

"THE BISMARCK"

Written by
Dan Sanders

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REPRESENTATION:
ERIC GIBSON
JANA LUKER AGENCY
1923-1/2 Westwood Blvd.
Suite 3
Los Angeles CA 90025
(310) 441-2822

"THE BISMARCK"

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY (1941)

A bleak February sunset, choked with charcoal clouds.
Force Ten gales blast freezing rain.

SUPERIMPOSE: WORLD WAR II IS IN ITS SECOND YEAR. AS AMERICA AND RUSSIA WATCH FROM THE SIDELINES, NAZI GERMANY RAPES EUROPE - UNLEASHING FIGHTING MEN AND MACHINES AS GOOD AS ANY ON EARTH. ENGLAND STANDS ALONE, FED ONLY BY THE SHIPS THAT CAN REACH HER.

Six smallish SHIPS - clunky, unarmed freighters - crawl through waves as tall as mansions.

ON ONE FREIGHTER'S DECK

Six men wrestle a dangerously loose crate, tie it down.
Then they squirm through a hatch for refuge below.

INT. BRITISH FREIGHTER - DAY

The old scow GROANS with the pitching storm and its jam-packed cargo, nowadays more precious than pearls: canned food, penicillin, parts for fighter planes and radios.

The sailors shed their foul-weather gear, AD LIB bitching about the cold. Men too old for war, boys too young. Their accents are from places like Belfast and Liverpool. One old salt pets a mangy dog.

BELFAST SAILOR

- Baltimore girls, ye get 'em
on the outside of six or eight
whiskies, they see the light.

SOUTHAMPTON SAILOR

Bloody Boston birds, they got
airs. But Philadelphia -

PORTSMOUTH SAILOR
George, the key.

Portsmouth yanks a key from Southampton's neck, unlocks a large chest stuffed with contraband from the States.

He grabs a bottle of expensive booze and suckles from it.

SOUTHAMPTON SAILOR
Dammit-all Pete, guzzle more profit, will you!

LIVERPOOL SAILOR
(to Belfast Sailor)
Pair o' real tycoons here.
Blew a month's wage on that rubbish, think they'll sell it back home for triple.

A freckled BOY of twelve, filthy with coal dust, enters.

SOUTHAMPTON SAILOR
You load all of it? Good lad.

The Boy's eyes saucer. Over Portsmouth's shoulder, the kid sees a color magazine called "NUDIST SUN 'N FUN!" Porno, 1940s style.

SOUTHAMPTON SAILOR
(continuing, annoyed)
Pete! That's me own sister's boy, don't.

BOY
(at nudist, incredulous)
Is that hair on her...?

From all the men but Southampton, rough laughter...

And the cabin BURSTS and COLLAPSES with the noise of a gigantic gong. Mayhem, flame, smoke, screams.

Death has come to grab these men and boys.

Belfast and Liverpool lie under a beam, horrific piles of braised yellow meat and bone. A thirty-foot section of the deck above has been ripped away.

Another HIT and the ship tilts sickeningly to one side.

EXT. OCEAN - THE CONVOY

Half-ton shells HOWL down, picking off the ships like arcade ducks. Two are bonfires, another has capsized.

EXT. OCEAN, TEN MILES AWAY - TWO GERMAN BATTLE CRUISERS

bull through the waves, spitting broadsides. Their guns BLAST hundred-yard plumes of flame and smoke.

INT. GERMAN BATTLE CRUISER

A hawk-eyed GUNNERY OFFICER sits in a small, armored housing, gunsighting his prey through a telescope device.

GUNNERY OFFICER

Target third ship left. All
turrets correct to: down six
degrees, left seven. Fire!

INT. FREIGHTER - BOILER ROOM

An incoming salvo BLOWS OPEN the ship's boiler. Five men are cooked alive by the steam. They thrash about the deck screaming, horribly swollen, their skins one giant blister.

EXT. OCEAN - CONVOY

Five ships are burning now, the sixth has just sunk. Then one rolls, turns turtle. Shells SLAM into the rest.

INT. FREIGHTER - NEAR ENGINE ROOM

Orange-molten coal sprays out of the engines, showering a half-dozen terrorized stokers. It sticks to skin like napalm, burns through to the bone.

EXT. OCEAN - ON ONE CARGO SHIP

A shell drops square at its middle and CHOPS the freighter clean in half.

INT. GERMAN BATTLE CRUISER - BRIDGE

A windowed chamber near the top of the warship, its brain: CAPTAIN, senior OFFICERS, radios, the ship's wheel.

GUNNERY OFFICER (INTERCOM V.O.)

Three targets sunk. All others hit, burning, and dead in the water.

BATTLE CRUISER CAPTAIN

A convoy that size, with no escort? Poor stupid bastards. Admiral?

Captain offers binoculars to a tall, lean, severely handsome man of fifty-one. ADMIRAL GUNTHER LUTJENS is insular, sternly charismatic, and the German Navy's greatest warrior.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(after a pause, quietly)
Next time, our new bath-toy, bigger than both of these put together, hm?

BATTLE CRUISER CAPTAIN

Next autumn, we'll sail her under London Bridge.

EXT. OCEAN - THE CONVOY

Southampton Sailor, his young nephew, and the terrified dog leap from the burning deck of their ship into the sea.

A few others scamper onto boats or bob in the water; it doesn't matter, really - not at twenty degrees below zero.

In the water, bits of their pathetic booty float about - silk lingerie, chocolate, booze, jazz records, girlie mags.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY OVER BALTIC SEA - DAY

Cloudless; perfect May flying weather. SUPERIMPOSE: THREE MONTHS LATER. A small seaplane with Luftwaffe (German air force) markings turns slow circles at 10,000 feet. It's tracking "fall of shot" - Bismarck's marksmanship.

GUNNERY OFFICER (V.O., filtered)
Spotter Pilot - stand by for
Turret Anton, cleared to fire.
Turret Bruno, stand by.

PILOT'S VOICE (RUDI)
Anton, acknowledged.

Below, pairs of shells screech down around a target barge. They raise astonishing geysers, far larger than those that ravaged the convoy - they seem to erupt to the very sky.

ON THE PILOT - RUDI HERZOG

Very young, barely out of his teens. Not quite Hitler's Aryan ideal; indifferently handsome. Rudi takes nothing serious that isn't.

RUDI
Salvos are long and wide left.
Correct right four, back six.

BISMARCK GUNNERY OFFICER
(V.O., filtered)
Right four back six, stand by
for Turret Bruno.

Two more geysers and the barge is smashed to splinters.

RUDI
Direct hit, target destroyed.

BISMARCK GUNNERY OFFICER
(V.O., filtered)
That's beer for Bruno! Well
done. Cease exercise. Pilot
return to ship.

EXT. BALTIC SEA - DAY (20 MINUTES LATER)

Rudi on landing approach. He opens his plane's canopy, smokes, relaxes. Passes low over a grimy harbor town. SUPERIMPOSE: GDYNIA, NAZI-OCCUPIED POLAND.

HIS POV - NEAR GDYNIA DOCKS

is an impossibly large BATTLESHIP, a sixth of a mile long. It gleams with newness and lovely malevolence.

THE BISMARCK

Four massive gun turrets. Countless smaller weapons bristle its length. The superstructure towers from the gargantuan hull like Khufu's pyramid; a fifty-foot swastika flag WHIPS from the top of it. Hundreds of men swarm its decks.

Rudi's plane circles low around the stern of this floating treaty violation, built in secret: the most deadly weapon yet contrived by man.

DECK OFFICER (V.O., filtered)
Stand by, scout aircraft
retrieval detail.

Rudi lands the seaplane alongside Bismarck, a hummingbird beside a lion. A crane on the battleship hoists the aircraft aboard. Rudi climbs out.

ON RUDI - WALKING TOWARDS STERN

An immense, gray-steel beehive...

Sailors stow supplies, making ready for Bismarck's maiden voyage. Dock workers hustle aboard ammunition, beef carcasses, beer, radio tubes, toilet paper - anything and everything needed to keep a small town alive for two months.

Absurdly stuck in the middle of all this are two-dozen white-clad musicians. They march and pivot and strut in four razor-sharp columns, trilling a sternly martial SONG. The best marching band you've ever heard.

ON A YOUNG MAN IN FRONT

A flutist, world-class. Hands that have never been dirty.
A slight, fair, bespectacled boy, seventeen perhaps.
MATTIAS KIRCHERR has no more business on a battleship than
his friend Rudi has at the Berlin Opera.

RUDI

sneaks behind the fat, grandiose conductor, mimics him. The
band struggles to not laugh. Song ends.

CONDUCTOR

Dismissed! Review at 18:30.

Band leaves. Rudi mock-bows to his childhood friend.

RUDI

(snotty critic voice)
"A labored effort, reminiscent
of a herd of cows mortally
constipated."

Matty uses his flute to respond with a filthy gesture. The
two walk towards the mess deck for supper, dodging sailors
rolling large crates stenciled with red crosses -- which
Matty eyes nervously.

MATTY

I can almost look at those now
without pissing myself.

RUDI

That's it, the true warrior
spirit.

MATTY

You conniving bastard, talking
me into this. My father calls
you 'that accessory to
murder.'

RUDI

Matty, I found a way for you
to play your music and stay
out of the army. And you'd
rather ride than walk, right?

MATTY

It's just like a prison, only
you can drown.

Rudi stops his friend, looks about for eavesdroppers.

RUDI

Listen - what if that street
gang of our mighty Fuhrer's
picks a fight with the
Russians in a year? Or the
Americans? Or, my god, both?
No, you take your chances on
this ship, Matty. That ocean
is big and dark. This is
floating life insurance.

A MEDICAL OFFICER walks by, reading loudly from a manifest:

MEDICAL OFFICER

Surgical gauze, five thousand
rolls. Morphine, six thousand
ampules --

CUT TO:

EXT. RUGBY FIELD - ORKNEY ISLANDS, SCOTLAND - DAY

Twenty men, crouched like baboons, arms and legs tangled,
push at each other in a grunting, struggling pile. RUGBY:
football, but without that pantywaist helmet-and-pads stuff.

The ball is flipped to Chief Petty Officer JOHN CHICHESTER,
a Royal Navy lifer in his late thirties. A man innocent of
nothing but reverence. John runs and weaves - then six far
younger men pound him savagely to the muddy ground.

TACKLER

(nastily)

You forgot to take yer teeth
out, Grampy.

ANOTHER TACKLER

Hell bein' old, eh?

John gasps for air - they're right - just don't admit it...

WIDER ON THE FIELD

overlooking a harbor crammed with scarred old warships.
SUPERIMPOSE: SCAPA FLOW, NORTHERN SCOTLAND - BASE OF
BRITISH HOME FLEET.

Docked nearest is a battle cruiser, huge and grand yet much
older than the state-of-the-art Bismarck. It's the
legendary HMS Hood, the most famous warship in the world.

Built in 1919 - too late for the last world war, and now
she's too old for this one.

GRANDSTANDS

packed with sailors and officers, raucously cheering. A
sign: HOOD VS. PRINCE OF WALES - FLEET CUP. Much betting
and nipping. Officer's wives in flowery dresses and gloves.

A gaunt, pale officer of 60 approaches a flock of admirals.
CAPTAIN SIR MALCOLM BURKE is that steely, lonely
professional who is the bedrock of any great fighting force.

He is unwell.

HOOD CAPTAIN

Congratulations, Malkie.
Welcome back. Feeling all
right?

BURKE

(the only lie he knows)
Quite, thanks.

FLEET ADMIRAL

(glaring at Burke)
I lodged deep misgivings to
your chum the P.M. when he
gave you the Prince of Wales'
captaincy yesterday. Getting
some Harley Street quack to
clear you does not make you
fit for capital-ship command
in wartime.

Burke stubbornly acknowledges - with a single nod.

BURKE

We've heard from one of our Polish friends, sir. Says he delivered Atlantic navigation charts to Bismarck yesterday.

FLEET ADMIRAL

Can Prince of Wales sail with Hood tonight?

BURKE

Doubtful, sir. Brand-new ship like that, her guns aren't even ready. There's still civilian mechanics aboard working on them.

FLEET ADMIRAL

(to Hood Captain)

So take your best gunnery man, move him to Prince of Wales.

HOOD CAPTAIN

(pauses, lip curled)

Unfortunately sir, my 'best gunnery man' is my worst Navy man.

RUGBY FIELD

John is helped up by teammates OZZIE and BERTIE, both 40ish.

JOHN

Next play, leave His Lordship Number Six over there to me.

OZZIE

Oh bosh Johnny, how do you know he's an officer?

JOHN

(staring, hateful)

Not sure, guess it's that fifteen-inch shell up his arse.

COMMANDER FOWLEY, 28, runs with the ball; John clobbers him.

FOWLEY

Bit low on that hit there.

JOHN

Sir, every other day of the year, I have to hear your type braggin' on your posh schools n' clubs. But today, m'lord, you're in my backyard.

John deals a hard, rude shove at Fowley.

CUT TO:

INT. ADMIRAL LUTJENS' HOUSE, GERMANY - DAY

Middle-class; a painting of Christ over the mantle.

Two small children chase a kitten about, laughing.

BEDROOM

Lutjens' pregnant wife FRIEDE, just 33, packs a small sea bag, strains to keep a brave face. Lutjens smiles reassurance, kneels, gently kisses her swollen middle.

Both children run in. Lutjens hides his luggage.

CHILDREN

Papa, time to play, you promised! Come on!

Friede shoos them away. The DOORBELL rings.

FRIEDE

Go and answer that. Politely.

Children rush out, AD LIB yelp "Uncle Karl!" o.s.

They return with Lutjens' brother-in-law BACKENKOHLER, 50, another navy officer and close friend of Lutjens'.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

So, did that sister of mine wise up and throw you out?

Backenkohler smiles, glances at Friede and the children; she leads the children out, closes the door.

BACKENKOHLER

I got word over at Command
that you're sailing.

Lutjens crosses slowly to a desk drawer, pulls out a large envelope, gives it to him.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

I named you executor.
Insurance papers are there
too, in the blue folder.

BACKENKOHLER

Prudent, I suppose. I... got
word of something else. It
seems the Fuhrer wanted you to
fire all the Kriegsmarine's
Jewish officers - and you
refused.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(shrugs)
We're better than that, Karl.

BACKENKOHLER

Yes. Well. This 'dirty Jew'
thanks you.

He pats Lutjens' shoulder, leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUGBY FIELD, SCOTLAND - DAY

Hood's team down by five, time running out. John trades
winks with the referee. The two teams scrum in the mud.
John pulls up, writhing horribly. Olivier he's not -

JOHN

Oh, me arthritis! Gout,
lumbago, 'emorrhoids! OHHHHH!

The Prince of Wales team stands, relaxes, AD LIB taunts him.
A signal from Bertie; Ozzie pitches the ball back to John.

He tears down the field, runs over Fowley.

JOHN
(continuing)
I'M HEALED! FUCKING MIRACLE!

John crosses the goal line as the referee FIRES his pistol. Game over. Ozzie and Bertie pick John up in triumph, laughing. The Prince of Wales team howls, morally outraged.

John is pitched into the stands, hoisted about Hood's crew. Then a SIREN blares; signal flags snake up Hood's masts. It's a fleet action signal. The revelry stops.

DECK - HOOD

Seamen swarm aboard the old battle cruiser to light boilers. John, others load ammunition. Civilians are shoed off.

DOCK WORKER
Good hunting, John! Fetch me
back some good German brew!

Hood's Captain - all Navy and nothing but - confronts John.

JOHN
(saluting, sloppily)
At your service, sir.

HOOD CAPTAIN
(reading)
"Detach from Hood: Chief Petty
Officer Chichester, John.
Transfer same to Prince of
Wales immediately."

JOHN
(stunned, distraught)
... Sir?

HOOD CAPTAIN

Prince's crew is having
trouble breaking in their
heavy guns, you're needed.

JOHN
I'm needed here.

HOOD CAPTAIN

Think you can choose your own billet in this war, do you?

JOHN

Course I don't sir, it's just... No one has served this ship longer than me. Please, sir. She's an old lady now, she has her ways.

HOOD CAPTAIN

And you have yours: your contempt for any man wearing officer's stripes, your drinking and wenching - this damned war is all that's kept you from a coal mine!

JOHN

Sorry sir, I thought it was Hood's five straight Fleet gunnery pennants.

HOOD CAPTAIN

We're losing a ship every six hours out there these days - and that's without Bismarck. Prince of Wales needs help -

JOHN

This ship needs a refit, my god sir, she was due to be retired next year. The armor on this deck is tin-foil. She's - a champion boxer with a glass jaw.

HOOD CAPTAIN

(arctic)
Yard boat will be alongside in half an hour.

CUT TO:

EXT. BISMARCK - AT DOCK, POLAND - DAY

Rudi is off duty with the ship's two other pilots - lazing around inside an anti-aircraft gun tub, taking in some rare sunshine, and passing around some lurid pin-ups of built-for-comfort frauleins. A phonograph plays jazz.

Matty sneaks in, harried.

MATTY

Look at the three of you.
Anything I can get you from
Room Service?

RUDI

We're off duty. Besides,
we're not Kriegsmarine, we're
Luftwaffe. They don't know
what to do with us.

As Matty rifles the records, puts on something upbeat:

MATTY

Well, let me hide here before
that bastard petty officer
finds some other stupid-ass
thing for me to do -

Rudi grabs Matty, quietly hides him behind a splinter shield. A second later, Admiral Lutjens is trading salutes with CAPTAIN ERNST LINDEMANN just below them.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Welcome aboard, Admiral. This
way to flag quarters.

Lindemann is 45, mid-sized, more demonstrative than Lutjens, seldom without his cigar. He looks a bit sour about the Admiral coming along on this mission; it's not as great to be king when another man rules over you.

After admiral and captain are gone:

RUDI

They seem all right. None of
that heel-clicking secret-
boy's-club rot.

LUFTWAFFE #1
(offended, he's
loyal to Hitler)
Herzog ...

MATTY
Ever notice about those Party
big shots - none of them
qualify for that Master Race
of theirs?

LUFTWAFFE #2
(laughing)
You're right. Himmler
squinting like a park pervert
through those bottle-bottom
glasses.

RUDI
And Goering looks like someone
shoved an air hose up his ass.

MATTY
Then there's Herr Hitler,
crazy as a shithouse rat.

Luftwaffe #1 stands, bolts off. Matty shrugs, puts on
another record - frantic, hothouse jazz - turns it up.

Matty holds one of the pin-ups like a dance partner,
launches into a not-bad Lindy Hop. He prances idiotically
about the deck as his friends laugh, then suddenly JOLTS
stock-still as the sallow, twitching form of

ADOLF HITLER

stands not six feet from him, surrounded by HERMANN GOERING,
HEINRICH HIMMLER, and other Nazi elite. Hitler wrinkles his
nose at the "Negarmusik" - one of his aides AD LIB calls it
that - and someone RIPS the needle off the record.

RUDI AND SHIPMATES

shock to attention, petrified. Matty drops the girly pin-
up; the wind blows it to Hitler's feet.

HIMMLER

(to Rudi)

Perhaps you could find your way to your Admiral - and bring us along?

RUDI

Of course, sir. This - this way, if you please.

Rudi leads Hitler and his contingent aft.

EXT. BISMARCK - AFTERDECK

Lutjens, Lindemann, other senior officers at attention. Propaganda officers click their cameras. Hitler and friends offer the Nazi salute. Lutjens steps forward and, very deliberately, returns the old naval salute. The insult makes for a bad moment and The Fuhrer glowers. Lutjens glances at the motionless Rudi.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Dismissed, Lieutenant.

HITLER

No, fetch him along. Much can be learned from the common soldier. I was one.

INT. BISMARCK - CAPTAIN LUTJENS' CABIN

Everyone nervously partakes of refreshments and drinks.

HITLER

My congratulations on the raids by your two battle cruisers.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

The crews were superb, sir.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

This crew is better, and eager for your orders.

(ingratiating smile)

We - strain at your leash.

Hitler just stares. ADMIRAL RAEDER, 65, head of the navy, motions to a steward, who offers Hitler a platter full of small pastries. With surprising speed, Hitler neatly shovels a dozen of them into his mouth.

HITLER

On land I am a lion, at sea I am a coward.

HIMMLER

The Fuhrer has some concerns.

HITLER

Six months ago, the British managed to slaughter the Italian fleet in its pen at Taranto, using... torpedoes dropped from aircraft.

ADMIRAL RAEDER

(the humoring professor)

An airplane against a battleship. Well, you see -

GOERING

Those were Italian battleships, that's like saying - American soldiers.

Laughter and applause from Hitler's inner circle.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Those ships were asleep at anchor, Fuhrer. This ship is twice their size, with a hundred anti-aircraft guns and armor a half-meter thick.

HITLER

What does our young aviator think?

RUDI

(very carefully)

I would not want to try to bomb this ship, I have seen what her guns can do, Fuhrer.

(MORE)

RUDI (CONT'D)

But with aircraft, no matter how good the defenses, there is always that one lucky, crazy pilot who gets through.

HITLER

Admiral?

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

England cannot last long with these losses. But the longer we give them, the harder it will be to invade and finish them off.

Hitler considers, then nods at Raeder. To Lutjens:

ADMIRAL RAEDER

Break into the Atlantic. Rendezvous with cruiser Prinz Eugen. Smash every merchant ship bound for England, then re-provision in France.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Understood, sir.

HITLER

Then your sailors can fuck the ass of every French whore and make her lick the shit off.

This gem draws nervous laughter, though not from Lutjens.

HITLER

(continuing)

Your navy is my rope to strangle the British. Use this ship to give that rope a final tug, Admiral.

Salutes. All stand and leave but Lutjens and Lindemann.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

So that's it. He's scared England will hang on long enough for America to wake up.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

(grins)

Then the old fellow this ship is named for was right: "The great questions of the day will not be settled by speeches, but by blood and iron."

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Their iron, our blood. This foe, these - cousins of ours... they didn't rule the world from a musty little island without knowing how to mind the moat around them. A sea war, that's their sport.

(pause, touch of regret)

Make ready for sea.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCAPA FLOW, SCOTLAND - HMS PRINCE OF WALES - DAY

A motorboat delivers John Chichester from Hood to the brand-new Prince of Wales. It has a much younger crew. A month ago, most of them were bus drivers and store clerks. Several crewmen shoot dirty looks at John. Bad blood from the rugby match.

A rasping COUGH O.S. makes John look up. Scowling down at him like Jehovah from the bridge is Captain Burke. These two go way back -

JOHN

Oh god, no. Old Iron-Balls his own self.

Chichester climbs aboard, lugging a duffel bag. Fowley, the man John tormented on the rugby field, steps forward, glaring at John bleakly.

FOWLEY

I'm Commander Fowley. Your new Gunnery Officer.

John tries a just-kidding smile; it is not returned.

INT. HMS PRINCE OF WALES - LAVATORY - DAY

John scrubbing a long row of toilets. Two hours hard labor.

JOHN
(shouting out hatchway)
Right then, clear the bilge!

An evil, sloppy NOISE... then horrible muck fountains out of the toilets, covering the floor. John AD LIB cursing.

VOICE (O.S.)
(friend of Fowley's)
Sorry, I'm rather new at this.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLAND - BISMARCK - DAY (AFTERNOON)

Thick smoke gushes from the ship's funnel. The CLANK of 300-pound chain links hoisting anchors. HORNS. Gear is stowed or tied down by the crew. Dock ropes are loosened.

Slowly, the most advanced killing machine on the planet eases from the pier.

On the afterdeck, Matty and rest of ship's band plays a patriotic song. Rudi, others watch.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
HANS! NO, HANS! DON'T GO!

RUDI'S POV - DOCKS

A DOCK WHORE, 35, darts onto the pier. Her garish dress stands out from the gray drab of the docks.

DOCK WHORE
HANS! HAAAANS! I LOVE YOU!

AT BISMARCK'S RAIL - RUDI, MATTY AND THIRTY OTHERS

see the woman, laugh, make swinish noises. Shouting:

RUDI

Afraid we have a hundred
fellows named 'Hans' aboard,
Fraulein! Which one?

MATTY

Can you answer that with their
pants on?

DOCK

Rude laughter from the men. German guards laugh too, grab
the woman, begin to hustle her off, she wrestles to stay.

BISMARCK'S RAIL

Matty begins playing an old, sad song of parting - Muss i'
denn ("Must I Leave?") The band joins in, giggling. The
FIRST OFFICER, 40, the ship's hatchet man, hustles up.

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER

Stop that shit now, you
imbeciles! That song is a
security violation!

DOCK

He is right. The Dock Whore heard the song; now, in the
clutch of two guards, she's humming it to herself -

DOCK WHORE

(singing under breath)
"My journey beckons, must I
leave..."

It hits her - this isn't just another training jaunt.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - DAY (SUNSET)

The Dock Whore murmurs into the telephone as a fat German
officer grunts and thrashes atop her.

DOCK WHORE

That big, tall friend of mine
left our house at four to go
on a long visit to the lake.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - DAY (SUNSET)

The forward turret of the battleship - a fifty-by-sixty-foot vault, housing four giant guns. This is heavy industry: shells tall as a man, 14 inches thick and weighing a ton are hoisted from chambers below and stuffed in guns with big bags of gunpowder. Precision work... to err is to die.

But these forty-odd men are hopelessly raw - running into each other, AD LIB squabbling, jamming the shell hoist. Several are puking, seasick.

John shuts the turret down, whistles for quiet.

JOHN

You sad bastards'd fuck up a
two-carriage funeral.

(after a grim pause)

How many of you are H.O.'s?
Hostilities Only - drafted?

Most of their hands go up. John notices a half-dozen middle-aged men in civilian garb.

JOHN

(continuing)

What's wrong Gladys, uniform
didn't come in your color?

MECHANIC

We're civilians, mate.
Mechanics from Vickers-
Armstrong, finishing up work
on the guns.

So - this is what John looks like with a migraine.

JOHN

Well, it's a bit like this.
German battleships can load
and shoot in thirty seconds.
Crapulous work like this and
we'll be dead as Cleopatra's
tits. Ding-dong, school's in.

SAILOR

But - it's our tea-time, sir.

John just glares at the kid, who takes his post, pouting.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN OFF DENMARK - NIGHT

Bismarck slices between two islands, stealing north.
Another warship approaches on a converging course, falls in
behind the battleship. It's the hulking cruiser Prinz
Eugen; it looks like Bismarck's nasty little brother.

CUT TO:

EXT. FJORD, NORWAY - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: GRIMSTAD FJORD, OCCUPIED NORWAY. A bookish
NORWEGIAN BOY, 10, sails a small boat near the fjord's
mouth. He tacks around a large rock and gasps.

HIS POV - BISMARCK AND PRINZ EUGEN

ride massively at anchor.

BACK ON BOY IN SAILBOAT

A burst of MACHINE GUN FIRE o.s. rips just over the boy's
head. He cowers as a small German patrol boat speeds up
alongside. Two soldiers aboard.

GERMAN MACHINE-GUNNER

(rage)

You little shit-assed bastard!
What are you doing here?

GERMAN BOAT SKIPPER

My god Horst, relax. He's
younger than my kid.

GERMAN MACHINE-GUNNER

Oh yes, that's just how the
Gestapo will see it!

NORWEGIAN BOY

V-very sorry sir, I dropped my
compass into the water, I'm
lost.

GERMAN BOAT SKIPPER

It's all right, son. See that
clump of trees? Make for that
and you'll see the church
steeple. Move along, now.

Boy nods in humble thanks, turns his boat. The speedboat
roars off. The child subtly clips two small pennants to a
collapsed sail. Then he pulls a lanyard and raises it.

EXT. A MILE AWAY - ON SHORE

A fisherman squints through a telescope at the boy's
sailboat. The man hurriedly scribbles a few words on a
scrap of paper, which he folds into a chewing-gum wrapper.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE SPY-CHAIN GETS THE WORD OUT:

- A.) An old woman takes the piece of gum from the
fisherman, then rides off on her bicycle.
- B.) A grocer's errand boy gives the message to an
amputee man, who climbs aboard a bus.
- C.) The bus driver opens the vehicle's hood as if
something's wrong. He tucks the "gum" into a
hidden slot, just as a German patrol drives up.
- D.) A farmer works a radio set hidden inside a
hay bale, tapping a Morse-code key. A Gestapo
radio-detection squad screeches up in their truck.
The farmer's teenaged daughter charms them long
enough for her father to hide the transmitter.

E.) A bunker complex 200 feet below London, safe from the constant German air raids. A Royal Navy radioman decodes the signal, gives it to a "WREN" servicewoman. It's passed from man to man, each with more stripes on his sleeve.

F.) One knocks on a door marked PRIME MINISTER. A man who looks like an aged bulldog naps on a cot in a humble room, wearing gaudy boxers. WINSTON CHURCHILL squints at the message, then growls:

CHURCHILL

Ready a telephone to Air
Command.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY OVER NORWAY- DAY (AFTERNOON)

A Royal Air Force Spitfire fighter plane dives into zero-visibility fog. 800 feet, 500, 300, nothing but clouds. At 100 feet, they finally break. The young pilot pulls the plane level.

HIS POV - IN GRIMSTAD FJORD, BISMARCK AND PRINZ EUGEN

loom right in front of him - huge and close.

THE SPITFIRE PILOT

manages to snap a couple of photos, then the two ships absolutely ERUPT with anti-aircraft fire, 150 guns between them. Bullets smash through the cockpit, destroy his radio.

The pilot banks his plane, weaves and dodges through the hail of lead, takes more pictures. He's so consumed with getting them, he doesn't see the fjord's 500-foot granite wall until it's seconds from smashing him.

THE SPITFIRE

dives, flips, rolls, somehow misses being annexed by Norway.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Make preparations to get under
way.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Shouldn't we top off the fuel
tanks first?

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
No, he may be a scout for
enemy bombers. Best to leave
now.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
May I remind the Admiral, our
tankers at sea are not to be
counted on, British submar --

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Give the order, Captain.

INT. SPITFIRE - DAY

Its pilot puts out a small fire and heads for England.

EXT. SKY OVER BRITISH COAST - NIGHT

The pilot nurses the crippled Spitfire along. He stumbles
into a flight of Heinkel 111's heading for London. The
German bombers SHOOT at him; bullets mangle his radiator.

INT. SPITFIRE - THE RAF PILOT

hears the plane's engine die. He looks for a place to land.

EXT. ENGLISH FARM - NIGHT

Fifty miles from London. WHUMP-WHUMP of BOMBS DROPPING o.s.
The Spitfire crash-lands in a field. A stumpy FARMER, 60,
emerges from his house, clutching a lantern and shotgun.
He sees the Spitfire's wreck and gapes in disbelief. The
bloodied PILOT dashes up with his film canister, breathless.

SPITFIRE PILOT

Sorry about your barley there.
Have you a motorcar?

FARMER

I've - an old lorry.

SPITFIRE PILOT

Come along, then. Lovely
night to see London.

The old man gazes fearfully at the dull glow of bombs coming from the city's direction.

EXT. LONDON - NIGHT

Very dark; no lights anywhere. SIRENS. The Pilot races the ancient truck at full speed - forty - through a London air raid. Farmer hangs on as they dodge burning wreckage and falling bombs. The guard at Air Command waves them through.

INT. AIR COMMAND - NIGHT

Airmen and WRENS track the air raid on a large map. The Spitfire Pilot rushes in with the film canisters, shoves them at a pretty WREN. The old Farmer tries to keep up.

SPITFIRE PILOT

Get these in the soup now.
Where's Admiral Cole?

WREN

Level J, sir, with the P.M.

SPITFIRE PILOT

Right.
(rushing off,
pointing at Farmer)
Whatever he wants, give it to
him.

Farmer grins a set of dilapidated teeth at the WREN.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH SEA - DAY (SUNSET)

Eighteen hours later. Hood crashes elegantly through stormy seas, tailed by Prince of Wales.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN OFF NORWAY - DAY (SUNSET)

Far to the north, Bismarck and Prinz Eugen break out into the Atlantic, cheetahs charging the impala herd.

The two biggest warships on earth are now careening towards one another. SUPERIMPOSE: FRIDAY.

CUT TO:

EXT. DENMARK STRAIT - NIGHT

A narrow slot between Greenland and Iceland, near the Arctic Circle. Towering cliffs of ice on either side. A pair of creaky old British cruisers, Suffolk and Norfolk, patrol it.

EXT. SUFFOLK - NIGHT

High above the ship, a sort of crows-nest sways nauseatingly. Snow, ferocious cold. A pair of bundled-up, mortally bored LOOKOUTS scan the nothingness with binoculars.

LOOKOUT #1

On one end, there's that bloke
who won the Irish Sweepstakes
yesterday. On the crappin'
end, there's me.

LOOKOUT #2

Ted, if you didn't have
somethin' to sob about, I
swear you'd drop dead of
nothin' to do.

LOOKOUT #1

Name me a fouler lot in the
King's navy than this -
wandering this godforsaken
stretch, cold as a nun's arse!

Lookout #2 squints. For the first time in weeks, he just saw something new.

LOOKOUT #2'S POV THROUGH BINOCULARS

Two large, dark shapes in the fog materialize into Bismarck and Prinz Eugen, heading straight for them.

LOOKOUT #1 (O.S.)
(continuing, whiny)
Just a little teeny bit o'
action, a story for the pub -

CROW'S NEST

Terrified, Lookout #2 rushes to a voice tube.

LOOKOUT #2
Two large ships, hostiles,
bearing Green One Four Oh!

FIVE MILES AWAY - BISMARCK

fires her mammoth guns at the two British cruisers.

SUFFOLK AND NORFOLK

Suffolk ducks into the fog, but not before a pair of shells scream down and HIT the water on either side of her with geysers high as redwoods. Norfolk zig-zags behind.

INT. SUFFOLK BRIDGE

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN
Radio enemy position and
bearing to Admiralty, fast.

SUFFOLK BRIDGE OFFICER
Aye, sir.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN

(thoughtful pause, then -)
That new detecting contraption
we have on board, is it
installed yet?

SUFFOLK BRIDGE OFFICER

Believe it is. It's called...
"radar." Latest thing, sir.
Range is more than ten miles.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN

Set course parallel to enemy,
try to maintain contact with
it. And stay in this fog, or
we'll learn to play the harp
in one lesson.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE - NIGHT

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Range seven miles and opening,
they're both running like
rabbits. Should we pursue?

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

No, we're hunting merchant
ships, not cruisers. Just
shake them. They've already
tattled to their big brothers.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET - NIGHT

John times the gun-loading with a stop watch.

JOHN

One minute forty-two. Yer
dead men, all. Try again.

One of the three-hundred-pound bags of gunpowder falls off
the loader and splatters about the chamber.

A handful of it is caught between two large gears and flares
up. Panic.

John dives onto the little fire, swats it out with a gloved hand. He bowls over two crewmen, pulls an emergency valve.

Water sprays down the room. Everybody wet, cold, tense.

John grabs the crewman running the powder-loading arm.

JOHN

If there's one thing I really enjoy, it's living. Y'feel the same way, keep your feeble head about you and do this right every fucking time.

POWDER LOADER

Aye sir, sorry.

The ship tilts, sharply changing course.

JOHN

A turn that hard, we're goin' after something.

(barking)

Holiday's over, up, on yer feet! Clean and clear!

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - HYDROPHONE STATION - NIGHT

Technicians with headphones listen to underwater sound-echoing gear.

HYDROPHONE OPERATOR

Both cruisers are turning with us, matching everything we do. Very odd. Inform the Captain.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Whatever it is, I am afraid we must face this: they have detection capability superior to ours.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(quiet, but angry)

You mean, the kind they 'won't
have for another year'?

Another triumph for our spy
geniuses in Berlin. Pass the
word to all officers, action
expected within twenty-four
hours.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET - NIGHT

Fowley enters, shakes his head at the chaos, motions John
aside.

JOHN

Is it Bismarck?

FOWLEY

(a short, tight nod, then -)

You're the only one of them
who's been through this sort
of thing before, so tell them
what to do.

Fowley leaves. John bangs a wrench against a pipe to get
his men's attention.

JOHN

Everybody strip. Your
clothes, all of 'em.

Everyone just looks at this lunatic.

JOHN

(continuing, yelling)

You just married Rita
Hayworth, whaddaya do?!

John sheds his clothes. The men gulp, then slowly do the
same. John grabs a paper bag and tosses white cloth at each
man. They're new socks and underwear.

JOHN

(continuing)

Fire is to a sailor what gravity is to a pilot. When you're burned, clean skivvies mean less infection.

The men put them on. War just became real to them.

JOHN

(continuing)

You have twenty minutes to go to your locker, write a note for Mum or your girl. Don't come back without yer identity disk 'round your neck. Make sure the blood-type on it is right. Off with you.

INT. HOOD - WARDROOM - NIGHT

A large dining hall, so smartly appointed it looks like a tony restaurant. Ozzie and Bertie, John's old rugby teammates, are finishing battle preparations, helped by a half-dozen frightened teenagers.

BERTIE

Let's get these stowed, son.

Bertie and SEAMAN BOLTON, who looks twelve but is five years older, begin to take down and stow old photos of epic cruises and glorious liberty ports - Melbourne, Singapore, Rio, San Francisco. Ozzie smiles, taps one picture.

OZZIE

There's Papa, with a very young John Chichester. He used to bring me aboard on holidays. First three times I ever had ice cream was in this room.

Bolton's trembling hands DROP one of the pictures to the deck. Through its broken glass we can see it's a long shot of Hood's entire crew, 1,400 men lined up in dress uniforms on the forward part of the huge ship.

BOLTON

Sorry, sir. I'll - pay for
this, of course.

OZZIE

Ah, we'll tell the commander
it broke in the fight. And
don't worry yourself about
what's to come. Old Uncle
Fritzy-Kraut has to make
trouble every once in awhile,
tomorrow he'll get his
spanking.

BERTIE

Tell the boy the one about
John and the mayor's twin
daughters.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - BELOWDECKS - DAY (DAWN)

Matty sleeps fitfully on a hammock suspended from a pipe,
jammed in a small room with fifty others. A HORN sounds.

PETTY OFFICER

Up! Clear for action! To
your stations! Move your
asses!

Everyone shocks awake, dons helmets. Matty's is marked with
a red cross. He carries a stretcher upstairs.

INT. SUFFOLK BRIDGE

RADAR MAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

We've lost contact, sir. Both
ships took a hard turn and
went south at full speed.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN

Summon Hood on the wireless,
get enemy position.

SUFFOLK BRIDGE OFFICER

We can't break radio silence,
sir, admiral's orders, it'll
give away Hood's attack
vector.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN

Damn it, we're going to miss
this fight!

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

One scary noise after another. Watertight doors CLANG shut. Boots STOMP on ladders. Ammo hoists WHINE. Officers shout orders. On the LOUDSPEAKER, a chaplain recites a prayer. John climbs a ladder to a tiny chamber with a periscope rangefinder.

HIS POV - THROUGH RANGEFINDER

One set of antenna masts, then another, pierce the horizon.

TURRET

John slides down the ladder, rotates the hundred-ton turret towards the enemy. The bank-vault door into the chamber powers SHUT and locks.

CIVILIAN MECHANIC

Why do they lock that door?

JOHN

So you won't leave - no matter
what.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Lookout, ascertain contact.

LOOKOUT'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Battleship. Correction, two
battleships.

(MORE)

LOOKOUT'S VOICE (CONT'D)

One is King George V class.
The other - damn this fog...
(gasps, awed)
Sir, the other is the Hood!

Everyone's heart stops at the name of the enemy's pride and joy, the world heavyweight champion of warships.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Incredible...

EXT. OCEAN - HOOD AND PRINCE OF WALES

hurtle towards Bismarck and Prinz Eugen. Hood hoists a huge, bridal-white battle flag. SUPERIMPOSE: SATURDAY.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

John is looking through the rangefinder scope. Grabs the telephone to Gunnery Officer Fowley, dismayed.

JOHN

Sir, why in hell are we charging 'em straight on? Our rear guns can't fire.

FOWLEY (PHONE V.O., FILTERED)

They want to close the range fast as they can, I think they're worried about Hood's deck armor. Anyway, leave that to the captain, damn you.

JOHN

Well, we just tied one arm behind our back.

John slams the phone down, starts working the rangefinder.

INT. BISMARCK - BELOW DECKS

Matty clutches his stretcher as men run past. Rudi, with nothing to do, stands clear of the tumult.

EXT. BISMARCK - THE EIGHT MAIN-BATTERY GUNS

turn towards the foe, sixty-foot monsters ready to loose shells as heavy as a small car.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - JOHN IN RANGEFINDER CHAMBER

FOWLEY (PHONE V.O., FILTERED)
Signal from Hood: "Target
left-hand ship, fire when
ready."

JOHN
There must be - sir, I think
that's a cruiser. Bismarck is
the one on the right.

FOWLEY (PHONE V.O., FILTERED)
Do as you're told or I'll have
you under arrest!

Exasperated, John switches the phone to his turret.

JOHN
Confirm loading, stand by for
my command. Targeting right-
hand ship.

BELOW JOHN, IN THE TURRET

they're still rookies, hopelessly green and slow.

JOHN (SPEAKER V.O., FILTERED)
Shoot.

The noise and smoke from the blast are unholy; the concussion rips the air from the gun crew's lungs.

EXT. BISMARCK

Ten miles off its beam, Prince of Wales and Hood OPEN FIRE.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
... Sir - shall we... ?

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
No, not yet.

INT. BISMARCK - BELOW DECKS

OFFICER (SPEAKER V.O.)
Enemy has fired.

Rudi, Matty and a dozen others wait out their fate.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

John rushes down the ladder. The turret is frozen still.

JOHN
What happened?

MECHANIC
Not sure, the firing jammed something.

JOHN
Well, put it to rights!

The phone RINGS angrily. John picks it up.

FOWLEY (PHONE V.O., FILTERED)
What the hell is wrong now?

JOHN
Turret jam, sir, we're trying!

John hangs up, struggles vainly with the machinery.

EXT. OCEAN - HOOD

fires all her forward guns at once, magnificently.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Lindemann agitated. Lutjens very calm.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Not yet. I want them closer.

Lindemann looks around, makes sure no one else on the bridge can hear:

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

I will not let this ship get shot out from under my ass!

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(ignoring Lindemann, gazing at Hood)

"Come into my lair, said the spider to the fly."

(long beat; quietly)

You may proceed, Captain.

EXT. BISMARCK

The British shells land, far off their targets. In b.g., Prinz Eugen fires; finally, so does Bismarck.

Eight massive dragon-belches of flame and black smoke...

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

Pouring sweat, John furiously works valves and levers. Nothing. The crew watches, helpless and chopping-block scared. The intercom squawks with AD LIB abuse from Fowley.

INT. BISMARCK - TURRET

The gun crew works deftly as a ballet troupe, FIRES.

EXT. HOOD

The German gunfire is scarily close to the aged ship, much better shooting than the British.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

Behind the bridge, a Bismarck shell smashes into the ship's deck. The blast BLOWS OUT the bridge windows; Captain Burke and his staff duck. An alarm CLANGS frantically.

CAPTAIN BURKE
God damn it all, why isn't A-
Turret firing?

PRINCE OF WALES FIRST OFFICER
Don't know sir, the interphone
is out. Messenger!

Two MESSENGER BOYS, 16, rush up. Burke stifles a cough.

CAPTAIN BURKE
Get down there, find out
what's wrong. Tell Chichester
to get those guns in action or
I'll have him in irons!

EXT. BISMARCK

spits death, firing twice as fast as the British ships.

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - ON LADDER OUTSIDE BRIDGE

MESSENGER BOY #1
You take it, he was looking at
you!

MESSENGER BOY #2
Damned if I'm missing a
ringside seat like this. You
do it, shrimpo.

Boy #1 curses the bigger Boy #2, climbs down off the bridge.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

Boy #2 strolls grandly onto the bridge, eyeing the great men there... and OBLIVION. A salvo from Bismarck STRIKES under the bridge, killing everyone there but Captain Burke and the Signal Officer.

EXT. OCEAN - BISMARCK AND PRINZ EUGEN

blast away. Salvoes from Hood splash down, getting closer. One skims Bismarck's upper deck, smashing a boat. Another POUNDS the side of the battleship at the waterline.

EXT. HOOD - DECK

Prinz Eugen finds the mark, hitting a row of anti-aircraft guns and setting off their ammunition. Then a much larger BLAST as Bismarck scores too, dead center.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

Smashed bodies all about. Captain Burke and the SIGNAL OFFICER stagger to their feet, dazed and bleeding; they look over at the disabled Hood.

PRINCE OF WALES SIGNAL OFFICER

Flag signal from Hood - turn
port two three oh.

CAPTAIN BURKE

About damned time! Get word
back to the rear turret to
fire soon as they're clear.

INT. BISMARCK - RANGEFINDER STATION - THE GUNNERY OFFICER

works the aiming device, sights his prey.

HIS POV - HOOD

is afire, slowing, an easy target.

THE BISMARCK GUNNERY OFFICER

pulls the firing signal, like Brutus pulling the knife.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

John opens the hatchway out of the turret.

He grabs the Mechanic and two others, pulls them outside.

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - NEAR "A" TURRET

The Mechanic pulls a panel and works some hydraulic couplings. John and the others help. The turret jerks.

MECHANIC

That's got it! We're on!

An odd NOISE O.S. from above, like water going down a giant drain. Something makes John look over at his beloved Hood.

JOHN'S POV - HOOD

The flames astern have subsided. Her big guns slug away. But high above, four great missiles plunge down at her.

JOHN

convulses with dread. Somehow he knows what is to happen.

JOHN

(strangled whisper)

Glass... jaw.

EXT. HOOD

One of the shells hits the splendid old ship near her stern, punches down through her unprotected deck into its vitals, and DETONATES its main ammunition supply.

In one ghastly moment, HMS Hood DISINTEGRATES in a thousand-foot pyre of flame and smoke. Twenty-ton chunks of steel and wood are flung into the air, men, pieces of men...

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - JOHN, MECHANIC, OTHER CREWMEN

The blast's concussive wave slaps John limply to his knees. Ten sailors scream in terror.

MECHANIC

God, god, god, god!

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Everyone is looking at the immolating Hood, incredulous.

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
SHE'S BLOWING UUUUUUUP!

Cries of joy, triumph, relief, astonishment. Lutjens quietly eyes the carnage. Lindemann exults.

EXT. HOOD - OCEAN SURFACE / UNDERWATER

The young sailor, Bolton, is blasted off the ship into the flaming sea. The suction of the sinking ship draws him down; he gives up; then an exploding boiler blows him to the surface. He looks around, sees no one else in the water.

No one.

EXT. HOOD - SURFACE

The shattered Hood is horribly bent at its middle; her back is broken, and her bow and stern rise from the waves. Flaming, smoking, groaning, she begins to roll to her side.

A mammoth BANG and Hood splits in two. The stern section sinks in seconds. The bow rises, completely upright.

INT. BISMARCK - BELOWDECKS

Matty and dozens of others cheer wildly, like a championship locker room. Rudi watches quietly; Matty notices.

RUDI
It's that easy? A thousand
lives are that cheap, that
easy to take?

Matty's grin fades. A PETTY OFFICER, twice the age and size of everyone else, enters and sees the celebrating.

PETTY OFFICER
SHUT YOUR SLITS!

The room quiets.

PETTY OFFICER
(continuing, stark fury)
If it can happen to them --
tomorrow, it'll be US. The
whole fucking Royal Navy will
be after this ship tonight.
They'll hunt us down like
rabid dogs! Now, do your jobs
so we can stay alive.

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - NEAR "A" TURRET

Hood's vertical bow towers just a hundred feet off the beam.
The rest of John's gun crew streams out of the turret.

GUN CREWMAN #1
(to his brother on Hood)
BOBBY! GOD NO! BOBBY?!

GUN CREWMAN #2
DAAAAAAD!

Crewman #1 is trying to jump the rail into the water.
John grabs the boy and hauls him towards "A" Turret.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Another HIT from Bismarck pounds into the Prince of Wales'
superstructure, swatting away Fowley's gunnery station.

JOHN AND HIS GUN CREW

Are knocked across the deck by the impact. Two lie still.

JOHN
Inside! Back to your posts!

He grabs as many of the horrified men as he can, stuffs them
back inside the gun turret. In b.g., the waves bury Hood.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

The men all have the stupefied looks of bystanders at an
assassination.

John starts up the ladder to his little rangefinder chamber.

JOHN
Right, now listen, Fowley's
dead, so we'll fire from my
sighting. Exactly what I say.

The crew numbly works the loading apparatus.

JOHN
(continuing)
Left red fifteen, down two.
MOVE! Right one - shoot.

The four mammoth guns of "A" Turret FIRE.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

The Signal Officer hurries in, stepping over the dead boy.

PRINCE OF WALES SIGNAL OFFICER
A half-dozen hits, sir, maybe
more. Compass, radar, all
forward fire control is out.

CAPTAIN BURKE
(quiet, bitter)
Make smoke and withdraw. Call
on our destroyers to search
for Hood survivors.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

The crew reloads. John watches his last shots.

EXT. BISMARCK

One of the shells from Prince of Wales STRIKES Bismarck at
its huge bow, blows out on the other side of the battleship.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - TURRET

JOHN
Hit, boys! Confirmed hit!

His gun crew growls cheers, loads with new energy. But there is a lurch as the ship turns hard away from Bismarck.

JOHN
(continuing, pure
frustration)
Old Iron-Balls, he's quitting
now?!

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES

A black cloud billows from the smoke generators. Under its cover, the beaten ship slinks off.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Three hits. One superficial,
boat deck aft of the funnel.
One amidships, some damage to
Number Two Boiler...
(catching breath)

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Go on, man. The third?

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
The last hit, at the bow... it
is rather serious, Captain.
Two fuel tanks punctured, both
are contaminated with
seawater. We're tracking oil.

Lidemann shoots a quick told-you-so look at Lutjens for not topping off the fuel tanks back in Norway.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(ignoring Lindemann's look)
Break off action, set course
south for merchant-ship lanes.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Sir, we can finish off that
other battleship if we pursue,
she's badly damaged.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(shaking head)

Too great a chance of other heavy British units nearby.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

But that ship is newer than this one. If we sink her too, all Britain will know this war is over.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

It's not warships that are feeding them. Our mission is to choke their supply shipping. Turn south, please.

EXT. OCEAN

Bismarck and Prinz Eugen roar south. Prince of Wales tries vainly to keep up. Norfolk and Suffolk far behind.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

John, still covered with the battle's grime, passes despondent, grieving shipmates.

The day's defeat lurks about the ship like a stench.

INT. CAPTAIN BURKE'S CABIN

Spartan-but-regal splendor. At his desk, a shirtless Burke is being tended for his burns by two pharmacist's mates. He looks very weak as he initials damage reports, murmurs AD LIB orders to officers. Quietly:

CAPTAIN BURKE

I've received word from our destroyers. The Hood... just three survivors.

John, shattered and exhausted, can only jerk a nod in reply.

CAPTAIN BURKE

(continuing, low, glacial)
Your performance in today's
action was lamentable. You
disobeyed poor Fowley's firing
direction, and your turret
managed just two salvos in
six minutes. Relieved of
duty. Confined to quarters
pending court-martial.

JOHN

Aye, sir.

John wheels, begins to go. Burke's iron voice stops him:

CAPTAIN BURKE

Anyway, that's what the book
says I'm to do. Problem is,
at this moment I've no one
else to plot this ship's
forward gunnery. Stuck with
you, I am.

A brief contest of cold stares. Burke is suddenly seized by
a bad coughing fit. The handkerchief at his mouth is
spattered with crimson. John looks at it, then at Burke.

Burke regains control, shoves the cloth into a pocket.

CAPTAIN BURKE

(continuing)
You're a miserable excuse for
a petty officer. But you were
the first to catch the mixup
between Bismarck and that
lookalike cruiser. And no one
else scored a confirmed hit.

JOHN

Captain, the hydraulic -

CAPTAIN BURKE

Can you make those guns work?

JOHN

I can... and I will. Sir.
(his voice catches)
The Hood - that ship was all
the family I'll see in this
world. You get me within ten
miles of her killer and there
won't be two parts of it
joined together when I'm done.
I'll watch that ship burn,
watch those murdering
strutting bastards jump from
its corpse, and if they swim
to this ship for rescue I'll
stomp my boot to their necks,
hold 'em under the waves until
they're still. I'll drown 'em
like blind pups.

CAPTAIN BURKE
(nods, unnerved, then --)
Never mind the theatricals,
Chief, just get our guns
firing. Now you're dismissed.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - PORTSMOUTH, ENGLAND - DAY

Hood's home port. A street of tight-packed row houses. In
house after house, wails and screams from the bereaved. The
calamity is absolute, Biblical...

INT. LONDON BUNKER COMPLEX - DAY

A grim, tired Churchill huddles with the ADMIRALTY,
including the FIRST SEA LORD, 65, top man in the Royal Navy.
Ghostlike on one wall is a large, beautiful oil painting of
Hood. SUPERIMPOSE: SUNDAY.

FIRST SEA LORD
- battle cruisers Repulse and
Renown - cruiser Dorsetshire -

WINSTON CHURCHILL
Tell them all to turn around
and join the hunt.

FIRST SEA LORD

In the Mediterranean there's
the old Rodney, on her way to
Boston for a refit.

ADMIRAL

Out of the question. Rodney's
escorting a troop convoy. U-
boat gets in among them,
they'll be helpless as babes.

Churchill looks at the painting of Hood, sets his jaw.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

That ship was the Empire, as
Bismarck is now theirs.
Sinking it bears an importance
far beyond a single warship.
This is arrant piracy upon the
broad waters - and the
overture for their invasion of
this island. Admiral, lay
your ships alongside those of
the enemy.

FIRST SEA LORD

(chastened)

Understood, Minister.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Bully for you. Now. Is there
anything else we can throw at
them?

First Sea Lord makes a coughing noise, stalling.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

(continuing)

Don't let this war hurry you.

FIRST SEA LORD

... Minister, perhaps you
could clarify your definition
of 'anything'?

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER HMS ARK ROYAL - DAY (AFTERNOON)

The storm-pitched deck of an aging, rust-bucket carrier. Near its stern are a dozen rain-lashed airplanes.

CLOSE ON A MAN'S HAND

Dirty, calloused, poking a sewing needle into gray canvas.

WIDER

and it's a crewman mending a hole on a cloth-skinned, open-cockpit biplane. It's one of the Ark Royal's "SWORDFISH" torpedo bombers - pathetically obsolete little crates that look like they're from the Red Baron days. Flight crews approach, rookie-nervous. Their leader is BOZEY, the oldest at 24, large, loud, with a foot-thick Lancashire accent.

BOZEY

Saddle up, then!

They climb in. Grease-spattered GROUND CREWS crank the old planes' motors; they belch black smoke, cough, START.

CREW CHIEF

Cor! You're goin' out in that string-bag now, Lieutenant? What's wrong, you couldn't find a tall building to jump off of?

BOZEY

It's the glamorous flyer's life, don't you know. Knights of the skies an' all that.

Crew Chief flips shilling, catches it.

CREW CHIEF

Heads you get shot to glory, tails you get lost 'n drown.

BOZEY

So I 'ereby bequeath you me dirty-picture collection.

Crew Chief salutes Bozey, ducks out of the driving rain.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

The CAPTAIN and FLIGHT OPERATIONS OFFICER watch the little planes struggle into the sky.

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN
How many of them have taken
off from a carrier before?

FLIGHT OPERATIONS OFFICER
Maybe half. Not a one has
made a landing at night.

Captain shakes his head, mouths an obscenity.

EXT. SKY - THE TWELVE SWORDFISH BIPLANES

manage a ragged formation. Their top speed is 95 m.p.h. -
supposedly - and they creep at it towards Bismarck.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Lutjens eyeing the pursuing British ships through
binoculars. Lindemann and the First Officer bolt in.

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Admiral, that oil leak is
worsening.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(calm, pensive)
So we turn for France now,
make repairs.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Then... link up with the rest
of our fleet, break back into
the Atlantic. We'll be
unstoppable now.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Detach Prinz Eugen to proceed

into shipping lanes. Lay in
our course for France.

(pointing at Prince of Wales)
Suppose we'd better tell her.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET

John has the gun crew lined up in the dank, crowded chamber.

JOHN

Until you can do this in under
one minute, this stinking
place - and these stinking men
around you - will be all you
know. You'll eat, sleep,
shit, and flog yourself in
here. The only way out is -

The battle-stations alarm GONGS. Crew jumps, scared.

JOHN

(continuing)
Action Stations!

EXT. OCEAN

Bismarck has suddenly turned east toward France - and right
at Prince of Wales. The German ship FIRES.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET

The crew is giving maximum effort; faster, better. But then
there's a deafening, broken CLANKING from the sling carrying
the one-ton shells to the gun breech.

One of the live shells CRASHES to the deck, begins to roll
massively back and forth in the turret - just missing the
frightened crew. John slides down the ladder.

JOHN

Stay clear of it!

He shoves some wood blocks under the shell, stills it.

JOHN

(continuing, enraged)
Y'know, the other side has
these too, they'll kill us
just fine, thank you --

EXT. OCEAN

Bismarck's salvoes SCREAM twenty feet over Prince of Wales'
bridge. A return SALVO from Prince of Wales' rear turret.

Cruisers Norfolk and Suffolk chime in with their smaller
guns. No hits on either side. Prinz Eugen breaks away from
the melee, escapes. Prince of Wales turns tail, hurries out
of Bismarck's range. The cruisers follow.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET

INTERCOM (V.O., FILTERED)
PETTY OFFICER CHICHESTER TO
THE BRIDGE NOW.

John jabs a buzzer marked GUARDS.

JOHN
Get this ammo secure. Then
all of you... look each other
in the eye and tell the other
man what he's doin' wrong. No
blame, just truth. Regrets I
can't join you, I'll be busy
pickin' bits of Old Iron-
Balls' boots out o' me bum.

He slams open the armored door. Outside are two large,
brutal-looking Royal Marines - the ship's police.

JOHN
(continuing)
H'lo there, Squint, cheers.
Dim, how's the Missus? Now
see here - 'til I get back,
this turret is the Tower of
fuckin' London, right?

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE - DAY (SUNSET)

The aircraft alarm BELLOWS. Officers jolt to their feet.

BRIDGE LOOKOUT
Torpedo aircraft, starboard
beam!

EXT. BISMARCK

Hundreds of men dash ant-like from the immense superstructure. They ready the ship's eighty-plus antiaircraft guns.

EXT. SKY NEAR BISMARCK

With dumb luck, the dozen Swordfish planes have found the enemy. The little biplanes, torpedoes slung under their bellies, skim low over the water, and move in - slow as pelicans - to the attack.

A GERMAN GUN CREW

spots the prehistoric airplanes. They begin to point and laugh uproariously. Damndest thing they've ever seen.

ON ONE SWORDFISH / ITS THREE-MAN CREW

The pilot (22) concentrates on lining up the shot. The radioman-navigator (20) and the gunner (18) just look at this fire-spitting mountain they're crawling towards.

EXT. BISMARCK

Every gun opens up on them, spraying a stupendous hail. Swarming Bismarck like mosquitoes around a bonfire,

THE SWORDFISH

weave and bob, drop their torpedoes into the sea.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

The helmsman works the wheel furiously, dodging torpedoes.

EXT. BISMARCK - ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN PLATFORM

OFFICER

Hit something! The little
turds are barely moving!

GUNNER

That's what's wrong, these
gunsights can't range on a
plane that slow!

EXT. BISMARCK - SUPERSTRUCTURE

Rudi and the other two Luftwaffe pilots venture outside to
watch the show, plug their ears against their guns' din.

They look at the tiny biplanes, astonished.

LUFTWAFFE PILOT #1

They must be fucking mad!

Rudi just gazes at them in grinning admiration.

EXT. OCEAN

One by one, the torpedoes miss. The Swordfish pull up, turn
for home; their cloth skins are shredded by the German guns;
each SHOTS back with a laughably small machine gun.

Then - one torpedo HITS the cliff-face hull, its 400 pounds
of TNT blowing a great mushroom of water skyward.

EXT. BISMARCK - SUPERSTRUCTURE

Rudi and his two fellow Luftwaffe flyers are flung across
the deck; they smack into a bulkhead.

THE SWORDFISH THAT HIT BISMARCK

climbs, flies through the torpedo's water-blast right over the Bismarck. Anti-aircraft guns hit the plane's belly.

SWORDFISH GUNNER
OH JEEZ GOD HELP ME!

The bottom of the plane under the Gunner him has been shot away; he drops through it like it's a trap door. He clutches at the cockpit, his legs and middle hanging from under the plane.

The radioman climbs over, pulls the Gunner to safety.

EXT. BISMARCK - SUPERSTRUCTURE

Rudi was knocked out, though not badly hurt. But one pilot has a compound leg fracture. The other has a broken skull.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Dead of night; quiet. Just Lutjens, First Officer, helmsman and a few others.

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Enemy contact now variable,
they've started zig-zagging.
They're worried about our
submarines.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(intently, he has an idea)
That cruiser that sees in the
dark... what's the farthest
she zigs away before she turns
back to stay with us?

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Say... 25,000 meters. Current
range 22,000 and widening.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(shouts for first time)
Helm, right full rudder NOW!

Helmsman obeys. The ship leans, swings hard to the right.
Lindemann enters, annoyed he wasn't in on this decision.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Sir - may I ask -

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Shaking this dog off our leg.
Full circle, then course 130.

INT. HMS SUFFOLK RADAR STATION

The cruiser's radar operators are tired beyond sanity;
they've now been on duty thirty-three straight hours.

SUFFOLK RADAR OPERATOR
20,000 and closing - where the
hell is it?

The Captain is ashen. He just fumbled the Big Game away.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN
Oh lord, no.

SUFFOLK RADAR OPERATOR
No sign of 'em, sir. They're
gone like they never was.

SUFFOLK CAPTAIN
(low, agonized, to radioman)
... Message to Admiralty:
"Have lost contact with
enemy."

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

The helmsman beams as Lutjens claps the kid's shoulder.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Neatly done, Helmsman.

Lindemann cradles a telephone, goes to Lutjens.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Damage report from torpedo
hit: "scratched paint."
(laughs, incredulous)

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
... Astonishing.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
A few injuries from the
impact, but - this ship is
torpedo-proof. The Fuhrer can
stop worrying, eh?

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(leery)
How long before we reach
France?

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Forty hours, less than that.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARK ROYAL - NIGHT

3:00 a.m. Flanked by a battleship and a light cruiser, the
carrier plows through the usual North Atlantic rough stuff.

FLIGHT DECK

Crewmen peer into the frigid, moonless black in search of
the twelve Swordfish. Hopes are fading.

A sharp, bluish GLARE silhouettes the ship like lightning.
From the carrier's superstructure, six enormous SEARCHLIGHTS
swing great, luminous fingers into the sky.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

ARK ROYAL RADIOMAN
Urgent Morse from the Admiral
over in Renown, sir - "Douse
your lights immediately."

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

(stalling)

Send back to him... "What?"

FLIGHT DECK

Bozey's tough old CREW CHIEF strains ears, mouths his first prayer in decades. A shred of NOISE o.s. To his crew:

CREW CHIEF

Kiss yer tender asses if I
didn't just hear motors.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

ARK ROYAL FIRST OFFICER

Sir, you're giving away the
fleet. Every U-Boat in a
hundred miles will see us -

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

Belay that, Tom! I won't
leave them out there to die.

ARK ROYAL RADIOMAN

The Admiral is repeating his
order, with some new - er,
sir, the final two words are
"court" and "martial."

FLIGHT OPERATIONS OFFICER

There they are, port bow!

EXT. SKY - THE SWORDFISH

Battered and leaking, they circle behind Ark Royal to land.

FLIGHT DECK

Maniacal cheers, like a World Cup goal at Wembley.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN
Count to ten slow, then cut
the lights. Signal to Admiral
my neck size.

FIRST OFFICER / RADIOMAN
(both grinning)
Aye sir.

ON ONE SWORDFISH PILOT

Teeth chattering, he steels himself for his very first
carrier landing - on a deck rising and falling thirty feet.

FLIGHT DECK

One by one, the little planes all but crash-land on the
rolling, tossing deck.

Half-dead with cold and exhaustion, the flyers are pulled
from their cockpits and swathed in blankets. The Crew Chief
uses a screwdriver to pry one pilot's frozen hand from the
plane's control stick.

BELOWDECKS

The flyers are stuffed with soup and brandy to thaw them
out. The Captain enters, watches silently.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS - JOHN SLAVE-DRIVING HIS GUN CREW:

A.) Loading drill, running through it for the
five hundredth time. The men soaked with sweat.

JOHN
A minute-thirteen! Look for
the tiny things and find those
fourteen seconds. Again!

B.) John cajoling the mechanics, they get things fixed and running. John yanks bottles of Guinness out of his hidden stash, rewards them.

C.) Coughing and sweating, an unseen Captain Burke looks through a tiny window in the turret door. HIS POV - the men are half-dead, but everything is working.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKS - BREST, FRANCE - DAY (DAWN)

A port city on the French Atlantic coast. German ships and submarines at dock. SUPERIMPOSE: BREST, OCCUPIED FRANCE, then MONDAY.

EXT. DOCKYARD

The mess hall for the German naval officers is serving breakfast. A weedy vegetable garden lies next to it.

A kneeling woman, perhaps 30, stabs a small shovel into rocky earth. Attractive despite the dirt covering her, a strong Norman jaw. HELIOS is not her real name, just the one given her by the French Resistance. Helios crawls about the garden, digs up carrots and onions, hands a bowl of them to a German navy COOK. Two German officers walk by, see her, mutter their lust. She doesn't look at them, just listens. Intently.

GERMAN OFFICER #1
(laughing, to Officer #2)
Did you see the yard admiral
running around, pissing
himself?

GERMAN OFFICER #2
No, what now?

GERMAN OFFICER #1
(low, confidential)
Bismarck is coming here day
after tomorrow, so is lots of
brass from Berlin. The damn
docks aren't ready -

They move out of Helios' earshot. She goes to the kitchen door, gets the Cook's attention.

HELIOS

Very sorry, I have to go back home for a few minutes. There is something I must - do.

COOK

What the hell is it?

Helios looks down, blushes.

HELIOS

A feminine - a female concern.

The embarrassed Cook coughs. Waves her off, contemptuous.

EXT. DOCKYARD - GATE

Helios strolls casually past the guard shack, rounds a corner. Then she begins to run. Smacks into a scowling German soldier.

HELIOS

(frantic, impromptu)
My puppy, my little puppy!
Have you seen him?

Soldier laughs, gropes her. Helios keeps running.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - BREST - DAY

German guards everywhere. Helios scribbles an address on an envelope, seals it, then looks about for a kind face. Touches the elbow of an OLD FRENCHMAN, 75.

HELIOS

(playing the damsel
in distress)
Pardon monsieur, very sorry,
are you going to Lorient?

The old man nods, puzzled.

HELIOS

(continuing)

My child is there, she has been sick, very sick, the polio. Her father must remember to start her new medicine today! Please - could you take him this note?

OLD FRENCHMAN

Of course.

HELIOS

It's very important, life and death. Please take it to him today! Please.

OLD FRENCHMAN

It's very near my home, I'll deliver it first thing.

His first kiss from a pretty woman in forty years; he smiles, boards the train. Helios waves at him sweetly.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAPLANE BASE - IRELAND - DAY

A British intelligence officer (33, expensive accent) helms a tiny motorboat. He is IAN FLEMING; after the war he'll write spy novels with a character named James Bond.

Also in the motorboat is TUCK SMITH, 26, a U.S. Navy pilot from Missouri. Less than a dozen people between 10 Downing Street and the White House know that Ensign Smith is here.

IAN FLEMING

Fleming. Ian Fleming.

A quick handshake. The boat speeds towards a CATALINA, a big seaplane that's warming up its engines.

IAN FLEMING

(continuing)

My, er, 'big boss' talked to yours, do you have a general idea who I mean?

ENSIGN SMITH
 (honest Midwest grin)
Yeah.

 IAN FLEMING
Well, he said this is all
right.

The motorboat stops alongside the Catalina. Four Royal Navy
flyers peer out its hatches.

 IAN FLEMING
 (continuing, to flyers)
This is Ensign Smith, of the
United States Navy. He'll be
along with you today to
instruct you in the operation
of this aircraft his president
was so sporting to lend us.

Smith boards the Catalina, shakes a few hands with its
startled crew.

 ENSIGN SMITH
Just call me Tuck. Hiya.

Fleming opens a chart of the Atlantic.

 IAN FLEMING
Gents, there's some news about
Adolf's Yacht Club. We got
word out of someone in France
this morning that's where
they're headed. We lost them
here; the port of Brest is
here; suggest you look here.

 ENSIGN SMITH
Got it, okay. Let's scoot!

The Catalina revs up, begins takeoff.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - DAY

John is still playing Bligh with the exhausted gun crew...

But everything's running much smoother.

JOHN
Bates! Check the pressure
before you hit the breech
lock. Loading team, don't -

The ship's action alarm BLARES.

SHIP'S LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)
Ship, bearing Green Seven-Oh!

JOHN
Bring to bear, Green Seven-Oh!

The turret's aim, the loading, all is perfect. John sighs relief then dashes up the ladder to the rangefinder chamber. He looks through the ranging scope, then relaxes and smiles for the first time in days.

JOHN
(continuing)
Oh Rodney, you old whorehouse,
am I glad to see you.

He descends the ladder, eyes his stopwatch.

JOHN
(continuing)
Stand down boys, it's one of
ours... and that was fifty-
nine seconds.

Tired cheers. They did it.

JOHN
(continuing)
Care for some air that's not
piss-flavored?

John opens the turret hatch. The men squint at the daylight, suck lungfuls of air, savor their freedom. Coming up alongside is the old battleship Rodney.

WIDER - PRINCE OF WALES' DECK

Men stream outside, ignoring the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE - DAY

PRINCE OF WALES SIGNAL OFFICER

From Rodney, sir - "My best
speed twenty-two knots."

CAPTAIN BURKE

Slow us to twenty-two.

PRINCE OF WALES RADIOMAN

Sir, urgent. Air Recon just
found Bismarck - 49-33 north,
21-47 west, course 1-5-0.

INT. RODNEY - BRIDGE

RODNEY SIGNAL OFFICER

New course to intercept, 1-3-
3... we're falling behind
Prince of Wales, sir.

RODNEY CAPTAIN

Signal them: "Sorry, am afraid
my twenty-two knots is a bit
slower than yours."

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

PRINCE OF WALES RADIOMAN

From Ark Royal: "Launching new
air strike."

CAPTAIN BURKE

Not in this muck they aren't.

EXT. ARK ROYAL - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

50 m.p.h. winds, bits of snow, bone-aching cold. Crews
wrestle the drenched, skidding Swordfish across the pitching
skate rink of a flight deck. The men are nearly blown into
the ocean. One grabs a metal rail with a bare hand; the
cold tears his skin off his palm.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

Tell Sheffield to go on ahead,
perhaps she can help our
planes find the target.

ARK ROYAL FIRST OFFICER

Aye, sir.

Just then the Flight Operations Officer enters, TOO LATE to
hear that Sheffield will be venturing near Bismarck.

Since he doesn't know, neither do the flyers.

EXT. ARK ROYAL - FLIGHT DECK

The bow of the carrier dips, plows into the ocean, rises
with an explosion of spray.

The first flimsy Swordfish plane times the deck's rise and
fall, crawls into the air. Another follows.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

Flight Officer is looking out bridge windows, puzzled.

FLIGHT OFFICER

Sir... where's Sheffield?

Captain looks up from his chart, dismayed. To Radioman:

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

Message to the Swordfish:
"Watch out for Sheffield."

ARK ROYAL RADIOMAN

Aye sir, coding...

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

No time for that! Send it in
the clear, right now.

EXT. SHEFFIELD - NEAR BRIDGE

A puny, decrepit cruiser. Lookouts try to spot Bismarck in the snow and fog. One sees the dozen Swordfish; the lookouts grin and wave at their comrades.

POV FROM SWORDFISH

A warship shrouded in fog, where Bismarck should be. The Swordfish break into groups of three, begin to dive at Sheffield from all directions.

EXT. SHEFFIELD

The Lookouts' grins freeze. The Captain grabs a microphone.

SHEFFIELD CAPTAIN (LOUDSPEAKER)
Flank speed! Gun crews, HOLD
YOUR FIRE, THOSE ARE
FRIENDLIES! LEFT FULL!

The Swordfish drop their torpedoes; they streak towards the cruiser.

SHEFFIELD BRIDGE - THE HELMSMAN

flings the wheel furiously, sweating, sobbing.

SHEFFIELD

twists through a snake-pit of torpedo tracks. Her crew watches, yells, waves at the Swordfish in frantic terror.

EXT. BISMARCK

Sheffield's torpedo-dodging has made her stray too close to Bismarck. The battleship FIRES a full broadside.

EXT. SHEFFIELD

One of Bismarck's salvos blasts through Sheffield's masts and upperworks.

Five men in an anti-aircraft gun tub are laid open like gutted fish by shell splinters.

Sheffield turns away from Bismarck as the last torpedoes slice at her. Close calls, but nothing hits. The Swordfish lumber away.

CUT TO:

INT. ARK ROYAL - PILOT'S READY ROOM - DAY

The exhausted flyers warm up, crushed at their miserable error; they avoid the fishy glances of shipmates.

SUSSEX FLYER

Our own... bloody... ship.

IRISH FLYER

They'll remember this balls-up
five kings from now. Oh god.
Sir, just one more try and -

ARK ROYAL FLIGHT OFFICER

Forget it. By the time this
weather clears, Bismarck'll be
under their air force's
umbrella.

Bozey stands up, launches into coach-pep-talk mode.

BOZEY

Look... that was practice.
All right, very realistic
practice. Those blokes on
Sheffield, they didn't mind!
Doin' their patriotic bit!
Think about the story they'll
have for Mum 'n Dad! So brace
up, boys! "One more time onto
the breeches," an' all that!

SUSSEX FLYER

Sir, you're full o' shit as a
Christmas goose.

Finally, a bit of laughter in the gloom.

FLIGHT DECK

The Captain winces at the sleet, approaches the Crew Chief, returns his salute, shouts over the awful gale:

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

What's the fastest you've ever re-armed these planes with their torpedoes?

CREW CHIEF

(eyes glinting)
Not as fast as this.
(to other crewmen)
Jonesy! Pete! Get everybody out here now! George, bear a hand with the torpedo hoist!

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - UNDERWATER SHOT - DAY

A German U-Boat silently prowls the depths.

INT. U-BOAT

Cramped, greasy. Its CAPTAIN, 27, sits near the periscope.

U-BOAT SOUNDMAN

Contacts are two large ships, very close now.

U-BOAT CAPTAIN

Periscope depth.

INT. ARK ROYAL - PILOT'S READY ROOM

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

- Now if we try this, it's positively our last chance. By morning, they'll be within range of their Luftwaffe. Their fighters would shoot you down like partridges, and their bombers would butcher this fleet. So this is it. What do you think?

ARK ROYAL FLIGHT OFFICER

It's suicide! That wind out there is Force Eight! They can't fly in that.

ARK ROYAL CAPTAIN

I think that's up to them.

One by one, the flyer's long faces morph to grins.

They stand up.

FLIGHT DECK

Crewmen are finishing the backbreaking job of re-arming and refueling the planes. Crew Chief looks at the scores of holes in Bozey's plane from Bismarck's flak splinters.

CREW CHIEF

What about all this, Bozey?

Bozey picks up a neglected sandwich lying on the deck, begins rubbing its filling over the holes in the fabric.

BOZEY

Bit 'o marmalade works best. There, that should do it.

INT. U-BOAT

The periscope HISSES up. Captain looks through its eyepiece and grins like he sees a naked girl outside.

HIS POV - THROUGH PERISCOPE

The darling of his dreams, come true: directly in front of his submarine is a British battle cruiser. Periscope swings around. Just two thousand yards behind him is the HMS Ark Royal, about to launch her Swordfish. He can't miss.

U-BOAT CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Fish in a barrel. A very small barrel.

EXT. ARK ROYAL - FLIGHT DECK

Sunset. The wind and waves are now positively furious. Golf balls of snow blizzard across the deck, which is now rising and falling an incredible sixty feet. The Flight Officer and aviators huddle around the Swordfish.

ARK ROYAL FLIGHT OFFICER

Bismarck's forty miles out now, at bearing one six three. Now listen, all you fools. Aim direct at its big, fat broadside. Nothing fancy, no cutesie-poo bow or stern shots. We need sure hits. Father?

The dog-tired pilots kneel as a big, scarfaced CHAPLAIN, 45, raises his hands in blessing, then reads from a black Book.

CHAPLAIN

"Then David chose from a brook five smooth stones, and put them in his shepherd's bag, and his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to Goliath the Philistine."

(tired smile)

Ye know the rest, lads.

Pilots grin wearily, climb into their planes, rev motors. Chaplain shields his eyes from the blasting wind - and the sight of boys jousting with their cousins for empires.

INT. U-BOAT

U-BOAT CAPTAIN

Ready bow and stern tubes.
Open outer torpedo doors.

His officers look at him, stricken.

U-BOAT CAPTAIN

(continuing)
Well, move, damn it!

U-BOAT FIRST OFFICER
Captain... I believe I told
you last night, when - sir, we
used our last torpedoes on
that freighter!

Total agony. Captain's head slumps against the periscope.

HIS POV - THROUGH PERISCOPE

The Swordfish slowly lift off from Ark Royal, which now
looks close enough to spit at.

ON U-BOAT CAPTAIN

U-BOAT CAPTAIN
... Dive.

EXT. SKY - SWORDFISH SQUADRON - NIGHT

Against a 60 m.p.h. head wind, the Swordfish are making, oh,
about 40. The pilots struggle to see through the snow.

EXT. OCEAN - SWORDFISH

The biplanes plow through stone-thick clouds, just miss
hitting one another. Their landing wheels clip the waves.

Bismarck looms less than a mile ahead. The planes split up
to attack both sides of the battleship.

EXT. BISMARCK

lets loose with all the anti-aircraft she has. Awesome.

ON ONE SWORDFISH

bullets ZIP through its midsection. Radioman bleeding from
the gut. Gunner gets two fingers shot away. The pilot
ignores their screams, drops the plane's torpedo.

EXT. BISMARCK

A great, dirty-white column of water blasts up from the port side of the ship, hitting the armor belt; little damage.

EXT. OCEAN - SWORDFISH

The rest of the planes drop their torpedoes. Three are raked by gunfire, their crews badly hurt.

BOZEY'S PLANE

ducks and bobs through horrific fire.

He's about to pull the torpedo release when a shell hits his plane, almost knocks it into the water. He turns away and disappears into the clouds, his motor smoking and clanking.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Far below the bridge, another torpedo STRIKES the side of the ship. Lindemann hurries to the window. First Officer checks the flooding indicator lights.

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER

No compartments breached.
We're dry.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

(smug)
Bee-stings, I'm telling you.

INT. ARK ROYAL - BRIDGE

ARK ROYAL RADIOMAN

Message from surviving flight
leader: "Estimate no damage."

Despair. Captain offers a nice-try smile.

ARK ROYAL FLIGHT OFFICER

Game, set, match.

EXT. SKY NEAR BISMARCK

The Swordfish climb, start to form up to go back to Ark Royal. One is missing... but a second later,

BOZEY'S PLANE

drops like a brick out of an inky cloud, heads straight for Bismarck's stern, chunks of cloth flapping from its shredded skin.

Bozey's doing everything wrong - bad target angle, everything - so only a few of Bismarck's gunners see him.

The ship's vast rear end fills his vision...

BOZEY

pulls the torpedo release, grinning hugely.

BOZEY
SO SORRY, FORGOT ME VASELINE!

THE TORPEDO

knives into the ocean, straight and true. HITS.

EXT. BISMARCK - UNDERWATER - STERN

A TREMENDOUS BLAST, then nothing but roiling seawater.

INT. BISMARCK - STEERING ROOM

The housing for the rudders, at the very tail of the ship. An unholy SHOCK and WATER tidal-waves into the room; men escape up ladders.

EXT. BISMARCK - UNDERWATER - STERN

The starboard rudder... its shaft is BENT so badly the rudder is wedged against the hull. The other rudder is untouched, but turned at a slight angle.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Lutjens, Lindemann and the rest turn, startled... where in hell did that come from?

BISMARCK FIRST OFFICER
Attackers withdrawing.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Resume course for France.

Helmsman pulls at the wheel. It's frozen solid. Nothing.

Quiet. Everyone trades looks. For the first time, a thin, awful strand of dread snakes through them.

EXT. SKY NEAR BISMARCK - BOZEY'S PLANE

Bozey's shot-to-hell, smoking biplane limps along Bismarck's length. He pulls a pistol from his vest and - ridiculously - empties it at the monster alongside, beaming.

BOZEY'S RADIOMAN
You won't do nothin' with that
but nick its paint.

BOZEY
Feels good.

EXT. BISMARCK - SCOUT PLANE LAUNCHER

One of Bozey's shots just misses Rudi's plane, PLINKS into its launching gear.

A faint HISS of escaping air.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN
Rudders are jammed fifteen
degrees to port.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
Dispatch repair crews.

EXT. SKY - BOZEY'S PLANE

BOZEY'S RADIOMAN
Sir, bit of a draft back here.
Could you activate the heater?

Bozey hands back a big bottle of Glenlivet scotch.

BOZEY'S RADIOMAN
(continuing)
Much obliged, sir.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

The mood is downcast. John enters, hands papers to Burke.

JOHN
Here's the latest on "A"
turret, sir. Bit better.

Burke nods grudging approval. None of it matters much now.

CAPTAIN BURKE
Don't feel too badly,
everyone. They'll have to
come out of France at some
point, we'll get them then.

JOHN
(grim)
Not with all the same crew.

PRINCE OF WALES RADIOMAN
Sir... Sheffield reports
Bismarck turning toward us.

CAPTAIN BURKE
Bollocks! Why in hell would
they turn back at a task force
they've run from for days?

PRINCE OF WALES RADIOMAN
But it's confirmed by our
aircraft, sir. They all say
Bismarck is - it's circling.

JOHN

Something's wrong with them.
That's all it could be.

Everyone trades looks... so this is what luck feels like.

JOHN

(continuing, amazed)
I'll round up the gun crews.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - PASSAGE TO STEERING ROOM

Lutjens, Lindemann and First Officer stride into the passageway, ignoring the two feet of water there. The MASTER SHIPWRIGHT, 50, wet and disheveled, pores over blueprints. He looks like a Mercedes mechanic.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

Situation?

MASTER SHIPWRIGHT

It's coming in faster than we
can pump it out. We have
divers in there now, but
there's not much they can do.

Two DIVERS, hulking and Aryan, step up, large quantities of explosives lashed to their waists.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

What's this?

MASTER SHIPWRIGHT

Admiral, they've volunteered
to dive under the stern and
blow the rudders off.

LINDEMANN

(muttering)
And the propellers with them.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(to Diver)
How do you expect to get away
from the blast?

DIVER

We don't.

Lutjens just shakes his head, disgusted with the idea.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

(to Shipwright)

Keep me informed. Try
anything you think will work -
then try anything you think
won't.

(to Divers)

Take that stuff off.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - NIGHT

The bone-tired gun crews and John.

JOHN

- that's all of it, then. You
have to remain at your Action
Stations tonight, but you can
sleep there.

Murmurs of relief.

SAILOR

Attention, Captain on deck!

Everyone snaps to their feet, surprised at this royal visit.

CAPTAIN BURKE

Old habit from the last war.
Before these things, I like to
walk the ship, stem to stern.
So - we're very low on fuel,
and have to worry about U-
boats. We need a fast
knockout. Chief, your ideas?

JOHN

Sir, you don't need me to -

CAPTAIN BURKE

(harshly)

For now, you're my Forward
Gunnery Officer, damn -

Burke's body is jack-knifed by terrible coughing. The tubercular seizure spatters blood onto his immaculate uniform. The sailors back away from this contagion in fear.

Burke pitches forward. John catches him and eases the gasping Burke to the deck. Burke pushes him off.

CAPTAIN BURKE

... You're Gunnery Officer.
Now tell me what I haven't
thought of.

Pause. Old Iron Balls asked for it.

JOHN

They're scared over there, and they're tired. They've been hunted men for a week, and that wears on a body. A head-on approach is fine, dish 'em some fright, but open up at eight miles, not five. Keep Rodney far apart from us, a good mile, make Bismarck well and truly split its fire. Rodney's old, and slow as the Second Coming o' Christ, but there's nothing wrong with her guns. Hit first, hit hard.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Rudi enters, awed to stand before Lutjens and Lindemann.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

(grim)

Admiral, those divers couldn't reach the rudders. And inside, the explosion blew out the steering coupling, so --

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
(noticing Rudi)
What's your name, son?

RUDI
Herzog, Rudolf: Lieutenant,
Junior Grade, sir.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS
You're our only healthy pilot,
I am told. Our situation is a
grave one. In the morning,
you are to fly this ship's war
diary and log to Germany.
(small joke)
So Berlin can learn from my
mistakes. Dismissed.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - NIGHT

Everyone is asleep but John; he's triple-checking the gear.
The Voice of God makes him whirl around --

CAPTAIN BURKE (O.S.)
A foggy zombie's of no use to
me in a running gun fight.
You should be asleep, too.

JOHN
Just... don't care for
surprises, sir.

CAPTAIN BURKE
Well, too damn bad, here's
one. You're out of uniform.

He hands the puzzled John an envelope, motions for him to
open it. Out spill a pair of gold shoulder boards, the
insignia of a lieutenant. A long, stunned pause from John.

JOHN
You can't do this.

CAPTAIN BURKE
The First Sea Lord says I can.

JOHN

I've - none of the qualifying.

CAPTAIN BURKE

Turning this rabble into a proper crew? There's one word for that: leadership. It's wartime, we need officers.

JOHN

(soft, for once)

Captain, I joined up at fourteen for a hot meal and a bed. Mum dead, dad... gone. One of you? I'm - another animal.

CAPTAIN BURKE

You'll find it quite different on the other side. Deep down the men crave order, you must give it to them. Don't believe the myth they make of you. And ignore the nicknames - "Old Iron-Balls" and that sort of nonsense.

They share their first smile, for about three seconds. Burke's pale, sweaty hand holds out a pair of beautiful gold lieutenant's collar pins. John finally takes them.

CAPTAIN BURKE

(continuing, terse)

Those were my boy's, I'll thank you not to disgrace them. Now, rest.

Burke exits. John's jaw is still on the deck.

CUT TO:

INT. BISMARCK - WARDROOM

Bismarck now has the hushed, solemn aura of Death Row the night before an execution. The ship's eatery is being transformed to a hospital. Matty is helping set up an operating table.

Rudi enters, still dazed at his astounding turn of fortune.

MATTY

I know all about it. News of
your deliverance blew through
the ship in one minute flat.

Rudi watches Matty lay out morphine, bandages - and saws.

RUDI

Matty, in the morning half the
Luftwaffe will be here, and U-
boats too, the British ships
are scared to death of them --

MATTY

(mildly)

Shut up... shhhhh... Remember
that day when we were little,
playing football out on our
street? Arguing about which
of us would marry Elsa Hiller?
And - that airplane flew over,
the first we'd ever seen?

RUDI

We waved at the pilot, and he
waved back. Back then,
airplanes were - a miracle.

MATTY

Well, for one of us...

Both smile. A grizzled PETTY OFFICER, 45, walks up to Rudi,
an envelope in his oil-blackened hand.

PETTY OFFICER

Lieutenant, I was hoping you
could get this to my wife.
It's a letter, and some money.

RUDI

Of course.

PETTY OFFICER

Tell her I love her, and to
kiss the children twice as
much.

The man bows slightly, leaves. Rudi sees two silver objects stuffed in Matty's jacket. They're his flute.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - "A" TURRET - NIGHT

No noise but distant ship CLANKS and the snores of the crew.

John is in his officer's uniform, looking at himself in a polished brass bulkhead plate.

Lieutenant Chichester juts chin and chest, tries out his stern-officer expression. He sucks in his Guinness-gut and struts a bit, not quite Nelson at Trafalgar, but he'll do.

SAILOR (O.S.)

All hail His Highness!

Much male laughter, clapping. John spins to see his crew, all awake. He grins, self-conscious for once.

ANOTHER SAILOR

Congratulations, lieutenant,
you really rate it.

A midshipman enters and begins around handing out clean socks and underwear, fading everyone's smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. BISMARCK - SEAPLANE LAUNCHING DECK - DAY (DAWN)

Over a hundred men have gathered to watch Rudi escape Hell. The plane's motor is warming; Bismarck's logs are stowed.

Rudi pockets twenty more letters pressed on him by the damned, salutes Lutjens, then climbs in the cockpit after a last look at poor Matty.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Launch aircraft!

A crewman hits the catapult valve... and nothing. Rudi's plane sits on the launcher. He cuts the engine, gets out. Crewmen pore over the launch gear, find Bozey's bullet hole.

RUDI

What is it?

SEAPLANE CREWMAN

Yes. Right here. Something -
a shell splinter, probably -
hit the air-feed gasket.
There's no pressure.

CAPTAIN LINDEMANN

Can you mend it?

SEAPLANE CREWMAN

In two days, perhaps.

Silence. Rudi isn't going anywhere. A few smirk at him.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

That aircraft is a fire
hazard. Remove the logs and
push it overboard.

The crewmen comply. The seaplane PLOPS upside-down and
sinks. Rudi gives the logs to Lindemann, then heads below.
A big, rough-looking SEAMAN steps in Rudi's way.

SEAMAN

(sneering)

Won't you please join us?

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A long, God's-eye view downward: Bismarck circles slowly,
wallowing in the swells. Prince of Wales, Rodney, Norfolk,
Suffolk, and other ships creep towards her like picadors in
a bullring. SUPERIMPOSE: TUESDAY.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

A new gunnery-control station has been rigged for John.

JOHN

Range is twenty-three-four,
Captain. Target acquired.

CAPTAIN BURKE
When you're ready, then.
Signal same to Rodney.

EXT. OCEAN - PRINCE OF WALES AND RODNEY

charge the enemy head-on, a mile apart. Rodney's forward guns ERUPT.

BISMARCK

awkwardly dodges Rodney's shells, FIRES back at her.

RODNEY

is surrounded by a forest of shell splashes. Then one HITS her afterdeck, near where Hood got it. But Rodney's deck armor holds and she rams toward Bismarck, FIRING away.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

John watches the skirmish, then picks up the microphone to "A" and "B" turrets.

JOHN
(low, to Bismarck)
Lovely day to cook, eh?
(into microphone)
Aim Oh One Six and shoot.

Beat - nothing - a tense glance from Burke - then a ROAR as the six forward guns fire as one.

BISMARCK

Five splashes bracket it... the sixth POUNDS onto one of the forward turrets, blows the back of it clean off... perfect shot. A few survivors stagger from it, clothes aflame.

EXT. OCEAN - PRINCE OF WALES, RODNEY, NORFOLK, SUFFOLK

blast away at Bismarck from all sides.

BISMARCK

A dazed, cornered boxer. HIT after HIT rains down.

INT. BISMARCK - BELOWDECKS

A salvo penetrates the deck above and EXPLODES inside a large room. Men are thrown, shredded, incinerated.

INT. BISMARCK - AMMUNITION MAGAZINE

A chamber full of shells fills with smoke. A dozen sailors are trapped inside by a jammed hatch.

INTERCOM VOICE (V.O.)
Fire, adjacent to forward
secondary-battery magazine,
flood it - repeat - FLOOD!

Water gushes into the ammo room. The men panic, tug furiously at the door, but the water overwhelms them.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

John eyes Bismarck with grim satisfaction, checks gauges.

CAPTAIN BURKE
Turn Green Nine Oh, bring rear
turret to bear.

EXT. OCEAN - PRINCE OF WALES AND RODNEY

turn in crisp unison to starboard and fire broadsides.

EXT. BISMARCK - DECK

A twisted, blackened, shambling junkpile. Just a few guns firing. Scores of men lie about, crippled, baying, helpless. Others, their nerve gone, rush from belowdecks. Most are cut down by the incessant, hellish shellfire.

INT. BISMARCK - WARDROOM / HOSPITAL

Matty gazes dumbly at the carnage. Two hundred men lie about, screaming and thrashing. A dozen overwhelmed medics do their best, but the casualties keep coming - and coming.

MATTY'S POV

Men with arms and legs blown off, blinded, gutted. By the hatchway, a pile of thirty burned-black sailors all scream for morphine. The living envy the dead.

RUDI

staggers in, carrying a dying boy on a stretcher. The man helping Rudi drops, holding his crimson-soaked middle.

STRETCHER-BEARER

I need to sit a minute. My
apologies. Just a minute -

A terrible, mushy sound and a huge wad of yellow intestine bursts from the gut-shot man. He falls back, dead.

RUDI

Matty! Help me lift this kid!

Matty grabs the whimpering boy on the stretcher by his ankles - and the flesh crumbles in ash... nothing but ash.

A FLASH and a giant CYMBAL of noise knocks them both across the wardroom. They push the dead and dying off themselves, stagger up. There is now a noticeable list to Bismarck.

INTERCOM VOICE (V.O.)

Permission is granted to
abandon ship - repeat -

Another EXPLOSION nearby. The wardroom fills with smoke.

RUDI

Our duty can't be done
anymore, Matty. Come on.

The door out is a solid ball of flame. They struggle through a pile of casualties to a ladder leading belowdecks.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Everything on the once-immaculate platform is smashed or burned. A bloodied Lutjens, Lindemann and the bridge staff look out the shot-away windows at the maelstrom below.

ADMIRAL LUTJENS

You've all done well. You may go. Captain, see to your men.

Most hurry out. Lindemann and a few others look back at the unmoving Lutjens; he dismisses them with a small gesture.

INT. BISMARCK - PASSAGEWAY

Rudi and Matty scramble down ladders, deep into the ship. There's the THONK o.s. of shells landing abovedecks.

One passageway has collapsed. Another is filled with fire. They try a hatch, then another; both are jammed. The two keep descending, past wreckage and corpses.

RUDI

Ever been down here?

MATTY

I don't even know what they do down here. Engine... stuff. Men getting dirty. Right?

VOICES o.s. A dozen young men, ordinary as shipping clerks, run up breathlessly.

AMMO LOADER

You two know the way out?

MATTY

It's not the way we came.

AMMO LOADER

Not this way either. We load the anti-aircraft shells onto the lifts up to the deck. There's fucking SMOKE coming down the lift shafts! Smoke around ammo? A holy sign from God to run like a bastard!

RUDI

You go back our way, you die.
We go back your way, probably
we die. So - after you.

Ammo Loader leads them aft. Worsening smoke, then a close, hard EXPLOSION.

INT. BISMARCK - AMMUNITION DECK

Coughing and gagging, the loaders crawl past smoky chambers stocked with ammunition. Matty and Rudi behind them.

AMMO LOADER

There's... a big air shaft on
the other side. It... goes
down, but I think it's down to
the engines... I know you can
get upstairs from there -

Very close, a terrific POP draws screams. One of the loaders has had half his abdomen shot away, like a giant's bite.

Foot-long anti-aircraft shells are IGNITING, ripping holes in bulkheads the size of a man's head. Four others are hit.

Rudi, Matty and two of the loaders cower in another ammo chamber. POP-POP-POP, like a string of mammoth firecrackers. Five shells PUNCH through the bulkhead, just miss other ammo piled in there. Silence.

The four venture out. The other loaders are dead. Rudi runs past the chambers, followed by the others. They dodge flying splinters and igniting shells. One loader sees the meter-wide air shaft, dives into it.

INT. BISMARCK - BOILER ROOM

The four have fallen twenty feet and are mashed against a grating above the boiler room. They kick it loose and are helped down by sailors. Fifty men in here.

BOILER ROOM CHIEF

You jokers bent that grating,
you're all on report!

The bedraggled quartet gapes at the Chief. His men are working as casually as if they're docked in Hamburg.

WATER TENDER

How's the fight going?
There's something wrong with
our telephone.

RUDI

My god, they gave the abandon
ship order twenty minutes ago.
You want out of here!

An odd, metal-and-mush NOISE above. Chief whistles loudly.

BOILER ROOM CHIEF

Pack up and head topside!

Above the fifty-foot boiler, a bulkhead gives way with an ear-splitting CROMP. Some water pours down.

The men panic and run aft. Rudi and Matty fight with the others to squeeze through a hatchway.

A colossal load of seawater sluices in, splashes over the red-hot boiler.

A great, terrible DETONATION...

RUDI AND MATTY

are in the hatchway. The hatch blows shut behind them with tremendous force. A long, awful bellow from Matty... his RIGHT HAND is GONE, severed at the wrist by the hatch.

Rudi gulps down his panic, wrestles the hysterical Matty down. He pulls the belt off a dead sailor and rigs a tourniquet on his friend's arm, then carries him.

MATTY

(babbling)

It hurts, it still hurts, oh
god how can it still hurt when
it's gone? Just put me down,
I want to quit.

RUDI

No, just a little farther.
Come on, we're going for a
walk. Let's get some fresh
air, all right? Fresh air.

RUDI'S POV

The horror is unspeakable - a slaughterhouse. Boiling oil,
water, steam, blood. Men are splattered against walls, into
each other. The few survivors flail about, or sit stupid
with shock, vomiting. An officer SHOTS himself, drops.

The seaman who taunted Rudi after the seaplane's failure is
standing at attention, saluting. Stark-mad raving:

SEAMAN

OF COURSE YOU ARE THE
SCHOOLMASTER, HERR SCHMIDT,
AND YOU CHOOSE WHO PLAYS ON
THE FIRST ELEVEN! BUT ALL
FRANZ DOES IS SHOOT THE BALL,
HE IS A SELFISH BOY, SO VERY
SELFISH! I SHOULD BE THE ONE
TO PLAY MIDFIELDER TODAY --

EXT. BISMARCK

It's an execution now, not a sea fight. The big guns are
twisted, silent. Flames dot the hulk from stem to stern.
House-sized holes in the deck, hull, and superstructure pour
smoke. The big swastika flag hangs limp and torn.

EXT. OCEAN - THE BRITISH SHIPS

creep closer, lobbing a fantastic array of shells.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

JOHN

Captain, gunnery is on for
range, on for line. All
rounds hitting or straddling.

CAPTAIN BURKE

Well done. Can't say I'm
enjoying this sort of
slaughter very much, but
there's no helping it.

JOHN

(growling)
Jolliest day of me life. Sir.

Burke is spent, weak by the mass-murder ambiance of this morning. He looks at John sadly, stifles a cough.

INT. BISMARCK - BRIDGE

Lutjens alone on the shattered platform above the ship; everyone else has deserted or been killed. Nothing left but to wait his turn - and here it is. The SHRRSSSH of a shell dropping; closer... Lutjens waits, patient as for a barber.

EXT. BISMARCK

The salvo BLOWS the bridge utterly off the superstructure, like a cap off a bottle.

INT. BISMARCK - BELOWDECKS

Rudi carries Matty aft through one demolished passage after another. Waist-high water, bodies floating.

Bismarck lurches hard to one side. The water rises. Rudi struggles up a ladder. DARKNESS as the lights are shorted out. Cries. Dim LIGHT as an emergency circuit takes hold.

LUFTWAFFE PILOT #1

Don't bother, Rudi, we went
that way.

Rudi whirls, sees both his fellow pilots, sitting on a pile of crates with a half-dozen others. All are very drunk.

LUFTWAFFE PILOT #2

Hell, we went everywhere. You
go up, there's fire.

RUDI

That's all that's in you?
You're not even going to try?

LUFTWAFFE PILOT #1

"Hamlet, there is not an
hour's life left in thee." So
pass it here. Thirsty?

Bottles are handed around. In the pilot's laps are gas masks. Rudi grabs them, leaves with Matty.

INT. BISMARCK - ABOVE SHAFT ALLEY

A large, open machinery area above the ship's great propeller shafts. A flame-lashed stairway. Rudi sees a mattress floating. Dunks himself and Matty in the oily water. Pulls gas masks on them both. Grabs the mattress, drapes it over them, and lumbers up the stairs.

IN THE INFERNO

Rudi trudges through with his burden. Finds a small landing, looks around. Something lands on him. Seawater. He drops the mattress, lugs Matty up a tiny ladder.

INT. AFT MAIN-BATTERY MAGAZINE

The deep-storage for the aft big guns, jammed with 200 of the one-ton shells. Water dripping down. Rudi looks up.

HIS POV - THE AMMO-HOIST SHAFT

A meter-wide tunnel that carries the shells up to the deck.

RUDI / MATTY

Rudi shakes Matty furiously, pummels him.

RUDI

Matty. MATTY KIRCHERR. LET'S
GO. MATTY. YOU'LL HAVE TO DO
THIS YOURSELF. CLIMB. NOW.

Dazed, Matty starts up the shaft, Rudi behind him, pushing.

AMMO-HOIST SHAFT

The two struggle upwards. The NOISE of incoming gunfire grows louder. Two other men appear below them, trying the same thing. A SOUND above, like a roller coaster.

RUDI

The side! Stick to the side!

An instant later one of Bismarck's unspent, fifteen-inch-thick shells DROPS down the shaft. It barely misses Rudi and Matty but carries the other two men away. A CRASH and screams o.s. below.

They climb higher and there it is - a fire door at the top of the shaft, jammed open less than a foot. DAYLIGHT. Immense noise, heat and smoke up here.

RUDI

(continuing)

All right, here we go. Great day to be young. And skinny.

Rudi stuffs Matty through the gap - legs, good arm, chest, head, bad arm. Another sailor climbs up, watches Rudi. Not young and not skinny. Rudi grunts, yells, contorts his way through. Trades looks with the other man. Hopeless.

INT. TURRET "DORA"

The rearmost big-gun turret, torn open by gunfire and full of scarlet, butchered meat. Rudi pulls Matty out of it.

EXT. BISMARCK - AFTERDECK

The leftward list is over thirty degrees. Covered with wreckage, bodies, fire, screeching wounded. Dozens of men are jumping off it, choosing freezing over frying. Thirty others, missing their legs, cannot.

LEGLSS MAN

Push me in, please, please!

Rudi and Matty duck the shellbursts, tighten the man's life belt, shove him into the sea, then a few others.

THEIR POV

The slaughter is now positively medieval. One man tries to jump ship and is lopped in half when he does. Another runs through smoke into a shell hole, falling into the flames.

A fuel supply IGNITES nearby with an enormous fireball.

RUDI / MATTY

Matty totters, begins to faint, Rudi shakes him and pushes him overboard. Then Rudi jumps in too.

The water's awful cold seizes them like the Last Judgement. They swim from the wreck, Rudi keeping Matty afloat.

INT. PRINCE OF WALES - BRIDGE

John looks at the flaming, listing enemy. It isn't the sweet revenge he thought it would be.

CAPTAIN BURKE

What the hell do we have to do to sink that damned thing?

PRINCE OF WALES FIRST OFFICER

Sir, Rodney, Norfolk, Suffolk
all low on fuel and
ammunition, they request
permission to break for home.

CAPTAIN BURKE

All granted. Signal cruiser
Dorsetshire: "Use your
torpedoes if you have any."

EXT. DORSETSHIRE

Torpedoes SHOOT into the sea from tubes on her deck.

EXT. BISMARCK

Two torpedoes CONNECT below the armor belt, rip huge holes. Bursting boilers crumple Bismarck; it rolls onto its side. Great chunks of the ship - turrets, superstructure, masts - break off and CRASH into the water, smashing scores of men, barely missing Rudi and Matty.

ON STERN SECTION

A cluster of men scramble from the rolling side of the ship to its now-upturned keel. They jump the wreck into the ocean until just one is left. It is Captain Lindemann.

RUDI / MATTY
CAPTAIN! THIS WAY, SIR!
WE'LL HELP YOU! CAPTAIN!

THEIR POV - LINDEMANN

looks at them numbly, salutes, stands still as the stern dips below the waves. The sea washes over his hips, neck...

UNDERWATER

Eyes open, Lindemann inhales a great lungful of seawater.

IN WATER - RUDI AND MATTY

with over a thousand souls, many howling as the salt water festers their burns. The waves hoist and drop them twenty feet. Junk in the water; corpses too, and pieces of them.

But the worst of all is the OIL: a horrible slick of viscous muck around the wreck. The stinking, syrupy stuff covers everyone, fouling noses and mouths, blinding eyes. In some patches it burns, and burns men with it.

Matty gags, retches. Rudi pulls him in the water, away from

THE BISMARCK

as the ship begins its final plunge.

The bow raises, lurches, then slides under the waves, 1300 men still inside. The suction of sinking takes fifty swimmers with it.

RUDI / MATTY

move up behind a crewman in the water, gasping.

RUDI

Excuse me... sir... my friend
is hurt very badly, could he
wear your lifebelt for a few -

Rudi touches the man's shoulder, he flips him over to reveal NOTHING from the rib cage down. Rudi pulls the belt off the remains, buckles it onto Matty.

THEIR POV

Prince of Wales is a mile away, closing slowly.

RUDI / MATTY

RUDI

Matty... see that? They're
coming for us. You hang on.
Just kick with your feet, I'll
pull you. Matty. KICK!

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - PLATFORM OUTSIDE BRIDGE

The officers watch as the ship draws close to the Germans.

CAPTAIN BURKE

Muster all pharmacist's mates
and marines on deck. Bring up
blankets, soup, brandy.

PRINCE OF WALES FIRST OFFICER

Sir, request permission to
supervise the rescue detail.

Burke begins to say yes, stops himself.

CAPTAIN BURKE

No. No, denied. Chichester -
you do it.

JOHN

I will not, sir! I won't
dirty the hands that served
Hood saving those Nazi scum -

CAPTAIN BURKE

(as if with the last
of his strength)
Lieutenant, that is a COMMAND!

John gives Burke a murderous look... stalks off.

EXT. OCEAN - BISMARCK SURVIVORS

Some simply quit and disappear. The stronger ones thrash on
towards the British ship.

RUDI

Keep your feet moving, all of
you!

BURNED SAILOR

They'll just shoot us. They
told us so in school.

MATTY

They will? They'll sh -

RUDI

Stop that talk NOW! They
won't shoot us, now swim.

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - NEAR "A" TURRET

John exits the superstructure. Crewmen tie rescue ropes to
the rail, lower them over the side. Medics are piling up
blankets and medicine. Royal Marines line up, rifles ready.
John's gun crew is there too, watching.

GUN CREWMAN

Splendid shooting, sir. Proud
to serve with you.

JOHN

Well... thanks to the lot of
you, for... for not killin' me
when my back was turned. Grab
stretchers and blankets.
Lively, now!

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

Engines, all stop!

John AD LIB issues orders to the rescue detail. Then he
strides to the rail, shoving bullets into a revolver, eyeing
the swimming Germans and grimacing.

Burke totters onto the main deck, sees John.

JOHN'S POV - ALONGSIDE PRINCE OF WALES

The cloud of humanity in the water, shouting, crying, thrown
like toys by the waves, covered with blood and oil...

JOHN

eyes them. Yes, they are Germans, enemies, killers, but
beyond all... they are sailors, in peril on the sea.

He pockets the gun, grabs a rope and pulls.

JOHN

You marines! Secure your
weapons and help! If there's
a man on a rope, pull it up!

The marines obey. The first German, a terribly burned boy
of 17, flops on the deck, convulsing. Others follow.

IN THE WATER

The side of Prince of Wales is a thirty-foot, vertical
mountainside. The waves batter the Germans against it.

As the battleship rocks side to side, the oil-slickened
ropes drop and pull out of reach. One man just misses with
his last strength, vanishes.

His only hand frozen, Matty grips the oily rope with his teeth. Rudi is trying to help him.

JOHN'S POV

Men are savagely biting, clawing, stepping on each other to get on the ropes. Among them are a slight blond kid with one hand gone and a young Luftwaffe officer.

AT THE RAIL

John scrambles down a small rope ladder, grabs the Luftwaffe man by the scruff, hauls him onto the deck. The two look at each other for a second, gasping. Rudi nods thanks, then looks around for Matty.

RUDI'S POV - IN THE WATER

Stronger men have elbowed Matty aside; he's face-down in the water, unmoving.

AT THE RAIL

Two marines grab Rudi, try to pull him away. Rudi knocks one down; the other marine goes for his rifle, swearing. Rudi dives off the side. Shots CRACK past him.

IN THE WATER

Rudi punches four men aside, grabs Matty, ties the rope around his lifebelt. Matty is yanked to salvation.

Rudi grabs a rope... and it jerks away from him.

The sheer, gray side of the battleship has begun to move.

ON DECK

Medics tend to Matty. John feels the ship move forward. He grabs Burke.

JOHN
Why are we underway?

CAPTAIN BURKE

Lookouts saw something in the water, a periscope, maybe.

JOHN

Maybe?!

CAPTAIN BURKE

Stopped in the water like this, we'd be good as dead! Our day is done. Carry on, lieutenant.

Matty and the other prisoners look over the rail in horror.

THEIR POV - THEIR BISMARCK SHIPMATES

claw at the slick, hopelessly steep side of the ship. A few hang from the rescue ropes, Rudi among them. Huge waves pound at them; one by one, the men are wrestled off the ropes into the sea.

Rudi hangs on longer than any of the others, then he, too, is flung into the Atlantic.

EXT. PRINCE OF WALES - AFTERDECK

Barely more than a hundred of Bismarck's crew of 2,400 are huddled on deck, shivering with cold and shock.

A pair of marines motion to Matty to follow them to sick bay. He shakes them off, gazes at the endless, roiling sea.

JOHN

It's all right fellows, let him stay up here for a bit.

The ship's chaplain weaves through the survivors, murmuring prayers with them and slipping them cigarettes.

Matty impulsively reaches his mangled right arm into his jacket, winces. Reaches left hand to right pocket, pulls out the two pieces of his flute. Struggles to fit them together.

John helps him. Matty mutters his thanks.

Holding the flute in his only hand, Matty begins to play Muss i' denn ("Must I Leave?") - the song they played as they left port seven days ago. The dazed men raggedly begin singing along. John and Burke look on at them.

EXT. OCEAN - BISMARCK CREW IN THE WATER

Very quiet. Prince of Wales pulls away. Rudi and all the other men stare at it mutely. A few cries and whimperings, muffled by the icy waves. A faint speck of flute music.

No one swims; there is nowhere to swim; nothing to do now but wait awhile for the end.

SUPERIMPOSE: The German Navy never again sent a battleship onto the high seas.

SUPERIMPOSE: Six months later, three days after Pearl Harbor, HMS Prince of Wales was sunk off Singapore by Japanese aircraft.

FADE OUT.

THE END