as powerful as the one that failed.
(beat)
This is on me.

Tiny takes this in. Thinks it over.

TINY

You didn't start the war.

JOHN

No... no, you're right about that.
But maybe I need to find a way to
end it.

TINY

It'll take more than one airplane
and a pilot with nerves of steel to
accomplish that.

JOHN

A step toward the goal is just as
important as the goal itself.

Tiny just shakes his head, impressed.

TINY

Someone is going to write a book
about you someday, my friend.

John doesn't react to this, just keeps smoking.

TINY (CONT'D)

News went out over the airways...
your gong has been approved. Long
overdue, if you ask me.

JOHN

You know what a gong means just as
much as I do.

TINY

A promotion?

JOHN

Perhaps.

TINY

A DFC is pretty, um...
distinguished, John. This is good
news. You can allow yourself to
smile a bit. You don't have to--

JOHN

Do you know what DFC stands for,
Tiny?

Tiny looks slightly baffled by this. As if this is common
knowledge. Because it is.

TINY
Distinguished Flying Cross.

John shakes his head.

JOHN
Don't Fucking Care.

John quickly ashes out his cigarette and gets up. He leaves the room without another word. Tiny notices John's cigarette is still smoking... He snuffs it out.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - DAY

John walks across the runway with a purpose, drawing looks from the various AIRMEN and GROUND CREW. Airman KEN MCINTYRE, 26, standing under his plane as it's being painted, gives John a quick salute as he passes.

KEN
Sir.

JOHN
Ken, how's your son?

KEN
Hung just like his father.

JOHN
Glad to hear it. You choose a call sign yet?

KEN
Sure did. K for Kenny.

JOHN
Funny.

KEN
No, went with Skylark.

JOHN
Strong choice.

John keeps going, passing Stanley and Christian, who quickly catch up and follow him in lockstep.

STANLEY
Hey, Johnny! Wait up!

JOHN
Back to work, gentlemen.

CHRISTIAN
Where you been lately?

JOHN
Around.

CHRISTIAN
Yet we haven't seen you. Where's
your new medal?

John waves this away like a fly.

JOHN
I left some beer and cigarettes in
the maintenance hangar, boys. I
suggest you partake in it before
it's all gone.

John picks up the pace and leaves Stanley and Christian
behind.

INT. MAINTENANCE HANGAR - DAY

Marty, Cliff and Lloyd enter the hanger talking amongst
themselves. They find three empty chairs amongst the mass of
AIRMEN already seated. Most of them are casually dressed.

Something catches Marty's eye up front. He nudges Cliff.
Cliff's eyes snap to the front. The three Men stare ahead.

John, in full uniform, medals adorning it, stands at
attention at the front. Beside him is a fully uniformed
British Station Commander, PIERCE DOWNING, 44, a no nonsense
man with a crooked smile, whenever he decides to show it.

Pierce leans in to John and says something. John shakes his
head, clearly not pleased. A MURMUR of quiet conversations
reverberate around the room.

Marty leans in to Cliff.

MARTY
Who's the suit?

CLIFF
Don't know. But he's got so much
brass on his cap he's got to be
right from London. Probably draws
in an awful lot of water.

Cliff and Marty eye the 617 Squadron on the opposite side of
the room who we last saw on the front of a newspaper.

The Squadron is made up of Master Bomber and squad leader JOEL SEARS, 35, pilot SAMUEL TATE, 28, Navigator DANNY CAMERON, 27, Bomb-Aimer BILLY ASH, 24, Wireless Operator LINCOLN HOLMES, 23, and Air Gunner BLAKE DOUGLAS, 27. This is a confident bunch... By far the most decorated here. They talk and snicker amongst themselves.

JOHN

Gentlemen...

John looks over the young crowd before him, who go quiet under his gaze. His eyes flick over the assembled array of sweaters and tennis shoes in his midst.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I don't ask you to shine your shoes
and buttons on your uniforms but
you damn well better wear them.

John's eyes settle on a casually dressed young man amongst the masses, DALTON CRUZ, 21. Dalton shakes his head and looks away, MUTTERING something under his breath. John lets it go.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Anyway, an issue for another day.
To business...

(beat)

We are The Pathfinders now, men.
Wear that label with pride. The
Pathfinders will be considered the
elite of the elite, the best crews
in the Command who will inspire all
inexperienced crews following them.

Lloyd raises a hand, like it's school. Someone throws a piece of chewed gum at him, also like school.

LLOYD

I thought we were calling it The
Fire-Raising Force?

JOHN

The Pathfinders sound a little less
incendiary, wouldn't you agree,
Lloyd?

CHUCKLES. Lloyd peels the gum off his leg and throws it back.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, before I go off on a tangent, I know my British Compadre here is chomping at the bit to tell you a little about a new secret weapon of ours. This is most specifically for you navigators.

John quickly glances at Cliff, who nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Pierce.

Pierce Downing steps forward.

PIERCE

(British accent)

Thank you, John. And good day, gentlemen. This is an open forum, first of all. Any and all questions are welcomed. I'm sure you'll have many after we discuss what we are here to discuss.

(beat)

And that's H2S... H2S, is a recently developed, downward-looking radar system designed to assist navigators in identifying their targets on the ground for night and all-weather bombing. And believe me, it works. This system is a long-range system that allows for attacks outside the 350 kilometer range of navigation aids like Gee or Oboe.

Ken perches up in his seat.

KEN

Why is it called H2S?

Pierce glances at John. John glares at Ken.

JOHN

Is it time for questions, Ken? Or is it time for listening?

PIERCE

It's okay. I knew someone would ask that.

KEN

Didn't mean to overstep, sir.

PIERCE

It's a good question. And like all good questions, the answer is fuzzy. The radar was originally called BN, for Blind Navigation, but the genesis of the new name remains somewhat debated. Some have said it means, 'Height to Slope'. Others have said, 'Home Sweet Home'. Neither is wrong. Neither is right. Such is life.

John steps up beside Pierce.

JOHN

As most of you know, we have been using 'S' for awhile now for its operating wavelength in the centimetric range, which ultimately gave name to the S band, but I believe this new system is named after hydrogen sulphide. It's chemical formula is H₂S.

PIERCE

There you go. Now, the last week of July saw the opening attack in Hamburg. We know it as Operation Gomorrah. Hamburg is one of Germany's most important port cities. Its shipyards produce most of Germany's submarines and oil refineries. All vital to the Nazi's. With the assistance of H₂S, we took the lions share of these down. And better yet? We saw the least amount of casualties of any bomb raid in recent memory. No British planes were lost. Only Canadian.

This part doesn't sit well with John.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

The minimal loss rate was due in large part to the bomber command's initial deployment window. By releasing huge volumes of thin strips of metallic foil, we completely confused the German's airborne and ground-based radar systems.

(MORE)

PIERCE (CONT'D)

However, Nazi scientists are bound to react quickly with countermeasures for any and all future attacks. This means casualties will inevitably increase, and we must be prepared.

John steps ahead of Pierce.

JOHN

I would like to point out that, during this attack, the 405 squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which was the only inclusion of a Canadian squadron in The Pathfinders, did the most damage.

PIERCE

Allegedly.

JOHN

I have the numbers.

PIERCE

Consider the source.

JOHN

They don't lie. Now, Pierce... tell them about who took the silver and bronze medals in Hamburg. Go ahead. Hop to.

Pierce nods and clenches his jaw.

PIERCE

I just love taking direction from a damn Frenchman. Especially one whose last name I can't even pronounce.

Dead silence throughout the room. John doesn't even look at him.

JOHN

Fauquier is French... But our family left France in the mid-1600's. I know about as much French as you do, *mate*. Nice teeth, by the way.

CHUCKLES. A pressure valve released. Pierce nods, can't help but smile and show off his chompers, which elicits some CHEERS from the group.

John grins at Pierce who returns his gaze. *Well played...*

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John is doing paperwork at his desk, smoking a cigarette.

Pierce enters holding a FILE and takes a seat, crossing his legs comfortably. He stares at John for a moment.

PIERCE

It would be wise if we didn't bust each others balls too much in front of the men, wouldn't you agree?

JOHN

(eyes on papers)
Sometimes wise, Pierce... Like vowels.

Pierce stares at John for a moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(off his look)
Relatable authority doesn't get rebelled against.

PIERCE

Relatable or not, I'm in charge of this station.

John looks up, takes a drag from his cigarette.

JOHN

Yes, but this is my squadron. And we are a *Canadian* squadron. We're here to help *you*. My rules are my rules, not yours.

PIERCE

But you will play within my playground, John. Clear?

JOHN

You look after your babies and I'll look after mine. But don't interfere with mine under any circumstances. Clear?

John and Pierce stare at each other. *Mutual respect*. Pierce tosses the file down on the table.

PIERCE

The loss rate for the Dortmund raid was 4.9%. It should be noted that the loss rate for the Lancasters was 2.4, whereas with the Halifaxes, it was 8.5. Lancasters have a much better survival rate. Especially at night.

JOHN

It's not just about the planes, Pierce. It's about who's flying them.

PIERCE

Yes, well... you guys have who you have, I guess.

John considers this for a moment.

JOHN

Landing and takeoff times certainly need to be improved upon.

PIERCE

Easy to say, tough to accomplish.

JOHN

I have some new practises in mind.

PIERCE

Such as?

John organizes some papers on his desk, stacking them neatly.

JOHN

All squadron bomber leaders will now test and rate their crews on a weekly basis, so that those with training errors greater than 280 yards or operational errors of more than 1000 yards can be taken off the battle order temporarily and given further training.

PIERCE

Hm. You'll ruffle some feathers doing that. Further training can be considered a demotion.

JOHN

I'm not worried about hurting feelings here. I'm worried about getting the job done.

Pierce nods, adjusts his collar.

PIERCE

Word is you're looking for a new title.

JOHN

I don't concern myself with titles either.

PIERCE

Bomber Commander.

John just stares at Pierce.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

Lofty goals.

JOHN

Are there any other kind?

PIERCE

I suppose not. But hey, it's always nice to have dreams.

Pierce ashes out his cigarette and stands up, straightening his uniform. John gets back to his paperwork. Pierce starts to leave but stops in the doorway.

PIERCE (CONT'D)

By the way, it's been decided that you'll be visiting their Majesties, the King and the Queen, in the months ahead. Part of the pomp and circumstance related to this is to do what's known as, 'Presenting Crews'. So, round up twenty five of your air and ground crew to represent the squadron, but please, be sure they're all... presentable.

Pierce leaves. John puffs his cigarette and opens the file. Light ORCHESTRA MUSIC begin to filter in as we CUT TO--

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

MEN and WOMEN laughing and dancing. Airmen... Groundcrew... And everyone in between. Conversing. Enjoying a pocket of happiness. The Overseas Dance Orchestra provides the MUSIC.

Tiny is slow dancing with Janice in the middle of the floor.

John, in full uniform, leans against a wall smoking a cigarette. General ARNOLD MOORE, 45, is beside him, sipping a drink. They watch the party known as, 'The Airman's Dance'.

Arnold Moore takes another sip, winces at the strength of his drink.

ARNOLD

Good call on this dance, John.

JOHN

I didn't make it, Arnold. But the ground crew sure deserve it.

ARNOLD

The women outnumber us two-to-one. Gonna be a lot of full beds tonight.

JOHN

Better than empty ones.

ARNOLD

Yes, we have enough of those after the last raid.

John doesn't react to this, just stares ahead. Arnold looks out over the festivities, takes another sip.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

You hope prisoners of war but you never can be sure--

JOHN

Hey, Arn'?

Arnold glances at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's a dance.

ARNOLD

Right. Of course.

JOHN

Try to enjoy yourself.

ARNOLD

Pot, meet kettle.

Arnold walks away, getting lost in the crowd rather quickly. John continues to smoke and look out over the congregation, taking it all in with a quiet reverie.

JEAN (O.S.)
Permission to approach?

John notices Jean, adorned in a beautiful dress, with a cocktail, standing beside him. He looks her up and down then quickly looks away.

JOHN
Stop with that.

Jean sidles up next to him, sipping her cocktail.

JEAN
Sorry, boss. You just have that air about you.

JOHN
That air about me?

JEAN
Authority.

There's a comfortable silence between the two.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Wanna dance?

John flashes her a look, eyebrows raised. Jean grins, sips her drink.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Can't blame a girl for trying.

John gazes over the soiree.

JOHN
People sure like to play pretend, don't they?

JEAN
How do you mean?

JOHN
All this... It's fantasy.

JEAN
It's a party, John.

JOHN
It's a social construct.

JEAN

See? That's what I like about you.
You're always straight down the
pipe and never mince words.

John takes a puff of his cigarette, blows the smoke out.

JOHN

So I've been told.

JEAN

That's probably why the Brits don't
like you.

John CHUCKLES at this.

JOHN

They don't like me because I have a
French name and I won't fucking
bend over in front of them.

JEAN

Language, John.

JOHN

Sorry, Ma'am.

Jean catches a glimpse of someone approaching.

JEAN

Oh, here comes the camera man
that's been lurking around. I'll
catch up with you later.

Jean scampers off as a CAMERA MAN steps up close to John to
snap a photo. John holds out a defensive hand.

JOHN

I'm not here to be prim and proper.
I'm just another guy.

CAMERA MAN

Sorry, John...

The photo *snaps*. John rolls his eyes. The Camera Man lowers
the camera.

CAMERA MAN (CONT'D)

Got to do what I got to do.

JOHN

Just let me do what I know I can do
without the fuss, okay?

CAMERA MAN

And what's that?

John looks around at all the happy People conversing and dancing.

JOHN

It's not this...

He stubs out his cigarette in a nearby ashtray.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's not this.

He leaves.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - DAY

John waits with his hands on his hips beside Stanley and Christian as a brand new AVRO LANCASTER taxi's down the runway toward them. There are cases of beer and cigarettes on the tarmac, as per usual.

STANLEY

Now I know you love the Halifax's,
John... But this bird right here?
This is a thing of beauty. Flies
like a dream and will be an
absolute nightmare for the Nazi's.

John stares up at the marvel of modern aviation as it stops nearby, its massive SHADOW overtaking all three of them.

CHRISTIAN

It's just too bad you aren't on the
docket to fly today...

STANLEY

Yeah, too bad...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

The Avro Lancaster tears through the clouds, dipping its wings side-to-side as it goes. It makes a hard turn, diving down out of view.

STANLEY (V.O.)

How's she feel, Johnny?

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John is at the controls in the advanced, modern cockpit. He is giving the plane its paces - All with a smile on his face.

JOHN
Love at first flight, Stan. Love at
first flight...

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Avro Lancaster vanishes into the clouds.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - DAY

The Avro Lancaster slowly taxi's down the runway. Stanley and Christian flash John a thumbs up as he goes.

John flashes one back through the windshield.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John faces ahead and slows the plane. Suddenly, one of the wheels on the landing gear hits a small BUMP--

FLASH CUT:

INT. HALIFAX MK II - NIGHT

GUNFIRE ERUPTS in the cabin, rupturing the hull. Hugh quickly spins back around to take aim just in time for shrapnel to tear through his chest. Tiny EXPLOSIONS of blood burst outward. Hugh slumps over his turret, dead.

BACK TO:

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John tries to shake off the image as he loses control of the plane on the runway.

FLASH CUT:

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY

John is staring up into the sky, hand cupped over his eyes. The commercial airplane above is now a German fighter plane; A Messerschmitt Bf 109. It drops a BOMB directly overhead.

A SHADOW ENGULFS John and his home. His young Children, GILBERT and PENELOPE, SCREAM. John doesn't even react as the bomb falls...

BACK TO:

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John blinks his eyes rapidly as he comes to. He instantly sits up in his seat and JAMS the controls.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stanley and Christian watch in horror as the Avro Lancaster goes off the end of the runway, the port undercarriage dropping into an overgrown ditch.

CHRISTIAN
Crash and burn.

STANLEY
Oh, boy.

They take off running toward the downed plane.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John EXHALES a breath and slumps in his seat. Hangs his head.

JOHN
(under his breath)
God damnit...

He SLAMS his hands down on the sticks and removes his headgear before leaving the cockpit.

INT. BASE, MESS HALL - DAY

Various PILOTS and GROUND CREW bicker and talk amongst themselves over lunch in a busy mess hall. Stanley, Christian, Ken McIntyre and Dalton Cruz all sit around a table in the thick of it.

KEN
So it can't be repaired?

Christian shakes his head.

CHRISTIAN
It's cooked.

KEN

Of all the people to do it too...
Who woulda thunk?

DALTON

Too bad Fauquier's high standards
for us doesn't translate to
himself.

STANLEY

He's got a lot on his chest,
Dalton.

DALTON

Yeah, a bullseye. He's arrogant.
Let that be a lesson to all of us.
Keep your words short and sweet cuz
you may have to eat 'em.

Dalton stabs a green bean with his fork and eats it.

DALTON (CONT'D)

Looks good on him.

Tiny walks by with his tray of food, overhearing everything.
He stops and stares down at Dalton. All four Men go quiet.

TINY

If you were half the pilot Johnny
is, maybe I'd allow this. But as it
stands? This is tantamount to a
vagrant making fun of someone for
having money...

(beat; stares them down)

Now knock it off. All of you.

Tiny moves along.

CHRISTIAN

(quietly to Ken)

Look what you did.

KEN

Me?

STANLEY

John's definitely going to hear
about this now... Shit.

Dalton smiles.

DALTON

It's always nice to be reminded
that nobody's perfect, huh?

Ken, Christian and Stanley ignore this and get back to their meals. Dalton eventually does the same.

DALTON (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
Fuck Fauquier... And the horse he rode in on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

The brand new Avro Lancaster, now with a green and brown camouflage tint, tagged '*J for Johnny*', cuts through the clouds with speed and precision.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John is at the helm once again. His crew consists of some familiar faces, and one strange one. Cliff, Marty and Lloyd are all at their stations. The new face is ANDERSON WILLIAMS, 25, gunner, Hugh's replacement.

MARTY
 Seems you shook off some rust there, John...

JOHN
 Just happy to be feeling myself again, Marty.

LLOYD
 Old man Fauquier here now has the dubious distinction of being the pilot of the first Lancaster lost in service by the 405 squadron.

JOHN
 My apologies, Lloyd. Next time I'll wait until you're on board before I crash it.

CHUCKLES all around.

LLOYD
 The Prodigal son has returned!

CLIFF
 You mean the Prodigal father? He's 34 years old and on an Op...

JOHN

You all will get there one day, if you're lucky...

ANDERSON

Yeah, I know I'm new here guys, but let's not poke the bear that has us 20,000 feet in the air, shall we?

Johnny's eyes flick to the side at the sound of the unfamiliar voice.

JOHN

It's all in good fun. But thank you, Anderson.

ANDERSON

Don't mention it.

John's eyes shift back front and center.

JOHN

I'm here to put my money where my mouth is, fellas. I'm certainly not up here to lose any more airplanes. Besides, I've been told the next one I destroy comes out of my own pocket.

Some CHUCKLES.

MARTY

Let's not lose *this* one, specifically... with me in it.

LLOYD

I second that. I got a girlfriend now that can't afford to lose me.

CLIFF

You got that part right. You're paying her salary with every blow job.

LAUGHTER.

LLOYD

You're just jealous you don't got what I got.

CLIFF

What? Chlamydia?

LLOYD
 You can get some too, lover boy.
 Plenty to go around.

John smiles inwardly.

JOHN
 Good to be back, boys. Anderson,
 this is standard practise here in
 405 so get used to it.

ANDERSON
 Ay, ay, Captain.

JOHN
 Now let's light these targets up
 for Hugh.

LLOYD
 For Hugh!

MARTY
 Amen.

ANDERSON
 I didn't know the cat but fuck
 it... For Hugh!

EXT. ARMAMENT FACTORY, LE CREUSOT - CONTINUOUS

Various trucks with Swastika's painted on them trek back and forth, shipping MISSILES and AMMUNITION in and out of the factory. There is a scattering of NAZI WORKERS on the ground, busy as ants.

Suddenly, an AIR RAID ALARM sounds. The Workers scatter.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Lloyd looks down through his scope at an EXPLOSION on the ground that takes out the factory.

LLOYD
 Boom. That's a hit.

MARTY
 Dead eye, kid. Dead eye.

LLOYD
 A sight to behold, ain't I?

Cliff looks out the window and spots MOVEMENT in the clouds.

CLIFF
We just got spotted.

MARTY
Of course we did. We were flying
low like Lloyd's fly.

JOHN
Keep your eyes peeled.

EXT. SKIES OVER LE CREUSOT - CONTINUOUS

An enemy AIRPLANE barrels towards the Avro Lancaster, FIRING at it and barely missing.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John leans on the sticks, avoiding the gunfire. Marty glances at Anderson, who mans the turret.

CLIFF
Your time to shine, new guy.

MARTY
Light 'em up, Anderson.

Anderson aims down the sights.

ANDERSON
Like New Years Eve, baby.

He FIRES.

EXT. SKIES OVER LE CREUSOT - CONTINUOUS

The GUNFIRE from the turret misses the enemy plane as it banks hard to the right.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson seethes.

ANDERSON
Ah, dang it! I missed!

LLOYD
Come on, man!

Cliff and Marty eye each other, concerned. John leans on the sticks and brings the plane around full circle.

JOHN

It's not a mistake until you refuse
to correct it. I'll bring you
around for another shot.

EXT. SKIES OVER LE CREUSOT - CONTINUOUS

The Avro Lancaster performs some evasive maneuvers as the enemy plane continues to FIRE in pursuit.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson lines up another shot as John sharply banks to the side. SHRAPNEL hits the hull. Anderson takes a bullet in the left arm, SCREAMS OUT, but remains focused down the sights. He FIRES.

EXT. SKIES OVER LE CREUSOT - CONTINUOUS

The GUNFIRE from the Avro Lancaster's turret hits the enemy airplane, disabling the engine immediately and sending it SPIRALING DOWNWARD with a smoky jet stream through the clouds.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson pulls himself back from the turret, holding his left arm.

ANDERSON

Got 'em!

Lloyd stares at Anderson's wound from the prone position.

LLOYD

Did they get you?!

ANDERSON

I'll live.

Cliff rushes to Anderson's side and wraps up his injured arm.

CLIFF

This will hold ya.

JOHN

How's the damage to the hull?

Marty eyes a few BULLET HOLES in the side of the plane near the turret.

MARTY

Nothing the ground crew can't fix.

John glances back at Anderson, who looks up from his wound and nods at John. John nods back, impressed.

JOHN

Well done.

ANDERSON

Thank you, sir.

Cliff *wrenches* the bandage tight.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

A pointing stick WHIPS and CRACKS against a large MAP OF GERMANY projected on the whiteboard.

General Arnold Moore is at the forefront of the meeting, holding the pointer. Stanley mans the projector. John is seated on a chair off to the side yet near the front.

ARNOLD

Peenemünde.

The chairs are full in the briefing room. Airmen and groundcrew alike. Some familiar faces, some not. Lloyd and Ken McIntyre sit beside each other in the crowd.

LLOYD

Penne... what?

KEN

I suddenly want pasta.

They CHUCKLE.

ARNOLD

This is no laughing matter, gentlemen.

KEN

Of course not, sir. Apologies.

Cliff and Marty sit beside each other. The 617 Squadron are seated on the opposite side of the room, talking amongst themselves and shaking their heads with superiority. John notices.

Arnold Moore takes his eyes off Ken and Lloyd. Goes back to the whiteboard as a slide changes.

ARNOLD

The Nazi's V-1 Flying Bomb could be seen and defended against by our fighters and anti-aircraft guns but the new V-2 causes some considerable issues for us. It's effectively invisible after it's launched. In fact, a V-2 recently exploded in London. The rocket was 46 feet in length and, when fully loaded with fuel and warhead, weighed thirteen tons. From launch to the speed of sound took only 30 seconds.

Billy Ash lets out a WHISTLE upon hearing this.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Its maximum trajectory height is typically between 50 and 60 miles for long-range targets. The warhead weighs one ton and is capable of causing considerable damage.

Arnold glances at Stanley on the projector, a new slide appears. *Click*. The picture shows the result of a V-2 bomb dropping - Devastation in the city of London.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

And here's the damage.

MUTTERING throughout the room.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Hitler hopes the V-2 program will change the course of the war. However, it is Bomber Command's task to delay this, reduce the scale of the program, and destroy many, if not all, of its vital facilities.

John leans forward in his chair.

JOHN

And it all starts and ends with Peenemünde, gentlemen. We're calling this upcoming raid... Operation Hydra.

Stanley *clicks* to a new slide - An aerial view of Peenemünde.

ARNOLD

Before you ask, Peenemünde is located on the Baltic coast, due north of Berlin. Here the Nazi's are developing and testing the V-2 rocket. They have assembled many of Germany's most brilliant scientists and a workforce that operates under the greatest of secrecy.

Click. A new slide reveals a picture of WERNER VON BRAUN.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

One of the leading scientists is Werner Von Braun, expert in aerospace engineering.

Lincoln from the 617 shakes his head.

LINCOLN

Ugly fuck...

Lloyd glances toward the 617 Squadron.

LLOYD

Hey, how do you send a Nazi to space, fellas?

Ken shoots a hand up in the 'Heil Hitler' salute.

KEN

Whoosh.

A scattering of LAUGHTER.

ARNOLD

Let's try to stay focused here, children.

LLOYD

Just point me in the direction of Nazi's, sir. That's all the focus I need.

A few GROANS.

ARNOLD

You just gave me another reason to use the stick.

WHIP. CRACK. Right on the whiteboard.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

There you go.

LLOYD

I still can't see the Nazi's, sir.

Marty leans in toward Lloyd.

MARTY

And I can *not* see you getting out of this room without a beating. Keep it zipped.

ARNOLD

The Polish underground movement has sent back information about the Peenemünde program and facilities. As well, the RAF has aerial photographs of the site. We just saw one of them. The significance of the site is apparent. Bomber Command must destroy Peenemünde... No matter what the cost.

Cliff leans forward in his seat.

CLIFF

What kind of Op are we looking at here, sir?

JOHN

I'll take it from here, Arnold.

John makes his way in front of the whiteboard, the 617 Squadron eyeing him as he goes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Peenemünde will be a precision, low-level moonlight raid, which is, as you know, highly unusual for Bomber Command and makes it much more hazardous for you and your crews. There will be no hiding in the clouds on this night, gentlemen... but the risk must be accepted. We will be bombing at 7000 feet, not our usual 18-20,000.

LINCOLN

Whoa, whoa, whoa... *How* low?

John turns his attention to Lincoln and the entire 617 Squadron.

JOHN

7000. Did I not enunciate clearly enough for you?

There's no response.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It is hoped that the first, second, and even third of the three waves of bombers will be able to drop their loads without being attacked by fighters. It's been decided that a divisionary raid on Berlin by Mosquito Bombers will be launched with the hope that German fighters will be drawn to the defense of the capital before the night's actual target becomes apparent.

KEN

So is this essentially a suicide mission, John?

JOHN

Not at all. But that largely depends on your flying there, Ken.

KEN

Should've just signed up to be a kamikaze pilot...

JOHN

If you're defeated in such a way before you even begin, perhaps you should have.

Silence. John scans the room, sensing the temperature shift.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This all means one very important thing, boys... Get all your drinking in tonight. And however many women you can handle.

Some CHUCKLES. The mood lightens.

DANNY

Why is it called Operation Hydra anyway?

JOHN

Cut the head off the snake, and the body dies.

Danny stares at John, waiting for more context. He gets none. He just nods slowly. Joel Sears turns his attention to Danny.

JOEL
You know what a Hydra is Danny,
right?

DANNY
(shifty eyes)
Of course.

JOEL
It's a giant serpent in Greek
mythology. In the tales, the
monster's head was cut off by
Hercules and two more grew in its
place. It was essentially immortal.

DANNY
So if the operation is called
Hydra, then who is Hercules?

Silence throughout the room.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Hopefully not Hitler...

JOHN
If this operation is successful, we
will all be immortal as well.
That's the only way humans can
achieve immortality... To do
something meaningful that stands
the test of time, and echoes down
through history. If you become a
story that everyone remembers, you
can live forever.

Danny nods at John, newly motivated.

ARNOLD
For the record, my vote was for
Operation Crossbow.

JOHN
Thank you, Arnold.

INT. GRANSDEN LODGE, BAR - NIGHT

Crew Members from different Squadrons mix and mingle. MUSIC
plays. Drinks are flowing.

Tiny, Cliff, Marty, Lloyd and Anderson are at a long table with 617's Joel Sears and the 434 Squadron, made up of pilot CLAY JACKSON, 26, Bomb-Aimer HAROLD ARNETTE, 30, Navigator JIM LANGSTON, 28, and Wireless Operator JD ROWAN, 24. There is an empty chair in the middle.

CLAY

So... Peenemünde. Does anyone have the slightest fucking idea what it is?

JIM

It's a town along the Baltic coast.

CLIFF

Jimmy Langston, everyone.

JOEL

I'm sure we will find out more details soon enough.

LLOYD

Can't fucking wait.

Anderson takes a drink and winces from the pain in his left shoulder.

MARTY

How's the shoulder, Anderson?

ANDERSON

Just dandy. Even a dumb bullet wound sometimes smarts...

JD jabs a thumb towards Anderson.

JD

This one's clever, huh?

HAROLD

Anyone else worried that they got us bombing from 7000 feet? With a full moon, no less. Because I got to tell ya, I'm not that thrilled about it.

Some MUTTERINGS in agreement.

JOEL

This operation, gentlemen... Hydra, is one of the most important of the war.

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

We've been tasked with pulling it off, regardless of what we may think about it. So that's exactly what we are going to do.

JD

Not like we have much of a choice.

TINY

You're right. So make the best of it.

JD

Easy for you to say. Your buddy John pulled the entire 434 aside after the debriefing. Told us that if we don't knock out this important target on the night of the raid, then it will be laid on again the next night and every night until the job is done.

CLAY

Regardless of the losses.

JD

Right. And I didn't hear him say squat to 617.

CLAY

I wonder if they said that shit to John about the Bielefeld Viaduct?

TINY

Why don't you ask him, Clay? I didn't hear you say anything to his face earlier.

Clay begins to open his mouth but stops himself when he sees John coming back.

TINY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

John takes his seat in the middle with a fresh drink in hand. He gazes around the table at the sudden tone shift.

JOHN

This isn't the usual babble and horseplay I come out to drink for, boys.

CLAY

We were just talking about
Peenemünde.

JOHN

Ah, I see.

Tiny shakes his head. At a table across the room, Dalton Cruz eyes John with contempt before pouring himself another drink.

CLIFF

There is no other way to put it.
The trip there will most likely be
uneventful but it will for sure be
scary. I mean, flying a bomber at
night with a full moon is a bit
like walking down your busiest
road, naked... Everyone will be
able to see you.

LLOYD

Great. Now I'm picturing you naked.

CLIFF

Don't act like it's the first
time...

JOEL

Cliff is right. And we have to be
prepared for it. We will be a
sitting target for every fighter in
the Reich. You'll want to hide, but
there will be no place to go.

HAROLD

So how's it feel to finally be a
Master Bomber there, Fauquier?

John sips his drink casually.

JOHN

Joel is designated as the Master
Bomber on this raid, Harold. I'm
just the Deputy Master Bomber.

HAROLD

Just... So humble.

JOEL

I think John here would make a fine
Master Bomber one day. He imposes
his will wherever he goes.

A *clicking* sound nearby.

DALTON (O.S.)
 (slurring)
 Yeah, that's the problem.

A small CROWD parts as a clearly inebriated Dalton Cruz steps forward, a service REVOLVER pointed directly at John's chest. An eerie silence is cast over the bar. Tiny and the 405 Squadron begin to stand. John stops them.

JOHN
 No, no. Sit down, gentlemen. Sit down. It's okay.

They reluctantly comply. Dalton keeps the revolver aimed at John, his grip shaky.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 What seems to be the problem, son?

DALTON
 (slurring)
 I'm not your God damn son. And I'm tired of your brow-beating, you hear me? Talking down to us, like you're somehow better.

JOHN
 And you mean to shoot me over this?

DALTON
 (slurring)
 You don't get to just walk around here like your shit don't stink.

JOHN
 I don't know, I'm pretty sure I can stink up a latrine with the best of them. Right, boys?

John's crew and the 434 remain stoic and silent, focusing in on Dalton, poised to strike. Dalton sways slightly on his feet, reaffirms his grip.

DALTON
 (slurring)
 You don't even know who I am or what I'm capable of.

JOHN
 Why don't you have a seat, Dalton. Get yourself some water.

Tiny slowly stands up and offers him his chair. Dalton looks somewhat surprised that John knows his name.

His eyes dart between Tiny and John, unsure of his next move. Joel Sears makes a subtle motion to something behind Dalton.

JOHN (CONT'D)

There's a divide between what a man knows and what he allows himself to say. Never assume silence is disrespect. It could, in fact, mean just the opposite.

Dalton absorbs this as the other Men from the 617 Squadron sneak up behind him at Joel's behest.

DALTON

(slurring)

That's bullshit. You-- you don't respect me. You don't respect anyone. You're full of yourself and runnin' on empty. That's why you crashed the Lanc'...

John's eyes flick to the side, just over Dalton's shoulder.

JOHN

Go easy on him, boys.

Before Dalton can turn around, Lincoln and Blake snatch both of his arms and yank them down. Danny quickly grabs the revolver and pulls it free of Dalton's grasp. Dalton struggles but is quickly whisked out of view.

The Bar quickly regains it's lost momentum, as if this kind of occurrence isn't out of the ordinary. Business as usual. Tiny looks down at John, who seems unfazed.

TINY

Jesus, Johnny...

JOHN

Don't fuss.

John raises his drink in a toast.

JOHN (CONT'D)

To life.

A pause. Then-- the glasses raise all around.

EVERYONE

TO LIFE!

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

DRONE SHOT: The many planes litter the tarmac below as we ROTATE slowly around in a concentric circle.

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - NIGHT

John, in full flight gear, approaches the Avro Lancaster that has been tagged '*J for Johnny*'. Christian and Stanley follow in his wake.

JOHN

How's everything looking,
gentlemen?

CHRISTIAN

Target markers are on board, ready
to go. You're one of seven that's
fully loaded.

John nods and glances up into the night sky - A full moon.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The sky is full of Lancasters and Halifaxes and Mosquito Bombers as they fly toward their destination.

INSERT: Operation Hydra.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - NIGHT

John is at the helm with his usual 405 crew. He glances out of the side window as another Lancaster, tagged '*Skylark*', veers off course. He adjusts his headset.

JOHN

Where are you going, Ken?

KEN (V.O.)

Making a run over Flensburg.

JOHN

And why's that?

KEN (V.O.)

A pack scares them off. A lone wolf
gets the sheep.

JOHN

Just be careful.

KEN (V.O.)

10-4.

Lloyd gazes out of the window on the other side -- A full moon pierces the dark night, illuminating it.

LLOYD

Look at that moon, baby.

CLIFF

We're on full display. Let's act accordingly.

INT. PEENUMÜNDE RESEARCH BUILDING - NIGHT

Sleeping and Living Quarters. Rows and rows of beds -- NAZI SCIENTISTS are sound asleep. There's a large SWASTIKA painted on the back wall.

A small TREMOR in the ceiling. One of the Nazi Scientists opens his eyes. Another TREMOR, longer this time. A light flickers...

EXT. SKIES OVER DENMARK - NIGHT

Lancasters fill the night sky, crossing the north of Denmark and turning south to Peenemünde. Before long the target appears - RESEARCH BUILDINGS. The first wave of Bombers have already dropped their bombs; the buildings are ALIGHT.

SMOKE SCREENS have been deployed around the area.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John holds the plane steady on its flight pattern.

LLOYD

Look at that. The first two waves have done heavy damage already!

CLIFF

I would expect as much.

Anderson preps his turret gun.

ANDERSON

This third wave will be the worst for them. Mark my words.

MARTY

Let's just make sure it's the final one.

LLOYD

They say death comes in threes.

John gazes out the window.

JOHN

Some heavy smoke below us. 617, mark the target.

A Lancaster drops altitude outside the window on John's right, tagged '*THE 617*', commanded by Joel Sears.

JOEL (V.O.)

Marking target.

(beat)

Dropping flares.

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

A stick of FLARES drops from '*THE 617*' Lancaster.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John watches the FLARES drop through the smoke, LIGHTING the way.

JOEL (V.O.)

Follow the lights through the smoke Johnny, but keep your distance so they remain visible.

JOHN

Roger that, 617. Staying the course.

EXT. PEENEMÜNDE, GROUND LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

NAZI SOLDIERS quickly load up Flak guns and begin to FIRE at passing planes above. It's DEAFENING.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John pushes forward on the sticks, keeping the Lancaster aligned with the FLARES 617 dropped below.

JOHN

They're throwing up the flak like vomit. Dropping altitude. Eyes out for targets.

CLIFF

We're at optimal bombing height already, John. 7000 feet.

JOHN

We can get closer. I'm going to 6000. The resistance isn't there.

MARTY

Looks like the diversionary raid in Berlin worked. Their fighters will need to land and refuel before coming this way.

JOHN

This is our window, gentlemen. Let's smash through it.

EXT. SKIES OVER PENNEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

The Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*' drops a bomb on its target - A DIRECT HIT. The ensuing cloud PLUMES up from the ground. '*J for Johnny*' begins its ascent pattern.

ENEMY FIGHTERS pierce the smoke and give chase. They FIRE at '*J for Johnny*', which avoids the damage with last-second evasive maneuvers.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Cliff peers over his shoulder.

CLIFF

Here comes the backup.

Anderson returns FIRE from his turret.

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

A DIRECT HIT on the enemy - The enemy plane SPINS TOWARD THE EARTH in a 360 degree nosedive.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson continues to FIRE. He stops to reload the turret's ammo belt with help from Marty.

ANDERSON

The sky is getting crowded, John!

JOHN

I can see that.

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

An enemy plane banks a sharp turn and lines up a shot from behind on '*J for Johnny*'.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

CLIFF

Enemy on our six! We're in trouble.

Anderson and Marty struggle with the ammo belt.

John cranks the sticks, trying to get out of the line of fire.

JOHN

Come on...

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

The enemy plane lines up its shot on '*J for Johnny*'... Just as the enemy plane begins to FIRE, the Lancaster tagged '*Skylark*' pierces through the smoke and SHOTS IT DOWN at the last second.

KEN (V.O.)

Not on my watch.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

CHEERS in the cockpit.

LLOYD

Ken! That's my boy!

JOHN

Nice shooting, Skylark.

KEN (V.O.)

The full moon saved you guys. We were nearly invisible on the dark side of it. Somebody up there likes you...

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

More Lancaster Bombers approach in formation. The Bombers are silhouetted against the bright FLAMES on the ground and bathed in brilliant MOONLIGHT. More BOMBS are dropped. More EXPLOSIONS on the ground.

Enemy planes are now lit up by the moonlight. The Lancasters take advantage, SHOOTING THEM DOWN one-by-one.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

ANDERSON

Whew! Yeah, I think the Gods are with us on this night, boys.

JOHN

That ammo belt ready to go, Anderson?

ANDERSON

Locked and loaded. Why?

JOHN

Our planes still have bombs to drop. Let's clear the air for them.

John leans on the sticks and turns the plane.

EXT. SKIES OVER PEENEMÜNDE - CONTINUOUS

The Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*' circles over the target throughout the attack, ITS TURRET GUN FIRING at enemy fighters during the very last minutes of the planned raid period.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

CLIFF

Round and round we go.

MARTY

We're sitting ducks here, John. Dead in the water.

JOHN
 Ducks don't sit in the water,
 Marty. Just got to look a little
 deeper.

The Turret gun JAMS UP. Anderson steps away from it.

ANDERSON
 We've run dry, John.

JOEL (V.O.)
 Time to call it a night, 405. We're
 heading home.

John looks over the devastation below. The FIRES. The SMOKE --
 Peenemünde is wrecked.

JOHN
 Roger that, 617. Hell of a night.

Lloyd EXHALES a relieved breath.

LLOYD
 Thank God.

EXT. GRANSDEN LODGE - NIGHT

John and his crew walk back toward Gransden Lodge, helmets
 under their arms, chatting it up and CHUCKLING. Ken McIntyre
 catches up and joins them. Lloyd throws an arm around his
 buddy.

JOHN
 Nice save up there, Ken.

KEN
 (impersonating John)
 Don't fuss, don't fuss...

LAUGHTER. The crew continue on ahead as we watch them go.

JOHN (V.O.)
 We returned uneventfully to
 Gransden Lodge and I think my
 general impression was that,
 perhaps this pathfinding business
 wasn't going to be so bad after
 all.

(MORE)

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I didn't realize, at the time, that
 the next operation for which we
 would be briefed was to Berlin, the
 dreaded 'Big City', and on that
 raid one of the pilots with whom I
 joined the squadron would be lost,
 never to be seen or heard from
 again...

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*' tears through the night sky, leading the way for other Lancasters, Halifaxes and 727 Bombers.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

KEN (V.O.)
 Johnny Fauquier, Master Bomber.
 It's about damn time.

John ignores this, concentrates on his flight path. Lloyd grabs a headset.

LLOYD
 He's ignoring you, Ken. We're full
 to the tits over here.

KEN (V.O.)
 Coming from you, Lloyd, I'm not
 sure I want to know what that
 means.

LLOYD
 It means we're carrying green
 target indicators, a load of
 incendiaries and seventy gallons of
 extra fuel, baby.

KEN (V.O.)
 Oh, lovely. So if you're shot down
 you won't feel a thing...

The look on Lloyd's face says he hadn't considered that until now.

JOHN
 Just follow my lead, gentlemen.
 Concentrate on your targets and
 your flight patterns. Slow and
 steady is the ticket. We're almost
 there.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

The RAID OF AIRPLANES settle over the city of Berlin far below.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

JOHN
Steady over our target.

CLIFF
Right on schedule like always.

LLOYD
Let's kick this party off with a bang, shall we?

John checks his instrumentation.

JOHN
Releasing our T.I.'s and bomb load.
Skylark, Ravens... follow suit.

JOEL (V.O.)
Roger that, John.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

EXPLOSIONS below, lighting up Berlin in an ORANGE GLOW.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

LLOYD
Bye, bye. Nice to meet ya.

MARTY
Quick and easy, fellas. That's how I like it.

Cliff checks the map.

CLIFF
Charting a reverse course for home.

John stares out of the windshield.

JOHN
Wait, we have company.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

Emerging from the clouds are a mass of ENEMY FIGHTERS, clearly responding to the bombing.

The fighters immediately start FIRING on the many Lancasters in their midst -- A couple Lancasters are hit. One EXPLODES. The other begins SMOKING and DROPPING FAST...

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson mans the turret and FIRES.

ANDERSON

This is just the first response,
John! More on the way!

John's eyes lock onto a Lancaster tagged '*Skylark*' ahead and below, clearly visible in the full moon -- All four engines are on FIRE as the enemy fighter plane that shot it follows it down, like it wants to witness the crash for itself.

JOHN

Skylark is hit. He's going down.

Lloyd turns white as a ghost as he sees which Lancaster it is.

LLOYD

Ken...

Silence throughout the cockpit as everyone watches.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

TRACER BULLETS stream out from the rear turret of *Skylark*. The enemy fighter in pursuit, however, is out of range for the tracers to be effective.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

Tracer bullets... He's going down
firing.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John drops altitude, watching '*Skylark*' struggle to maintain control as the fighter plane veers off course.

JOHN

(quietly)
Come on, Ken... Get out... Get out.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

The TRACERS continue to stream out of *Skylark* as the Lancaster hits the Baltic and EXPLODES in a huge wave below.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Lloyd closes his eyes.

LLOYD

No...

It's quiet throughout the cockpit. John pulls up.

JOHN

Keep focused. We're going to orbit around the target and continue to broadcast instructions. I need more Lancs to come into the fray.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

A mass of Lancasters circle over the burning city of Berlin, maintaining steady flight patterns. SPOTLIGHTS shine up from below, piercing the sky in cones. Various green and red TARGET INDICATORS light up the sky.

In the distance, enemy fighter planes and Lancasters DUEL IT OUT in the clouds.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John checks the radar, adjusts his headset.

JOHN

Those green T.I.'s are short. Aim for the red ones further on. Disregard the T.I.'s on your left.

Anderson lets loose on his turret -- FIRING and damaging a passing fighter plane's wing.

ANDERSON

Fuck you!

MARTY

We need all hands on deck!

John maintains his flight pattern above Berlin amidst the commotion.

JOHN

Come on in, fellows. The flak is
nowhere near as bad as it looks.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

Through the clouds and illuminated by the full moon, a new wave of Halifaxes and Lancasters approach, clearly spurred on and motivated by John's reassurances.

More bombs EXPLODE below. Planes SHOOT EACH OTHER DOWN. It's a beautiful chaos.

JOHN (V.O.)

The moonlight, searchlights and fires made the scene almost a daylight raid, and fighters were as thick as flies. But it's a thrilling sight to fly above a blazing city and see our bombers come streaming in... It's a sight you never forget. The bright bomb bursts, freshly-laid incendiaries breaking into flames, colorful target sky target markers, the city burning, smoke rising, illuminating chandelier flares dropped by enemy fighters, crimson tracer exchanges between aircraft and all around the flak, searchlights and fighters...

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John smiles at the reinforcements arriving.

JOHN

Press right on to the target. Don't release your loads prematurely.

CLIFF

Yeah, don't do what Lloyd does.

Nervous CHUCKLES.

MARTY

Always a safe bet.

Lloyd doesn't respond. Still clearly shaken up.

John watches as many Halifaxes fly through the FLAK of enemy fighters, cutting corners and veering off from their main routes.

JOHN
Steady, gentlemen! Steady!

CLIFF
They're flying like chickens with
their heads cut off.

JOHN
They're compounding target marking
challenges, is what they're doing.
Let's back them up.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - CONTINUOUS

The Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*' diverts into the fray,
the turret FIRING and lending support as it changes course.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Marty presses headphones to one ear. Cliff stares down at the
radar.

CLIFF
Berlin is now out of GEE range,
John...

JOHN
Switch to H2S.

Cliff makes the change. The RADAR SCREENS switch to the
complex H2S system - The water below seems to blend in with
the land. Lloyd and Cliff glance down at the radar, trying to
make sense of it. Lloyd shakes his head.

LLOYD
I'm finding it difficult to
identify anything in the midst of
these echoes on the radar screens.
Countryside. Urban areas. I can't
tell one from another.

CLIFF
Many of the target indicators are
falling to the southwest of the
aiming point.

John pilots his way through the thick SMOKE ahead. FLAK flies
up through the smoke from the ground turrets.

JOHN
Visibility is low and defenses are
high... Not a good combination.

MARTY

Large portions of the main force's bombs are landing in open country. Southwest of the city, where the indicators are.

CLIFF

Yeah, we're a dog chasing its tail right now, John.

John considers this.

JOHN

I think we've done what we could here tonight. Let's pack it up and head home.

(shakes head)

I guess we know what H2S stands for now...

LLOYD

What? How 2 Suck?

LAUGHTER in the cockpit, even from Johnny. Lloyd allows himself a small smile.

EXT. SKIES OVER BERLIN - NIGHT

Slowly PAN DOWN from the sky full of planes into the outer edges of the city of Berlin - A great deal of DAMAGE has been done. FIRES are everywhere. Government buildings have been destroyed. There are about 20 SINKING SHIPS in the canals.

JOHN (V.O.)

Of the 727 aircraft that attacked Berlin, 56 or 7.9% were lost.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John looks over some paperwork at his desk. Across from him, Pierce sits in a chair smoking a cigar. Beside him is Arnold, cross-legged and getting more comfortable by the second.

PIERCE

That's a low number.

John looks up.

JOHN

It's Bomber Command's greatest loss of aircraft in one night thus far in the war.

Pierce EXHALES some cigar smoke.

PIERCE

Something to improve upon then.

JOHN

I just hope it's not a forecast of casualties to come during the upcoming winter. I need to implement more training for the 405. Some of us were... scattered up there.

Arnold and Pierce glance at each other.

ARNOLD

Well, John... you won't be the one to have to worry about it.

PIERCE

You're relinquishing command of the 405.

John looks up again, this time with eyebrows raised. His eyes flick back and forth between Pierce and Arnold.

JOHN

I am?

Pierce and Arnold both nod in unison. John leans back in his chair.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Okay... And who is taking my place?

ARNOLD

Lieutenant Clay Jackson from 434.

John nods slowly.

JOHN

A fine choice. But to what end will I--

ARNOLD

It's time to go home, John. At least for a little while.

John takes a puff of his cigarette.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Don't act too excited.

JOHN
For how long exactly?

PIERCE
We'll be in touch.

ARNOLD
This isn't the end of the road,
John. More like... the beginning of
a new one.

JOHN
I guess I'll take your word for it,
Arn'.

Arnold smiles, glances at Pierce.

ARNOLD
Then we are all set. Enjoy your
time at home with your family.

They both stand up and straighten their suits. Arnold heads
for the door.

PIERCE
Oh, and that meeting with the King
and Queen I mentioned? It's
happening September 1st at a RCAF
station Linton-on-Ouse. You'll be
awarded the DSO by King George
himself. Should give you a sense of
our timeline...
(beat)
Congratulations.

John just nods and puffs his cigarette.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

John walks up to the front door and drops his luggage. Mary
is waiting for him. They look at each other, deadpan for a
moment, then two smiles slowly form.

They embrace.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY

John, seated in the grass, plays with his young children, Gilbert and Penelope, who fight over a toy. He gives the toy to Penelope, Gilbert CRIES. John tickles Gilbert, who GIGGLES.

He watches the children with pride for a moment before becoming lost in his own thoughts. He stands up and EXHALES a breath. A COMMERCIAL AIRPLANE passes by overhead.

John cups a hand over his eyes, squinting, watching the plane fly away into the clouds...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Mary watches John from the kitchen window as she cleans the dishes in the sink. John places his hands on his hips and continues to stare into the sky above.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

John lays in bed with Mary. He is staring up at a ceiling fan while Mary gazes at him. The house is quiet.

MARY

You're lost to yourself again.

John SIGHS.

JOHN

I just have a bad feeling about their intentions, is all. If office duty is the capacity that they want me to come back in then I may just stay home.

Mary sidles up closer to him.

MARY

Don't tease me when you're this close to me.

John doesn't budge, just keeps staring up at the ceiling fan rotating around and around - Like a propeller.

JOHN

I just can't picture myself on the outside looking in.

MARY

No one can. But one day, you will be.

JOHN

I still have a lot to give.

Mary props herself up on her elbow.

MARY

Then give it. *Teach*. Take those young men under your wing, point them in the right direction and let them soar.

JOHN

I can do that while I'm flying, Mary. Not from some office, just... pushing papers around.

MARY

You're revered, John. You made it.

John turns to face her.

JOHN

And my reward is what?

Mary is silent. John looks back up at the ceiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I don't want a desk... I want the skies.

MARY

But what if the skies don't want you anymore?

John is silent.

MARY (CONT'D)

God knows there's things here on the ground that need you. Gilbert. Penelope.

(beat)

Me.

John slowly turns to Mary, locking eyes with her. They kiss.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Hot coffee and eggs on the breakfast table. John is seated, he looks tired. He stirs his coffee with a spoon, hypnotized by the *clinking* sound its making.

He stops and takes a sip, glancing at the NEWSPAPER AD on the table in front of him - A picture of a four-engine airplane in black and white. The headline reads, '*Flying Fortresses. Greater Than Ever. Boeing.*'

Mary gently places her ringed left hand on John's arm, snapping him out of his reverie.

MARY

Never deprive yourself of something
you can't go a day without thinking
about...

(beat)

You'll be back in the sky soon
enough. I know you will.

John looks up at her. Mary smiles sadly.

MARY (CONT'D)

When you've had your fill, we will
be down here waiting for you.

Mary kisses John's cheek and leaves the kitchen.

John looks down at his breakfast -- The plate begins SHAKING. The cutlery VIBRATES. The entire table is now MOVING as something RUMBLES overhead. John looks up...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, OFFICE - NIGHT

It's quiet and still. John is at his desk, doing paperwork.

INSERT - One Month Later.

A phone RINGS. John picks it up without looking, fumbling with the cord attached to the receiver.

JOHN

Hello?

ARNOLD (V.O.)

Hi, John. Arnold Moore.

John sits up a little higher in his chair.

JOHN

Hello, Arnold.

ARNOLD (V.O.)
You ready to come back?

JOHN
Yes, I am. Of course.

ARNOLD
Splendid. You will be taking up
Joel Sears' old position as
Commander of the 617 squadron.

John absorbs this for a moment, leans back in his chair.

JOHN
Joel's *old* position?

ARNOLD (V.O.)
Affirmative. He has moved on from
617, thus the vacancy.

JOHN
Moved on or pushed aside?

ARNOLD (V.O.)
What does it matter?

John stays silent.

ARNOLD (V.O.)
I'm sure you're aware, John... but
if you accept a position in the 617
squadron, I'll have to drop you in
rank you from Air Commodore to
Group Captain. And you'll be under
Roy Cochrane's command.

JOHN
I am aware of the process, yes.

ARNOLD (V.O.)
And you're okay with that?

John considers the ramifications of his response.

JOHN
There's plenty of ways I could
respond, but yes... Seems like an
opportunity I can't pass up.

ARNOLD (V.O.)
You may never get back to where you
are now, is what I'm saying.

JOHN

Then that's fine. I'm coming back
to lead by example, not to be one.

A pause on the other end.

ARNOLD (V.O.)

How was your time at home?

John glances down at the piece of paper he was writing on -
Just rough scribbling of the cockpit of a Avro Lancaster.

JOHN

Fulfilling.

ARNOLD (V.O.)

You sure you're ready for this?

John clenches his jaw, pushes the paper away.

JOHN

I've already done two tours,
Arnold, in case you forgot. I'm not
sure if I take too kindly to you
asking me that. But if the position
is up for grabs, by whatever means
that has come by, I have to say
that I think it would be good for
our country to have a Canadian
command the exalted 617 squadron.
It will be a very difficult thing
indeed to follow in the footsteps
of the great men before me, like
Joel Sears, but I'll certainly do
the best I can.

ARNOLD (V.O.)

The best you can? John... It's just
us talking here.

John grabs a cigarette, places it between pursed lips. He
lights it and INHALES deeply.

JOHN

I would plan on doing a
considerable amount of damage.

ARNOLD (V.O.)

You're always amped up, aren't you?

JOHN

Guilty as charged.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RCAF STATION, LINTON-ON-OUSE - DAY

KING GEORGE the VI and QUEEN ELIZABETH, youthful in their appearances, present the Distinguished Service Order to John, who bows in their presence and lowers his eyes.

JEAN (V.O.)

The officer is a first-class leader whose skillful and courageous example has proved most inspiring. His sterling qualities were well illustrated during an operation against Peenemünde one night in August 1943, and again a few nights later in an attack against Berlin. Wing Commander Fauquier has displayed boundless energy and great drive and has contributed, in a large measure, to the high standard of operational efficiency of the squadron he commands.

INT. MILITARY VEHICLE - DAY

Jean is behind the wheel, idling in park at the Base. She finishes reading the accompanying citation that went along with John's DSO. John is in the backseat, gazing out the window, like usual.

JOHN

A lot of fluff.

Jean grabs a newspaper on the dashboard and opens it. She shows it to John, the headline reads; *"King of the Pathfinders" is Johnny Fauquier's Title*. Below it is a PICTURE of John in full uniform.

JEAN

You're being described as King of the Pathfinders. You must be proud.

John glances at the headline then quickly looks away.

JOHN

Nonsense. Who would want that on their shoulders?

Jean closes the newspaper and places it back on the dash.

JEAN

The shoulders that could bear it.

(beat)

I hear you've been promoted to 617.

JOHN
Is that what you'd call it?

JEAN
You wouldn't?

JOHN
Even if it is, a promotion isn't
the end of the road, Jean. It's
just the start of a new, better
paved one. I still have to put in
the work.

Jean nods at him in the rear view.

JEAN
I'll miss driving you, John.

John stares at Jean in the rear view for a moment. He takes
his PATHFINDER WINGS off of his tunic and hands them to her.

JOHN
Here, this will remind you of me.

JEAN
John... I can't--

JOHN
Just take it.

She hesitates for a moment, but eventually takes it.

JEAN
I don't need the reminder... but
thank you.

JOHN
It's all I can offer you.

JEAN
Then I accept.

Jean locks eyes with John in the rear view and smiles.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Don't know if you heard, but...
Tiny and Janice have a wedding
date.

JOHN
I heard.

JEAN
Will you be at the ceremony?

JOHN
Of course I will. Wouldn't miss it.

JEAN
I'll see you there then.

John winks at her.

JOHN
Not if I see you first.

John exits the vehicle and closes the door. Jean watches him go with a sad smile. She looks down at the Pathfinder Wings in her hand.

The sounds of WHIRRING PLANE ENGINES and GUNFIRE and BOMBS--

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY/NIGHT

Rapid fire QUICK SHOTS of planes EXPLODING ON IMPACT. Being BLOWN UP IN THE SKY. Bombs dropping from above as quiet towns ERUPT into chaos.

JOHN (V.O.)
I hear it's been business as usual,
gentlemen... Just a little less
efficient without me around.

Some CHUCKLES reverberate.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

John and General Arnold Moore stand at the front of the room.

JOHN
I'm pleased as punch to be back
around so many familiar faces.
Meaning, some of you I still want
to punch in the face...

More CHUCKLES.

JOHN (CONT'D)
But I want to thank you for your
services since I've been gone. I
was at home eating bacon and eggs
and getting fat with the family but
you were still here, fighting the
good fight. That's to be commended.

John glances at Arnold and nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now what do you say we get on with
it, shall we? No one cares what
I've been up to.

John takes a seat with the 617 squadron (Samuel Tate, Danny Cameron, Billy Ash, Lincoln Holmes, Blake Douglas), on one side of the room.

ARNOLD

Johnny Fauquier everyone.

The 434, Harold Arnette, Jim Langston, JD Rowan, and a new Pilot, PHILLIP KENNEDY, 29, who's currently picking his teeth with a toothpick, sit in the middle with the other Squadrons.

John's old crew, the 405, Cliff, Marty, Lloyd, Anderson, now sit with Lieutenant Clay Jackson on the other side.

Arnold Moore stands alone at the front of the room. Stanley mans the projector once again. A MAP OF BERLIN pops up on the whiteboard; a unified GROAN from the crowd accompanies it.

LINCOLN

God, Berlin! Again!

BILLY

Yeah, haven't we bombed that enough
already?

CLAY

Clearly, the answer is no.

John slowly scans the room -- The various Squadrons turn stone-faced. Some shake their heads; the usual chit-chat that goes on here has long since died.

ARNOLD

I realize the losses on the Berlin
raid were fairly heavy...

JD

Heavy, sir? It's like walking into
the jaws of death at this point.

ARNOLD

Yet you come out of them time and
time again.

BLAKE

Escape by the skin of our teeth is
more like it.

Phillip flicks his toothpick away.

LLOYD
Not all of us...

Clay glances over at Lloyd, who straightens up. John notices this.

JOHN
There will always be casualties,
gentlemen. Remember what Winston
Churchill said, "War does not
determine who is right - Only who
is left."

A hushed silence falls over the room.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Now, eyes forward. Ears open.
Mouths closed.

Arnold nods at John. The Squadrons look back to the map of Berlin on the whiteboard. *John is back.*

EXT. BASE, RUNWAY - DAY

NEWS REPORTERS gather on the tarmac, microphones held out toward Clay Jackson, in full uniform. Janice is among the throng.

JANICE
Janice Morrison, Quebec Gazette.

CLAY
Hi, Janice.

JANICE
How does it feel to take over the
405 squadron from the likes of John
Fauquier? Big shoes to fill, no?

CLAY
Absolutely, but I have big feet...
I was actually with Fauquier as a
flight commander for three months.
I believe I was being prepped for
when he left the squadron.

JANICE
What's your opinion of him?

CLAY
Personally or professionally?

Janice doesn't respond.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Just kidding. He's a unique person. I think he has ice in his veins, in all honesty. That's the only way to describe him. He is as hard as nails and it doesn't make any difference whether he is thinking of the enemy or getting into a fight in a pub in London, he just has no fear. He probably couldn't even spell the word.

JANICE

You want that last part quoted?

Clay grins.

CLAY

Let's keep that off the record. Could be taken out of context.

CHUCKLES all around. Janice smiles and makes a note.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Say hi to Tiny for me.

LATER

Cliff stands at the front of the throng, microphones in his face.

CLIFF

Johnny is a complex individual who could freeze you with a glance of those cold eyes and brusque manner. But as I got to know him, I soon recognized that the intimidating exterior was straight veneer and that there was a very soft character underneath... Don't tell him I said that.

LATER

LLOYD

When something goes wrong, Fauquier's gaze freezes and it looks as if it could penetrate solid steel.

LATER

MARTY

His eyes are very piercing and focused. They were always wide-open and always looking right at you. You know when you are being looked at by Johnny. It is just that obvious.

INT. GRANSDEN LODGE, BAR - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on John's eyes as he stares straight ahead. As we PULL BACK, we see he is seated at a table with drinks on it, surrounded by his new 617 squadron, Samuel Tate, Danny Cameron, Billy Ash, Lincoln Holmes and Blake Douglas.

The Bar is packed. MUSIC plays. There's some ice on a window, showing a hill of snow beyond. The Bar is adorned with a Christmas theme throughout. Some wreaths hung up. Fake snow.

Danny nudges John with an elbow, snapping him out of his distant gaze.

DANNY

New man in charge. How's the first week been? Hopefully we haven't been too hard on you.

John takes a sip of his drink.

JOHN

I was never looking to come in here and step on toes, Danny. Just looking to elevate an already exceptional squadron.

SAMUEL

I'm glad you said that. Because we are, you know, exceptional. Aren't we, gentlemen?

LINCOLN

Damn right.

BLAKE

We are decorated every bit as you, John.

BILLY

Like Christmas trees.

JOHN

I have enjoyed success, I won't deny it.

LINCOLN

Except maybe on those bomb raids
against the Bielefeld Viaduct.

CHUCKLES all around. John nods and smiles at this.

JOHN

Everyone has their Achilles heel.

SAMUEL

Well, where you find yourself
currently? It's a far cry from the
405.

JOHN

The 405 was a fine squadron.

SAMUEL

I'm sure they were. But they are
Clay Jackson's squadron now...
You're with the big boys.

DANNY

We will respect your authority, of
course. But you will respect our
accomplishments.

JOHN

Wouldn't have it any other way. But
you're right, I am in charge, and I
realize the transfer of power is
never completely pleasant. So, that
said, I'll do my best to make it a
smooth transition for everyone.

John raises a glass.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Deal?

The crew nods in unison and *clink* glasses.

617 SQUADRON

Deal.

They all take a drink.

SAMUEL

I should let you know, John... The
older guys? They question the
choice of bringing a colonial on
board to run things.

JOHN
A colonial?

Samuel nods.

SAMUEL
Despite your distinguished
operational record, I don't think
they are particularly impressed
with the two DSO's and your DFC as
many of them have similar gongs.

JOHN
This isn't a competition. We are
all on the same team here.

SAMUEL
That sounds like what the guy at
the top of the podium would say.

JOHN
Well, I'd certainly prefer to be
looked up to than down upon.

BLAKE
Oh, Cochrane is going to love you.

Danny flashes a mischievous grin.

DANNY
I think we need to bring Johnny
here down a level or two...

LINCOLN
Yeah, down to *our* level.

BILLY
What do you say, John? You up for
it?

Everyone in 617 anxiously awaits John's response. John shrugs
and takes a drink.

JOHN
Bombs away.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GRANSDEN LODGE, BAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON a beer being SLAMMED down on a table by Billy - The
suds explode upwards like a bomb. Billy looks trashed.

The bar is even more crowded and alive now. PEOPLE everywhere talking over each other and LAUGHING and having a good time.

John, surrounded by his new crew, all LAUGH and drink and shoot the shit. Lincoln, now wearing a Santa hat for some reason, is singing a drunken version of Fred Astaire's 'Cheek to Cheek'.

LINCOLN

(singing)

Heaven! I'm in Heaven! And the
cares that hung around me through
the week! Seem to vanish like a
gambler's lucky streak! When we're
out together--!

EVERYONE

Dancing cheek to cheek!

A CHEER erupts as everyone raises their drinks and toasts. John flashes an inward look, as if the song has brought up a memory that he has to quickly push back down... *Hugh*.

Billy spots a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN nearby, gets up awkwardly, and stumbles over to her. John puts his arm around Danny.

SAMUEL

Johnny's up! So what'll it be? Sing
or drop your pants and take a beer
up the rear?

JOHN

Well, I sure as hell don't have the
pipes that Lincoln has, so--

John stands up and unbuckles his pants. Everyone CHEERS.

INT. ROY COCHRANE'S OFFICE - DAY

ROY COCHRANE, 45, 617 squadron Commander, sits at his desk with a glass of liquor in front of him. John is on the other side. He looks hungover as he sips some water.

ROY

Word is your introductory party
went off without a hitch.

JOHN

Yeah, went off right into the deep
end.

John and Roy exchange a knowing smile.

ROY

I'm glad you're getting your feet wet. But the concern here, John, and the reason *why* you're here, is that some of the crews in the squadron have become, how should I put this... somewhat relaxed in their proficiency. Perhaps it's the realization that the war is drawing to a close, perhaps it's an overabundance of success... Who knows. But you've been brought in to see 617 is kept up to the mark and stays as good as ever.

JOHN

I have some ideas already...

John's gaze is strong and unbroken. Roy nods.

ROY

Good. Now, you also face a steep learning curve when it comes to both the weapons and equipment used by the squadron.

JOHN

Naturally. But I'm ready to brush up where I need to.

ROY

May be more than just a brush up. You know about SABS?

JOHN

I'm aware of it, yes.

ROY

Well, let me tighten the nuts and bolts for you. SABS, or Stabilizing Automatic Bomb Sight, is a precision instrument that became available during early 1942. It was rarely used until 617 squadron was equipped with the device last August. It was to be used in conjunction with the newly developed bombs that would be delivered from high altitude to precise targets.

JOHN

Sounds promising.

ROY

The Americans with the Norden sight said that they could put a bomb in a pickle barrel while using it.

JOHN

Like to see them try.

ROY

My opinion exactly. They actually visited us and studied what we were doing and watched us bomb. They were amazed at the consistency of SABS -- 75 yards or less from 20,000 feet. Somebody made a caustic remark about this pickle barrel bombing and I think it was Pierce who said, "Well, let's have a competition. We'll put up three crews and you put up three crews and we'll see who comes out best." They wouldn't do it.

JOHN

Naturally. A lack of confidence is a white flag waving in the air.

ROY

Agreed. Those boys knew they would come up short. Now, to the Tallboys...

**The following will be spliced with footage of Tallboy bombs dropping from the sky in test runs. Bomb after bomb, EXPLODING in a vacant field, leaving craters behind.*

ROY (V.O.)

As knowledge of the Nazi's V-2 Rocket program becomes more and more known to British intelligence, it's been determined that these weapons are to be manufactured, stored, and in some cases, launched from massive, concrete bunkers which cannot be penetrated by existing weapons. As well, the enemy's U-Boat and E-Boat pens are being extensively reinforced with extremely thick concrete roofs and walls.

JOHN (V.O.)

So we'll need a big boom...

ROY (V.O.)

We believe we have one. These 12,000 pound Tallboys, they will exceed the speed of sound prior to reaching the ground and impact with such energy that it will penetrate deeply underground prior to exploding following a pre-set time delay.

BACK TO ROY'S OFFICE.

John nods, impressed.

JOHN

I've been saying we need something like this for awhile.

ROY

And it has been in development. But now... now we believe it's ready.

JOHN

What happens after the delay?

ROY

Ah, that's when the fun starts. A series of 'earthquake waves' will fracture and hopefully collapse the nearby concrete structures and tunnels.

JOHN

I'm assuming you've been running your tests under replicated conditions?

ROY

To the best of our ability. But who knows what the Germans are really up to. No one can say for sure.

John takes a sip of his water, thinks something over; His cold, distant eyes stare through Roy to the wall beyond.

JOHN

Tell me about the bomb casing.

**Splice with footage of the Tallboy bombs being manufactured, cleaned and stored.*

ROY (V.O.)

The casing is made of a special chrome molybdenum steel, cast in a single piece to ensure that it will survive the impact. Near the tip of the bomb, this casing is over four inches thick. It's then filled with 5200 pounds of Torpex D1 explosive. The bomb is 21 feet long with fins that are placed at a five degree angle so that it spins as it falls, reaching a maximum rotational velocity of 300 rpm.

BACK TO ROY'S OFFICE.

JOHN

Thus improving the aerodynamics and the accuracy. I like it.

ROY

Exactly. And when dropped from 18,000 feet, the Tallboy takes 37 seconds to reach the ground where it impacts at 750 miles-per-hour and, depending on the characteristics of the material it strikes, penetrates to a considerable depth.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - EVENING

A stream of Lancasters fill the sky as the sun dips down into the horizon beyond. We FOCUS on one Lancaster in particular. The once tagged 'THE 617' has been painted over. It now reads, 'J for Johnny'.

ROY (V.O.)

Now, come New Years Eve you'll be leading the 617 squadron as part of a force of 28 Lancasters to attack two enemy warships, the cruisers Koln and Emden, which has been located in a fjord near Oslo in Norway.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - EVENING

John is flying. Billy is looking down the sights at the bomb-aimer position. Danny is the navigator. Lincoln is on Coms and Blake mans the turret. Samuel is the spare on board, assisting everyone.

Billy lines up the target below -- Two Warships.

BILLY

You don't know this, John, but I worship warships... They just break apart so nicely, you know?

JOHN

Then keep looking to get a clean hit. I don't want collateral damage on the docks if I can avoid it.

BILLY

These babies are fused with a 0.3 second delay, meaning they'll explode about 100 feet under the water. Should help... Mark.

John studies the SABS bomb sight.

JOHN

Let 'er rip.

Locking in, Billy releases the lever that drops the Tallboy bomb.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - CONTINUOUS

The MASSIVE BOMB DROPS from the undercarriage of the Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*'.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

On the SABS sight, the warship EXPLODES from a well-placed Tallboy bomb in the water below. The following EARTHQUAKE WAVE rattles the harbor.

BILLY

Target hit.

JOHN

Nicely done.

Billy glances at John.

BILLY

You act like you're surprised.

JOHN

Pleasantly, Billy... Pleasantly. How are we looking, Danny?

DANNY

Bright moonlight tonight. Crystal
clear views.

JOHN

Let's take full advantage.

John follows the flight path and begins to circle around.
Samuel assists Blake with the ammo belt.

SAMUEL

Billy the kid here likes to act all
confident to impress you, but this
is all new to us.

Billy flashes him a look.

JOHN

How do you mean?

BLAKE

617 has never attacked warships at
sea before.

JOHN

Really?

Samuel looks over the turret gun, inspecting it.

SAMUEL

Yeah only stationary,
unfortunately. Mostly along the
docks.

JOHN

Well then, you boys are going to
get an education tonight... One way
or another.

BILLY

I only wish the bomb bay was big
enough to hold two Tallboys.

JOHN

That's why we have friends, Billy.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - NIGHT

The full moon is high in the black sky - The raid has gone on
for hours at this point.

Twelve Lancasters from the 617 are joined by sixteen others from 83 and 97 squadrons, dropping FLARES that illuminate the area around the ships below.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

What's the target altitude again,
John?

JOHN

7000 feet. We're at 8. Close
enough.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Another Tallboy drops from a Lancaster of 97 squadron -- The bomb misses and EXPLODES about 100 yards to the port of the target ship, the EARTHQUAKE WAVE rocking it and stirring it to life.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

BILLY

Damn it, he missed.

Danny checks the radar.

DANNY

Ship has made off in a northerly
direction at high speed.

LINCOLN

It's fleeing.

JOHN

It's not going anywhere.

John cranks on the sticks.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*' maneuvers around behind the ship.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

Dropping another stick of flares.

SAMUEL
It's our last one.

JOHN
I know.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - CONTINUOUS

The stick of FLARES drops over the target ship as it makes its way between Ran Island and the mainland, seeking the cover of the dark waters ahead.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

John picks up the radio transmitter.

JOHN
Orbit to the north and begin continuous illuminations and bombing within two minutes. I want flares dropped at the northern end of Ran Island.

BILLY
What are we doing, John?

JOHN
Staying as support.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSLO, NORWAY - CONTINUOUS

The FLEEING SHIP below moves out of the illumination of FLARES and into the dark waters, a BOMB EXPLODING nearby. As it is engulfed in the darkness, another BOMB drops -- This one a dead-on hit. The ship EXPLODES in a glorious FIREBALL.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Billy pumps his fist and high-fives the crew who all HOOT and HOLLER.

BILLY
Hell yeah! That's how we do it!

DANNY
They can run but they can't hide!
What do you think, John?!

John silently peers down from above at the carnage, a piercing gaze that consumes every inch of the FLAMES below. We PULL IN close to his cold, distant eyes...

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

John?

EXT. THE SEA - NIGHT

Bombs EXPLODE in the water and along an unknown Harbor. Ships are DESTROYED one-by-one. Planes fill the sky above. Then, it suddenly goes silent, like a calm before the storm...

A large, monstrous SHADOW suddenly appears in the water. RISING from the depths, slowly, until--

A HYDRA MONSTER with MULTIPLE HEADS breaches the surface. Some of the heads SNAP sharp teeth, grabbing onto ships and RIPPING them from port to stern. The other heads propel upwards, BITING the wings off of planes and SWALLOWING THEM WHOLE like a lizard eating mosquitos.

Wingless planes CRASH into the water and BURN UP on impact. The many head of the HYDRA ROARS -- It's chaos.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S ROOM, AIRBASE - NIGHT

John wakes up with a GASP. Breathing heavily. He EXHALES a breath, calming himself.

Blinking his eyes rapidly until they settle, he stares up at the ceiling fan rotating around and around - Like a propeller. A BUZZING sound infiltrates the silence...

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on a propeller spinning and BUZZING. PULL BACK to reveal a small MOSQUITO BOMBER flying over a large body of water at night.

INT. MOSQUITO BOMBER - CONTINUOUS

John is piloting the small bomber. Tucked tightly beside him is Danny, who adjusts himself in his seat.

DANNY

Tight quarters.

JOHN

Welcome to the Mosquito.

DANNY

They always come out at night...
Especially around water.

JOHN

It's not much on defenses, but it's
quick and agile. Perfect if we need
to, um... flee.

DANNY

I see what you did there.

JOHN

So, navigator and bomb-aimer...
How's it feel pulling double duty
tonight?

DANNY

It feels like my pay won't reflect
that.

JOHN

Naturally.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Mosquito Bomber whips through the dark clouds, quick and agile; BUZZING like the incessant insect that it's named after. Following behind, a squad of 32 Lancasters and Halifaxes fill the night sky.

JOHN (V.O.)

Lancasters are to attack shipping
in the harbor. The remainder are to
target U-Boat pens and the floating
dock.

QUICK SHOTS at GROUND LEVEL of THREE TALLBOYS striking the thick roofs of the pens. BAM, BAM, BAM -- EXPLOSIONS. One penetrates the roof and causes an 8 metre wide hole on top and 4 metre wide crater inside.

QUICK SHOTS of two near misses; Severe damage being caused to various workshops, offices and stores within.

INT. MOSQUITO BOMBER - NIGHT

John looks down out of the window as he circles the harbor. There's SMOKE everywhere.

JOHN
Smoke is beginning to obscure the
target... We need to--

John grabs the radio transmitter.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Pilots who have not yet bombed, aim
for the ships. U-Boats and
Minesweepers are still out in the
open.

Danny checks the bomb-sights -- A large CARGO SHIP has
crashed on land.

DANNY
One of their cargo ships just
turned into a whale. It's beaching
itself.

JOHN
I'll get in for a closer look on
the next go around.

John pushes the Mosquito to its limits, the small engine
BUZZING. It's silent in the cockpit as he flies, some light
CREAKS as the small plane adjusts to the velocity.

DANNY
Guess now's a good time to tell
you... Blake Douglas is moving on
from 617. Switching squadrons.

JOHN
Hm. Can't be by choice.

DANNY
No.

JOHN
Hell of a gunner. He will be
missed.

DANNY
We'll need a replacement.

JOHN
I'm sure Roy Cochrane will see to
that.

DANNY
Don't act like he won't ask you,
John.

John ignores this and keeps his eyes focused ahead.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Got anybody on the short list?

JOHN
I do, one of my guy's from 405.

DANNY
He any good?

JOHN
Well, he took down a fighter plane
with one arm once.

DANNY
Hell of an arm... What's his name?

EXT. SKIES OVER HOLLAND - DAY

Blue skies. Barely a cloud. It's peaceful. Then-- CHAOS. An enemy fighter plane is SHOT DOWN by the turret gun protruding from a Lancaster tagged '*J for Johnny*'.

JOHN (V.O.)
Anderson... Nice shooting.

The Lancaster swoops down below the clouds revealing the many SUBMARINE PENS below. Some are SMOKING.

INT. AVRO LANCASTER - CONTINUOUS

Anderson swivels the turret, looking for more targets. Billy stares down the bomb-sights.

BILLY
I can't spot any movement below.
Nothing's scrambling.

DANNY
Stay vigilant, this part of Holland
is still occupied. Intel says the
pens are sheltering midget
submarines.

BILLY
And we brought the Tallboys...

JOHN
We're in and out on this one,
gentlemen. Make your shots count.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Billy, we'll be holding altitude at 13,000 feet. Adjust accordingly.

BILLY

No need. I could put this baby in a pickle jar from this height, John. Fuck a barrel. Uncle Sam is a fag.

DANNY

Great weather for it. Clear blue skies.

ANDERSON

First wave seems to be a success. Minimal flak. Bombing looks fairly concentrated. No current threats in the air.

BILLY

Do us a favor and keep it that way, new guy.

The look on Anderson's face says he plans to. He loads the turret with gusto, *chk-chk*.

JOHN

Good to see a familiar face doing familiar things.

ANDERSON

Ditto, John. Ditto.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

WHIP. CRACK. Arnold Moore points the pointer stick, with gusto, to an IMAGE on the whiteboard - The Bielefeld Viaduct.

ARNOLD

The Bielefeld Viaduct.

Every Squadron is present in the room (405, 434, 617, etc.), and they all turn to look at John in unison.

JOHN

Yes, my arch enemy.

LINCOLN

How many times have you bombed this now, John?

JOHN

Too many. The thing has 9 lives.

CLAY

Just give me one crack at it and
it's a done deal.

John doesn't dignify this with a response. Arnold keeps his focus on the image on the whiteboard.

ARNOLD

The Bielefeld Viaduct has been subjected to our attacks since the beginning of the war by an estimated 7 million pounds of explosive, thus far. It was damaged on our last attempt, some tracks bent, but has remained in regular use by the Germans.

(turns to face the throng)

This cannot and *will* not be allowed to continue.

LINCOLN

Maybe it's immortal like the Hydra monster.

John's eyes flick toward Lincoln for a moment. Danny, fidgeting with a pen, flashes Lincoln a cold look from a few chairs behind.

ARNOLD

Allied war planners consider it to be one of the most important lengths of railway in Germany and therefore, a crucial target.

LINCOLN

Everything is a crucial target. That's why they are targets.

Danny chucks his pen at Lincoln.

DANNY

Shut the fuck up already.

Lincoln spins around to face Danny.

LINCOLN

What? Ever seen a target without a bullseye? Yeah, me neither.

ARNOLD

Shipments of weapons and bombs and God-knows-what-else are passed along through this viaduct. It has to be obliterated.

BILLY

And it will be, sir.

ARNOLD

Well, we're not taking any chances this time.

BILLY

Then find a way to load each Lanc with two Tallboys in the bomb bay without weighing it down and that thing is as good as gone.

CLAY

Amen.

ARNOLD

We have the new Lancaster B-1's on the way. They're capable of hauling the extra weight. But it's not so we can carry an extra Tallboy, I assure you.

BILLY

Then what's it for?

Arnold stares at Billy, then diverts his attention to John.

ARNOLD

John, as I'm sure you've guessed by now, your next planned raid will be over Bielefeld, but this time we will be sending you out with the bigger bomb, as we discussed.

Billy locks eyes with Lloyd across the room. Mouths the words, '*The bigger bomb?*'.

JOHN

Glad to have the excess firepower on board, but it's unfortunate this location requires extra attention because of... past failures.

Clay leans in and whispers something to Harold.

ARNOLD

Previous bombings were not considered failures in my book.

CLAY

What about Pierce's book?

BILLY

Tell us about this bigger bomb.

LLOYD

Yeah, what are we working with here?

JOHN

You fellas will know in due time.

ARNOLD

That is correct. Just follow the rules of engagement, ladies and gents. The rest will take care of itself.

EXT. WEDDING CEREMONY, AISLE - DAY

It's *silent*. Tiny, in a nice suit, is hand-in-hand with Janice, who wears a white wedding dress, at the forefront ahead. Bride and Groom, smiling at each other. A PASTOR reads the vows, mouthing silently.

John, dressed in formal wear, watches from his seat as the vows are being read. Jean is seated beside him, wearing a nice dress. It's quiet as John stares into the void.

A PLANE passes overhead -- The jet ENGINE cuts through the silence. All SOUND comes crashing back. John looks up, staring at the plane until it vanishes into the clouds.

EXT. WEDDING CEREMONY, CATERING - DAY

John sits with Tiny off to the side of the procession, sharing a drink together. Ties and collars are loosened. John watches as Tiny fidgets with his brand new wedding ring on his finger.

JOHN

So how's it feel to be hitched?

Tiny stops fidgeting, shrugs.

TINY

Weight off of my shoulders.

JOHN

Yeah, now it's around your ankle holding you in place.

TINY

I'm happy with it.

JOHN

Just be sure to avoid water.

TINY

Never been much of a swimmer
anyway.

John looks away and sips his drink.

Janice waves to Tiny from afar, surrounded by her FRIENDS and FAMILY. Tiny waves a large hand back. He takes a drink, sitting in comfortable silence with his best friend.

JOHN

You ever think about if all of this
is right, Tiny?

TINY

What do you mean?

JOHN

Like the way we approach life....
Go to school. Graduate. Maybe a few
years of service. Get a job.
Marriage. Kids. More work. Death.
Is this the way it's supposed to
be? Or did we just, you know, make
it all up and commit to it?

TINY

You're drunk, John. And I'm not
sure what to say to that.

John nods, takes another drink.

TINY (CONT'D)

Especially on my wedding day.

JOHN

Ignore me. I'm no good at parties.

TINY

Is that what this is?

JOHN

In a way.

TINY

Not everything is supposed to be a
struggle.

JOHN

It's not supposed to be all roses
either.

Tiny watches Janice for a moment, lost in his own thoughts.

TINY
Der Krieg ist vorbei. Es wäre
klug, sich zu ergeben.

John's eyebrows raise at this.

JOHN
You speaking German now, big guy?

TINY
A little.

JOHN
Can I ask why?

TINY
Janice made me learn a few phrases,
you know... in case I ever become a
prisoner of war.

Tiny takes a drink.

JOHN
That's a cheery thought.

TINY
Isn't it?

They share a drink in silence. One of Janice's Family Members comes up to Tiny and shakes his hand. Pleasantries exchanged. The Family Member departs.

JOHN
What does it mean?

TINY
Hm?

JOHN
What you said... In German.

TINY
"The war is over. It would be wise
to surrender."

John mulls this over, furrows his brow.

JOHN
That's what you're supposed to say
if you're a POW?

TINY

Yeah, I-- maybe it's worked before
somewhere...

(beat)

I don't know where she gets this
shit from.

They CHUCKLE. Sip their drinks.

JOHN

Say it again.

Tiny looks at John, inquisitive. John looks back, dead
serious.

EXT. RUNWAY, MUNITIONS STATION - DAY

Stanley leads John toward a mound of CRATES OF AMMUNITION and
BOMBS stacked together on the edge of the tarmac. One GIANT
BOMB in particular engulfs all the rest. Stanley stops in
front of it, gazing up to its peak.

STANLEY

And here she is... the Grand Slam.

John looks the bomb up and down, then glances around quickly
like he's about to commit a crime.

JOHN

Why is it in the bomb dump?

STANLEY

Don't ask me. She was just left
here.

JOHN

With no instructions from Bomb
Command?

STANLEY

None.

JOHN

Hm.

STANLEY

I see your wheels turning, John...
What are you thinking?

John nods, confirming something to himself.

JOHN

Have the bomb hoisted onto the new aircraft. Clear all personnel out of the station.

STANLEY

For what?

John just stares at him. Stanley catches on.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

You want to takeoff with this thing? Without authority from Bomb Command?

JOHN

Yes.

STANLEY

You're crazy.

JOHN

So I've been told. Besides, it's the only way to know if it's safe to fly with these things.

STANLEY

So why don't you let someone with a little less medals attached to their lapels test pilot it?

JOHN

And allow them to have all the fun? To be one of the first to pilot the B-1?

(beat; shakes head)

Don't think so... This is mine.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The brand new LANCASTER B-1, the Grand Slam bomb nestled safe in its bomb bay, begins to taxi down the runway.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

The scenery whips past the window as the plane picks up speed on the runway. John looks concerned and grabs his radio.

JOHN

I don't think we're going to get in the air.

STANLEY (V.O.)
Yeah, you look sluggish.

JOHN
Usually I'm airborne with a full
load at around 110 miles per hour.

John glances at his speedometer dial - It's shaking at 145.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm at 145.

John hears a CREAKING SOUND on his left; He looks out the window and sees the wing tips of the airplane starting to BEND UPWARDS. It looks as if the wings are about to snap off.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We may have a problem--

Then-- LIFT. The ground disappears as the plane ascends.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Atta girl.

STANLEY (V.O.)
Off you go!

John EXHALES a relieved breath.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The Lancaster B-1 flies effortlessly through the clouds.

STANLEY (V.O.)
How's she feel, John?

JOHN
Like a dream, Stan... Like a dream.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The Lancaster B-1 comes to a stop on the runway after a successful test flight.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

John gets on the radio.

JOHN
Bomb Command, come in.

BOMB COMMAND (V.O.)

Go ahead.

JOHN

I just piloted the B-1 around with the Grand Slam loaded on board for about 20 minutes. Just landed now.

BOMB COMMAND (V.O.)

What was that? Who is this?

JOHN

John Fauquier. I'll have you know it's quite safe. Couple hiccups to iron out, will need to adjust speed parameters for takeoff and whatnot, but the flight itself was smooth. Shouldn't be much of an issue.

A pause. Then--

BOMB COMMAND (V.O.)

Were you authorized for this flight, John?

JOHN

I was not.

Silence.

BOMB COMMAND (V.O.)

I see.

JOHN

Just know, if you have to bring the bomb back, you can't drop the aircraft more than six inches onto the runway. If you do, the tires will no doubt burst.

BOMB COMMAND (V.O.)

Okay, um... Roger that. Thank you, John.

John clicks off.

EXT. RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

John, still in the cockpit of the B-1 with the window open, looks down at Christian and Stanley waiting below. He flashes the thumbs up.

CHRISTIAN

Alright, Johnny... Let's get you out of there.

JOHN

What's the rush?

CHRISTIAN

Come on, *out*. We let you go up, don't let us down. It's our asses on the line, too.

JOHN

Let me?

CHRISTIAN

You know what I meant.

JOHN

You can relax, Christian. I already radioed bomb command and told them what's what.

CHRISTIAN

You-- What?

STANLEY

Hate to be the bearer of bad news gentlemen, but we have the press coming by shortly to take pictures. We'll most likely be on the front page so, let's give them a picture worthy of a headline, shall we?

EXT. RUNWAY, MUNITIONS STATION - DAY

NEWS REPORTERS mull about with their cameras, *snapping* photographs. Christian and Stanley stand in front of the Lancaster B-1 with the Grand Slam bomb now on full display. John sits atop the bomb, cross-legged. He smiles for a PHOTO.

REPORTER #1

Hell of a plane.

CHRISTIAN

Isn't it? This special lady is the first of 32 B-1 Specials that have been modified to carry the massive Grand Slam bomb.

Christian moves along the plane below, proudly showing off its frame like a game show host presenting a prize.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

The modifications we added include more powerful Rolls Royce Merlin 24 engines, the removal of the bomb doors to accommodate the weapon, the removal of the front and mid-upper gun turrets and the H2S radar equipment to save weight, and the strengthening of the undercarriage to enable the aircraft to land with the bomb still aboard. Minor weight-
lessening even includes the removal of three of the Lancaster's four fire axes and its crew door ladder.

REPORTER #1

So basically it can bomb and nothing else.

CHRISTIAN

Basically.

REPORTER #2

Tell us about the bomb.

The cameras go away and the notepads come out. Christian steps toward the bomb on display.

CHRISTIAN

Well, as you can see, it's identical in shape to the Tallboy. But when in production these Grand Slams weigh about 22,400 pounds, have a length of 25 feet, 5 inches and a diameter of 3 feet 10 inches.

Stanley steps up beside Christian.

STANLEY

And just like the Tallboy, the Grand Slam's fins are designed to generate a stabilizing spin of up to 60 revolutions per minute and, again, like the Tallboy, has a thicker case than any conventional bomb, allowing it to penetrate deep into the earth or to pass through extremely thick reinforced concrete roofs.

CHRISTIAN

The explosive used is called Torpex and it is poured into the casing as a liquid and takes about a month to cool and set.

STANLEY

And because of the low rate of production and high rate of value of each bomb, the crews will be told to land with their Grand Slams on board rather than jettison them if a sortie has to be aborted.

The Reporters all look up at John seated on the bomb.

REPORTER #2

You gonna ride that bomb down just like that, John?

JOHN

Absolutely. Maybe they'll make a movie about it someday...

LAUGHTER from below. John smiles, on top of the world.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

John is at the front of the room briefing the various Squadrons on another operation to Bielefeld; The PICTURE of the previously damaged and repaired viaduct on the whiteboard behind him.

JOHN

And I feel confident that, with these new conditions in place, we can categorically cripple Bielefeld once and for all.

He scans the room, the eyes looking back at him are unsure.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But it all depends on the results of the test bombings.

A few GROANS litter the room. Clay Jackson's leg bounces up and down anxiously. Phillip Kennedy is seated beside him, picking his teeth with a toothpick.

CLAY

When's that happening?

JOHN
Right now, actually. Arnold Moore
is at the bomb site.

CLAY
And where's that?

JOHN
A need-to-know basis. You don't
need to know.

CLAY
Well then what *do* we need to know,
John?

JOHN
I'll tell you this, through earlier
testing, they have determined that
the bomb would need to be dropped
from an altitude of 40,000 feet to
reach its terminal velocity.

CLAY
Oh, please. You know these new
birds ain't taking it up over 20.

JOHN
Right. But I believe, even at that
height, it is still a formidable
weapon and one that will allow each
squadron to attack a range of new
and difficult targets... Like the
Bielefeld Viaduct.

A phone RINGS on the wall. John heads over and picks it up,
turning his back on the room. The Airmen talk amongst
themselves.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay... Yes.
(beat)
Altitude?
(beat)
Fuse delay?
(beat)
Very good.

He hangs up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So....

He heads back to the front of the room. Everybody quiets
down.

JOHN (CONT'D)
They just dropped a Grand Slam in a
field from 20,000 feet.

Clay leans in toward Phillip Kennedy.

CLAY
Told ya.

JOHN
11 second delay. Apparently it left
a crater like a meteor from outer
space...

Silence for a moment. Phillip flicks his toothpick away.

PHILLIP
Sounds good to me.

John nods.

JOHN
Me too. Now what do you say we turn
these bombs loose in the real
world, gentlemen? See what trouble
we can drum up...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

Various Lancaster bombers ROAR to life on the runway. A GRAND SLAM BOMB is being loaded into the Lancaster B-1, now tagged '*J for Johnny*', by a large GROUND CREW, Christian and Stanley included.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - DAY

John snaps his helmet on and flashes a thumbs up to the Ground Crew. His 617 squadron, Samuel Tate, Danny Cameron, Billy Ash, Lincoln Holmes and Anderson Williams, are aboard.

SAMUEL
Ready to make history, John?

John busies himself with his instrumentation, his brow furrowing as he looks something over.

JOHN
Don't count the chickens before
they hatch, Samuel.

Danny leans in close to Billy.

DANNY
 (quietly)
 Guy is about to drop the largest
 weapon ever built on the only thing
 he hasn't successfully destroyed.

JOHN
 I heard that.

Billy flashes an overly-excited face. He's pumped.

EXT. RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Lancaster B-1 tagged '*J for Johnny*' begins to taxi down the runway.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

John picks up speed for takeoff. Then-- A BUMP, the engine FALTERING and SPUTTERING. John's attention snaps down to the dials.

JOHN
 Our SABS is leaking oil. Starboard-
 inner engine has seized up. We're
 on three engines.

BILLY
 Can we still make it?

JOHN
 Carrying this load? Not a chance.

John hits the BRAKES and begins to slow down. He SLAMS a hand down on the sticks.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Damn!

The disappointment echoes throughout the cockpit. John brings the Lancaster B-1 to a stop and thinks it over.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 We need to commandeer another
 plane.

DANNY
 What?

JOHN

I'm not going to miss this opportunity. Bielefeld is *mine*.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

John runs toward a 405 Lancaster tagged '*Ravens*', waving his arms, trying to get the pilot's attention. The pilot, Clay Jackson, glances at John then turns away, pretending not to see him as he taxi's off down the runway.

John pursues but Clay cracks open the THROTTLES and takes off for Bielefeld, leaving John fuming behind. He throws his helmet on the tarmac, frustrated.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - DAY

John leans against the back wall, arms crossed. He doesn't look pleased. Arnold is at the front of the room addressing the crews. Clay is among the throng, looking smug.

ARNOLD

I have just seen a stereo-pair of the Bielefeld Viaduct taken after your visit yesterday afternoon, my congratulations to 405 on your accurate bombing. You have certainly made a proper mess of it this time, which was the goal, and added another page to your history by being the first squadron to drop the biggest bomb on Germany so far. So good work and keep up the training.

High fives all around. Clay glances back toward John -- He is gone.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

A dark night. The lights are on. The Lancaster B-1 tagged '*J for Johnny*' propels forward on the runway.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

John THROTTLES UP, the dark scenery whipping by in a blur, his usual 617 crew on board with him.

BILLY

Here we go.

LINCOLN
Arnsburg. Not exactly Bielefeld,
but it's something.

DANNY
Third time's the charm, right
Johnny?

John doesn't respond. He's focused.

EXT. SKIES OVER ARNSBURG - NIGHT

Nineteen Lancasters fill the night sky. '*J for Johnny*' is at the forefront. The 405 squadron follows the 617's lead. A burst of STATIC, Clay Jackson chimes in over coms.

CLAY (V.O.)
Finally going to hit that Grand
Slam huh, Fauquier? No more
triples.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

John clenches his jaw. He glances at Danny.

JOHN
Give me a location, Danny.

Danny checks the map.

DANNY
We're right over the Ruhr River, 40
kilometers east of Dortmund.

John lightly pulls back on the sticks.

JOHN
Roger that. Coaxing this baby up to
12,700 feet.

DANNY
Coaxing, yes. Please do. We're
definitely bottom heavy with this
bomb on board. It's like an
overgrown pilot fish under a
whale's belly.

JOHN
What's with you and whales?

LINCOLN
If you saw his girlfriend you'd
know...

DANNY
Remind me to kick you in the balls
later.

LINCOLN
No thanks.

BILLY
I'll remind you.

EXT. SKIES OVER ARNSBURG - CONTINUOUS

The many Lancasters begin attracting FLAK from below as the Arnsburg Viaduct nears. Evasive maneuvers. Some turrets FIRE back.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

Anderson aims his turret gun, head on a swivel. Billy readies the SABS sight.

BILLY
Flak is becoming a serious concern
here...

LINCOLN
Ain't it always?

DANNY
Yeah, what's special, Billy?

BILLY
This ain't your run-of-the-mill
bomb run, fellas.

JOHN
He's right. The B-1 has to be flown
at a constant and precise course,
speed, and altitude for 5 minutes
if we want to accurately drop our
bomb.

SAMUEL
Making us a perfect target for
radar-controlled anti-aircraft
guns.

ANDERSON
Or enemy fighters.

DANNY
Well, fuck me. Sometimes it's
better to be lucky than good.

EXT. SKIES OVER ARNSBURG - NIGHT

Two Lancasters are hit by heavy FLAK. One receives a direct hit, the port wing TEARING OFF as the aircraft spins toward the ground near the target.

A PARACHUTE opens below at about 2000 feet before the Lancaster EXPLODES on the ground below. The Parachute is quickly engulfed in SMOKE and vanishes within.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - NIGHT

Billy checks the SABS.

BILLY
Target acquired.

The cockpit RATTLES and SHAKES from some nearby FLAK. John maintains control through the chaos as the cockpit settles. Billy closes his eyes. Lincoln stares at him.

LINCOLN
What the hell are you doing?

BILLY
Listening.

LINCOLN
For what?

BILLY
The release unit firing with its sharp retort, the straps that have been holding the bomb in the bomb bay slamming open, hitting the fuselage as they come free... Music to my ears.

Lincoln slowly looks away. John checks the sights, locking on visually to the Arnsburg Viaduct below.

JOHN
Here we go. You ready, Ravens?

CLAY (V.O.)
Waiting on your mark.

John nods at Billy.

JOHN
Mark.

Billy releases the mechanism and drops the Grand Slam bomb, savouring the sounds as he does.

EXT. SKIES OVER ARNSBURG - CONTINUOUS

The GRAND SLAM BOMB drops from '*J for Johnny*', spinning impeccably, spiraling down. The Lancaster B-1 ascends quickly, wings flexing and un-flexing like an overstrung bow.

EXT. ARNSBURG VIADUCT, GROUND LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

The Grand Slam STRIKES THE VIADUCT, a magnificent pattern of concentric SHOCKWAVE CIRCLES shudders out, the apex being where the viaduct once arched. The accompanying Tallboys SLAM into the circles, creating cross-circle patterns.

INT. LANCASTER B-1 - CONTINUOUS

The crew watches the sights in stunned silence as CHAOS bellows below. Lincoln fumbles with the Coms as he broadcasts and watches the screens.

LINCOLN
We, uh... just released our Special Store from approximately 13,000 feet. Suffered the usual tendency to overshoot, but... I'd say about a third of the viaduct appears to be down. I see... two hits on the embankment to the north of the bridge.

John grabs the radio.

JOHN
A 40 foot section of the viaduct appears to have been destroyed.

Silence throughout the cockpit. Billy stares at the damage with wide eyes.

BILLY
Holy shit.

DANNY
You did it, Johnny...
(beat)
Breathe easy, my friend.

John EXHALES a relieved breath.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROY COCHRANE'S OFFICE - DAY

INSERT - 6 Months Later

John lights a cigarette and takes a puff, settling in across from Roy Cochrane, who finishes up some paperwork while squinting through reading glasses. A clock *ticks*.

ROY
I assume you know why you're here?

JOHN
To get briefed on the upcoming
Berchtesgaden raid, hopefully.

Roy continues with his paperwork in silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Or not... Why don't you tell me,
Roy.

ROY
The war is coming to an end. Slowly
but surely, but it is. I don't want
you killed during the last moments
of it.

JOHN
Seems as good a time as any, no?

Roy takes off his reading glasses.

ROY
You mean something now, John. Well,
you have for awhile, but it's
especially true now. You've dropped
more Grand Slams than anyone.
Combine this with your previous
gongs and you've become more of a
symbol than an airman. I aim to
protect that.

JOHN

I see. So is this what happened to
Joel Sears?

Roy doesn't respond. John slowly nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, I guess it's a nice way of
saying you don't need me anymore.

Roy stares at John.

ROY

I would never say that.

John ashes out his cigarette in an ash tray.

JOHN

And you'll never have to.

He gets up and leaves the office.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE ROY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John shuts the door, noticing Clay Jackson walking down the
hall towards him. Clay approaches and holds out his hand.

CLAY

Nice work in Swinemunde Harbour,
sinking the Lutzow... No small
feat.

John shakes his hand.

JOHN

You would know the feeling, young
man.

CLAY

Nothing like hitting a Grand Slam,
huh?

JOHN

You know... We've dropped 6 of the
41 between us.

CLAY

Sounds about right. Did Cochrane
tell you that?

John shakes his head.

JOHN
4 for me. 2 for you.

Clay stares at John for a moment.

CLAY
You've been keeping score?

JOHN
Of course I have. Ever since
Bielefeld. You know, when you
pretended not to see me on the
runway...

Clay nods slowly, wide eyed.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good luck in Berchtesgaden.
Hitler's Eagle Nest chalet is a
hell of a target. I've had dreams
for weeks of a Grand Slam barreling
towards that madman's last
refuge...
(beat; a far away look)
Anyway, enjoy.

John walks off down the hallway. Clay watches him leave,
confused.

CLAY
(calling after)
You're not in on this one?

John keeps going without another word.

EXT. GRANSDEN LODGE, BAR - DAY

The Bar is BUZZING with commotion in the late afternoon.
Danny approaches Lincoln from behind.

DANNY
Hey, Lincoln.

Lincoln turns around, holding a beer. Danny kicks him in the
balls and walks away. Lincoln crumples to the floor,
GROANING, the beer bottle *cracking* on impact.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens quickly, CRACK. John enters, stopping in the doorway when he sees-- Pierce, sitting and smoking a cigar at his desk.

JOHN
Make yourself at home.

PIERCE
I *am* at home, John.

John takes a seat across from Pierce and lights up a cigarette.

JOHN
So what do I owe the pleasure?

PIERCE
What, I can't just come by for a cordial visit? Talk about families and the weather and such?

John smiles politely but impatiently. Pierce drops the act.

PIERCE (CONT'D)
As you know, the 617 squadron attacked U-Boat pens at Hamburg on the 9th of April. But the British Navy remains, how should I put this... unconvinced, that the bombing actually put the vessels out of action.

JOHN
Then perhaps you should've let me fly the raid.

PIERCE
You were grounded for a reason. That's not the point here.

JOHN
Then what's the point, Pierce?

PIERCE
You may be grounded but you're still under my command. With that said, I want you to drive into Hamburg and have a look at the damage for yourself.

JOHN
Drive? Into Hamburg?

PIERCE

Yes, there won't be resistance. The city has been completely occupied by the allies. You can take a couple RAF Officer's with you, if you wish. But you're safe.

JOHN

Famous last words...

Pierce shrugs and blows some cigar smoke into the air.

PIERCE

Only one way to find out.

EXT. INNER CITY, HAMBURG - DAY

DRONE SHOT: Rubble and destruction everywhere. An RAF MILITARY JEEP makes its way over the many bumps in the cracked road below.

EXT. RAF MILITARY JEEP - CONTINUOUS

John is seated in the front seat, accompanied by two armed Soldiers, DENNIS MAYS and MAXWELL LAPIERRE, both late 20s. Mays is driving. Lapierre is sitting in the back.

MAYS

A whole lot different seeing it from the ground huh, John?

JOHN

From above we are Gods. Down here? We're just one of them.

MAYS

Nazi's?

John side-eyes Mays.

JOHN

People.

EXT. INNER CITY, HAMBURG - CONTINUOUS

DRONE SHOT: The Jeep drives slowly through the uneven terrain of the desecrated city. Then-- Swarms of NAZI SOLDIERS begin to emerge from the broken buildings and descend on the Jeep like a virus attacking healthy skin cells.

INT. RAF MILITARY JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Hundreds of armed NAZI SOLDIERS stare blankly at John and the RAF Officers as they pass, clearly dirty and exhausted from their salvage work.

MAYS

We've got company...

LAPIERRE

Where are all the allied troops?
What's going on here?

JOHN

I don't know...

LAPIERRE

They're all just... staring at us.

JOHN

I can see that, Maxwell. Thank you.

MAYS

And they're still armed.

John notices all the GERMAN LUGERS in their holsters as they slowly pass.

MAYS (CONT'D)

They know the war is over, right?
Hamburg surrendered days ago...

JOHN

Yes, well... apparently they never
got the message.

It's quiet other than the Jeep's engine REVVING UP every time it hits a slight incline. The Nazi Soldiers all continue to stare at John and his crew as they pass, like the Jeep and its passengers are a float in a parade nobody asked for.

John spots something up ahead.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Stop the jeep.

MAYS

What? Why?

JOHN

Just do it.

Mays reluctantly stops the Jeep. The Nazi Soldiers continue staring at them, dead-faced.

Mays and Lapierre place their hands on their weapons. A shrill BREEZE whips through the concrete buildings as John gets out of the Jeep.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Follow my lead.

Mays and Lapierre follow swiftly. John walks ahead, flanked by Mays and Lapierre. The Nazi Soldiers slowly close in around the three men, like the tightening of a noose around a neck struggling for air.

It's quiet -- You can hear a pin drop.

The German Officer in command, made evident by his Nazi uniform and the medals adorning it, FRANZ WAGNER, 40s, stares at John as he approaches, unflinching and powerful.

John stops right in front of him, staring back. Neither man blinks. There's a long, silent standoff. No one makes a sound. No one dares to make the first move. Then--

JOHN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Der Krieg ist vorbei. Es wäre
klug, sich zu ergeben.

Franz doesn't flinch. His eyes flick in the direction of Mays and Lapierre... The two hundred plus Nazi Soldiers at his command step closer. He glances back at John. Nods once. EXHALES a relieved breath.

FRANZ
Thank God.

He removes his firearm, a German luger, and hands it to John, who takes it.

Franz looks over his men -- They all remove their lugers and place them on the ground in unison. Mays and Lapierre watch in amazement. They can barely believe it. And John doesn't even bat an eye...

FRANZ (CONT'D)
Are you gentlemen hungry?

John glances over his shoulder at Mays and Lapierre. They return his gaze, dumbfounded. John turns back to face Franz.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
How about some lunch, yeah?

John's eyes scour the many destroyed buildings that surround him, most still towering over his head, staggered in broken concrete. He pockets the German luger and looks at Franz.

JOHN
Anything good around here?

John and Franz stare at each other blankly for a moment.
Then, slowly, they exchange the smallest of smiles...

EXT. WOODHALL SPA - DAY

The RAF military Jeep pulls up to a waiting Arnold Moore with Mays driving, John in the front, and Lapierre sitting on a mound of GERMAN LUGERS in the back. Arnold stares at the guns.

ARNOLD
Jesus... Did you kill every Nazi
soldier in Hamburg?

JOHN
Just my fair share.

John gets out of the Jeep and makes his way toward Arnold.

ARNOLD
How did this happen?

JOHN
I merely accepted their surrender,
had a nice lunch, then asked if
they would be kind enough to load
their weapons into the back of the
jeep. They obliged.

Arnold looks over the Jeep full of German lugers as Mays and Lapierre exit the vehicle.

MAYS
It's true, sir.

LAPIERRE
Wouldn't of believed it if I didn't
see it myself.

Arnold nods slowly.

ARNOLD
Well then, John... How's it feel to
be the only RCAF officer to accept
a formal surrender by an entire
garrison of enemy troops?

JOHN
Doesn't feel like anything, Arn'.
Whatever happens, happens. And
that's all there is to it.

Arnold just shakes his head.

ARNOLD
You know, it's okay to take
something with you from time to
time... Not all praise needs to be
shrugged off.

JOHN
I *am* taking something with me...

John holds up the German luger that Franz gave him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Call it a personal souvenir.

John notices something ETCHED along the side of the luger. He
brings it in closer for examination.

JOHN (CONT'D)
"Scheiß auf diese Welt"

Arnold cranes his neck and has a peek.

ARNOLD
What's it mean?

John just shakes his head.

JOHN
Doesn't matter. The war is over.

ARNOLD
Is that what it says or is that
your opinion?

John smirks.

JOHN
Wouldn't you like to know...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

Arnold stands at a podium on a makeshift stage, various NEWS
REPORTERS huddle together below him.

ARNOLD

And it is my honor to award John Fauquier a second Bar to his DSO today. This is essentially a third Distinguished Service Order for the esteemed officer.

John stands at attention, off to the side, his eyes on the floor. Too much pomp and circumstance for his liking.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

John led from the front in both the 617 and 405 squadrons, taking part in almost every raid in which his squadrons flew. Since assuming command of the squadron in December 1944, this officer has taken part in almost all the sorties to which the formation has been committed. Early in February 1945, Group Captain Fauquier led the squadron in an attack on the U-Boat pens at Poortershaven. Photographs obtained showed that the bombing was accurate and concentrated. Since then, this officer has participated in a number of sorties during which the railway viaduct at Bielefeld...

John subtly clenches his jaw at this.

ARNOLD (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

... a railway bridge over the river Weser and a viaduct flooded meadow near to Abergen Bridge were all rendered unusable by the enemy. By his brilliant leadership, undoubted skill and iron determination, this officer played an integral part in the success obtained. He has rendered much loyal and valuable service. John Emilius Fauquier, DSO and Two Bars DFC, retires today as the RCAF's most decorated airman.

Arnold looks over at John.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

And I know what you're thinking, John... "Don't fuss, don't fuss."

Some CHUCKLES from the gallery. John looks up and smiles. He sees Mary, Tiny and Janice sitting together in the crowd. He winks at them.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
 But I think we will fuss this time,
 old friend. I think you deserve it.

LATER

John stands at the podium with Mary at his side, who is holding on to his arm proudly. Some flashbulbs FLASH.

JOHN
 I will say it was nice to have my rank of Air Commodore restored once the war ended. But once I had climbed out of my Lancaster after that last sortie, I vowed never again to touch the controls of an aircraft. I felt I had done my time and had pushed my luck to the end. I'm sure Mary here would agree.

Mary squeezes John's arm and smiles.

REPORTER #1
 So what's next for you, John?

John considers this... He doesn't have an answer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OFFICE, ACONIC MINING - DAY

INSERT: Ottawa, Ontario. May 2nd, 1957 - 24 Years From Immortality.

John, now 48, a little greyer, thinner hair, suit and tie, is on the phone at his desk. He looks concerned. There's a Vice President placard on the desk, along with a familiar FRAMED PICTURE of him and Mary on their wedding day.

A large SIGN on the wall dominates the background. It reads: 'AMC - Aconic Mining Corporation'.

JOHN
 I understand.
 (beat; listens)
 Yes, thank you.

John rubs his tired eyes and slowly hangs up the phone. He grabs a glass and pours himself a drink.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 No need for that tie, Tiny. We just lost our shirts.

Tiny, middle-aged, greying along the sides, suit and tie, is seated in a chair across the desk.

TINY
How bad is it?

JOHN
Well, we just dropped from \$10 a share to 1, so... not good.

Tiny fidgets in his seat and eyes John's glass full of liquor.

TINY
Pour me one of those, would ya?

John does. They drink.

TINY (CONT'D)
Not a good time to go broke.

JOHN
Is there ever a good one?

TINY
Well, having a wife who's 7 months pregnant has got to be one of the worst...

Silence. They drink.

TINY (CONT'D)
How does this happen, John?

JOHN
The President and General Manager of the company are on trial for fraud and wash trading, and the same person was acting as buyer and seller of the stock. That's how.

TINY
I didn't mean literally.

JOHN
What else is there?

Tiny considers his options. He SIGHS.

TINY
I'll meet with investors this week. Fly to Labrador and Montreal and talk to the main ones personally.

(MORE)

TINY (CONT'D)

Hopefully they won't hit the panic button in the meantime and sell.

JOHN

I don't think we have to worry about that at this point. Pennies on the dollar right now.

TINY

Something is always better than nothing.

JOHN

Regardless, people are going to have questions. And I'm not sure I'm going to like giving them the answers...

A long silence. More drinking. A phone RINGS. John ignores it.

TINY

It's funny... Before this, the biggest question I'd always get is, "Why Aconic and not Iconic?"

JOHN

What would you tell them?

TINY

I'd say, the difference is just a vowel.

John nods slowly.

JOHN

Well, I guess, my friend... that's the reason why we are only *sometimes wise*...

They raise their glasses in a half-hearted toast.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's the opposite of cheers?

Tiny mulls this over.

TINY

DFC? Don't Fucking Care? A great man once told me that...

JOHN

Hm. You need to introduce me to this guy sometime...

They drink.

EXT. BATTLE HARBOUR, LABRADOR - DAY

DRONE SHOT: A sweeping view of Battle Harbour from above.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

The wartime 'King of the Pathfinders' won't be in England tomorrow when the Queen Mother makes a special presentation to the Royal Air Force's famous 617 Dambusting Squadron. John Fauquier said yesterday he had to pass up on the RAF invitation because he couldn't afford the trip...

EXT. MARINA, BATTLE HARBOUR - DAY

Tiny kisses a very pregnant Janice goodbye on a long dock that is surrounded by boats. There is a lone FLOAT PLANE waiting for him at the edge of the pier.

JANICE

Give me a call when you get to Montreal.

TINY

That rhymed.

Tiny rubs Janice's pregnant stomach for good luck, throws a bag over his shoulder and jogs toward the float plane, looking back once to wave goodbye with a large hand.

Janice smiles and waves back as Tiny jogs away, getting smaller and smaller as he goes...

FADE TO BLACK.

FROM THE BLACK -- A WOMAN IS CRYING.

JOHN (V.O.)

Janice. What happened?

JANICE (V.O.)

The plane, it... it crashed into the water, John. He's gone. He's... gone.

FADE IN:

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

John has a phone pressed to his ear, the coiled cord stretched straight to reach his position at the end of the bed.

Janice is hysterical and CRYING on the other end. John EXHALES a deep, painful breath.

JANICE (V.O.)

What am I going to do? John... the baby... What am I going to do?

John hangs his head, tears falling from his eyes. A DIAL TONE clicks on from the other end. He drops the phone and lets it sling back onto the floor.

Mary, eyes puffy from crying, enters the room and sits beside John on the bed, comforting him. Much like Tiny once did.

MARY

I'm so sorry, John... Tiny was--
(beat)

Death is a terrible thing, you know? A heavy weight no one should lift. But I can help you carry the burden, if you'll allow me to do so.

John buries his face in Mary's shirt and CRIES.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

Various cars and trucks come and go through a busy car wash.

INT. CAR WASH - DAY

John, looking a million miles away and lost to his own thoughts, far from the dynamic man we saw at the height of war, takes a CUSTOMER's money at the counter. He hands this middle-aged Man a car wash ticket.

CUSTOMER

Thank you for your service.

John makes eye contact with the Man, a glimmer of hope entering his eyes. He's about to say something when--

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Your car wash, I mean. It's the best one in town.

John just nods at this, his blank canvas of a face returning.

JOHN

Thank you.

The Customer leaves the store. John is alone. It's quiet. A *ticking* of a clock somewhere fills the space. Incessant. Like a timed device on a bomb that has yet to go off...

John stares right at us. Unflinching. Unblinking. His eyes focusing on something beyond. We PULL IN closer as the clock *ticks*...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, OFFICE - DAY

PULL BACK from the framed pictures on the wall. John, 72, skin weathered by time, retreats from his memories, tears in his eyes.

He turns back to the mahogany desk and takes a drink, his stomach making an unhealthy GURGLING sound. He grimaces and places the glass down on the coaster.

Somewhere, a clock *ticks*. John slightly readjusts the photo of his wife Mary on the desk...

FLASH CUT:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

John is kneeling at a headstone. Etched on it is, '*Mary Burden Fauquier. 1912-1980. Beloved Wife. Mother.*'

JOHN

Mary Burden... And now I carry it.

(beat)

I miss you, my love.

John places his hand on the headstone.

BACK TO:

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, OFFICE - DAY

John EXHALES a tired breath, removes his hand from the frame, and glances at the German luger in the small black felt case one last time. He leaves the office.

We PULL IN closer to the etching on the luger... '*Scheiß auf diese Welt*'...

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

John slowly ventures into the yard. He stares at the spot where his kids once played, which is now just a patch of dry, dead grass.

A commercial AIRPLANE flies by overhead, it's jet ENGINE BELLOWING in the air like a roar of thunder. John hears it, but doesn't look up. Instead, he stares at an EVER-GROWING SHADOW on the ground, coming from above...

The SHADOW is shaped like a Grand Slam bomb. It quickly splits up in mid-air into many SMALLER BOMBS, or perhaps, into the many heads of the Hydra Monster John once saw in his dreams. Either way, he can't take his eyes off it as it gets closer and closer...

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - TIME UNDETERMINED

A needle is skipping over a vinyl, looping the same part over and over. The song, by Fred Astaire, CRACKS and POPS as it plays... *"Heaven... I'm in Heaven..."*. A hand lifts the needle gently and stops the music.

John, 30s, like he aged backwards to the pinnacle of his life, in a full RAF uniform, turns from the record player. He stands in front of the 617, 434 and 405 Squadrons, including the many Airmen and Ground Crew he crossed paths with throughout the years, in all his glory.

His wife, Mary, is seated at the forefront, smiling proudly. She's seated with their 5 young Children, GILBERT, PENNY, NANCY, VALS, and JONATHAN.

Tiny and Hugh sit beside each other. John locks eyes with each of them. He nods. They nod back.

JOHN

Let there be no mistake about this...

(beat)

The strategic bombing of Germany contributed more than any other factor to her defeat. One has only to see the devastation to realize that no country could put up a prolonged defense under such a hammering as she received.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Does anyone here think that the war would be over now if Germany had been able to maintain her oil and gasoline plants intact, her iron and steel empire working full blast, her internal rail and road communications unimpaired, her canals filled with water and fit for navigation, her factories standing and producing war materials and her colossal army of civilian workers well housed and organized? No! The war would be on to this day, and the casualties on D-Day would have been far higher.

John's eyes scan the room, taking everything in.

JOHN (CONT'D)

So, to those of you who suffered losses and to those who happened to be more fortunate and escaped, to all of you I say... Remember those of Bomber Command who gave their lives so others might live. *Remember...* because those who gave can never forget.

Silence surrounds the room for several moments. John nods and begins to walk away. Then--

Tiny stands and starts CLAPPING. Then Hugh does the same. Followed by Mary and their Children. The rest of the familiar crowd quickly follows suit, standing and APPLAUDING.

John tries to get them to calm, motioning with his arms for everyone to sit down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sit. Sit down, please. Don't fuss... Don't fuss...

The CHEERS continue, like a fire that will forever burn. John finally drops his arms, gives up and allows it to happen. He smiles as the APPLAUSE grows louder...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN TORONTO - DAY

The round of applause gives way to the sounds of a busy, bustling city in early Spring, patches of snow still litter the ground; Remnants of a late Winter.

INSERT - April 2, 1981 - 1 Day From Immortality.

INT. CITY BUS - DAY

Ethan is seated alone in a row of seats, dejected. He gazes out the window at the moving scenery; The melting snow of the Toronto streets whipping by.

JOHN (V.O.)

As we passed over lakes we drew our own maps, otherwise we would have never been able to return...

Ethan shakes his head and looks down at his hands, still gripping the ENVELOPE tightly.

JOHN (V.O.)

Draw your own map, kid.

Ethan EXHALES slowly and opens the envelope once again, leafing through the many Canadian \$100 bills. He spots something folded at the back -- Something he never saw before when he first opened it.

It's a piece of paper, folded. He removes the folded paper and looks it over. Written in pen on the back is just two words, '*Your Map*'.

Ethan unfolds the paper and flips it around - It's a Canadian Army sign up sheet. There is a NOTE attached to the corner by a paperclip. He reads it, his lips moving with each word...

JOHN (V.O.)

You waited 18 years to find me, now spend the next 18 finding yourself. When one door closes, another one always opens. Live a life that's worth re-telling, and you will become immortal, my son.

Ethan smiles at the last two words.

EXT. DOWNTOWN TORONTO - CONTINUOUS

The city bus drives away.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

It's a snowy yet warm April 4th and here is what's making headlines.

(MORE)

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One of Canada's most decorated World War 2 pilots died yesterday in a Toronto hospital of a heart attack. John Fauquier was 72 years old. He is survived by his three daughters, Nancy Penny, Vals Hill and Penelope Coulson, and two sons, Jonathan and Gilbert. His wife, the former Mary Burden, died in March 1980. Mister Fauquier is to be buried with military honors Monday in Ottawa after a service at the Timothy Eaton Memorial Church in Toronto.

The city bus vanishes around a corner. Another bus pulls up in front a group of PEOPLE all bundled together waiting to board...

The doors open.

FADE OUT.