FADE IN:

A stark desert plain peppered with stars.

Low mechanical rumbling rolls across the sands, coming toward us, all around us, until it hits like a wind and a Junker 52 transport plane roars into frame and takes off, up and away from a bustling military AIR STATION.

SUPER:

TOBRUK, NORTH AFRICA - OCTOBER, 1942

A PROPELLER

Buzzes to life.

German airmen load cargo into the belly of a JUNKER. A pilot under the wing performs a preflight inspection of the plane. Headlight beams hit him. He shields his eyes and looks.

A desert-camouflaged Daimler Benz staff car speeds along the dirt runway, a beige cloud of dust in its wake.

It swerves to a stop and an ITALIAN OFFICER steps out of the back. Handsome, fit, a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist.

He makes for the plane. Confident. Purposeful. Moving like a panther, all grace and power.

A column of British prisoners pass by in front of him, dust-covered men in bandages and tattered uniforms.

A young Brit missing a leg looks at the Italian, holds his gaze, a compassionate shade in the Italian Officer's eyes.

The column passes by and the Italian moves on and boards.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The Junker 52 in flight.

INT. JUNKER 52 - REAR COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

The Italian sits on a bench across from two SS officers. Jostled by turbulence. Besieged by the HUM of the engines.

He eyes the SS officers, their Death's Head insignia. Shoulder holsters. Walther P38 sidearms.

One of them turns and the Italian looks away, around the plane, his eyes coming to rest on a

Small wooden crate marked with a stamped British flag and stenciled lettering that reads: "Fragile: Gyroscopes".

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The German transport hums along.

INT. JUNKER - SAME

The SS officers sleep. The Italian studies them, making sure. He checks his watch: 0200.

Uncuffs the briefcase, glances at the flight deck curtain, then weaves his way over to the Germans.

SS OFFICER #1

Comes awake. The Italian standing over him, smiling.

ITALIAN OFFICER/CROSS
Mornin', Fritz.

THUMP! The stunned German looks down at a knife in his chest.

His eyes roll.

SS OFFICER #2 stirs.

And British agent COMMANDER JAMES CROSS slaps a hand over the German's mouth and stabs. Another silent death.

Cross checks the flight deck - nothing. Against the sound of the engines no one heard a thing.

He slips the blade into an ankle sheath. Heads for the gyros.

Ties them and a PARACHUTE to a packed inflatable raft.

Opens a jump door. Reaches for another chute

When WHAM! The co-pilot hurtles into frame and slams him against the fuselage, launching a wild slugfest that carries around the compartment, near the open jump door and through the curtained doorway onto the

FLIGHT DECK

Where they tumble in, in a heap.

The shocked pilot draws a Luger.

Cross kicks it. It fires, BOOM! Into the windshield!

Blowing it apart. Filling the cockpit with a sudden vortex of flight plans, light equipment and broken glass.

A shard strikes the pilot's face. He CRIES OUT! Falls on the wheel.

Puts the plane into a dive that sends Cross and co-pilot out the blown windshield onto the

NOSE

Where they hang on for dear life. Cross gripping the windshield coaming, the co-pilot clinging to his legs.

THE PILOT

Wipes blood from his eyes and pulls up on the wheel.

AND THE JUNKER

Rises. Higher and higher. Up out of the dive.

CROSS AND CO-PILOT

Fighting Gs as the plane soars.

Co-pilot reaching upward. Cross pushing down on his face. Pulling a leg free, nailing co-pilot with a kick that sends him cartwheeling into the wing propeller.

CO-PILOT
Nein!

PHFTTT! Blood and clothing splatter across the wing.

PILOT

Looks out at his bloodstained plane. Turns back as Cross leaps onto him through the blown-out windshield.

They hit the floor. Fight to their feet.

Bump the wheel and put the plane into a climb that sends them rolling into the BACK COMPARTMENT, the Luger skittering in after them.

They come off the floor a few meters apart.

THE JUNKER

Soaring. Leveling off. Cresting a parabola.

And for a few seconds everything in the plane becomes WEIGHTLESS. Cross, the pilot, bodies and cargo all float around the cabin like feathers in a breeze.

The Luger floats before the pilot. He grabs it. SHOOTS!

Bullets ZIP and PING around the plane. Clip Cross's ear!

When WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Gravity's back and everything drops at once and slides towards the nose.

Cross tumbling down the fuselage. Past a net which he grabs.

The pilot rolling by, FIRING! Missing Cross. Crashing into a bulkhead. Recovering. Aiming...

at Cross, who whips out his knife and lets it fly! End over end into the pilot's throat!

THE NOSE OF THE JUNKER DIPS

The dive angle steepens.

JOLTING CROSS

Who pulls himself hand over hand up the net to the jump door.

He hauls up the gyros attached to the parachute and packed inflatable raft. Heaves them out one by one.

Grabs another chute caught in the net. Concentrates. Intensely. Strapping on the chute, ignoring the shimmering blackness of the sea rising up to meet him.

Coming closer and CLOSER as Cross fastens the chute and bails!

TWO WHITE PARACHUTES DRIFT AWAY

from the plane as it spirals into the sea and EXPLODES!

CROSS

Floats down, eyes locked on the inky surface of the sea. He times the impact, unhooks his shoot and plunges in the water.

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - NIGHT

Cross surfaces.

Swims to the raft and drags himself over the side.

Hauls in the gyroscopes by the cord.

Checks the crate - intact, everything A-okay.

Cross pulls a small flashlight out of his pocket.

Signals in each direction - north, west, south, east.

In the east, a deck-mounted searchlight comes to life. It flashes an answer - we are here.

INT. DR GRIEVE'S OFFICE - SIS HQ (LONDON) - DAY

MATCH CUT to a pen-light. Shining. Going out.

Leaving behind the glum face of DOCTOR GRIEVE, a bespectacled elderly physician.

Doctor Grieve examines Cross. Checks the scrape on his ear.

DR GRIEVE
Hmm, another centimeter and your head would've popped like a melon.

He makes a popping sound with his mouth. Cross is not amused.

DR GRIEVE (CONT'D)
Apologies, Commander. Black sense of humor - a hazard of the trade.

Doctor Grieve clears air bubbles from a shot. Jabs Cross.

CROSS
Heyyy!

DR GRIEVE
Tetanus. Filthy things those German bullets.

Doctor Grieve fills out a chart as Cross gets dressed.

DR GRIEVE (CONT'D)
So how are you feeling?
(off a look from Cross)
I have to ask; it's on the questionnaire.

CROSS
What does advanced battle fatigue get me?

DR GRIEVE
A pep talk.

Dr Grieve hands Cross his medical clearance.

DR GRIEVE (CONT'D)
You're cleared for leave, Commander. God knows you've earned it. Where to?

CROSS
Edinburgh. I'm flying up there this afternoon.

DR GRIEVE
Good God, whatever for? The place is an icebox this time of year.

CROSS
It certainly is. But they've got the world's best Scotch, beautiful redheads and it's so damn cold none of them ever want to get out of bed.

Cross cracks a sly grin and leaves.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rain. A war-torn London street: barrage blimp overhead, residential buildings, one side of the street in rubble.

A cab pulls up. Cross steps out. Totes his duffel bag and enters his building.

INT. LOBBY - CROSS'S BUILDING - DAY

Takes mail from a box and walks upstairs.

INT. CROSS'S FLAT - SAME

Steps into a spartan room. Drops his bag and sifts through the mail.

Handwritten letters embroidered with feminine touches, return addresses from Belfast, Liverpool... Stockholm.

Cross smells this one, not bad.

He drops them all in a waste basket, removes his coat and falls on the bed.

LATER

Cross sits on the edge of the bed in his undershirt, smoking a cigarette, staring out at nothing. A faded, poorly-inked tattoo on his shoulder. It reads: "Orbis non sufficit".

He turns to a SCRATCHING SOUND.

A gray mouse scurries along the floorboards by the wall. Ducks into a small hole in the plaster.

Cross smiles faintly. Holds the cigarette in his lips and goes to a desk. Takes out a bit of moldy cheese.

Knocks off the mold and sets the small chunk outside the hole. Goes back and sits.

Looks again at the hole. The cheese is gone.

CROSS
Your welcome, Mickey.

Cross gazes with faraway eyes out the rain-streaked window.

CROSS (CONT'D)
(muted with melancholy)
Good to be home.

He takes a drag. Blows a veil of blue smoke at the dreary skyline of London.

LATER STILL

Cross puts on his uniform. Picks up a hotel brochure.

CLOSE ON the brochure - "The Highlander", a picturesque Scottish inn.

EXT. CROSS'S STREET - DAY

Cross stands on a wet sidewalk holding a travel bag, a smoke in his mouth. A cab pulls to the curb.

Before he can get in a jeep arrives and a BRITISH SERGEANT alights from the vehicle.

BRITISH SERGEANT
Commander Cross?

Cross stops, knows what's coming and doesn't like it.

BRITISH SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Admiral Godfrey wants to see you.

Cross gazes right through the sergeant. Pulls his travels papers from his jacket and looks at the brochure, the picturesque Scottish inn.

Tosses the lot into a street-side rubbish can.

The cabbie flips the meter and drives off.

Cross takes a last drag on his cigarette, flicks it away. Climbs in the jeep.

THE DRONE RHYTHMIC PURR OF A SUBMARINE PROPELLER RISES TO A ROAR, DROWNING OUT ALL OTHER SOUND AS WE SMASH CUT TO:

The sleek black body of a SUB POWERING THROUGH THE DEEP

AND CROSS

in the cramped confines within. On a bunk, his face five inches from the cot above, his hands clasped behind his head.

Waiting. Thinking. His eyes SEEING...

SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIS) HQ - FRONT GATE - DAY

The jeep pulls up to a gate. MPs. A compound of buildings.

Cross steps out of the jeep ducking the rain.

Shows a pass to an FSP Military Policeman, the green-capped MPs of the Intelligence Services.

ENTERS SIS HEADQUARTERS

A brick monolith beside the Thames.

Steps from an elevator into a catacomb-like BASEMENT where an MP mans a table.

Cross flashes an ID. Walks down a mole's passage - a dim HALLWAY in the bowels of the building.

To a door, a sign above the jamb:

"30 ASSAULT UNIT"

He enters the crack commando unit of the SIS.

CROSS - ON THE SUB

Awake in his berth. He looks around at the other cots.

The dim rounded shapes of three men sleeping.

Betty Garble in a one-piece taped to a bulkhead. Looking over her shoulder, smiling.

CROSS REMEMBERING...

An attractive SECRETARY turns to Cross as he steps into an OFFICE. Smiles with something more than familiarity and points to a side door.

SECRETARY
They're in there. You're late.

Cross goes to the door, stops and turns.

CROSS
Thank you, ma'am.

SECRETARY
I'll ma'am you all right.

Cross cracks a roguish grin then steps into a

CONFERENCE ROOM

Where his eyes meet those of REAR ADMIRAL JOHN GODFREY (54), one of Special Intelligence Services top brass. He sits on a table with one leg on the floor. Been waiting.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
Good of you to join us, Commander.

Cross slides into the nearest seat.

Up front, another officer, a COMMODORE glares at the late arrival. Approaches and drops a file on Cross's lap.

Cross regards him with casual indifference. The Commodore looks critically at Cross and moves on.

Takes mission files to three other men:

French Army CAPTAIN ALAIN ROYAN - middle-aged, dark featured, has an air of grand experience about him.

MAX KAUFMAN (25), a blonde Teutonic bull, handsome, crisply dressed, could be a poster-boy for Aryan propaganda.

And CORPORAL STANLEY OWENS, maybe thirty, British, spruce and stringy, better suited for a lab coat than a uniform.

Admiral Godfrey stands, glances at Cross.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Now that we've all seen fit to be present, I'll get started.

He walks to the front of the room. Pulls down a screen.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, I'm sure you're wondering what all the fuss is about. Why the big rush to get you here...
(at Cross)
the canceled leaves, the selection of four men who've never worked before as a team?

The agents trade glances, curiosity stirred.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Well, it can't be helped. This is a priority one mission. For it, I need German-speaking agents with experience behind enemy lines; our best men, and you four fit the bill.

He nods to the Commodore who hits the lights and uses a projector to put a circa 1942 map of Germany on the screen.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
A short notice mission, gentlemen; short on intel, planning and time.

ALAIN
(sotto voce to Cross)
And any chance of success.

Cross grins at Alain, shares his cynicism.

A photo of a fortified coast line appears on the screen.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
You will enter enemy territory by submarine here at Cape Arkona. From the coast you'll make your way to Berlin, to the...

Another slide: a rectangular mansion five stories high.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Physics. Once there, you will infiltrate, retrieve a German scientist and make your way home.

Max raises his hand.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Max?

MAX
Sir, our escape route?

ADMIRAL GODFREY
Back to the coast, to the drop point. That's with a twenty-four hour turnaround.

CROSS
And if it takes twenty-five?

ADMIRAL GODFREY
Just see that it doesn't. But if needed we've planned for alternate escape routes through France and Switzerland. They're in your mission file.

Silence. Slides off. Lights on.

CUT TO:

SUB CABIN

Suddenly illuminated. A young NAVAL OFFICER, torso through the hatchway, hand on a light switch.

NAVAL OFFICER
Sir, we're nearing the drop point.

CROSS

Acknowledges with a nod.

A KNIFE

Slips into an ankle sheath as Cross secures it to his ankle. Zips up his wet suit.

ALAIN, MAX AND OWENS

Stand around him half in and out of their wet suits, loading black equipment bags with German uniforms, canteens, weapons - Lugers and Schmeissers, everything Wehrmacht issue.

MAX

Pulls a steel box out from under a cot. Takes out plastic explosives and timing devices, hands them to Alain. Who places them carefully in a black equipment bag.

CROSS

Watching him, REMEMBERING.

ALAIN - AT THE BRIEFING

His arms crossed on his chest, a sly grin on his face.

ALAIN
Okay, Admiral, another happy holiday into the Third Reich. But why all the fuss over one lousy le boche?

The word "boche" draws a look from Max.

Admiral Godfrey turns to the Commodore.

COMMODORE
His code name is X. I know, not terribly original, but this chap's something of a mystery: Our only contact with him is through telegrams he sends to our Swiss embassy.
(MORE)

COMMODORE (CONT'D)
We know that he's a scientist, anti-Nazi, and holed up in this Institute, unable to leave. We aren't sure why. And we haven't a clue what he looks like, just a name, "Doctor Mueller" But we do know that he wants out, and that he works in the most sensitive of German operations.

Admiral Godfrey nods to Owens who stumbles out of his seat and stands before the others.

OWENS
Gentlemen, what do you know about nuclear fission?

The dull looks on their faces is answer enough.

OWENS (CONT'D)
Theoretically, nuclear fission is the splitting of an atom, creating a chain reaction that releases enormous amounts of energy.

He pauses for effect.

MAX
A bomb?

OWENS
A very big bomb, large enough to destroy an enter city. If the Jerrys can make one, or if we do, it could decide the outcome of the war.

COMMODORE
So far no one's been able to make it work, but we think the Germans are about two years ahead of us, and--

ADMIRAL GODFREY
And this Doctor Mueller has information that can close that gap.

Admiral Godfrey gives the Commodore a look, it was all they needed to know.

Cross flips through his mission file.

CROSS
So let me get this straight, we've got no photo, no description and we think he's held up in this Institute.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
That's about the size of it, Commander.

CROSS
What lunatic dreamt this one up?

COMMODORE
Commander Cross, that's quite enough. You have your orders.

Cross looks to Admiral Godfrey.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
Corporal Owens here will be your guide. He's a physicist. As a civilian he spent some time at the Institute before the war. His job is to get you in. Yours is to find Mueller and bring him to me.

Admiral Godfrey locks eyes with Cross, the other men - no questions.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Well, that's it.
(checks his watch)
You've got two hours to make your sub.

The men rise, file out. Admiral Godfrey motioning to Cross to remain behind. Talks to him after the others have gone.

ADMIRAL GODFREY (CONT'D)
Sorry about your leave, but you're the only man for the job.

CROSS
(overlapping)
...man for the job.

Admiral Godfrey and Cross share a look, an understanding, something more than just mutual respect passing between them.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
(takes a grave tone)
James, there's one other thing. This Doctor Mueller claims to have made some sort of breakthrough. Our technical guys are falling all over themselves wondering what it can be, but they agree on one thing: under no circumstances can he be left in German hands. Understood?

The admiral's words hang in the air.

CROSS
Yeah, understood.
(embittered)
The things we do for king and country.

ADMIRAL GODFREY
Every bloody day.

CROSS'S REACTION

his eyes cold as ice... MATCH-CUT TO:

END OF WEBSITE EXCERPT. If you'd like to read the entire script reach out to johnroyan@tahoefilmgroup.com.