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2024 American war drama miniseries Masters of the AirGenreWar dramaCreated by John Shiban John Orloff Based onMasters of the Airby Donald L. MillerDeveloped byJohn OrloffDirected by Cary Joji Fukunaga Dee Rees Anna BodenRyan Fleck Tim Van Patten Starring Austin Butler Callum Turner Anthony Boyle Barry Keoghan Nikolai Kinski Stephen Campbell Moore Sawyer Spielberg Isabel May James Murray Nate Mann Laurie Davidson Joanna Kulig Louis Hofmann Jamie Parker Bel Powley Sam Hazeldine Josiah Cross Branden Cook Ncuti Gatwa Jerry MacKinnon Josh Dylan Narrated byAnthony BoyleTheme music composerBlake Neely[1]Country of originUnited StatesOriginal languageEnglishNo. of episodes9ProductionExecutive producers Gary Goetzman Tom Hanks Steven Spielberg Cinematography Adam Arkapaw Jac Fitzgerald Richard Rutkowski David Franco Editors Mark Czyzewski Carmen Morrow Mark Sanger Spencer Averick Billy Rich Running time48–77 minutesProduction companies Playtone Amblin Television Apple Studios Budget$250 million[2][3]Original releaseNetworkApple TV+ReleaseJanuary 26 (2024-01-26) –March 15, 2024 (2024-03-15)Related Band of Brothers The Pacific Masters of the Air is a 2024 American war drama miniseries created by John Shiban and John Orloff for Apple TV+.[4] It is based on the 2007 book of the same name by Donald L. Miller and follows the actions of the 100th Bomb Group, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber unit in the Eighth Air Force in eastern England during World War II.[5] The series is a companion to Band of Brothers (2001) and The Pacific (2010). It is the first series to be produced by Apple Studios in cooperation with Playtone and Amblin Television and stars Austin Butler, Callum Turner and Anthony Boyle as part of an ensemble cast. The series consists of nine episodes. Principal photography began in England in 2021 but was delayed on several occasions due to strict government measures related to COVID-19.[5] Masters of the Air premiered on January 26, 2024 to generally positive reviews, and received three nominations at the 76th Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards, winning one. Masters of the Air recounts the story of the 100th Bomb Group during World War II and follows bomber crews on dangerous missions to destroy targets inside German-occupied Europe. The show portrays the intensity of war, the dangers the airmen face, and the friendships and relationships they develop. Austin Butler as Major Gale "Buck" Cleven[5] Callum Turner as Major John "Bucky" Egan[5] Anthony Boyle as Lt. Harry Crosby Barry Keoghan as Lt. Curtis Biddick Nikolai Kinski as Colonel Harold Huglin Stephen Campbell Moore as Major Marvin "Red" Bowman Sawyer Spielberg as Lt. Roy Frank Claytor Isabel May as Marjorie "Marge" Spencer James Murray as Colonel Neil "Chick" Harding Nate Mann as Major Robert "Rosie" Rosenthal Laurie Davidson as Lt. Herbert Nash Joanna Kulig as Paulina Louis Hofmann as Lt. Ulrich Haussmann Jamie Parker as Dr. Huston Bel Powley as Alessandra "Sandra" Wesgate Sam Hazeldine as Col. Albert Clark Josiah Cross as 2nd Lt. Richard D. Macon Branden Cook as 2nd Lt. Alexander Jefferson Ncuti Gatwa as 2nd Lt. Robert Daniels Jerry MacKinnon as Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Josh Dylan as Lt. George Niethammer Darragh Cowley as Lt. Glenn Graham Matt Gavan as Lt. Charles Cruikshank Jonas Moore as Capt. Frank Murphy Jordan Coulson as Lt. Howard Hamilton Ben Radcliffe as Capt. John D. Brady David Shields as Major Everett Blakely Edward Ashley as Major Jack Kidd Raff Law as Sgt. Ken Lemmons Adam Long as Capt. Bernard DeMarco Elliot Warren as Lt. James Douglass Samuel Jordan as Sgt. John J. "Winks" Herrmann Kai Alexander as Sgt. William Quinn Harry Ames as Capt. August H. Gaspar Bailey Brook as Sgt. Charles K. Bailey Louis Greatorex as Capt. Joseph "Bubbles" Payne John Hopkins as Dr. Wendell "Smokey" Stover Nathen Solly as Lt. John Hoerr Josh Bolt as Lt. Winifred "Pappy" Lewis Ian Dunnett Jnr as Lt. Ron Bailey Thomas Flynn as Barr James Frecheville as Major Bill Veal Jonathan Halliwell as Sgt. William J. DeBlasio Dean John-Wilson as Lt. Clifford Milburn Tom Joyner as Cpt. "Stormy" Becker Riley Neldam as Sgt. Michael V. Boccuzzi Adam Silver as Lt. David Solomon Ben Spong as Major Ollie Turner Spike White as Lt. Charles A. Via Nathan Collins as Lt. George Oliver 100th Bomb Group Daniel Briggs as Sgt. William Crabb Freddy Carter as Lt. David Friedkin James Meunier as Lt. Kenneth Lorch Kieron Moore as Sgt. Clifford Starkey Oaklee Pendergast as Sgt. William Hinton Francesco Piacentini-Smith as Sgt. Ray H. Robinson Dean Ridge as FO. Richard L. Snyder Sonny Ashbourne Serkis as Lt. James Evans George Smale as Lt. Raymond Nutting George Webster as Lt. Glenn W. Dye Ben Dilloway as Lt. Col. Bill Aring Luke Coughlan as Sgt. James M. Johnson Jon Ewart as Lt. William Couch Max Hastings as Lt. Kenneth Allen Nitai Levi as Sgt. Paul A. Vrabec, Jr. Fionn O'Shea as Sgt. Steve Bosser Neil Pendleton as Sgt. William Stewart Thomas Perry as Sgt. Harold E. Clanton Charlie Rix as Lt. Glen Van Noy Elliott Ross as Lt. Donald Strout Alex Boxall as Sgt. Monroe Thornton Elan Butler as Lt. Robert Shoens Lino Facioli as Lt. Adams Christopher Lakewood as Col Thomas Jeffery Dimitri Leonidas as Sgt. George J. Petrohelos Phillip Lewitski as Lt. Francis Harper Jojo Macari as Capt. Oran Petrich John Schwab as Lt. Col. James W. Lann Corin Silva as Lt. Col. John Bennett Louis Sparks as Sgt. Lester Saunders Tuskegee Airmen Kwame Agyei as Lt. Joseph Evans Gordon Tomisin Ajani as Captain Erwin B. Lawrence Bradley Banton as Lieutenant Lee "Buddy" Archer Jonathan Jules as Lt. Shelby F. Westbrook Darryl Mundoma as Lt. Charles M. Bussey Francis Lovehall as Captain Wendell O. Pruitt Rahshan Wall as Lt. Frederick D. Funderburg Other Nancy Farino as Lil, a barmaid at a pub frequented by the airmen Tommy Jessop as Tommy, a local whom Egan befriends Toby Eden as Billy Taylor, a boy who lives near the airfield, looked after by Lemmons Alfie Tempest as Sammy Hurry, a boy who lives near the airfield, looked after by Lemmons Harriet Leitch as Tatty Spaatz, a volunteer for the American Red Cross Emma Canning as Helen, a volunteer for the American Red Cross who makes a connection with Lt. Nash Ben Segers as Vincent, a Belgian resistance fighter aiding Quinn and Bailey in returning to England Vincent Londez as Jean Achten, a Belgian resistance fighter aiding Quinn and Bailey in returning to England Barney White as Bob, a German spy who attempts to blend in with Quinn and Bailey Bronwyn James as Susie, an attendee at Lt. Dye's celebration Lauren McQueen as Rose, a volunteer for the American Red Cross David Austin-Barnes as Stuart O'Neill, a POW at Stalag Luft III Robert Hands as Major Gustav Simoleit, Deputy Commandant at Stalag Luft III Saro Emirze as Hanns Scharff, a Luftwaffe interrogator Léonie Lojkine as Michou, a Resistance guide No.Title[6]Directed byWritten by[4]Original release date[7]1"Part One"Cary Joji FukunagaTeleplay by: John OrloffStory by: John Shiban and John OrloffJanuary 26, 2024 (2024-01-26) In spring 1943, USAAF majors Gale Cleven and John Egan of the 100th Bombardment Group deploy to England to join the allied war effort against Nazi Germany. In June, the 100th, comprising four squadrons of B-17s from RAF base Thorpe Abbotts, is sent on a daytime bombing mission to destroy military targets in Bremen, Germany. Despite the use of the advanced Norden bombsight, the bombardiers are unable to confirm the targets due to heavy cloud cover, and the mission is aborted. The 100th is forced to fly through heavy anti-aircraft fire, and is then attacked by Luftwaffe fighters. The failed mission results in the loss of three B-17s and thirty men, while the 100th commanding officer, Colonel Harold Huglin, is relieved of command due to illness. 2"Part Two"Cary Joji FukunagaJohn OrloffJanuary 26, 2024 (2024-01-26) The 100th copes with its first combat losses. At a pub, RAF members challenge the American tactic of daytime raids; feeling disrespected, Lieutenant (Lt.) Curtis Biddick defeats a British pilot in a bare-knuckle boxing match. The episode also focuses on the importance of ground crew. When Major Marvin Bowman is incapacitated by illness, Major Cleven is tasked with leading the 100th on their second mission: bombing German U-boat pens in Norway. Lt. Harry Crosby, despite airsickness, successfully navigates the mission. Lt. Biddick's B-17 is damaged; the other planes reduce airspeed to stay with Biddick's, which makes a controlled landing without power in Scotland. Following a raucous evening in the mess, the members of the 100th witness an air raid on Norwich. 3"Part Three"Cary Joji FukunagaTeleplay by: John OrloffFebruary 2, 2024 (2024-02-02) In August 1943, the 100th participates in the Schweinfurt–Regensburg mission to destroy aircraft manufacturing plants deep within Germany before traveling to meet the Twelfth Air Force in North Africa. Lt. Biddick and his co-pilot are killed when they crash trying to make an emergency landing in a forest clearing. Sergeant Quinn parachutes to safety after his B-17 is destroyed; he lands in Belgium and is met by resistance members from an escape line. The surviving members of the 100th arrived in Algeria at Telergma Airfield. The Regensburg task force had lost 24 bombers; more than 60 of the 122 surviving aircraft landing in North Africa had suffered battle damage. 4"Part Four"Cary Joji FukunagaJohn OrloffFebruary 9, 2024 (2024-02-09) In October 1943, fresh B-17 crews, including Lt. Robert Rosenthal, arrive. The 100th bombs Bremen once again. Feeling the effects of combat exhaustion, Major Egan is sent on leave to London, where he has a one-night stand with a Polish war widow. Learning that Major Cleven did not return from Bremen, Egan returns to duty early. Meanwhile, Sgt. Quinn is guided by Belgian resistance smugglers. He also meets two other American airmen, including Bob, who is killed after writing the date in dmy format and being exposed as a German infiltrator. Quinn and the others arrive via train to German occupied Paris on the way to Spain. 5"Part Five"Anna Boden & Ryan FleckJohn OrloffFebruary 16, 2024 (2024-02-16) The 100th returns from the Bremen mission after taking heavy casualties. Lt. Crosby replaces Captain Payne as the lead navigator and is promoted. Major Egan leads another bombing raid to Münster just days after the Bremen mission. The mission ends disastrously for the 100th after they are intercepted by swarms of fighters. All but one B-17, piloted by Lt. Rosenthal, are shot down. Having bailed from his doomed plane, Major Egan parachutes alone into the German countryside of Westphalia. 6"Part Six"Anna Boden & Ryan FleckJohn OrloffFebruary 23, 2024 (2024-02-23) October 1943; Major Egan is taken prisoner and almost dies after he and other downed pilots are attacked by civilians while being marched through a bombed town, a reflection of the Rüsselsheim massacre in August 1944. He is taken to Dulag Luft for interrogation before being transferred to Stalag Luft III. There, he meets other comrades from the 100th, including Cleven. Lt. Rosenthal and his crew are sent to a country estate for relaxation and counseling, which Rosenthal resists. Captain Crosby attends a conference at the University of Oxford where he meets a British ATS officer whom he bonds with before she is unexpectedly called away. 7"Part Seven"Dee ReesJohn OrloffMarch 1, 2024 (2024-03-01) In March 1944, the 100th loses fifteen B-17s and one-hundred-fifty men during a mission over Berlin. Their next attack proves more successful when the bombers are guarded by P-51 Mustang fighter squadrons. They are upset to learn that the number of missions required for a crew to be discharged is being increased to twenty-eight. Captain Rosenthal completes his twenty-fifth mission, but decides to reenlist. He learns General Doolittle is planning to use the B-17 crews as bait to draw the Luftwaffe into the sky to face the P-51s; Rosenthal is placed in command of the 350th. Captain Crosby begins an affair with ATS officer Wesgate. Sgt. Quinn returns to base and is exempted from further missions due to his knowledge of the escape lines. In Stalag Luft III, Major Cleven and other prisoners of war build a crystal radio to tune into the BBC news. A large group of British prisoners escape but many murdered after recapture; Cleven, Egan and the other American officers are threatened that the camp will be turned over to the SS and Gestapo if there are further escape attempts. 8"Part Eight"Dee ReesTeleplay by: John Orloff & Joel Anderson Thompson and Dee ReesStory by: John Orloff and Joel Anderson Thompson & Morwenna BanksMarch 8, 2024 (2024-03-08) In June 1944, Captain Crosby conducts operational planning for two hundred bombing missions against Wehrmacht positions in France in preparation for Operation Overlord. Working for three straight days, he passes out and sleeps through D-Day. There is virtually no resistance from the Luftwaffe. During Operation Dragoon, the Tuskegee Airmen of the 332nd fighter group are downed attacking German positions at the Côte d'Azur; 2nd lieutenants Richard Macon, Robert Daniels, and Alexander Jefferson are transferred to Stalag Luft III, now under control of the SS. They are invited by Cleven to join with preparations for a potential breakout, now that the Red Army is approaching. 9"Part Nine"Tim Van PattenTeleplay by: John Orloff & Joel Anderson ThompsonStory by: John OrloffMarch 15, 2024 (2024-03-15) In February 1945, Major Rosenthal's plane is shot down over Berlin; he parachutes into no man's land and is rescued by the Red Army. The Germans evacuate Stalag Luft III, forcing the prisoners to march in freezing conditions; they are taken via train to Nuremberg before being interned at Stalag XIII. When they are again forced to march, Majors Cleven and Egan try to escape, but only Cleven succeeds. Cleven survives an attack by Volkssturm children before encountering U.S. Army units. Egan and the other prisoners are taken to Stalag VII and are liberated soon after. In Poznań, Major Rosenthal enters Żabikowo prison camp (which replaced Fort VII) where he sees the bodies of prisoners, as well as signs of the earlier Jewish inmates. Shortly afterwards, Rosenthal speaks Yiddish to a man who has lost his family in the Holocaust. Majors Cleven, Egan, Rosenthal and Crosby reunite at Thorpe Abbotts; they participate in Operations Manna and Chowhound to supply food to the Dutch population stricken by Hongerwinter. After the German surrender, the 100th departs for home. The series ends with a montage explaining the future lives of its central characters. Emblem of the Eighth Air Force in World War II In October 2012, there were reports of a third World War II miniseries, in the same vein as Band of Brothers and The Pacific, but focusing on United States Army Air Forces aircrews of the Eighth Air Force, that was being considered by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg.[8] In January 2013, HBO confirmed that it was developing the miniseries, based on Donald L. Miller's book Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany, to be adapted by John Orloff.[9] The series would focus on the 100th Bombardment Group of the Eighth Air Force.[10] In October 2019, it was reported that Apple had made a deal with Spielberg's and Hanks's respective production companies to stream the series exclusively on Apple TV+ instead of HBO.[11] In a statement, HBO later confirmed that it had decided not to move forward with the series.[12] The Hollywood Reporter said it would consist of nine episodes at a total cost of $250 million.[13][14] The series is the first Apple TV+ series to go into production under the technology firm's in-house production company, Apple Studios.[15] In October 2020, Cary Joji Fukunaga was announced as director of the first three episodes.[16] In February 2021, Austin Butler and Callum Turner were cast to star.[13] Anthony Boyle and Nate Mann joined the cast in March,[17][18] with Raff Law, James Murray and Tommy Jessop added in April.[19][20][21] Freddy Carter revealed his casting in a May interview,[22] while set photos revealed that Barry Keoghan was also cast.[23] In June, Dee Rees was announced as directing episodes of the series.[24] In July, Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck were also announced as directing episodes.[25] Colleen Atwood served as costume designer.[26] In February 2021, it was reported that production had begun at Dalton Barracks (the former WWII airfield RAF Abingdon) in Oxfordshire, England.[27] Retrospective temporary 12-month planning permission was applied for at Newland Park, Chalfont St Peter, following the construction of a WWII barracks on the site.[28] Filming paused briefly in July due to positive COVID-19 tests.[29] Production also occurred in Hemel Hempstead.[30] The series used on-set virtual production by Lux Machina for cockpit scenes.[31][32][33][34] Stephen Rosenbaum served as the visual effects supervisor for the miniseries.[35] In total, 3,447 visual effects shots were used for the series.[36] Over 1,600 visual effects shots were done by DNEG, including most of the aerial sequences.[37] Masters of the Air premiered on Apple TV+ on January 26, 2024.[7] A companion documentary titled The Bloody Hundredth, narrated by Tom Hanks, tells the story of the 100th Bomb Group that inspired the stories in Masters of the Air. It was released on March 15, 2024, on Apple TV+.[38] On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 85% of 98 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8/10. The website's consensus reads: "Soaring high with its immaculate production design and acutely well-observed characters, Masters of the Air can stand proud alongside its sibling series Band of Brothers and The Pacific."[6] Metacritic assigned the series a weighted average score of 72 out of 100 based on 41 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".[39] Writing for The Guardian, Rebecca Nicholson gave the series five out of five, describing it as "truly fantastic television", portraying the experience of the pilots "as thrilling as it is terrible".[40] However, in the i, Emily Baker rated the series two out of five, describing it as "the first big TV disappointment of 2024". Baker criticizes the predictable and "formulaic" drama, thin characterization, and storylines and suggests that the series is "too old-fashioned to compete with today's prestige TV".[41] The Daily Telegraph also criticized the show, saying it "sacrificed authenticity for Hollywood clichés".[42] Empire pointed out that it is all handled with "a certain strain of American exceptionalism" with non-Americans appearing as stereotypes, the British portrayed as "invariably stiff-upper-lipped" and "only a passing mention" for the RAF.[43] The series has been criticised regarding its accuracy,[42] with many changes and omissions from the actual story of the 100th.[44] The lack of a strategic narrative was also commented on - "the limited focus on strategy missed the opportunity to put the characters' experience into context".[45] The quality of CGI for the aerial scenes was also criticised,[46] including making the B17s seem "cartoonish".[45] Year Ceremony Category Recipient Result Ref. 2024 76th Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards Outstanding Original Main Title Theme Music Blake Neely Nominated [47] Outstanding Sound Editing for a Limited or Anthology Series, Movie or Special Jack Whittaker, Michael Minkler, Jeff Sawyer, Luke Gibleon, Dave McMoyler, Michael Hertlein, Michele Perrone, Jim Brookshire, Bryan Parker, Zach Goheen, Paul B. Knox, Adam Kopald, Angela Claverie, Dylan Tuomy-Wilhoit, and Jeff Wilhoit (for "Part Five") Nominated Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie Michael Minkler, Duncan McRae, Tim Fraser, and Thor Fienberg (for "Part Five") Won 2025 30th Critics' Choice Awards Best Limited Series Masters of the Air Nominated [48] 23rd Visual Effects Society Awards Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal Episode Stephen Rosenbaum, Bruce Franklin, Xavier Matia Bernasconi, David Andrews, Neil Corbould (for "Part Three") Nominated [49] 2025 British Academy Television Craft Awards Best Production Design Chris Seagers Nominated [50] Best Special, Visual and Graphic Effects Neil Corbould, Caimin Bourne, Stuart Heath, and Glen Winchester Nominated ^ "Blake Neely Scoring Apple TV+'s 'Masters of the Air'". Retrieved December 28, 2023. ^ Onion, Rebecca (January 26, 2024). "Masters of the Air, in Red, White, and Blue". Slate. 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Official website Masters of the Air at IMDb "Introducing The Mighty 8th"—We Have Ways of Making You Talk podcast interview with John Orloff Retrieved from " Elliot Warren as bombardier Lt. James Douglass in "Masters of the Air," now streaming on Apple TV+. (Photo courtesy of Apple TV+)There's a moment, midway through the third episode of Apple TV's new series Masters of the Air, when the action in the sky switches from blinkering speed to slo-mo, much like the gunfight scenes in a '90s John Woo movie. And with good reason.B-17 bombers spiral downward in flames, some in flat spins, others corkscrewing in nose-down, high-G death dives from which crews can't escape. German fighters dance through the ragged bomber formations, dodging machine gun tracers and floating parachutes to harry the wounded, smoking aircraft that are falling behind.The American bombers desperately claw their way toward their target, the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg. German fighters desperately try to stop them.In Part Three, Masters of the Air finally gives us the big battle sequence that its forebears, Band of Brothers and The Pacific, were known for. It's a doozy: the August 17, 1943, dual raid on the factories at Schweinfurt and Regensburg, Germany — part of a two-pronged strategy to draw fighter defenses away from Schweinfurt to ensure that target could be bombed accurately, and then escape before more fighter defenses could come up to meet the bombers. Unfortunately, the... Plunging into the heart of WWII's aerial battleground, "Masters of the Air" Episode 3 ramps up the adrenaline and gets down to the nitty-gritty of combat. This episode transcends a mere history lesson, offering a front-row seat to the Eighth Air Force's most audacious operation—a deep strike into the heart of Nazi Germany that focuses more on the visceral thrill of dogfights and the raw determination of the airmen than on their dialogue. Set on August 17, 1943, it's a gripping narrative, capturing the turmoil of war from the tight confines of B-17 cockpits to the strategic disarray above the clouds. It tells an epic story of survival, where the thin line between success and failure is navigated through sheer willpower, and heroes are those who live to recount their ordeal. With "Masters of the Air," the series doesn't just recount history; it immerses us in every electrifying moment of the action, showcasing that the heart of a story often beats loudest in its most thrilling sequences. * * * Ah-ten-hut! [Harding] At ease, gentlemen. Exactly one year ago to the day, the Eighth Air Force sent up its first maximum effort. It was a combined force of 12 B-17s. [soldiers chuckle] Today, the Eighth will be sending up a max effort with three air task forces. [soldiers whisper] Yeah. Totaling 376 heavy bombers and 240 fighters. Not bad, huh? Yeah. That's the largest air armada ever assembled in the history of mankind. [cheering, whistling] Yeah! Yes! Now, we will be in the first task force targeting the Messerschmitt 109 engine assembly plant in Regensburg. Second and third task forces will hit the ball bearing factories in Schweinfurt. And no war machine moves without ball bearings. If we succeed, we knock German production off line for months. There's no telling how many lives we could save. Corporal. Dear God. Oh, boy. This is Regensburg. [soldiers clamoring, whispering] [Harding] And you're probably thinking that's a lot of flying time over Kraut territory. It is. It's the deepest we've attempted to reach. But the mighty Eighth has a plan. Major Bowman? Go get 'em, Red. It's a three-punch combo and the Krauts will only be able to defend one of them. So, execution and timing will be essential. [Curt] Uh, Major? Why does that red line go all the way down to Africa? That is a characteristically astute question, Curt. And I'll answer that in a moment, if I may. [soldiers laugh] All right, all right. Laugh now. All right. Now, the three task forces will assemble over the channel together. And then split here. Now, the Luftwaffe will only be able to mount a sizable defense against our first task force before having to head back to base to rearm and refuel. And when they finally get back in the air, the second and third task forces should be dropping their bombs on the ball bearing factory in Schweinfurt, while we're dropping our bombs on Regensburg. Now, to answer your question, Curt. As we drew the... How can I put this... [chuckles] the shitty end of the stick on the approach, and we're taking the brunt of the enemy fighters, the brass, they've-they've come up with an ingenious plan that is sure to confuse the hell out of the Krauts when we're a no-show for the return. That's because you're headed to Africa, gentlemen. [soldiers whistling, clamoring] The 12th Air Force will welcome you with open arms, iced-cold beer and lobster tails. [soldiers cheering] It'll be... It'll be like a holiday. Y'all like beer. If we get lucky. [Harding] Thank you, Red. And now for some bad news. In our wing, we're tail-end Charlie. [soldiers murmuring, clamoring] Worst spot in the squad. [Harding] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Lives ain't worth a nickel. The lead squadron is the 418th with Major Kidd as command pilot of the group. In addition, Major Egan will be flying in Captain Cruikshank's fort, as, um, reserve command pilot of the group. Major Veal leads the 349th and the 351st in the high position... What, I got a fucking passenger? Apparently so. There you are. [Harding] Now, uh, it seems like we have a little tricky weather pressure in the early hours. Stormy? Let me guess, it's gonna rain. Hundred-percent chance. That's, uh, quite right, sir. Over the base today, gentlemen, cloud cover stands at about five-tenths stratus at 4,000 feet. Topped by five-tenths... What the hell is a "reserve command pilot"? I... I don't know. You had nothing to do with it? [Stormy] Visibility will be... What? Cloud invisibility should be good over the Alps and on your way south to Africa. Thank you, Stormy. Now, the success of this mission rests upon getting all three task forces precisely coordinated over the channel. If we don't rendezvous in sync, well, there's no pass fake. That means a fake pass in sports talk. 05:20 in ten seconds. Good luck... and I'll see you all in a few days. Hack. [tower operator] This is Clear-up Radio to aircraft 567. All aircraft are advised that takeoff has been delayed due to heavy fog. The entire wing is on temporary hold. Stand by for further instructions. [crew member] Clear-up Tower, this is aircraft 567. Roger temporary hold. Standing by. Over. [Teska] "Lord, guard and guide the men who fly through the great spaces of the sky. Be with them traversing the air in darkening storms or sunshine fair. Thou who dost keep with tender might, the balanced birds in all their flight. Thou of the tempered winds, be near, that having thee they know no fear." [sergeant] All three task forces are socked in. We got a 30-minute delay. [Teska] "...Fly through lonely ways beneath the sky." You're on the way through purgatory and you reach a fork in the road. One road goes to Valhalla, the other goes to hell. Damnation. On each of the road is a goblin. One goblin always tells the truth. The other is a tricky little fucker. He always lies. Okay? What's the one question that you need to ask that's gonna tell you the right way to go? Jesus Christ. [chuckles] [horn honks] Hey, Lieutenant. You got a visitor. That is a class woman. [sergeant] Stand by for 30 more minutes. Do you ever have any good news, Garcia? [Garcia] You got complaints? Take it up with operations. Hey! Strongly worded letter to follow! [vehicle departs] Delayed another half hour, fellas. Why can't we just take off? Because we can't. It's fog. Haven't the pilots been trained for that? Yeah. [stammers] Isn't that what they get paid for? Sure. They can fly upside down with a lollipop in their mouth. But if there's a cow on the runway... A cow on the runway? Where do you come up with this shit, Quinn? We're in a flying fortress. We can take on a cow. [Quinn] Alice isn't a Buick, Baby Face. She's a tin can. If we go head-to-head with a cow, she'd accordion. With us in it. [Chuck] Oh, I see your cow. Peanut butter, peanut butter, peanut butter, jam. [sighs] I'd turn your cow into ground beef. Bucky. Bucky. Bucky. Yeah, Crank? [Crank] How'd you convince Harding to let you fly? What do you mean? You, Buck, Veal, Kidd? Three squadron COs and an Air Exec. Lot of eggs in one basket. Yeah, I've never seen so much brass in the same mission before. Well, I wasn't gonna miss this one, was I? [chuckles] [Crosby] Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Do you ask it, "Are you the good goblin?" Uh, no. No, but you're getting closer. You're smarter than I thought, Croz. Ten bucks says the second and third task force is already up in the air. [Crosby] Ah, nah. Nah, they wouldn't hit their target before we formed up with them. Ah, what if they do? Then this genius plan is shit. [sniffs] Come here, Meatball. Come on. [Meatball whines] Good boy. [Curt] Hey, Buck. Hey, Curt. [sighs] [Curt] Some soup, huh? Yeah. We have fog like this back home. Always spooked me as a kid. [Buck] No one likes the fog. How your boys doing? Antsy. Not me. I'm feeling good. I feel like this could be a big one, you know? It is. I think we could do some real damage. Well, better get back to the ant farm. See you in Algeria. See you there, Buck. Here you go, sir. LeMay wants us wheels up. He doesn't wanna wait for the other task forces. What do you mean? They'll have to catch up, sir. [sniffs] Engine start at 06:40. Send up a flare to resume operations. Yes, sir. We're sending them straight into hell. Alone. Command pilot to crew. Anyone see the other task forces? [soldier 1] Radio, negative. [soldier 2] Waist negative. [soldier 3] Tail, negative. [soldier 4] Negative, sir. Negative. Not what they fucking said! They said we'd get the brunt of it, buddy. Yeah, I know. I know. But the other task forces were supposed to be sweeping up after us to make sure they don't come back for seconds. Where are they, huh? Via, you sure you don't see anyone? Not a one of 'em. Still alone. Crank? You think we can get, uh, closer to Blakely? Can do. Back seat driver. Ha! That's right, Crank. Backseat pilot in reserve. Come on, Buck. Keep pace with us. [Buck] Looks like we got stood up by the other divisions. We're on our own. [Dickie] They ain't trying too hard with this flak. [Curt] Keeping it clear for the fighters. Shit! Fighters at 10:00 low! Ten o'clock low! [shouting, groans] They're going for Buck. Fighters, 2:00! [ball turret] Nine o'clock low. More Germans. [waist gunner] I'm on the nine! [Douglass] More fighters. Two o'clock level. Got you, son of a bitch! More at 11:00 low! They're going for Claytor! [grunts] Left wing is hit. [breathing heavily] Oh, she's pulling left. Left flap locked up. Compensating. [gunner] Rockets 2:00! [Buck] Holy shit! [screams] [breathes heavily] [Curt] Shit! They've hit Cleven. Norman? Strout? [copilot] We're losing air speed. We need to increase power. [Buck] Do it. Norman! Strout! [Strout] We're both here. [Buck] What's your damage? [Strout] Electrical and oxygen hoses. [Buck] How's the bombsight? [Strout] Checking. [Norman] Bombsight is okay! Two 190's, 2:00. [groans] Charge handle's blown off! [breathes heavily] [breathes heavily, groans] Two o'clock low! Jesus. They're coming from everywhere! [Crosby] I got one! Full squad, 10:00 low! [Bucky] Shit! Buck's hit. Ah, hell with it. I'm going down to the nose. Roger. [gunner 2] Seven o'clock low! Another from two! [Bucky] All right, Murph. I'm taking that gun. Sir. Ten o'clock low! Tail to nose, coming your way. [gunner 2] Two o'clock high! [Bucky] They're gonna split, Murph! [crew member] They're going for Buck. [gunner 3] Fighters, 2:00 high! Copy. Got 'em. Hit 'em, boys. [gunner 3] They're going after the second element. Tail to Cleven. Hummel's fort is gone. You see any chutes? All ten chutes, but Claytor's in trouble. He's pulling badly. He's falling out of formation. [groans] [copilot] We're losing fuel. [Claytor] Well, I can see that. Left wing's on fire. [copilot] Should we bail, Roy? Roy! Roy! Should we bail? Should we bail? [breathing heavily] [alarm ringing] Pilot to crew, abandon ship. Bail out! Abandon ship! Bail out! Did you say abandon ship? [Claytor] Yes, goddamn it! Destroy the order and then bail! Pilot to bombardier. Open the bomb bay doors! Roger. [alarm continues ringing] [shouting] Lorch, drop all the bombs. [straining] [sighs] [grunts] [grunts, pants] [grunts, screams] [Baby Face] Ball turret to crew. I'm stuck. I can't get out of the turret. What do you mean you can't get out? The elevation clutch is jammed. It won't crank. [grunts] [breathes shakily] [Quinn groans] [Baby Face] Quinn! Help me out. [shouts] Quinn, come on. Help me, man. [Quinn] Push! [Baby Face] Pull on the count of three. Trying! [groans] One, two, three. Come on! [straining] Push, Baby Face! Help me! [Baby Face straining] [straining, grunting] Come on, Quinn! Please! [grunts] Come on, get me out of here. Please! I'm sorry. What do you mean? No! No! [grunts] [Quinn straining] [crying] No! Come back, Quinn! Quinn, please! [grunts] I can't. Get me out of this thing! Help! I can't. [screaming, crying] Get me out! Please! Quinn! I'm sorry, Baby Face. [grunts] I'm sorry. [Baby Face crying] No! No! No! Tail to lead pilot. Our whole second element is gone. Jesus. Roger, tail. We need to join the 418th. Redmeat Lead to Redmeat Squadron, we're joining up with Pacer. Roger that, Redmeat Lead. Let's power up. We're gonna climb and get some protection with the 418th. Tail to command pilot, the whole last element of the 350th is gone. The rest are trying to join us. Roger. [chattering] [Garcia] Come on. Sir. Every Luftwaffe base in Belgium's been scrambled. And we're still more than three hours away from the IP. Rockets incoming. Seven o'clock! [screams] Christ! Smith, report! Smith! Smith, report! [top turret] Smith is down. He-He's not breathing. Waist to Cleven. Smith is dead, sir. Fighters, 11:00 high! [screams, groans] Son of a bitch! [groans] Son of a bitch! You okay? [top turret] Yeah. Then get back up there and man your gun. [breathes heavily] Main electrical panel's been hit. How bad is it? [Buck] Generator's down. I can't tell. Waist to Pilot. Biddick's been hit. Pressure's dropping everywhere. All systems. Curt, we're losing her. No, we're not. [groans] No! Dickie! Dickie! Dickie! No! Best! Get down here now! He's on the controls. Get him off. Get him back. [Best groans] [groans] How is he? [Best] I think he's dead. No, Dickie. Dickie, wake up! Fuck! She's not gonna make it. We gotta get out. Pilot to crew. Bail out! Bail out! [alarm ringing] [Best] Here's your chute, Curt. [Dickie groaning] He's breathing, sir! [Curt] Dickie, stay with me. I'm gonna get you down safely. You hear me? [Best] You can't land this thing, can you? Yes, I can. If we drop him, he'll die. Drop him. It's his best chance! He's gonna die anyway, Lieutenant. No, he's not! We have to bail! Come on! Go. I'll be right behind you. Go! Promise me! I'll be behind you. I'ma keep her level till everyone bails out. Go! [Best] You gotta get out, Curt! [Curt] I'm right behind you. Get out! [Dickie groans] I'm getting us down, Dick. I have control. Right over there. You see it? That long field, huh? Dickie, stay with me. Come on. Come on, Curt. Fly like an angel, huh? [grunting] Oh, God. [Bowman] Sir, the second and third task forces have just crossed the channel. Five hours late. God help our boys. One o'clock high! [Buck] You hit? [copilot] No. You? No. Got a fluid leak on the port wing. I think the column may be jamming on something. Left rudder pedal feels loose and I've only got right rudder. [Buck] Compensate! I can't. Help me. [Buck groans] I think we may be done. It's not responding. We can manage it. We'll use throttles and rudder trim. It's too much. We need to bail out. Engine three is on fire too. Pilot to crew, get ready to b... [grunts] [Buck] You son of a bitch! We are going to sit here and take it. You hear me? We're gonna take it. Lead pilot to crew. We're gonna stick with our mission as long as we can fly. Somebody check if that last hit ruptured a fuel tank. Navigator to pilot, I see it. We got a leak. [Buck] Roger. Looks like the Krauts are heading back to refuel. Keep your eyes peeled. [panting] They're refueling. [Blakely] How we looking, Croz? Navigator to command. Hitting IP. [Jack] Command, roger. [flare explodes] Flares up! IPs. [grunts] Thirty seconds to bomb release. Prepare to hand over aircraft. Trimming. And holding 155. Autopilot is set and servos on. Pilot to bombardier, your aircraft. [Douglass] Roger, my aircraft. Fighters, 10:00 high! Coming in! [grunting] [grunting] [Bucky] I got that son of a bitch. Bomb bay doors opening. Prepare to drop. We're gonna get it done, boys. [Douglass] Bombs away! Take that. [copilot] Bombs away! Jesus. Will you look at that? Lead pilot to ball turret. How'd we do? Sir, that factory... is gone. Mission accomplished, boys. [Strout] Can we go home now? Not yet, Strout. We gotta make a little pit stop in Africa. Uh, it's... it's okay. I... [in French] German? [Quinn, in English] I'm American. Américain? [in English] Can you help me? Wait here. [in French] He's American. [parent] You're sure? [villager] Yes. [Bucky] Command pilot to tail, how many left behind us? [tail] Tail to command pilot, nine. They're scattered everywhere, I got 'em left and right. Is Cleven's fort still with us? [tail] They're beat to shit and trailing way behind, but they're still with us. Roger. Menzie, we're pulling left. How are the elevators looking? [Menzie] The left one is shot to hell. [straining] It's not working. [Menzie] Tail to pilot. We lost another fort. I think it was Oakes. [Buck] Roger. Major, I don't know how much longer we can hold this. We're okay. I think if we're gonna ditch, we should... We can make it. Elevator line is shot to shit, sir. What's our pl... I'm not planning to sit this thing out in a stalag, are you? Menzie, Hollenbeck and DeMarco following? Tail to pilot. DeMarco's sticking with us. Hollenbeck is abandoning ship. Eight chutes... Nine. All ten. That's good, Menzie. Norman. Strout. How you doing? [Strout] We're okay, sir! Just taking in the view and the fresh, thin air. You did good. I'm glad I had you with me. And that goes for the rest of you rabble on this fort too. Great job, fellas. Hey, Doug? Yeah? Do you know when we lost Biddick? I, uh... I didn't have time to mark it in the log. Jesus, Croz, I... I don't think a goddamn navigator in the entire wing had time to work the logs. Yeah, I just want to get it right, okay? I know, Croz. I guess they went down, uh, 1100. Yeah. Got it. 1100. We're under 600, sir. Pilot to navigator. We got just under 600 gallons left. Can it get us to Africa? No, Major. It looks like we might need more like 750, at present speed. We've been leaking fuel since the IP. Roger. Lead pilot to crew. We need to stretch our range as much as possible. Dump everything not bolted down. Bombsight, guns, ammo, everything. Bombardier to pilot. You say my bombsight? We're over water, Norm. Krauts won't get it. Let it go. Release the turret. Pilot to top turret, how we looking up there? [top turret] Pretty ragged, but okay, sir. [Bucky] Garrison, how are the stragglers looking back there? DeMarco's clean. Cleven's dumping now. It looks like Van Noy's gonna ditch in the water. [Strout] Navigator to pilot, Van Noy ditched smoothly in water. Approximately 350 miles from land. [Buck] Roger. Is it good? Yeah. [speaking French] Louise... [speaking French] Turn around. Turn around. You will not know my name, and you will forget my face. Yes? Yes. Do you want to escape back to England? Yes. I can help you. But know this, if you turn yourself in to the Germans now, you will become a prisoner under the Geneva conventions and likely you will survive the war. But if you choose to attempt to escape, you will be treated as a spy if captured, and likely you will be executed. Do you understand? Yes. And which do you choose? Surrender? Or escape? Crank? That it? That Africa? Yes, it is. Pilot to crew. Africa dead ahead! Command, navigator. Croz, are we where we're supposed to be? 'Cause if we're not, we're gonna land in that sand. Yeah. We should be seeing the base at 184 any minute. Croz, we're running on fumes. Are you sure about this? I'm telling the truth, gentlemen. As sure as I can read and count. [sighs] Come on. Fork in the road here, Croz. We could do with the answer to that riddle. The answer to the riddle's 184. Keep your eyes peeled. I think I see it. Twelve o'clock. And change. [chuckling] Close enough, Croz. Close enough. Oh, man. [Blakely] All right. Nice work. [Jack] Command pilot to Zootsuit Two, airfield's in sight. [chuckles] Pilot to crew, prepare for landing. To Valhalla, boys. [chuckles] Valhalla here we come, fellas. [chattering, laughing] Landing gear down. Landing gear coming down. Right gear down. Left gear down. Quarter flaps. Well done, boys. [grunts] Hey, Blakely, what was the answer to that riddle? I was hoping you'd tell me. Well, pretty sure this ain't Valhalla. [Bucky] Well, we made it, boys. Where's the welcoming committee? [Graham scoffs] [Blakely] God. Welcome to Africa, boys. [copilot] There's the airstrip. Due south. We're dropping fuel pressure on four. Feathering. I'm gonna sharpen the turn to the runway. [copilot] Now we're losing engine two. Feather it. [copilot] All engines feathered. [engines stop] That's it. We're a glider now. 200 feet. Landing gear down. Wait. It'll slow us down. [copilot] Landing gear now? Wait. [copilot] 100 feet. Wait. Now. [grunts] Right landing gear down. Left down. Flaps at quarter. Better late than never. Yeah. Let's get that kübelwagen. [exclaims] [pants] [exhales sharply] [panting] [chuckles] [copilot] Whoa! I got you. You boys okay? [copilot] Yeah. [Bucky] Hey, Norm. [grunts] [Bucky] You all right? Pull the med kits off the plane. Let's get these guys in the wagon. Guys, I'm fine. Get him on the wagon. Listen to Kidd. Up. Look after him, all right? I got him. [groans] Major, I got him. You got him? Come on. [groans] I don't know how you flew that thing all the way to Africa, but you couldn't make the runway. It's right there. Huh? [crew member] All right. Watch it, watch it, watch it, watch it. [Buck breathes heavily] Oh, boy. Who is it? [Buck] Norman Smith. Radio operator. [grunting] [Buck] I lost four forts. I know. [Buck] How many of us made it? [Bucky] Eleven out of 21. What about Claytor? Any chutes? I... I, uh, didn't see any. Yeah. And Curt? I don't know. Yeah, well, knowing Biddick, he's probably sipping on a bottle of schnapps right about now. We're gonna get through this. Come on. Don't you stop believing that. Sure, Bucky. [guide] She's your guide, and you will do what she says. [Jack] Get your things, boys. We're going home. [Bucky] All these are, uh, new faces... Major Egan. Major Cleven. Think you might be the last pretty face I ever see. Feels like we're actually gonna do something. Yeah, you'll do something, all right. To the fellas who aren't here tonight, who should've been. [guide] German. They have tried many ways to infiltrate our network. We go down, they won't remember us either. Like we never existed, Buck. What happened to Baby Face? Is he dead? 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