

SHEEAN

By  
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Based on a true story

FADE IN:

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY (1942)

EDWARD "TEDDY" SHEEAN (18) makes his way back to the aft 20mm Oerlikon cannon on the Australian Corvette. Teddy takes one last bite from a ham sandwich. Tosses the crust into the sea.

Walking behind Teddy is the ships captain Lieutenant Commander DAVID RICHARDS (55)

DAVID RICHARDS  
Hold it right there sailor.

Teddy stops and turns to face David Richards. Then stands to attention.

TEDDY  
Sir, I was just returning to my station.

DAVID RICHARDS  
We may be at sea. But we don't treat the ocean as our personal garbage can.

TEDDY  
Yes sir.

Teddy becomes nervous.

DAVID RICHARDS  
You'll be on report should you do that again.

TEDDY  
Yes sir.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Stand easy. It's not the worst thing to do. Where are you from?

TEDDY  
Sir from Tasmania, Latrobe

DAVID RICHARDS  
Okay, you can relax now, no need for the rigid Navy routine. I like to know about the men I command.

David starts walking to the aft Oerlikon cannon. Teddy joins him.

TEDDY  
I grew up around that area. How about you sir? What did you do before the War?

DAVID RICHARDS

I Joined the Navy at as soon as I was old enough. Never really known any other life.

TEDDY

Quiet an achievement sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

Yes, I suppose it is.

They arrive at the aft Oerlikon cannon.

TEDDY

I better get back to it sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

Very well, carry on sailor.

David heads back towards the bridge.

At the Oerlikon cannon. Teddy checks the magazine and replaces it with a full one.

Oiling the gun is Able Seaman JACK DUCKWORTH (20).

JACK DUCKWORTH

(sarcastically )

Nice stroll with the skipper, did Ya have a nice lunch date?

TEDDY

Shut up, don't go spreading that around the ship.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Steady on mate, The skipper is a good bloke. He does that with everyone.

TEDDY

Four days like this, nothin' but a sandwich and a peach slice. Enough to drive a man crazy if ya ask me.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Look, lad, I've been around this Navy a little while and let me tell you, havin' a whinge does nothin' for morale.

TEDDY

Who said anythin' about havin' a whinge? Sorry, mate, Navy life is not all it's cracked up to be.

JACK DUCKWORTH

It never is.

The signal for action stations RINGS out across the ship.

High in the distance, 13 small plane shapes can be made out. Six are Japanese "Zero" fighters. The other seven are twin-engine "Betty" bombers.

All of the planes peel off from their formation, and approach the Armidale from all sides of the ship.

All the guns from Armidale open FIRE with a hail of 20mm rounds.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

Lieutenant-Commander David Richards watches a torpedo bomber come in.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Steady as she goes.

At the helm is Ordinary Seaman RUSSEL CARO (19).

RUSSEL CARO  
Aye, sir.

DAVID RICHARDS  
All ahead full, smartly.

Operating the ship's engine telegraph is Sub-Lieutenant BUCKLAND (29). He places the ships engine telegraph into the ahead full position.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Aye. All ahead full.

A torpedo bomber lets go a torpedo on the port quarter. It SPLASHES into the sea, speeding toward the Armidale.

DAVID RICHARDS  
HARD OVER TO STARBOARD.

Russel Caro frantically spins the ship's wheel over to starboard. The Armidale turns sharply.

RUSSEL CARO  
Aye. Hard over to starboard.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
They missed us.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Rudder amidships.

RUSSEL CARO  
Aye. Rudder amidships.

A second torpedo bomber comes in from starboard midships. The bomber lets go its torpedo. Bombs EXPLODE on either side of the Armidale. Sending up huge columns of water.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Hard over to Starboard.

RUSSEL CARO  
Aye. Hard over to starboard.

The Armidale sharply makes the turn, the torpedo passes by parallel to the Armidale.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - PORT BRIDGE WING - DAY

The crew manning the 20mm Oerlikon cannon have a torpedo bomber in their sights. The huge volume of FIRE from the gun causes the pilot of the bomber to drop his torpedo too late.

The torpedo flies only a metre above the bridge and SPLASHES harmlessly down on the starboard side of the ship.

A Japanese Zero comes in low skimming above the waves. Approaches from the port side aft. Drops a torpedo.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Shit that was close. Keep calling  
out the targets.

The noise from both the bridge wing guns is deafening. A moment later Sub Lt. Buckland sees the torpedo coming in.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
(points)  
TORPEDO PORT SIDE.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Hard over to port.

RUSSEL CARO  
Aye, hard over to port.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Where the hell did that come from?  
Quickly get that damn wheel over.

The torpedo is getting closer and closer. All of the ship's action stations work frantically to fight off the attacking Japanese.

The torpedo HITS the Armidale on the port side just aft of the mess deck. The ships decks split and fracture apart. Some of the sailors on deck are killed.

A second torpedo HITS the Armidale, a bomb EXPLODES on the starboard side aft blowing a huge hole into the hull.

One sailor runs down from the bridge yelling to abandon ship. Men are jumping overboard, grabbing onto what ever floats.

INT. JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTER - DAY

The pilot can see the sailors in the water, he turns the fighter into their direction. The pilot opens FIRE with the machine guns. Killing some of the sailors in the water.

Behind him a second zero fighter finishes of the ones that were missed by the first fighter.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - DECK - DAY

Men scramble to get the ships whaler and life rafts away. One sailor rushes over to the depth charges and sets the depth charge pistols to the safe position.

Another sailor races over to the minesweeping gear and cuts loose the paravane floats into the sea.

INT. JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTER - DAY

Below the pilot looks for more targets to machine gun. Spotting a large gathering of sailors in the sea. The pilot turns the fighter towards them. Tracer FIRE coming up at him.

The pilot looks down his gun sight.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy rushes over to help a sailor free a life boat. The hull and decks are raked with machine gun FIRE. Teddy looks at the dead bodies floating in the water.

Teddy looks at the men being machine gunned in the water. Approaching the ships rail, Teddy climbs over.

More men are killed just meters away from teddy. Teddy looks up at all the aircraft in the air. Looking back at the aft Oerlikon cannon.

Teddy climbs back over the ships rail, scrambles his way back to the Oerlikon cannon.

INT. JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTER - DAY

The pilot can see a lone sailor rush back to the aft Oerlikon cannon and open FIRE. Tracer fire rakes the fighter, killing the pilot.

The pilot slumps forward on the control yoke sending the fighter into a steep dive toward the sea. The fighter cartwheels as it CRASHES into the sea.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy continues to pour on the FIRE from the cannon. The deck around him CRACKS and POPS as rounds from a zero fighter come in at him.

EXT. TASMANIA - LATROBE - ROAD - DAY (1939)

Teddy (now 15) rides his push bike down the road. A semi-rural area, with lush green fields and dairy farms.

He turns onto a property and rides up the long path to a weather-beaten fibro home.

SUPER: "THREE YEARS EARLIER"

Resting the push bike against the stairs, Teddy KNOCKS on the front door.

The door is opened by ANGUS HAYS (55), a right-arm amputee from the elbow, with burn scar tissue around the stump.

INT. HAYS HOME - DAY

The home is sparse. With minimal period furniture. Angus shows Teddy into his home.

TEDDY

Hello, Mr. Hays. What can I do for you today?

ANGUS HAYS

Come in, Teddy, you can start by chopping some wood. Then a few odd jobs around the house.

TEDDY

Righto, Mr. Hays. Anything else?

ANGUS HAYS

No, that should do for today. I need to get down to the store for a few things.

TEDDY

I can do that for ya, Mr. Hays.

ANGUS HAYS

No, I can do it. I may only have one arm, but I'm not a complete invalid.

Angus rubs the stump of his right arm as they make their way outside to the backyard.

EXT. HAYS HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Small logs ready to be cut lie beside a tree stump. An axe's blade is buried in the stump.

Teddy takes the axe and places a log on the stump. Starts chopping the wood.

TEDDY

Does it get itchy much?

ANGUS HAYS

Does what get itchy?

TEDDY

You know? The... um.

Teddy gestures to the amputated arm.

ANGUS HAYS

Sometimes, but that is none of your business.

TEDDY

Sorry, Mr. Hays.

Angus removes a small hip flask from his trouser pocket - takes a sip.

ANGUS HAYS

War, never get involved, boy. The damn Germans, they never learn. Should be wiped from the face of the Earth.

TEDDY

That's not really fair Mr. Hays you can't blame the Germans for everything.

Teddy chops another log.

ANGUS HAYS

Then you're a damn fool. And so are your brothers. You have no idea what war is.

Angus stops Teddy, and holds his stump up to Teddy. Only an inch from Teddy's face.

ANGUS HAYS

See this, boy? This is what war does to ya. And I was one of the lucky ones.

Teddy stares at the stump.

TEDDY

I'm sorry, Mr. Hays. I meant nothin' by it.

ANGUS HAYS

I can't stop ya, or your brothers for that matter. But remember boy, only dead heroes don't make it back.

TEDDY

I won't forget Mr. Hays.

EXT. SHEEAN FAMILY HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Teddy along with his father JAMES SHEEAN (59) pull weeds from the garden. Toss them into a bucket.

Teddy's mother MARY (56) waters the garden with a watering can.

Teddy's brothers THOMAS (28) and WILLIAM (24) - smoke cigarettes.

THOMAS

(to William)

How about this Hitler bloke?, Strewth sounds like he is going to be causing lots of trouble.

WILLIAM

The poms can deal with him. No need for us to get involved.

THOMAS

That's what worries me. You know what the bloody poms are like. One in all bloody well in.

WILLIAM

Too bloody right mate, never could fight without us doin' most of the bloody work.

MARY

Come now boys, enough of the politics.

THOMAS

No, mum this has been brewing for some time now, take a look at that clown Chamberlain. He tried to appease Hitler. Look where it got us?

WILLIAM

Clown? That's a bit rich. He did modernise the Royal Air Force.

William takes a puff of his cigarette.

MARY

I do wish you boys would give up that filthy habit, stinking up my garden.

THOMAS

(to William)

The real problem is Churchill. How could anyone forgive him for Gallipoli, our boys were nothing but cannon fodder to him.

James rises to his feet and Joins them.

JAMES

(to William)

You weren't even born then. What would you know about that time.

MARY

He would have learned it from his teachers James.

WILLIAM

I'll give you a tip, at least Churchill will have the balls to take on Hitler.

William stubs out his cigarette.

INT. SHEEAN FAMILY HOME - LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting on a lounge chair is James. Beside him is a radio cabinet. Playing Music softly. Mary sits on a couch, knitting a white wool scarf.

SUPER: "1ST SEPTEMBER 1939"

Next to Mary sits William reading a news paper.

The MUSIC from the radio stops.

MARY

James, that could be something important?. Turn it up a little please.

James increases the volume on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

*Here is the Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Honourable R.G. Menzies.*

William folds the news paper up, placing it to one side. Mary stops knitting.

ROBERT MENZIES (V.O.)

*Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.*

MARY

No more. I don't want to hear it. It's going to be like the great war all over again. No more I say.

JAMES

Hush, I want to hear what the Prime Minister is saying.

Teddy enters the room.

TEDDY

Dad What's going on? What is Mum upset for?

James does not respond, he only stares at the radio, straining to hear. In the background the address by the Prime Minister continues.

WILLIAM

(to Teddy)

We're going to war.

EXT. TASMANIA - LATROBE - TOWN CENTRE - NIGHT

Teddy and his girlfriend KATH LAPTHORNE (17) exit the local cinema. They walk hand in hand down the street.

The street busy with folks out for a Saturday night.

Traffic passing by, a Army flatbed truck with armed soldiers in the back drives by. Their faces camouflaged black.

Both Kath and Teddy watch as the Army truck drives past.

SUPER: "MARCH 1941"

KATH LAPTHORNE

What do you think will happen to us? I might never see you again.

TEDDY

Try not to become too upset my love. I'm not leaving now. Still 'ave two months of training yet.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Where will they send you? I couldn't bear it to be away from you.

TEDDY

I don't know, could be on the other side of the world for all I know.

They stop. Teddy lets go of her hand.

KATH LAPTHORNE

What's wrong? Something you're not telling me.

TEDDY

No, it's nothing.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Tell me, before I have to leave. My dad is picking me up.

TEDDY

We should get married.

KATH LAPTHORNE

We're too Young, can it wait until after the war? Besides we haven't well... you know.

TEDDY

Know what?

KATH LAPTHORNE

(blushing)

Teddy.

TEDDY

Oh... Yes I see what you mean.

KATH LAPTHORNE

I don't want to rush things. Hope you're okay with that?

TEDDY

Yes. Suppose so. Can you come over to my place tomorrow? Can you do that?

A car pulls up beside them, driven by Kath's father. Kath enters the car, rolls down the window.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Sure I'll be there.

TEDDY

Bye.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Bye.

Kath and her father drive away.

EXT. SHEEAN FAMILY HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Teddy is dressed in his Navy uniform.

Kath is wearing her Jodpurs pants, a white shirt and a cardigan.

TEDDY

Sorry about last night, I was just being silly.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Not at all, but I'm glad you feel about me that way. You know some day.

TEDDY

Yes some day.

James comes out from the house. In his hand is a box brownie camera.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Hello Mr. Sheean, how are you?

JAMES

Fine, look how smart Teddy is all done up to the nines in his uniform.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Yes Teddy does look very nice. Is that a camera Mr. Sheean?

JAMES

Yes it is, marvellous piece of technology.

KATH LAPTHORNE

Is it your camera?

JAMES

No, I borrowed it from the bloke across the street. It pays to have good relations with your neighbours.

TEDDY

Dad, please.

JAMES

What's wrong boy? The old man an embarrassment? How about a picture of you two?

TEDDY

Sure that would be smashing.

James points to where he wants Teddy and Kath to stand.

JAMES

That's the spot, a little closer now.

Teddy takes a step closer to Kath.

JAMES

Hold it a minute.

James walks up to Teddy and tilts his Navy cap back a little on his head.

TEDDY

Take it easy Dad, I had it the way I like it.

JAMES

That's much better, the cap was covering your eyes. On three. One, two, three.

The picture is taken of Kath and Teddy standing together.

EXT. HOBART - HMAS DERWENT NAVAL BASE - DAY

Teddy and ten other Navy trainees gather around a 20mm Oerlikon cannon. On the ground next to the gun are ten 100-round magazines.

The cannon is fitted with a leather strap, the operator places around their back to provide stability while firing the cannon.

Standing in front of them is Leading Seaman LOUIS (45).

LOUIS

Gather around men, today you will learn about the Oerlikon cannon. And then you will all take turns at firing it down range.

TEDDY

Finally something good for a change.

The comment brings a few sniggers from the other trainees.

LOUIS

One more remark from you Sheean and you'll be scrubbing floors for the rest of the day.

TEDDY

Sorry sir.

LOUIS

Right then, to start off with the barrel on its own weighs in at a whopping one hundred and fifty pounds. The rounds are twenty millimetre.

Louis takes a single round from a magazine and passes it to Teddy. He looks at it and passes it on to the next trainee.

TEDDY

Blighmy hate to get hit by one of those bastards.

LOUIS

As you can see, the rounds are quite large and are designed to inflict maximum damage to the enemy.

TEDDY

When do we get to have a go?

LOUIS

As soon as I'm done. Now pipe down. Each round must be greased before loading into the magazine.

Louis picks up a magazine and demonstrates how to load the magazine onto the Cannon.

LOUIS

I want all of you to take turns in loading and unloading a magazine.

Each of the trainees picks up a magazine and has a turn of loading and unloading a magazine.

Teddy has his turn. He struggles with the procedure.

TEDDY

What is the matter with this thing?

LOUIS

Not good enough, no enemy is going to wait while you figure it out. Do it again.

Teddy finally gets the magazine loaded and unloaded correctly.

TEDDY  
Right, much better.

LOUIS  
See how much better you do without  
the smart arse remarks?

Louis shows the correct stance and body position to fire the gun. Placing the leather strap around his back, then leaning against it to take up the slack. COCKS the gun and FIRES a single round down range.

TEDDY  
Strewth, look at the kick on it.

LOUIS  
Quite so, you will need to use your  
body weight to control the gun.  
Lean into it. And pivot from the  
hips.

Louis FIRES a three-round BURST from the gun.

The trainees cover their ears due to the NOISE.

Louis unstraps himself then steps away from the gun.

LOUIS  
Sheean you're next, fire when  
ready.

Teddy positions himself, straps himself in and FIRES a short BURST down range.

EXT. LATROBE RAILWAY STATION - PLATFORM - DAY

Teddy, dressed in his Navy uniform and a long coat, is Joined by his parents and his brother Thomas. Dressed in his Navy uniform. James has the box brownie camera with him.

A small suit case and duffle bag are beside Teddy.

JAMES  
Well son, you look all spiffy in  
that uniform. Your Mother and I are  
proud of you, both of you.

TEDDY  
Thanks, dad. I just want to say..

James cuts Teddy off.

JAMES  
Take it easy son. This is no Bogart  
picture.

MARY  
Wish your brothers were here to see  
you off.

JAMES  
Yes mother, but duty calls.

Mary takes from her coat pocket a white wool scarf.

MARY  
I made this for you. Should keep  
you warm out on the sea.

TEDDY  
Thanks mum, I love it.

Teddy hugs his mother, placing the scarf around his neck and tucking the ends of the scarf under his great coat.

JAMES  
How about a picture of Mick and  
Teddy?

TEDDY  
Sure dad.

Thomas and Teddy stand together, Teddy on the right Thomas on the left. Both with their arms behind their backs. James SNAPS a photo.

JAMES  
That should be a keeper.

The WHISTLE from a steam Train can be heard. A moment later the train pulls into the station. All of the train cars are full of other soldiers and sailors.

TEDDY  
Well this is it.

JAMES  
Be safe. We'll miss you.

MARY  
Come home to us.

TEDDY  
I'll miss you too. So long Tom.

Teddy shakes hands with Tom.

Teddy kisses his mother and hugs her.

JAMES  
Here let me help you with them  
bags.

James picks up the suit case and carries it on board the Train. Then exits the train. Teddy picks up the duffle bag and slings it over his shoulder.

Teddy shakes hands with his father. James pulls Teddy in and hugs him.

The train WHISTLE blows again.

Teddy boards the train as the train blows its WHISTLE once more. The train pulls away from the station. Teddy looks back at his parents and brother on the platform. Waving goodbye to him. Teddy waves back.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - DECK - DAY

The Armidale sailing in a large race track pattern a few miles out from Sydney heads. The ships company run fire drills.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

Standing outside the bridge is David Richards and Sub Lieutenant Buckland. Both men have stop watches. They watch as the crew practice fire drills.

Some of the crew are too slow, others fumble with the equipment. Teddy so far is faultless in his duties.

DAVID RICHARDS

Not good enough, this will not do.  
Two and a half minutes on that last run.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

The men have been busy with general duties sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

Even so, run it again. I want the men able to do this in their sleep. No excuses.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Yes sir.

Buckland waves his hand to the men below to re-do the drill. The crew below commence to uncouple the nozzles and roll up the fire hoses.

DAVID RICHARDS

That new chap. What's name? Not one mistake so far.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Ah.. That would be Edward Sheean sir. However all the men call him Teddy.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Teddy, after were done here have  
him sent to my cabin.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Yes sir. You should know he is not  
long out from basic.

DAVID RICHARDS  
He really is showing up the more  
experienced men.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Teddy is sir, a lot of this is  
still fresh in his mind.

A sailor waves up to them.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Okay run it again. I want the men  
ready and hoses deployed in less  
than one minute.

The men re-run the drill. A moment later David Richards stops  
his stop watch.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Made it with five seconds to spare.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Much better. But keep the men at it  
on regular basis. I won't stand for  
this drop in standards.

Sub Lieutenant waves his arm for another fire drill to start  
over.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Yes sir. Shall we start the anti-  
aircraft drills?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Yes start it now.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
But sir the men are still running  
the fire drill.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Run it, do you think the enemy is  
going to patiently wait while we  
put fires out?

Sub Lieutenant Buckland enters the bridge and activates the  
alarm BELL to signal air attack.

The men involved in the fire drill look up at the bridge.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 (to the crew below)  
 DON'T LOOK AT ME. GET TO YOUR  
 BLOODY ACTION STATIONS.

Some of the crew below break off from the fire drill and man the four inch gun and the Oerlikon cannon's.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
 That drill was much better. Again Sheean is the stand out. But I worry you're pushing the men too hard.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Where a warship, we must be ready to handle any situation that crops up.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
 Yes sir, sir were due for sub watch tonight.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Very well, stow the gear and make preparation's to return to the Harbour.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
 Aye sir.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE- CAPTAINS QUARTERS - NIGHT

A desk, chair and a bed. Some personal effects adorn the walls. David Richards sits at his desk, with a personnel file open. With him is Teddy.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Ordinary seaman Sheean, I see you're not long with us. How do feel you're going so far?

TEDDY  
 Sir, okay.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 You caught my attention today with the drills.

TEDDY  
 Sorry sir I will do better.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 On the contrary, no need to be nervous. You out performed many of the men. Even the senior men. Very impressive.

TEDDY

Thank you sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

Keep up the good work Sheean and  
you will go far.

TEDDY

Thank you sir. Will that be all  
sir?

DAVID RICHARDS

Yes, you can go now.

Teddy turns and exits the cabin.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MESS DECK - NIGHT

Teddy is with Russel Caro. They share a table as other  
members of the ship's company also eat their meals.

Russel has a cup of Tea. Teddy peels an orange.

RUSSEL CARO

Lad that was impressive work today.  
Just a word of the wise. Don't get  
too cocky.

TEDDY

Thanks, I just try to do my best.  
Still learnin' the ropes around  
here.

Russel takes a sip of tea.

RUSSEL CARO

I found working hard and don't mess  
things up, works best.

TEDDY

What will I have to do? Besides  
clean floors and crappers.

RUSSEL CARO

Well as one of the newest men, all  
of the shit jobs. But just knuckle  
under.

TEDDY

Getting damn sick of being the  
dogsboddy around here. They must  
hate me.

Teddy eats a slice of the orange.

RUSSEL CARO

Not so loud, look they don't hate you. You just need to prove ya self to them first.

TEDDY

S'pose so. I'm not a trouble maker. I just wanna do my part.

They both get up and head for the Aft deck.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - NIGHT

A clear night, the city of Sydney in the background. Other ships and pleasure craft dot the Harbour. On the ships' decks other crew make ready for departure.

Teddy and Russel Caro arrive at the aft deck, Russel Caro leans against the ship's rail as he faces Teddy.

RUSSEL CARO

We are on sub watch, so from now on strict light and noise discipline.

TEDDY

Bloody Jap sub almost killed me.

RUSSEL CARO

Yeah, how so?

TEDDY

I was meant to be on the Kattabul when she was hit by a Jap torpedo. Only I was on leave back home.

RUSSEL CARO

Damn lucky turn of events, fate has put you here.

The engines HUM into life.

-- The Armidale moves out heading toward Sydney Heads.

-- The ship stops at Watsons Bay just south of South Head.

-- The ship's engine idles down.

TEDDY

I hope this is not how I am going to spend the war? Baby-sitting a Harbour.

RUSSEL CARO

Be thankful, you do know so far this has been the worst year for the Navy? So many Ships lost to enemy action.

TEDDY

No, but I want my folks back home to know I did something. I made a difference.

RUSSEL CARO

We all play our part, it may not seem like it. But even the small parts make the bigger picture whole.

TEDDY

Wish I could get a chance to show the others what I'm capable of.

RUSSEL CARO

Be careful what you wish for.

EXT. TIMOR - KOEPANG - STREET - DAY

SPENCE (35) and NEIL TREWEEK (30), both dressed in civilian clothes, walk down the street.

The street is busy with local people going about their daily business. Markets, vendors selling all kinds of goods.

NEIL TREWEEK

No beating around the bush, how bad is it?

SPENCE

We landed with two hundred and thirty-two men and officers. We're down to less than one quarter.

NEIL TREWEEK

My God man, why did you wait so long before reporting this?

SPENCE

We were under constant counter attack, our last radio was shot to fucking bits.

NEIL TREWEEK

You probably gathered by now we can't relieve you. The situation is too desperate.

SPENCE

So, that the way it is then, were just cannon fodder to you and Pope.

NEIL TREWEEK

I would not say that. It's more complex than that. Force H.Q. In Darwin can't relieve you. You will just have to hold on.

SPENCE

Hold on? To what? The men are ill. Dysentery is taking men every other day. Then the Japs kill their share.

NEIL TREWEEK

If we fail then Australia is under direct threat of invasion. We can not fail.

SPENCE

Don't you get it? The men are willing to fight, and die. But how can you expect us to do our bloody jobs, when we are no longer an effective force?

EXT. DARWIN PORT - NIGHT

The Armidale is at dock side, the ship's company busy with duties. Some clean the weapons, others carry fresh supplies on board.

David Richards walks down the gangway. With him is Sub Lt. Buckland.

DAVID RICHARDS

Reg, continue the resupply. And have Lieutenant Jenkyn report to me when I return.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Yes sir, as to why?

DAVID RICHARDS

The last supply run. Did you notice the strong burning smell?

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Yes I did, I'll have Harry look into it. What will the Commodore have for us?

DAVID RICHARDS

Hopefully just another briefing.

An ordinary seaman waits by a vehicle. He salutes as David and Sub Lt. Buckland approach. They both return the salute.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Will that be all sir?

DAVID RICHARDS

Yes, I expect to be back in an hour or so.

David enters the vehicle and they drive off.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - NIGHT

The building is blacked out. No light is seen from the outside. Black curtains hang from all of the windows.

David Richards walks down a corridor, enters an office.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - OFFICE - NIGHT

David Richards sits at a desk. With him is Commodore CUTHBERT POPE (55)

Cuthbert pours brandy into two glasses. Passes one over to David Richards.

CUTHBERT POPE

To our partners.

DAVID RICHARDS

To our partners.

Both men CLINK their glasses as the toast is made. Then take a sip of brandy.

CUTHBERT POPE

Right, better get straight to it. Lancer force operating out of Timor are in a dreadful situation.

DAVID RICHARDS

How so?

CUTHBERT POPE

Well they have been doing some bloody good work, given Tojo a bloody nose. But they are beginning to fall apart.

DAVID RICHARDS

What is the latest intelligence from Timor?

CUTHBERT POPE

Not good I'm afraid, their losses are mounting. Hell even the local people have turned against us. Ungrateful bastards.

Cuthbert passes over a report. David takes a moment to read it. David takes another sip of brandy as he reads the report.

DAVID RICHARDS

Sounds rather grim, what is to be done about it?

CUTHBERT POPE

That is where you come in. You and two other ships are to set sail for Timor tomorrow.

DAVID RICHARDS

We're not ready, I have an engine problem to see to.

Cuthbert opens a desk draw, removes an envelope.

CUTHBERT POPE

You have until the morning to get it fixed. Here are your orders.

He passes the envelope to David.

DAVID RICHARDS

Who else is going with us?

CUTHBERT POPE

You'll be Joined by the Kuru and Castlemaine. The Castlemaine will be the lead ship.

DAVID RICHARDS

Can any other ship take our place, if we're not ready?

CUTHBERT POPE

If you're not up to the task I'll have another ship take the mission. And you can go back to Sydney.

DAVID RICHARDS

That won't be necessary I'll move Heaven and Earth to be ready to sail on time.

CUTHBERT POPE

Good, you can catch me up on the other mission another time.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - ENGINE ROOM - NIGHT

David Richards is with Engineer Lieutenant HARRY JENKYN (33). Harry is covered in grease and dirt. Harry holds an engine part, cleaning it with a rag.

A second engineer works on an engine block.

HARRY JENKYN

(to other engineer)

Be sure the pistons are correctly seated, call me when you're done.

DAVID RICHARDS

Lieutenant a moment please.

Harry steps away from the engine.

HARRY JENKYN

Sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

We have orders to set sail to Timor in eight hours from now. Can we be ready by then?

HARRY JENKYN

No, several of the engine parts are burnt out, they need replacing. That will take at least ten to twelve hours.

DAVID RICHARDS

Not good enough, we must be ready to leave on time.

HARRY JENKYN

It's not that simple, these Corvettes are dreadful in rough seas. Cutting through the big waves overworks the engines.

Harry steps over to the engine where the part came from.

DAVID RICHARDS

Tell me what you need to get it done?

HARRY JENKYN

Extra men working on each part, then we might be lucky to leave on time.

DAVID RICHARDS

No might, you must be ready leave. I will get the extra men you need. In the mean time work quickly.

HARRY JENKYN

Aye sir.

David Richards leaves the engine room.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

David Richards takes a seat at the desk. A KNOCK on the door.

DAVID RICHARDS

Enter.

Sub Lt. Buckland enters.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Sir, you wanted to see me.

DAVID RICHARDS

Yes, I have our orders from Pope.  
We are to sail for Timor.

David hands over the orders to Sub Lt. Buckland. He takes a moment to read it.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

To Betano, with sixty three Dutch  
troops plus equipment.

DAVID RICHARDS

And relieve what is left of Lancer  
force. Then take them and some  
refugees back to Darwin.

Sub Lt. Buckland takes out a sea chart and looks up the location of Betano, Timor.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

That is well inside Jap territory.

DAVID RICHARDS

Right into Tojo's backyard.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

It will get rather cosy on board.  
We are rather crammed for space as  
it is.

DAVID RICHARDS

Indeed so, have the ship's company  
make all available space for the  
Dutch troops.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Aye sir, anything else?

DAVID RICHARDS

How long until the Dutch troops  
arrive?

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

They will be here within the hour.

DAVID RICHARDS

Board the Dutch troops as soon as  
they arrive. We set sail in the  
morning.

Sub Lt. Buckland leaves, closing the door behind him.

EXT. DARWIN PORT - DAY

The Armidale, Castlemaine and Kuru depart Darwin in a trail formation with Castlemaine taking the lead followed by the Armidale then the Kuru.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - DECK - DAY

On the decks of the Armidale are the DUTCH TROOPS. Some play card games, others read letters. Some play crap's with dice. Two troops with a Lewis machine gun, strip it down and clean the parts.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

On the bridge is David Richards, and the Bridge crew. David has a pair of binoculars hanging from his neck.

The signal from Castlemaine's signal lamp is visible. David Richards raises the binoculars to read it.

DAVID RICHARDS

Leaving friendly waters, as of now  
strict noise and light discipline.  
Be on lookout for enemy aircraft.

David lowers the binoculars.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

I'll have the men set observation  
post.

DAVID RICHARDS

Very well. Make your course three  
zero, zero degrees speed ten knots.

RUSSEL CARO

Aye to course three zero zero  
degrees, ten knots.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

(into voice pipe to lower  
bridge)

Hands to observation positions.

Members of the ship's company fan out around the ship on all sides, in teams of three. They commence to observe the water and sky for any signs of the enemy.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy scans the sky, while Jack Duckworth watches the water. Jack checks his watch. On the deck rest a pair of binoculars.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Half past twelve, been at it for  
six hours. Nothin' yet.

TEDDY

Too bloody right, hope we get a  
break soon. Me bloody neck is  
killing me.

Teddy rubs the back of his neck. Then resumes scanning the sky.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Busting for a piss, I need to use  
the head.

Jack begins to walk away.

TEDDY  
Hang on a minute, I think I see  
something, I can see a plane. Not  
sure if it is one of ours.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Gimmy the glasses, I'll have a  
look.

TEDDY  
Seems to be just flyin' around in  
circles.

Teddy passes over the Binoculars.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
It could just be a patrol. Hang on  
a sec. Shit, he's a Jap bastard.  
Call the skipper.

Teddy picks up a deck phone, and RINGS the bridge.

TEDDY  
Skipper we have one, high above,  
off the port beam.

A moment later the signal for action stations RINGS out.  
Teddy moves up to the 20mm Oerlikon cannon, loads a full  
magazine and COCKS the gun.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Steady on mate, he's way too high.  
Save the ammo.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

The bridge crew continue to observe the Japanese aircraft.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Shall we evade sir?

DAVID RICHARDS  
No, he would've attacked us by now.  
Well if they didn't know we were  
here before, they sure as hell do  
now.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
What shall we do now?

DAVID RICHARDS

We wait.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - CREW QUARTERS - DAY

The Quarters are rectangular in shape, two rows of hammocks on either side.

The hammocks sway in time with the pitching and rolling of the ship.

Teddy is asleep in one of the hammocks. Beside him is Jack Duckworth. Several other hammocks are occupied by men sleeping.

A moment later the ship's bell RINGS out the alarm for enemy aircraft.

Teddy and the other men all spring out from their hammocks and run to their action stations.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

David Richards is out on the port bridge wing searching for the Aircraft. Wireman NOEL (20) enters the bridge and hands a note to David Richards.

The bridge phone RINGS. It is answered by Sub Lt. Buckland.

NOEL

Sir, a message from the Castlemaine.

DAVID RICHARDS

(reading the note)

Break formation, position ten cables abreast. Commence zig-zagging.

NOEL

Shall I send a reply?

DAVID RICHARDS

Yes, moving to position.

Noel leaves the bridge. Sub Lt. Buckland returns the bridge phone to its cradle.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Sir, all action stations have reported in.

DAVID RICHARDS

Very well, all ahead full. Commence zig-zagging when at ten cables abreast.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Aye sir.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy and Jack Duckworth man the 20mm Oerlikon cannon. The three planes can be seen clearly above. Two Zero fighters and a Betty bomber.

JACK DUCKWORTH

As soon as they're in range, I'll  
blow 'em all to fucking hell.

TEDDY

Just don't miss.

Far off in the distance the Castlemaine is seen. Her Guns have Opened FIRE on the three aircraft. Tracer fire fills the sky.

JACK DUCKWORTH

That's it, good enough for them.  
Good enough for me.

Jack Opens FIRE, as does the 20mm Oerlikon cannon on the bridge wing facing the enemy planes. The sky is filled with tracer FIRE. None of the rounds hit their mark.

TEDDY

Jack a little more in front.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Damn bastards are just out of  
range.

TEDDY

Nothin' is even getting close, the  
bastards are playing with us.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Shut up, keep the damn ammo coming.

The other Oerlikon's cease FIRE. As does Jack.

TEDDY

Tell me to shut up will ya.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Sorry lad, don't take it personal.

All three planes suddenly turn toward the Castlemaine, level out. The Castlemaine opens FIRE. The Betty bomber opens FIRE with it's machine guns.

The three Aircraft fly toward the Armidale, machine guns blazing as rounds SPLASH into the water.

TEDDY  
 Shit take cover, they're comin'  
 right for us.

Both Teddy and Jack dive for cover at the ships waist. As rounds strafe the ship. Missing them both.

The Armidale returns FIRE as the three aircraft climb high and fly away.

INT. HMAS KURU - ARAFURA SEA - DAY

A small wooden motor vessel. In command is Lieutenant JOHN GRANT (39) John stands beside the ship's wireman.

JOHN GRANT  
 Send the following to Darwin. Ships  
 have been shadowed and attacked.

The wireman TAPS out the message via Morse code.

JOHN GRANT  
 Consider prospect operation  
 doubtful. Request orders.

The message is sent.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The room consist of various work stations, telegraphist stations, and a phone exchange.

In the centre of the room is a large table with a map of Northern Australia and immediate countries. On the Table are various markers.

Staff move the markers around on the table.

In the operations room is Cuthbert pope and Commander LAURANCE TOZER (40) both men are at a telegraphist station.

The Telegraphist passes a note to Cuthbert.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 What is it sir? Anything wrong?

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Message from the Kuru, the convoy  
 has come under enemy fire.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Perhaps we should re-think this  
 mission?

CUTHBERT POPE  
 I can't call off a mission on one  
 minor attack. We must push on.

Laurance turns to the telegraphist.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 (to telegraphist)  
 Any additional information from the  
 last message.

The telegraphist shakes their head in response to the question.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 We have to get those men off Timor.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Sir, can we try to get the men off  
 from another location. One of the  
 islands south.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Don't be absurd, how will they get  
 there? What about the refugees? And  
 the wounded soldier?

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Even if it means loosing three  
 ships to do it. Can you live with  
 that?

Cuthbert snaps a look at Laurance.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Risk must be accepted in war. My  
 orders stand.

Cuthbert writes a message on a note, passes it to the telegraphist. The message is sent.

INT. HMAS KURU - BRIDGE - DAY

John Grant enters the bridge. A sailor mans the ship's wheel.

The wireman hands a note to John.

JOHN GRANT  
 (reading out loud.)  
 Steer a deceptive course to the  
 north-east. Expect Beaufighters at  
 thirteen hundred hours. Risk must  
 be accepted.

INT. JAPANESE BETTY BOMBER - DAY

Flying high above, the PILOT can see the Australian Ships below.

The pilot looks out his window. A large rain squall has formed off in the distance.

The CO-PILOT looks out his window. The BOMBARDIER takes up his position and looks down the bomb sight.

Through the bomb sight he sees tracer FIRE rise from the Armidale and Castlemaine. The Kuru breaks off and heads for the rain squall.

(All dialogue in Japanese.)

PILOT

There they are just ahead.

CO-PILOT

Yes, I see them. Opening bomb-bay doors now. One is getting away, shall we send a bomber after it?

PILOT

No, focus on the main enemy force.

The co-pilot reaches for the lever to open the bomb-bay doors.

PILOT

(into radio )

This is the lead plane. Take up V formation and follow in on my bomb run.

BOMBARDIER

Steady, to the right. Stop, hold it there.

The bombardier presses a button. The bombs are dropped.

BOMBARDIER

Bombs away.

The Bombs fall toward the Armidale and Castlemaine.

PILOT

Do I need to go around again?

BOMBARDIER

One moment... They missed, come around for another try.

A BURST of MACHINE GUN FIRE tears through the Fuselage of the bomber. A second later an Australian Beaufighter ROARS past the Betty bomber.

The Beaufighter opens FIRE on the Bomber. Rounds SMASH through the canopy killing the Bombardier.

The Bomber banks hard to evade the FIRE coming from the beaufighter.

Two more Beaufighters chime in on the Attack.

PILOT  
 (into radio)  
 All BOMBERS, DROP YOUR BOMBS AND  
 RETURN TO BASE.

More MACHINE GUN FIRE BURSTS through the mid section of the bomber. Black SMOKE pours out from one engine.

Multiple EXPLOSIONS are heard from below. The Australian Beaufighters continue to attack the Betty bombers as they fly away.

EXT. TIMOR - BATANO BAY - NIGHT

A light rain falls. From the bushes emerges Spence. With him are several other Australian Soldiers, one who is carried on a stretcher.

Farther back in the bush are 70 local refugees, comprised of men, women and children. They all huddle together. Spence waves over one of his men.

SPENCE  
 This is the bay, take three other  
 men and light the signal fires.  
 Then have the men take up defensive  
 positions.

The soldier begins to walk away.

SPENCE  
 And be sure to take the signal  
 lamp.

The soldier calls over three men. They gather up a few dry sticks and light the fires.

EXT. TIMOR - BATANO BAY - NIGHT

The wounded Australian soldier is loaded onto the Whaler by two sailors of the Kuru. Standing by the boat is Spence.

At a distance is a second boat with the last of the refugees. Two sailors row the boat back to the Kuru.

SPENCE  
 Take care now, I would love to go  
 with you, but me and the rest of  
 the boys can catch the next ride  
 home.

WOUNDED SOLDIER  
 Sorry you're not comin' with us.  
 Wish I had a ciggie.

SPENCE

I know mate, but perhaps the doc  
will say it's okay once you're  
feeling a little better.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Bloody well hope so, I might have  
to just have one anyhow.

The two sailors start to row away from the beach. Spence  
walks back to shore. Returning to the bush.

EXT. TIMOR - BATANO BAY - NIGHT

The Armidale and Castlemaine arrive at the bay. No signal  
fires are lit.

From the search light of the Castlemaine the challenge signal  
is flashed. No response is seen.

The two Corvettes slowly move up and down the bay. No sign of  
the Kuru. No signal fires.

INT. HMAS CASTLEMAINE - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Lieutenant-Commander PHILIP SULLIVAN (45) leaves the bridge  
and enters the Radio room.

INT. HMAS CASTLEMAINE - RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

The room consists of a desk, a receiving radio set and a  
transmitting set as well as a sea chart. Sitting at the desk  
is Signalman STAN (16).

Philip Sullivan enters the room.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Send this message to Armidale. This  
is the bay. No fires. No reply to  
challenge. Consider operation  
hopeless. Now returning.

STAN

Right away sir.

The message is tapped out via Morse code. A moment later a  
reply from the Armidale.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

What is her answer?

STAN

Suggest leave now. Move out as far  
as possible. Avoid detection by  
enemy.

Philip consults a sea chart and writes down a set of  
coordinates. He passes the note to Stan.

PHILIP SULLIVAN  
Send this, leaving now. And these  
co-ordinates.

The message is tapped out again via Morse code.

EXT. HMAS CASTLEMAINE - SEARCH LIGHT DECK - NIGHT

On the Deck is lieutenant-commander Philip Sullivan. With him is a signalman. Over to their Starboard side is the Armidale.

Philip checks his watch.

PHILIP SULLIVAN  
Send this. Will signal Darwin.  
Advise of situation. Let me know of  
any further communication.

The signalman flashes out the message.

Philip climbs down the ladder and makes his way to the Radio room.

INT. HMAS CASTLEMAINE - RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

In the room is signaller Stan. When Philip Sullivan enters the room.

PHILIP SULLIVAN  
I need to send a message to Darwin.

STAN  
Ready sir.

PHILIP SULLIVAN  
Patrolled beach for one hour.  
Negative reply to challenge.  
Negative fires. No sign of kuru.  
Have departed.

STAN  
Sending it now sir.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

At the communications room is Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer. Laurance is speaking with a staffer at the map table.

A telegraphist hands a note to Cuthbert.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Laurance, you need to see this.

Laurance excuses himself with the staffer and walks over to Cuthbert.

LAURANCE TOZER  
What is it sir?

Cuthbert passes over the note, Laurance reads it.

CUTHBERT POPE

I want them to return to complete the mission.

LAURANCE TOZER

My advice would be to wait a day or two. Then arrange an alternate location for extraction.

CUTHBERT POPE

Too risky, our communications are intercepted by the Japs. We risk giving away Lancer forces location.

LAURANCE TOZER

All the more reason to wait, go quiet for a few days. Then get them out.

CUTHBERT POPE

No, what if the Japs stumble upon them by accident. No they must go back tomorrow night.

Cuthbert walks over to a telegraphist station and has the order issued.

HMAS CASTLEMAINE - RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

Philip Sullivan enters the room.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Any reply from Darwin?

STAN

Just got it now sir.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Well no mucking around, let's have it.

STAN

You may be required to repeat operation tonight.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Send this to the Armidale. Need to rendezvous in four hours. Discuss next move.

The message is sent.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

The Armidale moves slowly in a large circle. In the middle of the circle are the Kuru and Castlemaine, who have come alongside each other.

Teddy mans the aft 20mm Oerlikon cannon with Jack Duckworth.

TEDDY

Around and around we go, where she stops no body knows.

JACK DUCKWORTH

You are a funny bastard mate. Damn lucky we found the Kuru.

TEDDY

More like they found us. If I were a Jap? Right now I'll think all me Christmases had come at once.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Don't lose focus now, we don't want to give the damn Japs a gift.

TEDDY

I don't like it out here all exposed. Like a couple of sittin' ducks.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Look it won't be for too long. They have to get them refugees out of here.

TEDDY

Should have left them, we're not a ferry service.

Teddy swings the 20mm Oerlikon to the port side, scanning the sky.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Ya just can't leave 'em in a war zone. Sad day If we Aussies ever treat refugees cruelly.

TEDDY

Wish they would get on with it. Making me nervous.

EXT. HMAS KURU - DECK - DAY

The Kuru and Castlemaine are alongside each other. John Grant arrives at the aft deck. On the aft deck of the Castlemaine is Philip Sullivan.

JOHN GRANT

How are you holding up? That last attack almost had us.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

We're doing okay. Some minor damage on our decks but otherwise okay.

JOHN GRANT

I suggest a transfer to you. While I and the Armidale return to Betano.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

As the lead ship I have the responsibility to lead the mission.

JOHN GRANT

Armidale can't do it, they have the Dutch troops.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Yes, that would make a very big juicy target for the Japs. That is the way it has to be then.

JOHN GRANT

One other thing. I have my orders to do the job tonight.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

What are you talking about?

JOHN GRANT

Pope wants us to go back in.

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Crazy fool sending us back in like that. Same mission same location.

JOHN GRANT

I don't like it either, but what else can I do?

PHILIP SULLIVAN

Righto, then it's agreed I'll complete the operation with the Armidale.

A BURST of FIRE from the Castlemaine's bridge wing 20mm Oerlikon cannon. Both Philip and John turn to see a lone Japanese Plane coming in low and fast.

The other 20mm Oerlikon cannons open FIRE.

JOHN GRANT

Quickly, get the hell outta here.

PHILIP SULLIVAN  
No need to tell me twice.

Both ships quickly part company and spread out. The Japanese plane drops a bomb, which misses its target. The plane climbs fast and high. All of the 20mm Oerlikon cannons cease fire.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - DAY

Staff move the markers around on the table. Three markers with the names of Armidale, Kuru and Castlemaine are placed just south of Timor.

Cuthbert Pope is in the room. With him is Commander Laurance Tozer.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Hello Laurance, I hope you slept well?

LAURANCE TOZER  
Not too bad, damn mozzies had a bloody picnic.

CUTHBERT POPE  
I'll have the quartermaster send over a mosquito net. Shall we get into it?

Both men turn to the large map table.

LAURANCE TOZER  
Well the latest report on Operation Hamburger is all three ships have met moderate opposition. But are holding their own.

CUTHBERT POPE  
When was the last communication?

LAURANCE TOZER  
Actually just before you arrived a message was coming in. Should be here any second.

Cuthbert points to a location on Timor of the Japanese Air Base.

CUTHBERT POPE  
That damn Jap Air base in Timor has got to go. How soon can we hit it again?

LAURANCE TOZER  
Not for the next two to three days. The crews are at breaking point. They need to rest.

CUTHBERT POPE

I don't care if they need rest. We all need rest. I need those planes in the air.

LAURANCE TOZER

Sir, it's not just that, the planes are breaking down more. Spare parts are running dangerously low.

CUTHBERT POPE

All I hear from you is excuses. Is it just that? I think you question my decision to send those ships back in.

LAURANCE TOZER

Well since you brought it up. I do. Same location, same mission. You're setting them up for an ambush.

CUTHBERT POPE

How dare you even for one second suggest I would do such a thing. What do you have me for? Some kind of callous monster?

LAURANCE TOZER

That is not what I was suggesting at all. I'm not against taking risk in war. What I'm against is sending men on a suicide mission.

A messenger arrives with a note in hand, passes the note to Cuthbert. He reads it. The messenger stands to one side and waits.

Cuthbert hands the note to Laurance, he reads it and hands the note back to Cuthbert.

LAURANCE TOZER

Perhaps we should bring them all back and try again in a few days?

CUTHBERT POPE

Then we will lose all of lancer force. Relieving those men is the whole purpose of this mission.

LAURANCE TOZER

I'm well aware of the purpose of the mission.

CUTHBERT POPE

Do you? Sometimes I don't think you really do.

Cuthbert flips the note over and writes his reply. He hands the note to the messenger who leaves.

EXT. JAPANESE AIR BASE TIMOR - NIGHT

The base consist of a single dirt airstrip with fighters and bombers parked on the edges. Various supplies, ground crew, and several tents.

Armed soldiers patrol the outer edges of the airstrip.

A zero fighter has it's engine covers removed, two ground crew are working to repair the engine.

Two Japanese pilots enter a tent.

INT. JAPANESE AIR BASE TIMOR - TENT - NIGHT

In the tent is the BASE COMMANDER (35) the two pilots enter, stand to attention and salute. The salute is returned. On a table is a map of the area.

BASE COMMANDER

Two attacks and we have not sunk the Australian ships yet.

PILOT # 1

They are more resilient than we thought.

BASE COMMANDER

I will not tolerate excuses, do not fail me again.

PILOT # 1

The Australians are defending their homeland. We would expect stiff resistance.

BASE COMMANDER

Or your weakness to fully commit to battle is our problem.

PILOT # 1

Our men are ready to die for the glory of Japan and the emperor.

BASE COMMANDER

I will not accept anything less than total victory.

PILOT # 1

We are ready to give you total victory.

BASE COMMANDER

Then I have devised a plan to end this once and for all.

The men lean in over the map as the base commander begins to explain his plan.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Heavy rain falls.

Jack Duckworth has opened FIRE with the 20mm Oerlikon cannon at five Japanese Betty bombers. Teddy stands by the gun with a fresh magazine in hand.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
You're doing great, Ted. Keep them  
cans coming.

TEDDY  
Ready?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Yep, do it now.

Teddy replaces the empty magazine with a full one. Tosses the empty magazine onto the deck. Two other empty magazines are already on the deck.

Jack COCKS the Cannon and resumes FIRING.

All of the ship's 20mm Oerlikon cannon Open FIRE. An EXPLOSION from a bomb off the port bow sends a column of water into the air.

TEDDY  
Damn that was close, running low on  
ammo.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Get to the locker, gather up  
whatever you can carry.

Teddy leaves for the Ammo locker, gathers up four more ammo cans. Returns to the 20mm Oerlikon cannon.

One of the bombers is hit. It wobbles and loses height rapidly before levelling off. Then flying off.

TEDDY  
Four more, you got one?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
You damn well bet I did. Got 'em  
alright.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

Noel mans the radio when David Richards enters.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Send this. Emergency. Enemy air  
attack. Aircraft bombing. And give  
our position.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

DAVID RICHARDS  
I'll be on the bridge. I'll be back  
shortly.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy and Jack continue. Two of the Betty bombers leave the  
area. Three remain. They continue to bomb the Armidale.

TEDDY  
Yeah, two are pissing off, don't  
have the stomach for it.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Never mind them, still three of 'em  
left.

Teddy loads a fresh magazine into the 20mm Oerlikon cannon.  
The sky is filled with tracer FIRE.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

Noel is TAPPING out a message when David Richards enters the  
room.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Any response from Darwin?

NOEL  
Expect three Beaufighters E.T.A. Oh  
three thirty Zulu.

A moment later the three Betty bombers leave the area.

NOEL  
They're gone now sir.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Send this to Darwin. Attack ceased.  
Absolutely essential adequate air  
protection provided continuously.  
Large enemy formations being used.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

The message is transmitted.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Jack and Teddy along with all of the ships' guns cease fire. -  
Teddy secures the Oerlikon cannon, and clears away the shell  
casings on the deck.

TEDDY

Don't they ever run out of those  
things?

JACK DUCKWORTH

Apparently not.

TEDDY

They are never going to stop coming  
are they?

JACK DUCKWORTH

Not on your life. Would you? I just  
don't like this mission my gut is  
telling me we should call it quits.

TEDDY

That is not our place to speak out  
like that. What can you do about  
it?

JACK DUCKWORTH

See the skipper, put my view  
across. He's a reasonable bloke.

TEDDY

Don't do it, we have our orders.  
The brass know what they are doin'.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Do they? They don't always get it  
right. Might take someone like me  
to steer em right.

TEDDY

I don't think the skipper or the  
Navy will pull up stumps based on  
the gut feeling of one sailor.

JACK DUCKWORTH

All I can do is try. All they can  
do is say no.

TEDDY

Okay, but don't say I didn't warn  
Ya.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MID SHIP DECK - DAY

Jack Duckworth is with David Richards - David takes out a  
pipe and lights the tobacco. Drawing in a couple of deep  
puffs.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Sir, mind if I have a word?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Not at all, what is on your mind?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Mind if I speak freely?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Go on.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
It's about this mission. I and a few of the men have grave concerns over our chances of making it out alive.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Oh, we do have our orders. I have my superiors just like you do. What are your concerns exactly?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
The bloody Japs are all over us like fly's to shit sir. They are never going to stop until every last one of us is dead.

DAVID RICHARDS  
So you think we should just give up and go home.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Well I wouldn't put it that way sir. How do we know they aren't already dead.

David takes a puff on the pipe

DAVID RICHARDS  
I see, so we should just assume they are? So we should just let the Japs do whatever they bloody well please.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Of course not sir. I want to save those men just as much as the next bloke.

DAVID RICHARDS  
What is it then? If you're not up to the job say so. I can always have you re-assigned to other duties.

JACK DUCKWORTH

I can do my job. I have a real bad feeling about this one sir.

DAVID RICHARDS

We concede defeat here. Where does it stop? In Darwin? On the streets and towns? In the cities? Or do we wait until they raise the Jap flag over Parliament House.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Why us? Why three small ships? Against everything they have that fly's or floats.

DAVID RICHARDS

If you can find a way to get the brass to commit more ships, then let me know.

JACK DUCKWORTH

I just thought I would raise mine and the men's concerns with you.

DAVID RICHARDS

And you have. Look Jack you're afraid. We all are, we have a job to do. Let's do it so others don't have to.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MESS DECK - DAY

Jack is with Teddy and three other sailers at a table. Teddy has a plate of eggs, bacon, sausages. - Teddy opens a bottle of tomato sauce and applies a generous helping.

Jack has a cup of coffee.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Like a little bit of egg and bacon with your sauce.

TEDDY

Piss off. Told Ya so the skipper would chew you out.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Not at all mate. I said my piece we came to an agreement.

TEDDY

Well what do Ya reckon now? Going to hell in a hand-basket are we?

JACK DUCKWORTH

Probably, but I pray we aren't.

Jack takes a sip of his coffee.

TEDDY

The old man has gone troppo.  
Suicide mission for sure.

Teddy cuts up a sausage and some egg takes a mouth full.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Keep it down, gonna scare the rest  
of the crew.

TEDDY

What else can we do? The brass have  
got it wrong on this one, no doubt  
about it.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Nothin' we can do. It's in the lap  
of the Gods now mate.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HEADQUARTERS - OFFICE - DAY

Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer stand at opposite ends of  
the office.

LAURANCE TOZER

Sir, the Armidale is requesting  
continuous air cover.

CUTHBERT POPE

Then give it to them. What is the  
problem?

LAURANCE TOZER

We simply don't have the men or  
planes to do that.

CUTHBERT POPE

I already told them they would have  
it.

LAURANCE TOZER

Why? Would you do that without  
consulting with me? I can't conjure  
up men and planes out of thin air.

A KNOCK on the door. Laurance opens the door and is handed a  
document from a staff member. The staff member closes the  
door.

CUTHBERT POPE

What is that?

LAURANCE TOZER

A report that shows exactly how  
many planes we have and available  
crews.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Okay, what is the point of this?

LAURANCE TOZER  
 I wanted to show you, since my word  
 is never enough.

Laurance reads the report.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 No need for the dramatics. I said  
 they will have the air cover, and  
 by God they will have it.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Not with twelve bombers. Four of  
 which are out of service for  
 repairs. You're promising something  
 we don't have.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Okay. Then pull other planes off  
 and re-task them.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Then we leave Darwin and this base  
 vulnerable to attack.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 So you want me to leave the  
 Armidale without air cover. Cover I  
 already said they would have.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 What other choice do we have. Sorry  
 sir but you have to reverse the  
 order.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 No the order stands.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

David Richards returns a sextant to it's case. Turning to a  
 sea chart marks the ships position on it.

David then returns the sextant case to a draw. Picking up a  
 pair of binocular's from the same draw.

He makes his way over to the port bridge wing. Searching the  
 sky. Checks his watch.

Moving over to the starboard bridge wing, David repeats the  
 process. Then moves back into the bridge.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
 Something wrong sir?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Yes, very wrong, the air cover Pope  
promised has not shown up. Where  
the hell can they be?

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Shall I signal Darwin?

DAVID RICHARDS  
No, no use now. We are for all  
intense purposes on our own.

Sub Lt. Buckland looks out a window of the ship.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Sir I see some planes, lots of  
them. Getting closer.

DAVID RICHARDS  
That could be them now. I better  
check.

David Richards checks from a bridge wing. He hurries back to  
the bridge.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Is it them?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Sound action stations. They're  
bloody Japs. I counted at least  
thirteen, maybe more.

The alarm bells RING for action stations.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
My God, we're in for one hell of a  
fight.

DAVID RICHARDS  
I don't like our chances with this  
one. Get the Dutch troops below to  
the mess deck.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Aye sir.

Sub Lt. Buckland turns to a voice pipe.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
(into voice pipe)  
All Dutch troops proceed to mess  
deck at once.

DAVID RICHARDS  
I need to signal Darwin.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

Noel mans the radio, when David Richards enters.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Get this to Darwin urgently. Enemy  
aircraft bombing. No fighters  
arrived.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

DAVID RICHARDS  
And give our position.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

The message is TAPPED out. As this is done the sound of an  
EXPLODING bomb in the water can be heard.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

David Richards enters the bridge looks back down toward the  
aft end of the ship. Machine gun FIRE from the Japanese  
strafes the decks.

Two sailors running for cover are gunned down and killed.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Get two of the Dutch troops with  
their Lewis machine guns on deck.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Aye sir.

Sub Lt. Buckland turns to the voice pipe beside him.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
(into voice pipe)  
We need two dutch soldiers with  
Lewis guns on port and starboard  
decks.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Secure all hatches, and bulkhead  
doors.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Aye sir.

A moment later two Dutch troops carrying Lewis machine guns  
and ammo boxes arrive, placing themselves on deck and  
commence to open FIRE on the Japanese.

David Richards returns to the radio room.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

David Richards enters the room, Noel is at his station.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Send this. Nine bombers. Four  
fighters. Absolutely no fighter  
support.

NOEL  
Aye sir, sir are we going to--

DAVID RICHARDS  
Just send it.

INT. JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTER - DAY

The pilot of the Zero swoops down. He levels the plane out.  
Machine gun FIRE from the Armidale pours in around him.  
Approaching the Armidale from the port side.

The pilot takes aim and drops His torpedo into the water. The  
torpedo speeds toward the Armidale. The pilot banks hard to  
one side and climbs high.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MESS DECK - DAY

In the Mess deck are the Dutch Troops, they huddle together.  
The noise of battle can be heard coming from outside. The  
ship rocks from side to side with each EXPLOSION.

Then AN EXPLOSION as the torpedo STRIKES the Armidale killing  
most of the Dutch Troops huddled together.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

Noel is thrown to the floor. A huge piece of Metal SMASHES  
through the bulkhead, ripping both radio sets to bits before  
lodging into the opposite bulkhead.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy and Jack Duckworth both rise to their feet. Sailors  
around them scramble to take cover. Some men lie dead on the  
deck.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Fuck we're hit. We have to get  
outta here.

TEDDY  
We can't give up now, we need to  
fight on.

The Armidale begins to list to port.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
We're going over, where is the damn  
order to abandon?

TEDDY  
Get it together Jack. Get back on  
the gun.

Jack returns to the Gun, COCKS it and resumes FIRING.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

Noel rushes into the bridge.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Get back to your station. I need to  
signal Darwin.

NOEL  
I can't do that, bloody sets are  
gone, smashed to bits.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Then get below, see what help they  
need.

NOEL  
Aye sir.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE- ENGINE ROOM - DAY

Noel arrives when he is meet by Harry Jenkyn. Harry is  
rushing to stop water leaks when a high pressure pipe BURST.

A high pressure jet of water erupts from the pipe.

HARRY JENKYN  
Damn it, get a clamp on that  
fucking pipe.

NOEL  
A what? What are you talking about?

Harry points to a curved sheet of metal with a flange which  
has four holes in it.

HARRY JENKYN  
Come on now hurry man.

Noel picks up the clamp. Standing in front of the jet of  
water, noel holds up the collar in front of the jet.

Noel commences to walk in against the enormous water  
pressure. Only to stumble to the floor.

NOEL  
Can't bloody well do it. You have  
to give me a hand.

HARRY JENKYN

You're gonna have to do it on Ya  
own. Someone has to bolt it shut.

Noel try's again, pushing as hard as he can against the jet  
of water. Reaching the burst section of pipe.

The water level rising above ankle level.

Noel forces the clamp around the pipe.

Harry moves in from the side of Noel with four bolts and nuts  
and a spanner.

Placing a bolt in each hole and securing with a nut and  
finally tightens with the spanner.

HARRY JENKYN

Two more mate just hold a little  
bit longer.

The clamp now secure the jet of water now stopped.

HARRY JENKYN

Well done lad. I'm okay now down  
here. Head back up.

NOEL

Sure thing mate.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

The bridge phone RINGS. It's answered by Sub Lt. Buckland.

DAVID RICHARDS

Reg how far are we listing by?

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

So far twenty degrees. At forty-  
five we go over.

DAVID RICHARDS

Damage reports from all stations.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

Mess deck is flooding, we need to  
check for survivors.

Sub Lt. Buckland returns the bridge phone to its cradle.

DAVID RICHARDS

No time for that, seal it off.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND

But sir men are still in there.

DAVID RICHARDS

SEAL IT OFF.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - ENGINE ROOM - DAY

The Engine room and Boiler room are separated by a narrow passage between them. In the engine room is Harry Jenkyn. With him is stoker RAY (21)

A second torpedo STRIKES the Armidale between the two rooms sending both men to the floor and Shrapnel flying through the air.

Ray is hit in the legs and Harry in the upper part of his body. Both men, stunned by the blast, rise gingerly to their feet.

HARRY JENKYN

Damn that was bloody close, we have to get off the ship.

RAY

Ya head is bleedin'. We can try the aft end.

Harry raises a hand to his forehead, takes a look at his blood covered fingers.

HARRY JENKYN

Thought I had something, can't see much. You're gonna have to help me out.

They both head toward the aft end of the ship. While doing that a Bomb EXPLODES very close to the ship on the starboard side blowing a large hole in the ship.

Harry and Ray are Knocked over again from the explosion. They help each other up.

The Armidale lists sharply to port. A loud GROANING, TWISTING and TEARING of metal is heard.

RAY

What the hell now?

HARRY JENKYN

She has broken her back. Nothing can save her now.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - DAY

The Armidale is rocked by the EXPLOSION. The ship's rigging STRAINS and SNAPS. Causing the main mast to CRASH onto the bridge of the ship.

The ship's funnel CRASHES down CRUSHING a sailor under it.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BRIDGE - DAY

Russel Caro is knocked to the floor. David Richards helps Russel Caro back up to his feet.

RUSSEL CARO  
She's breaking apart, we have to  
abandon.

DAVID RICHARDS  
That's it, all hands abandon ship.  
Say again, all hands abandon ship.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
I will go below, make sure everyone  
gets out.

Sub Lt. Buckland leaves the bridge. Making his way below deck.

Leading Signaller ARTHUR (24) leaves his station in the asdic cabin and runs to the voice pipes on the bridge.

ARTHUR  
(into all voice pipes)  
Abandon ship, from the captain  
abandon ship.

The Armidale is now listing severely over to port almost to the point of being on her side.

The crew from the Bridge exit for the aft deck. As they do none notice that Russel Caro is tangled up in the ship's rigging.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - BELOW DECKS - DAY

Sub Lieutenant Buckland moves along checking every space and room where crew would be. As he does so water is quickly rising.

Sub Lieutenant Buckland opens a door to a room and finds a sailor frozen with fear.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
(to sailor)  
You have to get out. The skipper  
has ordered abandon ship.

The sailor white with fear, eyes wide open. Does nothing says nothing only shakes his head.

SUB LT. BUCKLAND  
Get off the ship. Did you hear me?

Sub Lieutenant Buckland moves in and forcibly removes the sailor from the room and to the nearest stairway out.

The sailor exits the area. Sub Lieutenant Buckland continues his search below decks.

Overhead a high pressure steam pipe BURST sending a bolt straight into the head of Sub Lieutenant Buckland. He drops to the floor unconscious.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Russel Caro frantically tries to free himself, but can't do it. Russel Caro resigns himself to his fate. Waits for death to come.

Arthur returns and helps Russel Caro free by cutting the rigging with his seaman's knife. Russel Caro makes it to the ships side and jumps into the water.

Arthur moves down toward the aft end of the ship.

ARTHUR  
ABANDON SHIP, FROM THE CAPTAIN,  
ABANDON SHIP.

Arthur makes it to the ship's rail, climbs over the rail and jumps into the water.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MID SHIP DECK - DAY

Men are jumping over board as the ship slowly sinks. Some are drawn in by the ship's screws and cut to pieces. Others swim away.

Arthur swims around helping struggling sailors by passing anything that will float to them.

The surviving Dutch troops, some armed with holstered pistols, jump into the sea.

Able Seaman JIM PELLET (23) grabs a tomahawk and cuts through the jammed falls of the motorboat so it can be lowered into the water.

Jim is joined by Teddy.

TEDDY  
Here let me give ya a hand with that.

JIM PELLET  
Thanks mate, where is Jack?

TEDDY  
I don't know, lost him awhile back.

JIM PELLET  
Keep at it Teddy, I'll be back in a minute.

Jim leaves for the mess deck.

INT. HMAS ARMIDALE - MESS DECK - DAY

At the mess deck on a bench is a lemonade bottle. Jim fills the bottle with fresh water, then returns to the aft deck.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy still struggles with the falls of the motor boat. Jim returns.

JIM PELLET

Teddy get off the ship.

TEDDY

They just keep mowing them down.  
It's bloody murder.

JIM PELLET

GET IN THE DAMN WATER BOY! There's  
nothin' you can do about it.

Teddy approaches the rail stops, looks at the men in the water being shot at in the water. Turns back and clammers his way back to the aft 20mm Oerlikon cannon.

TEDDY

Someone has to do something!

Jim Pellet cuts through the last of the motor boat falls and sends the boat CRASHING into the sea. Jim jumps into the sea, climbs into the motor boat.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - DAY

Men in the water huddle together in groups of five to ten. Above them the Japanese fighters continue to machine-gun the men in the water.

Most of the men have their life Vest on. They duck-dive to evade the bullets. Some surface too early and are killed when they surface.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - PORT WAIST - DAY

Ray and Harry Jenkyn take cover crouching below the ship's waist.

RAY

Okay Harry as soon as I give the  
word we both go over.

HARRY JENKYN

Righto then.

Ray peeks above the Gunwale. Just as he does a bomb EXPLODES nearby. Ray turns back to check on Harry.

RAY  
Harry, Harry.

Ray looks to his left then right. Harry is gone. Ray jumps into the water.

EXT. HMAS ARMIDALE - AFT DECK - DAY

Teddy scrambles over dead bodies and the fallen ship's mast and rigging to reach the 20mm Oerlikon cannon.

Teddy straps himself into the gun. At that moment the ship drops below him. He steadies himself. Takes aim and opens FIRE.

A Japanese Zero is HIT, it cartwheels into the water and sinks. A second Zero fighter opens FIRE at Teddy HITTING him in the chest and back.

Teddy, in shock from blood loss. Continues to FIRE the gun. Two more planes are badly damaged.

Teddy has lost the use of his legs. He slumps down to the deck on his belly, blood pouring out from his wounds.

Teddy somehow finds the strength to continue to FIRE the 20mm Oerlikon cannon, water lapping around him.

Teddy continues to FIRE the gun even as the ship sinks below the waves. Tracer FIRE is seen coming up from below the waves.

The Armidale broken in two halves, finally sinks. The Japanese fighters finally stop the attack and fly away from the Area.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - DAY

A wide debris field is all that is left behind. An Oil slick has formed. Oil oozes up from under the sea. Dead bodies floating on the surface, as well as body parts. Many of the surviving men are wounded.

Men cling onto empty Oil drums and pieces of drift wood.

Floating on the surface is one carley float, three denton rafts, drift wood.

Men clamber aboard the carley floats or denton rafts. Others into the motorboat.

The ship's whaler, riddled with bullet holes, floats up to the surface upside down.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Reg where are you? Reg are you  
there?

No reply is heard.

ARTHUR

Sir he's gone, he never made it off the ship.

DAVID RICHARDS

Help me gather the men in. Get the wounded into the motor boat.

In the motor boat are two dead dutch troops. Arthur drags them both out of the motor boat.

ARTHUR

Aye sir, how many do you think made it?

DAVID RICHARDS

No Idea, I will do a roll call as soon as I can.

ARTHUR

Does anyone know we're out here? What happened to us?

DAVID RICHARDS

I JUST DON'T KNOW OKAY... We can worry about that later.

The two paravane floats and drift wood float by.

ARTHUR

Look at it, such a waste.

DAVID RICHARDS

Gather that wood up and the floats, we can make a raft from it.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - NIGHT

In the communications room is Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer. They are at a radio telegraph set. A telegraphist waits for a reply from a message.

CUTHBERT POPE

How long since my message to the Armidale?

LAURANCE TOZER

Three hours now. No one would go this long without responding.

CUTHBERT POPE

Could they have sunk?

LAURANCE TOZER  
 Given the level of enemy activity  
 in the area a very real  
 possibility.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Try calling the Castlemaine or  
 Kuru, they might know something.

The Telegraphist TAPS out a message to the Castlemaine.

LAURANCE TOZER  
 It could take some time for a  
 reply.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Send up some planes, commence a  
 search starting from the Armidale's  
 last reported position.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - DAY

The surviving men have made a raft from drift wood, rope and  
 the two paravane floats.

Two shark fins break the surface, slowly moving in and around  
 the raft.

One of the men LIEUTENANT PALMER (30) SLAPS at the water to  
 scare off the sharks, it does not work.

Other men on the motor boat and carley floats also try to  
 scare the sharks, but to no avail.

David Richards gestures to the men to gather around him.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Gather in, get in closer. That's  
 it. Get in close.

David waving to the other men to get closer to him.

ARTHUR  
 What is it skipper? What is all the  
 point of this?

DAVID RICHARDS  
 We're in one hell of a dire  
 situation here. Focus on staying  
 alive.

ARTHUR  
 What hope have we got? Damn sharks  
 may as well finish us off.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
 Look, drop it okay. Let the skipper  
 speak.

DAVID RICHARDS

The way I see it, we can wait here for help. But we never got a distress call to Darwin.

NOEL

We should stay here. Wait for rescue.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Don't you listen? No one knows we're fucking here. So keep Ya stupid mouth shut.

DAVID RICHARDS

Jack, enough! We have three options. One. Timor is seventy miles to our north.

NOEL

I don't think so. None of us want to go back.

DAVID RICHARDS

Then we have two choices. Two hundred and fifty miles to Bathurst island. Or three hundred miles to Darwin.

A lone shark appears. It raises its nose out of the water. The shark flicks its tail and swims away.

NOEL

Just keep swimmin' buddy. You're not getting a piece of me.

DAVID RICHARDS

With the amount of wounded we have, I propose that myself, and the strongest of the men leave for Darwin, we split the supplies we have.

JACK DUCKWORTH

I'm all for it, we have to make an attempt for land. How about the rest of you fellas?

The other men all nod in agreement.

DAVID RICHARDS

Right it's settled then, I will take the Motor boat. With me will be, George, Richard, Les, James, Arthur, Tom, Dave, Jack, Cleland, Ron, Max, Charlie, Morley, Roy, Eric, and Rob.

The men called climb onto the Motor Boat.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
And the wounded man Fred.

DAVID RICHARDS  
And we better take four of the  
Dutch blokes as well.

David waves over four Dutch soldiers. They all climb onto the Motor Boat. The motor boat is over loaded with men, it only just stays afloat.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
That's it then, twenty two men.

DAVID RICHARDS  
The rest of you try to stay as one  
group. Try to stay as close as  
possible to here. This is where  
they will come looking for you.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Shall we leave now?

ARTHUR  
So long boys.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Food for them sir?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Jack what is the food situation?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
We have one case of bully beef, two  
tins of fruit, one tin of condensed  
milk. Also one tin of carrots.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Leave the bulk of the food here, we  
will take one tin of beef, water,  
fruit and carrots.

ERIC  
Who? Will be in charge of the men  
left here?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Lieutenant Palmer will lead you.

LT. PALMER  
You can count on me skipper.

The men divide the food as instructed.

Some of the men try to start the motor. It fails to start. Others pass over the bulk of the food and water.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Goodbye and good luck.

DAVID RICHARDS  
I will send help for you as soon as  
I can. Till then good luck and God  
speed.

The men in the Motor Boat take out the oars and row away from  
the rest of the men.

INT. BEAUFIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

In the cockpit is Flying Officer KEARNEY (30) and Sergeant  
BUCK (22). At the gunners position. They speak via headset  
intercom.

They fly over a vast empty ocean below them.

KEARNEY  
Anything from your position?

BUCK (V.O.)  
Nothing yet. So hard to make  
anything out.

KEARNEY  
I can't believe they're gone  
without a trace. No debris field,  
no Oil slick, nothing.

BUCK (V.O.)  
Makes no sense. Should we get a  
little lower? Get a closer look.

KEARNEY  
I don't think that would make much  
difference.

BUCK (V.O.)  
We have to give it a try, it all  
looks the same from this high up.

KEARNEY  
Too low we narrow our field of  
view, too high all detail is lost.  
We're at the right height.

BUCK (V.O.)  
We better turn around for one more  
pass.

KEARNEY  
That will have to be our last pass,  
we're low on fuel.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - NIGHT

The men take turns, some in the boat, others in the water, clinging onto the side.

The men in the boat row, others bail out water. Fred lies motionless. Unable to be roused.

A sea snake swims by the boat.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Skipper, we have a problem.

DAVID RICHARDS  
What is it?

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Fred has died. Must have gone  
awhile ago, no one noticed until  
now.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Drop him overboard, we need the  
space.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Sir how can you say that? He's a  
great bloke.

DAVID RICHARDS  
They're all great blokes, we lost a  
lot of great men.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Men like Teddy, not even bloody  
nineteen. Damn bravest man I will  
ever see.

ARTHUR  
Got that right, he saved my life,  
he save so many lives. Paid for it  
with his own.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
He should be properly awarded for  
what he did.

DAVID RICHARDS  
You don't have to worry about that.  
I'll see that he gets the proper  
recognition.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
How about a few words for Fred?

David holds his hands in prayer as do the other men.

DAVID RICHARDS

Dear Lord as we commend our friend  
Fred to the sea, we ask that you  
graciously take him into your  
hands. We ask that you Provide Fred  
with eternal rest. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

Fred is gently lowered into the water.

Eric removes the housing from the motorboat engine.

JACK DUCKWORTH

What are you doing?

ERIC

I think I can get the motor running  
again.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Leave it alone, you will make it  
worse.

ERIC

No, I worked at my uncles mechanic  
shop before the war.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Well okay. Don't stuff it up.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - RAFT - DAY

The men left behind by Richards gather together. Some on the  
makeshift raft. Others on the carley float or denton raft.

Russel Caro is on the carley float with him is Ray and Lt.  
Palmer

Ray conducts a count of the men.

RAY

Twenty six, twenty seven. Twenty  
seven men Lieutenant.

LT. PALMER

Two more taken by sharks. Picking  
us off one by one.

RAY

We have to get the men out of the  
water some how.

RUSSEL CARO

In this debris field gives me an  
idea. The whaler.

LT. PALMER

Not going to work, Japs shot the hell out of it.

RAY

So we just give up? Let nature take it's course.

LT. PALMER

No, we keep thinking.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - DAY

The Dutch troops huddle together. Some of the Australians are in the water.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Skipper, I can't stop thinkin' about Teddy. Is that such a bad thing?

DAVID RICHARDS

Not at all, believe me it will help. Now and many years to come.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Poor bloke, what on earth possessed him to do that?

Eric sits up a little to hear better.

DAVID RICHARDS

Only Teddy and God know the answer to that one.

JACK DUCKWORTH

I remember one time Teddy told me a story about how he and several others while on basic were in a street parade.

ERIC

Do you have to go on? Let the fella rest in peace.

DAVID RICHARDS

Go on I would love to here the story.

JACK DUCKWORTH

The ocean liner Queen Mary was in town. And Teddy had to tow a cannon down the street.

DAVID RICHARDS

Not the same one captured during the boxer rebellion?

JACK DUCKWORTH

The very one. So old man Louis couldn't keep up. Anyhow the lads got away, they thought they had it made.

ERIC

Yeah what happened next?

JACK DUCKWORTH

They were about to piss off to the local for few beers. When the bloomin' cannon starts rolling down the hill.

ERIC

Serves em right for pullin' a stunt like that.

JACK DUCKWORTH

So here they all are running down the hill after the bloody cannon. Damn thing only stopped after it hit a bush.

All the men burst out laughing.

ERIC

Too bloody right, that sure sound like somethin' Teddy would do.

DAVID RICHARDS

What a cracker story. Okay time to switch places with the Dutch men.

The men in the water try to climb into the motor boat, but are pushed and kicked by the Dutch soldiers.

JACK DUCKWORTH

What the hell is wrong with you blokes? Get in the damn water.

One of the dutch soldiers gestures no.

DAVID RICHARDS

Get them in the Bloody water.

Jack grabs hold of one of the armed Dutch troops to pull him into the sea.

The Dutch troop kicks Jack away. Draws his pistol and aims it at Jack.

JACK DUCKWORTH

You arrogant bastard, you point that thing at me. After we saved your life.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Don't antagonise him. Everybody  
calm down.

The Dutch troop points the pistol at David Richards. David  
half raises both his hands.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Skipper, what do you want us to do?

DAVID RICHARDS  
Nothing, they can stay where they  
are.

ERIC  
Skipper this is absurd. What bloody  
right do they have to special  
treatment?

DAVID RICHARDS  
They have the guns, I'm not about  
to lose anymore men.

David gestures for the Dutch troops to stay in the raft. The  
Dutch troop lowers his pistol then holsters the gun.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
What are we to do with them  
skipper?

ARTHUR  
I know what I would like to do with  
'em. Leave 'em here to fend for  
themselves.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
I'll agree to that.

DAVID RICHARDS  
No, look leave it for now. I'll see  
if I can come up with a solution.

David scans the sea around him finding a denton raft drifting  
behind them.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Should have left them with the  
others.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Jack, if you can swim out grab that  
denton raft? Tow it back. Give it  
to the dutch boys.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Ah... sure it's not too far.

Jack swims out.

A MOMENT LATER

Jack returns with the denton raft.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Righto put them in it and tie it to  
the motor boat.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - DAY

In the communications room is flying officer Kearney,  
Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer. All three look over the  
large map table.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Glad you could join us, any news?

KEARNEY  
Nothing I'm afraid, my last flight,  
not a sign.

CUTHBERT POPE  
We need to widen the search to the  
west and east. Can we spare the  
aircraft?

KEARNEY  
No, we lost one on the way back to  
Darwin. The other crews are at the  
point of exhaustion.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Damn it, did the crew make it?

KEARNEY  
Yeah a cat landed and picked them  
up.

LAURANCE TOZER  
We have no other ships available to  
search. It has to be the  
Beaufighters.

KEARNEY  
You keep putting us up like this  
and I guarantee you you'll lose  
more men, more planes as they drop  
out of the sky from exhaustion.

CUTHBERT POPE  
We're not giving up on those men.  
Not yet anyway.

KEARNEY  
Anyway?

LAURANCE TOZER

Eventually, if we can't find anyone  
or any sign they're alive we'll  
have no choice but to call it off.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - DAY

The men in the boat struggle to sleep. Men nod off only to  
wake seconds later. David Richards takes a bearing from a  
button compass.

At the boat engine is Eric and Jack Duckworth.

ERIC

That should do it, crank the engine  
and see if we can get it goin'.

Jack CRANKS the engine. It SPLUTTERS. Again he CRANKS it.  
Again it SPLUTTERS. He CRANKS the engine again. It Only  
SPLUTTERS.

ERIC

Damn bastard won't start. Perhaps  
we missed something?

JACK DUCKWORTH

Give it another go.

Jack CRANKS the engine. Only the crank handle SNAPS off.

ERIC

That's fucking done it now.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Rope, we need a piece of rope.

One of the men fishes around in the water inside the boat.  
Finds a length of rope passing it over to Eric.

Eric wraps the rope around the flywheel and pulls as hard as  
he can.

The engine SPLUTTERS and begins to PUTT, PUTT into life.  
Finally it starts. A CHEER goes up from all of the men.

The slight increase in speed causes the sea to flow faster  
over the sides and through the large split in the bow of the  
boat.

ERIC

That's done it.

DAVID RICHARDS

Well done lads, plug up that hole.  
And put extra men on bailing duty.

Eric tears up his shirt, stuffing it into the hole in the  
bow. Two other men do the same.

ERIC  
That will hold it for now. Which  
way skipper?

DAVID RICHARDS  
We need to go toward the south  
east, that way.

David points in the direction of south east.

INT. BEAUFIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

At the controls are Kearney and Buck. Buck scans the sea from  
his gunners position. They speak via headset intercom.

BUCK (V.O.)  
How much time do you think they  
have?

KEARNEY  
A day or two more. Almost four  
days, no one can survive that.

BUCK (V.O.)  
Sounds like you've given up on them  
already. I don't care how long it  
takes, we should keep looking.

KEARNEY  
I would love nothing more than to  
do that.

BUCK (V.O.)  
But?

Kearney banks the plane into a slow wide left turn, offering  
a vast panorama of endless ocean and sky.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - DAY

All the men are in some form of pain. All have sunburnt skin,  
puffed-up and cracked skin. Blood oozing from the cracks.  
Lips cracked and blistered. Oil in their hair dried and gone  
hard.

Sea water only stings them when it flows over the skin. Drift  
wood from the Armidale trails around them.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Hold this course as much as you can  
lads. We must be getting close now.

Two of the pieces of drift wood come apart from the raft.

JACK DUCKWORTH  
Damn things breakin' apart skipper.

DAVID RICHARDS

Re-tie it with whatever we have. It will just have to do.

Jack re-ties the raft.

ARTHUR

No use in tryin' skipper, what hope is there?

DAVID RICHARDS

Is that the kind of attitude Teddy would have?

ARTHUR

No, he's not here to save us now.

DAVID RICHARDS

No, but you're here because of him we all are.

ARTHUR

I just want it to end. Go home to my misses and kids.

DAVID RICHARDS

Just think about getting home to your family.

ARTHUR

How on Earth do you know it works?

DAVID RICHARDS

It works for me. We only have each other to rely on.

The engine of the motorboat stops working.

ARTHUR

Sorry skipper. Eric you better check that out.

Eric inspects the engine.

DAVID RICHARDS

What is it?

ERIC

No petrol, ran dry.

DAVID RICHARDS

Well that's it then back to rowing.

ERIC

Not so fast skipper.

Eric removes the carburettor and empties the contents into the fuel tank.

DAVID RICHARDS

What on earth are you doing man?

ERIC

Run it as a diesel, that will buy  
us a few more hours.

EXT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - AIRSTRIP - NIGHT

Standing on the edge of the airstrip is Cuthbert Pope. He  
watches as a Beaufighter comes in for a landing.

When it stops and the door opens Cuthbert walks up to meet  
with Kearney and Buck.

CUTHBERT POPE

Well anything?

KEARNEY

Not a thing at all, it's like they  
just vanished.

BUCK

One more day I'm sure we can find  
them.

CUTHBERT POPE

No, sorry but I have to call it  
off.

BUCK

Sir, one more day, what harm can  
one more day do?

KEARNEY

I have to agree, one last flight.

CUTHBERT POPE

My mind is made up, I need you for  
other operations.

KEARNEY

Perhaps, if we had more planes,  
didn't a squadron of Hudson's  
arrive? Please sir one last day.

BUCK

We'll go out on our own if we have  
to.

CUTHBERT POPE

You'll do no such thing.

BUCK

Well give us tomorrow then.

Cuthbert takes a moment to consider the request.

CUTHBERT POPE

Okay, you and the Hudson's have one day to find something, anything.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - RAFT - DAY

Men on the raft construct a makeshift mast from a boat hook, using clothing for a sail.

In the water around them is drift wood, and debris from the Armidale.

Floating just below the surface is the whaler from the Armidale.

LT. PALMER

That's it men use what rope we have to secure that mast.

NOEL

Not much of a sail but it will do. How much longer do you think lieutenant?

LT. PALMER

At this rate, and assuming we hold our course three maybe four days.

One of the men, BOOL (23), looks around at all of the drift wood and debris.

BOOL

Sir, Take a look at all this floating around us. We could take the whaler and use it too.

NOEL

Are you daft man? Look at it riddled with holes, damn thing has a massive split in the stern.

BOOL

Why don't we make some kind of a raft or something. Get the whaler on top.

NOEL

It'll never work. The sun has driven you mad.

LT. PALMER

Now hang on a minute, I think he's onto something. With what's left of the rope lash the drift wood together into some kind of floating dry dock.

NOEL

Skipper, we are all in a dreadful state, we're barely holding on as it is.

BOOL

It's worth a try, free up some space, we can divide the men up between the carley float, the raft and denton rafts.

LT. PALMER

May as well give it a shot. Gather in all of the drift wood. Gather up the last of the rope.

NOEL

And what is left of the canvas cover.

Noel and Bool enter the water. They both turn over the whaler right way up.

Other men tie the driftwood together and form a square-shaped raft. Three more men enter the water straining to lower one end of the raft into the water.

LT. PALMER

That's it men keep it lowered now. You other men on my order push it up. One, two, three, heave.

Men in the water strain as the whaler is pushed partly onto the raft.

NOEL

One or two more goes then we have it.

LT. PALMER

One, two, three, HEAVE. One more lads HEAVE.

One of the men slips off the raft, the whaler slides off back into the water.

NOEL

It's no use skipper. Too bloody hard.

LT. PALMER

No, we don't give up just because things are hard. Teddy never gave up. Start over.

The men reset and push as hard as they can.

The whaler sits half way on the raft.

LT. PALMER  
One last big push men. HEAVE.

The whaler GRINDS its way fully onto the raft.

NOEL  
You little beauty the world's first  
floating dry dock constructed while  
at sea.

LT. PALMER  
Cover that slit in the stern with  
the canvas. Use the screws from the  
fittings to tack it down.

NOEL  
She won't stay afloat for long.

BOOL  
Our life vest inflate them. Pop 'em  
under the raft.

LT. PALMER  
Bloody brilliant, come on then you  
heard the man. Start huffin' an  
puffin'.

The men begin to inflate their life Vest.

LT. PALMER  
Stuff the other holes with  
clothing. Start bailing out the  
whaler, great job men.

INT. BEAUFIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

At the controls are Flying Officer Kearney and sergeant Buck  
at his gunner position. They speak via headset intercom.

BUCK (V.O.)  
I'm sure I saw something. Just off  
to the right.

Both men scan the water below them. The sea is rough with  
high swells.

KEARNEY  
There! I see them, looks like  
they're on a raft of some kind.

BUCK (V.O.)  
Yeah, I see them too. I'll mark  
their location on a chart.

KEARNEY  
I'll put a call into Darwin. Get a  
cat out here.

BUCK (V.O.)  
I don't think they can land in seas  
like this.

KEARNEY  
We have to give it a go. It might  
settle down by the time they get  
here.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - NIGHT

A MESSENGER is running down a long corridor with note in hand. He stops at the office of Cuthbert Pope. An Urgent KNOCK on the door.

The door opens.

MESSENGER  
Sir, you have to come quick to the  
operations room.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Why? What is going on? Explain  
yourself.

The messenger hands over the note. Cuthbert reads it.

MESSENGER  
Sir?

CUTHBERT POPE  
Quickly now, get Tozer to meet me  
in the ops room urgently.

MESSENGER  
Yes sir.

The messenger walks away.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Run boy, hurry now.

The messenger starts running. Cuthbert breaks into a jog.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - OFFICER QUARTERS - NIGHT

The messenger outside a door of the quarters.- He KNOCKS on the door. No response. The messenger KNOCKS on the door again harder.

A moment later.

The door is opened by Laurance Tozer who is dressed in his Pyjamas.

LAURANCE TOZER  
What is it? What can't wait until  
the morning?

MESSENGER

Sorry to wake you sir. But the commodore needs to see you in the ops room urgently.

LAURANCE TOZER

Did he say why?

MESSENGER

It is about the Armidale. They found some survivor's.

LAURANCE TOZER

My God. How many?

MESSENGER

I don't know sir. But the commodore just said to get you.

LAURANCE TOZER

Thanks, you can go.

The messengers leaves.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - OPERATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer arrive at the room at the same time. Laurance Tozer dressed in pyjamas and a robe and slippers.

They both stop at the large map table.

CUTHBERT POPE

Where are they?

A staffer places a marker on the table to indicate the location of the raft.

LAURANCE TOZER

That is about six hours sailing time.

CUTHBERT POPE

What planes are in the area now?

LAURANCE TOZER

None, they are all back now.

CUTHBERT POPE

Damn it I want a cat in the air, pick them up now.

LAURANCE TOZER

All flights are grounded until first light.

CUTHBERT POPE

Get the Kalgoorlie out to the area at once. Have a cat take off at first light.

LAURANCE TOZER

Right, I'll make the arrangements now.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - DAY

Every man is on the verge of complete exhaustion. The men are startled when a flying fish leaps out of the sea straight into the motor boat.

ARTHUR

What the hell? Hey fellas take a look at this a damn fish landed in the boat.

DAVID RICHARDS

Don't let it get away. Who has a knife?

JACK DUCKWORTH

I do. Look at it nice and juicy.

Jack passes his knife over to Arthur. The fish is cut into small pieces and distributed amongst the men.

Each man savours the tiny morsel of fish.

DAVID RICHARDS

Ask and the lord shall provide.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - RAFT - DAY

Lieutenant Palmer along with Jim Pellett lower a body of a Dutch soldier into the sea.

JIM PELLETT

No sign of a shark bite. What do Ya reckon got 'im.

LT. PALMER

Probably a sea snake. I think we need to split the men up.

BOOL

What for? Our chances of survival are better together.

LT. PALMER

I don't think so. If it's not sharks, or bloody sea snakes. Then it's men dieing with half their guts missing.

RAY

The Lieutenant's right split the men into two. Some on the whaler. The rest on the raft.

LT. PALMER

Increase our chances of a rescue. We know where the patrol zones are.

BOOL

You base that on the assumption the skipper made it. We don't know that. I say no stick together.

LT. PALMER

What do you think then bumble?

BOOL

Split the men up. We have to assume the skipper never made it.

LT. PALMER

Okay then. We put about a dozen or so on a raft. The rest stay with me on the whaler.

EXT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - AIRSTRIP - DAY

As the sun rises in the East.

A black catalina plane rolls down the runway. Lifting off it climbs into the air, then levels off.

INT. CATALINA - COCKPIT - DAY

At the controls is flying officer YOUNG (24) and sergeant DAVIS (22). At the waist gunners position is AC2. BOBBY (18)

FO. YOUNG

Check the maps, we have to be sure of the location. We can't waste a moment of daylight.

SGT. DAVIS

I have, but I can do it again. I want to find 'em too, but getting snippy about it doesn't help.

FO. YOUNG

Sorry you're right. I'm sure we can find them.

SGT. DAVIS

Forget it. I better check in with Bobby.

SGT. Davis switches on the intercom.

FO. YOUNG  
Hope he brought the camera?

SGT. DAVIS  
(into intercom)  
Bobby have you got the camera?

AC2. BOBBY (V.O.)  
Sure have, I made a package with a note attached should we find them.

SGT. DAVIS  
Great work. We will make at least two passes to get a proper fix on their location.

AC2. BOBBY (V.O.)  
Copy that, I can drop the supplies first take a picture on the second.

SGT. DAVIS  
Sounds like a plan to me. Just don't drop it on their heads, I think they have gone through enough.

AC2. BOBBY (V.O.)  
No I won't. I'm a pretty good shot.

INT. HMAS KALGOOLIE - BRIDGE - DAY

In command of the Australian Corvette is HAROLD LITCHFIELD (45) he study's a sea chart. Measuring out distance to a location with a divider.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
Steer to course three four zero degrees. Slow to one third.

A Sailor at the helm turns the wheel to the new course. An officer at the ship's engine telegraph moves the handle to the slow one third position.

INT. CATALINA - COCKPIT - DAY

The catalina is flying low over the ocean as it approaches a raft with 12 Sailors on it.

FO. YOUNG  
We're coming up on them now. Get Bobby ready with that package.

SGT. DAVIS  
(into intercom)  
Bob you ready back there? Got one shot at this.

FO. YOUNG  
Okay ten seconds.

INT. CATALINA - RIGHT WAIST GUNNER - DAY

Bobby with the package in hand holds it out the window. The catalina banks slightly to one side.

SGT. DAVIS (V.O.)  
Three, two, one. Drop it now.

Bobby lets go of the package. It plummets into the sea only a few metres from the raft.

AC2. BOBBY  
Good drop, I can see a man swimming out now.

INT. CATALINA - COCKPIT - DAY

FO. Young banks the plane into a turn for a second pass. Over the raft.

FO. YOUNG  
Get the location on this pass.

SGT. DAVIS  
Okay got it. I can send it right away to Darwin.

FO. YOUNG  
Yep, do it. Get the camera ready.

INT. CATALINA - RIGHT WAIST GUNNER - DAY

Bobby has a box brownie camera ready, as the plane makes a banking turn Bobby SNAPS a photo of the men on the raft.

The men are seen standing and waving as the picture is taken.

The plane levels out and leaves the area.

AC2. BOBBY  
(into intercom)  
Is that it? Are you sure we can't land?

FO. YOUNG (V.O.)  
Positive, the sea state is too rough. Don't worry we have their location. We will be back first thing tomorrow.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer are in the operations room at a telegraphist station. The telegraphist transmits a message to the Kalgoorlie.

LAURANCE TOZER  
Have the Kalgoorlie send her  
current location.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Also check with the cat crews any  
further news.

LAURANCE TOZER  
I think we need to make the men on  
the raft a priority.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Why? Do you think that?

LAURANCE TOZER  
The other men are in reasonable  
good shape on a carley float and  
motor boat.

CUTHBERT POPE  
What has that got to do with  
anything?

LAURANCE TOZER  
That raft could break apart at any  
moment, especially in a rough sea  
state.

CUTHBERT POPE  
I can't agree to that we have to go  
for the other men first. We know  
where they are and have a better  
chance of rescue.

LAURANCE TOZER  
So their lives are less valuable,  
more expendable.

CUTHBERT POPE  
Don't lecture me on life and death  
decisions. I sent those men out. I  
am the one who ordered them to  
their deaths.

LAURANCE TOZER  
A burden we must all bear.

CUTHBERT POPE  
No only I.

INT. CATALINA - COCKPIT - DAY

At the controls is FO. Young and SGT. Davis. With waist  
gunner Bobby.

FO. Young has the plane in a slow wide turn over the area  
where the picture was taken the day before.

FO. YOUNG  
Check the map again. Are you sure  
this is the right location?

SGT. DAVIS  
I'm telling you this is the  
location. I have checked it three  
times now.

FO. YOUNG  
Did you work out the location  
correctly? You could have made a  
mistake.

SGT. DAVIS  
No, I did not. I know how to  
navigate and read maps.

FO. YOUNG  
Tell me how a raft full of men just  
vanishes into thin air. It makes no  
sense.

SGT. DAVIS  
They could have been picked up by a  
ship. Or the Japs got them. God  
knows.

Over the intercom Bobby calls FO. Young.

AC2. BOBBY (V.O.)  
Skipper, I think SGT. Davis is  
right. My maps show the same as  
yours. We can't both be wrong.  
Maybe a rouge wave swamped them?

SGT. DAVIS  
That is possible. Tired exhausted  
men. It would not take much to give  
up in that situation.

AC2. BOBBY  
What if we continued out a little  
further to the south. Followed the  
sea currents.

SGT. DAVIS  
Sounds like a plan to me.

FO. YOUNG  
Worth a shot. But I don't like our  
chances.

EXT. HUDSON BOMBER - DAY

The Australian bomber fly's low and slow over the motor boat  
a package suspended by parachute is dropped.

A sailor from the motor boat swims out to retrieve the package.

The hudson bomber rocks it's wings as it fly's away from the area.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - DAY

David Richards unwraps the package with food and tinned water. A flare gun and several flares are also in the package. One of the tins of water has a note wrapped around it.

ARTHUR

What's it say skipper? Are they comin' for us?

DAVID RICHARDS

Says that the Kalgoorlie is on her way, and that we should fire the flare gun every half hour from twenty-three hundred hours tonight.

One of the men passes over the flare gun and flares to David.

ARTHUR

Praise Jesus, I knew someone was watching over us.

DAVID RICHARDS

This could be it lads. We could be going home.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Only if they're around, no guarantee they will show up.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - DAY

In the operations room is Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer. Both men are at the telegraphist station.

LAURANCE TOZER

Message from the Kalgoorlie. Arrived at location. No sign of raft or survivors. Resuming search.

CUTHBERT POPE

How does a raft full of men simply up and vanish?

A staffer places two markers with Japanese flags south-west of Betano Timor.

LAURANCE TOZER

Japanese cruisers could of picked them up.

CUTHBERT POPE

Not likely, damn Jap bastards would murder the lot of them first.

LAURANCE TOZER

We should not speculate as to their fate. Give the Kalgoorlie time to widen the search.

CUTHBERT POPE

They have another twelve hours, then I have to call them back.

LAURANCE TOZER

Sir those men could still be alive...

CUTHBERT POPE

Enough, don't you think I know that. It Pains me to do it. But we have to face reality. The war stops for no man.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - NIGHT

David Richards fires the last of the flares into the air. It burns out, with no response.

DAVID RICHARDS

That's it last one gone. Someone must have seen that.

ARTHUR

Japs would have. They show up and forget it.

Arthur runs his finger across his throat, gesturing the cutting of it.

JACK DUCKWORTH

I'll jump in and risk it with the sharks before that happens.

ARTHUR

Light a fire on the boat, that will get their attention.

JACK DUCKWORTH

Are you mad? Burn the only thing that floats and keeping us alive.

DAVID RICHARDS

No, wait give it a try, what else have we got to lose?

JACK DUCKWORTH

Our lives.

Men gather up what ever is dry, covered in Oil and set it alight with water proof matches. The fire burns bright.

EXT. HMAS KALGOOLIE - ARAFURA SEA - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Harold Litchfield scans the vast blackness, when the glow of the fire is spotted.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
Helm, steer toward to that fire.  
All stop, don't want to run the  
poor bastards over.

The sailor at the helm carries out the orders, an officer places the ship's engine telegraph into the all stop position.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
Stay on the port side of the fire.  
Have rescue parties stand by with  
blankets. Lower cargo nets over the  
side.

EXT. ARAFURA SEA - MOTOR BOAT - NIGHT

David richards watches as the fire burns brightly. The men on the boat watching for any sign of a ship.

In the darkness a voice is heard.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD (O.S.)  
PUT THAT BLOODY FIRE OUT, OR I'LL  
LEAVE YOU HERE.

The bow of the Kalgoorlie comes into view from the glow of the fire.

EXT. HMAS KALGOORLIE - PORT BOW - NIGHT

A rescue party from the Kalgoorlie's crew help the men from the motor boat on board. Harold Litchfield greets David Richards.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Thank God you showed up. I don't  
think we would have made it another  
day.

The crew distribute blankets to the rescued men.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
I don't know how you did it. Damn  
lucky, everyone of you.

DAVID RICHARDS  
Where do you want us?

HAROLD LITCHFIELD

Get the men below to the mess deck.  
Get the worst of the injured to the  
sick bay.

DAVID RICHARDS

That bloody motor boat saved so  
many men. We could bring it on  
board.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD

Why on Earth would you want to do  
that for?

DAVID RICHARDS

For history's sake, a permanent  
reminder of our ordeal.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD

Well it's your boat.

Two men lower ropes with hooks attached, they snag two ends  
of the motor boat and begin to haul it up. Only to have it  
break up half way and fall back into the sea.

DAVID RICHARDS

So much for that idea.

INT. DARWIN NAVAL BASE - BASE HQ - DAY

Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer are at the large table map.  
A telegraphist arrives with a note in hand.

LAURANCE TOZER

They found them, the men are alive.  
David made it. Final count is  
nineteen men.

CUTHBERT POPE

That is wonderful news. Any news on  
the other men?

LAURANCE TOZER

Kalgoorlie is reporting that David  
Richards has given the last known  
location. The kalgoorlie is  
returning to Darwin.

CUTHBERT POPE

No, have them turn around at once.

LAURANCE TOZER

Sir, Harold did state he was going  
to do that. But decided against it.

CUTHBERT POPE

On what grounds? He has no right to  
do that.

LAURANCE TOZER

The risk is too high, Japs are all over the place. I think he made the right call.

CUTHBERT POPE

Yes, perhaps. But as soon as the survivors are off loaded. Send the Kalgoorlie back out at once.

LAURANCE TOZER

Shall we send up a plane to confirm the location?

CUTHBERT POPE

Yes, get a cat up quickly.

LAURANCE TOZER

How far are they meant to be?

A staffer places a marker on the large table map.

CUTHBERT POPE

That is at least twenty-four hours sailing time. Four to six hours flying time.

EXT. DARWIN PORT - DAY

At the dock side are Cuthbert Pope and Laurance Tozer. Survivors from the Armidale are assisted down the gangway by the ship's company from the Kalgoorlie.

Two men are carried off on stretchers, their bodies covered with blankets.

David Richards assisted by a sailor stops to meet with Cuthbert and Laurance. David salutes them both, and the salute is returned.

CUTHBERT POPE

So good to see you alive, what happened to them?

DAVID RICHARDS

Made it all the way to the rescue. Died on the Kalgoorlie on the way back.

LAURANCE TOZER

Damn shame, only to die with the finishing post so close.

DAVID RICHARDS

It's not a bloody race.

LAURANCE TOZER

Excuse me.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Sorry, letting my emotions get to  
 me.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Hate to ask at a time like this,  
 but the code books.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Gone, went down with the ship. No  
 one will ever get to them.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 How many have we lost?

DAVID RICHARDS  
 Hard to say, so far I estimate in  
 the figure of forty to forty-five  
 men.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 My God, as high as that.

DAVID RICHARDS  
 It could have been a lot higher if  
 it weren't for ordinary seaman  
 Sheean.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 Oh, how so?

DAVID RICHARDS  
 If you don't mind I would like to  
 get to the sick berth and rest.

CUTHBERT POPE  
 No, of course not, you can tell me  
 about it later.

The sailor and David continue on toward the sick berth.

EXT. HMAS KALGOORLIE - PORT BOW - DAY

Harold Litchfield supervises the rescue party. Men from the  
 whaler are helped on board by the crew of the Kalgoorlie.

The crew distribute blankets to the rescued men.

Lieutenant Palmer is the first man aboard.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
 Lieutenant how many men have you  
 got?

LT. PALMER  
 I have seventeen, however we left  
 twelve on a raft. Have they been  
 found?

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
 No, a catalina crew did spot them.  
 Even managed to take a photograph.

LT. PALMER  
 Poor bastards I should have stayed  
 with them. What about the rest?

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
 They made it, I picked them up last  
 night. Your skipper is safe back in  
 Darwin.

LT. PALMER  
 I can't leave the area until we  
 find the men on the raft.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
 I understand how you would want to  
 do that. But I'm sorry we can't  
 stay here.

LT. PALMER  
 They have to keep looking for them.  
 They have to.

HAROLD LITCHFIELD  
 I'm sure they will, it has been one  
 horrific ordeal for you and the  
 men.

LT. PALMER  
 Trust me it is something that I and  
 the men who went through it will  
 never forget.

A crew member wraps a blanket around lieutenant Palmer. They  
 both walk off toward the mess deck.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCROLLING TEXT: "THE ACTIONS OF ORDINARY SEAMAN EDWARD  
 'TEDDY' SHEEAN WITHOUT A DOUBT SAVED THE LIVES OF MANY MEN  
 FROM HMAS ARMIDALE.

"A COMBINED TOTAL OF SHIP'S COMPANY, AIF, DUTCH ARMY OFFICERS  
 AND DUTCH NATIVE TROOPS TOTALLED ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE  
 SOULS ON BOARD. ONLY FORTY-NINE MEN WOULD SURVIVE.

"THE MEN PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE RAFT, THEIR FATE WAS NEVER  
 KNOWN, THEY VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE.

"EDWARD 'TEDDY' SHEEAN WILLINGLY GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE THE  
 LIVES OF HIS FELLOW SHIPMATES. HE WAS ONLY EIGHTEEN YEARS  
 OLD. TEDDY WAS ONLY MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES FOR HIS SELFLESS  
 ACT.

"FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS A CAMPAIGN TO HAVE EDWARD 'TEDDY'  
SHEEAN AWARDED A VICTORIA CROSS CONTINUES TO THIS DAY."

FADE OUT.

THE END.