

"FLIGHT 2012" by Clive Scarff

The following story was inspired by true events.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE -- NIGHT

SUPER: VALENTINE'S DAY 1950

We are looking at a small movie theatre in a very small town. A couple walking arm and arm passes by, and a man holding flowers rushes past in the opposite direction. Aside from that there is not much activity on the street.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE -- NIGHT

A black and white movie, circa 1950, is playing on the screen.

ANGLE ON COUPLE WATCHING MOVIE

MONTGOMERY, in RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) uniform and seated on the aisle, and his GIRLFRIEND next to him with flowers in her lap, eat popcorn as they watch the movie. Montgomery looks at his watch but struggles to tell the time in the dark. He resorts to leaning into the aisle and trying to put his watch under the small aisle light on the side of his chair. After a bit of fuss trying to read the watch, he sits back up and turns to his girlfriend.

MONTGOMERY
(whispering)
It's time.

CUT TO:

On screen, a MALE MOVIE STAR addresses a FEMALE MOVIE star:

MALE MOVIE STAR
I have no choice my dear, I must go.

GIRLFRIEND
(to screen)
No, don't go.

MONTGOMERY
I must -

MALE MOVIE STAR
You belong here, you know that. You
will be better off without me.

GIRLFRIEND
 (again to screen)
 You can't.

MONTGOMERY
 I have to be at the base in fifteen
 minutes; we talked about this.

GIRLFRIEND
 (to screen, tears in
 her eyes)
 No, no, no.

Montgomery realizes she hasn't hear a word he's said.

MONTGOMERY
 Bye honey.

Montgomery kisses her on the cheek, but her gaze remains
 firmly fixed on the screen.

GIRLFRIEND
 Ya, bye honey. Be careful.

MONTGOMERY
 (rising)
 I will.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE -- NIGHT

MONTGOMERY emerges from the theatre, and pauses on the
 sidewalk out front to zip up his jacket. As he does so, he
 looks up to the sky and gazes for a moment. Jacket zipped,
 he crosses the street and gets into an army issue JEEP.

EXT. RCAF STATION -- NIGHT

A JEEP, with MONTGOMERY inside, pulls into a parking spot in
 front of the main entrance to the RCAF.

CLOSE ON SIGN: "Smithers Station - Royal Canadian Air Force".

INT. RCAF STATION - HANGAR -- NIGHT

An AVIATION MECHANIC is doing routine checks on an RCAF CESSNA
 as MONTGOMERY approaches.

AVIATION MECHANIC
 (British accent)
 Good timing Captain.

MONTGOMERY

She lookin' good?

AVIATION MECHANIC

Best lookin' bird I've seen tonight.

MONTGOMERY

I'm sorry to hear that.

AVIATION MECHANIC

Bound to be a quiet one tonight I would imagine, Captain.

MONTGOMERY

They're all quiet ones nowadays. If I don't see a single thing up there that will be a-ok with me.

EXT. ALASKAN AIR FORCE BASE -- WINTER -- TWILIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Eielson Air Force Base.

SUPER: Alaska

CLOSE ON SIGN: Beneath a United States Air Force logo are the words "Welcome to Eielson - Alaska's Friendly Base".

A US Air Force B-36 - a huge intercontinental bomber with a wing span the size of a football field, sits on the tarmac as a couple of dozen men, braving the frigid temperatures, go about pre-flight preparations. We see Captain Ted SHERO approaching the rear of the plane.

INSERT: "02012" IS VISIBLE ON THE REAR TAIL OF THE PLANE.

Shero begins to walk the length of the plane, and as he approaches the wing we see a mechanic (MECHANIC I) on some scaffolding under the wing and another (MECHANIC II) below, handing tools up to him. The engines of the bomber are running, forcing everyone who speaks to yell.

MECHANIC I

Another one here.

MECHANIC II

Shit.

SHERO

(to Mechanic II)

Another what?

MECHANIC II
(departing)
Leaky fuel hose.

Shero continues his walk along the plane until he reaches the trap doors of bomb bay number two. There, two more mechanics are frantically trying to close the doors.

SHERO
What's the problem?

MECHANIC III
Ice damage, they won't close.
(to Mechanic IV)
We'll have to wire them shut.

SHERO
Wire them shut?

MECHANIC III
Would you rather fly with them wide open?

Shero continues along to the front of the plane, where he sees and addresses Aircraft Commander RAINSLEY.

SHERO
Commander Rainsley?

RAINSLEY
Yes?

SHERO
Third pilot and weaponeer Ted Shero.

RAINSLEY
Shero, glad to meet you. Welcome to SAC. We're just putting out a few fires.

SHERO
Normally I would think you were being facetious. With all due respect sir, is she going to make it?

RAINSLEY
Oh ya.
(pause)
But it probably won't ever make it back.

CORPORAL (O.S.)
Commander!

Rainsley's attention is turned toward the hangar.

RAINSLEY
(to Shero)
Here comes your baby.

ANGLE ON HANGAR AS DOORS OPEN

From within the hangar a utility vehicle emerges, trailing behind it a bomb at least the size of a sedan.

RAINSLEY (CONT'D)
(to Shero)
Mark IV. Familiar with it?

SHERO
I've trained on it.

RAINSLEY
Guess you wouldn't be here if you hadn't.

SHERO
About the plane -

RAINSLEY
You worry about the Mark IV, I'll worry about the plane. That sound reasonable, Weaponeer?

SHERO
Yes sir.

Shero turns and approaches the oncoming utility vehicle. As he passes we see mechanics wiring shut the doors of bomb bay two. He continues on and as he meets the utility vehicle at bomb bay one we hear, off:

MECHANIC I (O.S.)
Another one!

Shero watches as the bomb is hooked up to a winch beneath bomb bay number two. As the winch begins to lift the bomb a wind gusts and the bomb sways, causing all around to jump - as if they could catch it should it fall. The bomb steadies and is raised up into the belly of the bomber.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

Two pilots, RAINSLEY on the left and LEVY on the right, sit and go through their pre-flight checklist. Levy reaches toward the centre for the communications handset as Rainsley quickly grabs Levy's arm, stopping him from putting the handset to his mouth.

RAINSLEY
They're probably listening.

LEVY
It's habit.

INT. B-36 BOMB BAY - NIGHT

SHERO inspects the Mark IV suspended ominously in bomb bay number one. As he circles the bomb he comes upon a wooden crate, labelled "AEC012 - Top Secret".

Other CREW go about their duties and begin to strap themselves in as DAVIES approaches SHERO. Davies rests one hand on the Mark IV.

DAVIES
Ever seen one of these before?

SHERO
(removing Davies'
hand from bomb)
Yup.

DAVIES
Never seen me a nuke before.

SHERO
It's not a nuke without its core.

DAVIES
Huh?

SHERO
This is just a good ol' fashioned
bomb as it is now. It's not a nuke
'til you insert a nuclear core.

DAVIES
So where's the core?

SHERO
There's no core.

DAVIES

Whadya mean there's no core?

SHERO

This is just a test run, we don't need a core.

DAVIES

Well if this is just a test run then why all the secrecy? I wasn't even allowed to tell my wife where I was goin'.

SHERO

Beats me. Just don't want the Russians to know what we're doing I guess.

DAVIES

Hell, my wife ain't Russian.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

LEVY

You're not worried about the ice?

RAINSLEY

Of course I'm worried about ice. We're lucky it's as warm as it is tonight.

LEVY

Minus twenty-seven is warm?

RAINSLEY

Ya. For this time of year it is. Where you from?

LEVY

Los Angeles.

Rainsley rolls his eyes.

LEVY (CONT'D)

California.

RAINSLEY

I know where Los Angeles is.

LEVY

Well what are we waiting for?

RAINSLEY

The observer.

LEVY

I don't get it. This mission is beyond top secret, to the point it doesn't even exist, and yet we have an observer.

ANGLE ON ORAY AS HE ENTERS COCKPIT

ORAY, a stern man in a crisp black suit, is carrying a conspicuous black brief case.

ORAY

It's okay, I don 't exist either.
Let's go gentlemen.

ANGLE THROUGH COCKPIT FRONT WINDOW

TWO FLAGMEN on the tarmac give the signal to taxi forward. Wind sweeps snow around them as the flagmen retreat, still waving.

ANGLE ON RAINSLEY'S HAND AS HE PUSHES FORWARD ON THE MAIN THROTTLE.

EXT. ALASKAN AIR FORCE BASE - TARMAC- NIGHT

LIGHTS from the B-36 turn to camera as it taxis toward the long, desolate runway, lit by runway lights and the last gasp of twilight.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

LEVY looks at RAINSLEY. Rainsley nods.

ANGLE ON UNUSED COMMUNICATIONS HANDSET

as Rainsley's arm, pushing the throttle forward, again becomes visible.

EXT. ALASKAN AIR FORCE BASE - RUNWAY - NIGHT

OPENING CREDITS, as the B-36 makes its way down the runway and takes off into the darkening sky.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

RAINSLEY AND LEVY are flying the plane.

LEVY

That headwind is going to affect our time.

RAINSLEY

Nothing we can do about that.

ORAY

What about our fuel?

RAINSLEY

What about it?

ORAY

I heard you talking about a headwind. Won't that affect our fuel too?

RAINSLEY

(laughing)

Mr. Oray, you are sitting in a Peacemaker. A B-36.

Oray says nothing.

RAINSLEY (CONT'D)

This baby could fly to Germany and back with the fuel we have on board. There's plenty to get to Fort Worth.

ORAY

That would be fine. If we were going to Fort Worth.

Oray opens his briefcase and hands some papers to Rainsley.

RAINSLEY

Shit.

Levy looks at Rainsley. Rainsley hands the papers to Levy, who reads them.

LEVY

Shit.

EXT. CABIN - CANADIAN WILDERNESS -- NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a rustic wood cabin, nestled down in a snowy valley in the middle of the Canadian wilderness. Smoke is coming from the chimney.

INT. CABIN - CANADIAN WILDERNESS - NIGHT

BOB, a distinct mountain man in his sixties, is in the kitchen area of his very rustic wood cabin. He reaches into a cupboard and pulls out a bottle of scotch and a couple of glasses. He takes these to a crude dining table where a big plate of steak awaits. There he picks up a box of matches and lights two candles on the table. The lighting of the second candle illuminates a framed picture of a younger woman (Bob's wife IRENE) on the table across from him. Bob sits at the table and pours scotch into the two glasses. He raises a glass.

BOB

My love.

Bob drinks the scotch down and puts his glass on the table. He pauses for a moment, staring off into space. He then snaps back to the real world, and reaches for the second glass.

BOB (CONT'D)

(addressing photo)

Do you mind?

Pause.

BOB (CONT'D)

You're too kind.

Bob downs the second glass of scotch and then digs into his meal.

The sound of a small airplane is heard overhead.

EXT. CANADIAN CESSNA - FLYING - NIGHT

Montgomery's RCAF Cessna is flying through the night over the Canadian wilderness.

INT. CANADIAN CESSNA - FLYING - NIGHT

MONTGOMERY is at the controls of the Cessna, flying his routine coastal surveillance mission.

MONTGOMERY

Control, this is Charlie Tango two checking in.

INT. RCAF CONTROL TOWER -- NIGHT

SIMPSON
Roger that Charlie Tango two.

INT. CANADIAN CESSNA - FLYING - NIGHT

MONTGOMERY
How's your Valentine's Day?

SIMPSON
Let's see, I'm all alone in a control tower in the middle of nowhere talking to you. How's it sounding?

MONTGOMERY
Who would you rather be talking to than me?

SIMPSON
Betty Grable comes to mind.

MONTGOMERY
I bet she can't fly a plane.

SIMPSON
She can fly me.

MONTGOMERY
Anything to report?

SIMPSON
John Wayne's been nominated for an Academy Award.

MONTGOMERY
You see Iwo Jima?

SIMPSON
Yep.

MONTGOMERY
Good film.

SIMPSON
But other than that, nothin'. Very quiet out there.

MONTGOMERY
As it should be. We'll check in again later control.

SIMPSON
Roger that Charlie Tango Two.

MONTGOMERY
Charlie Tango Two out.

INT. RCAF CONTROL TOWER -- NIGHT

SIMPSON
Control out.

Simpson flips a switch terminating communication with Montgomery, and goes back to reading a Hollywood glamour magazine.

EXT. B-36 -- NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT OF B-36 IN FLIGHT.

INT. B-36 BOMB BAY - NIGHT

SHERO and DAVIES are seated and belted in.

DAVIES
Not quite what I had pictured doing
on Valentine's.

SHERO
You'll excuse me if I don't ask what
you had pictured.

DAVIES
The peeler club in Fairbanks got
half price drinks all night.

SHERO
Like I said -

DAVIES
Me and the girl could drink all night
and it would be like it was only one
of us.

SHERO
The girl?

DAVIES
My wife.

SHERO
 You would take your wife to a strip
 club on Valentine's Day?

DAVIES
 Did I mention the half price drinks?

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

LEVY
 What time is it?

RAINSLEY
 Quarter to midnight.

ORAY
 It's time.

LEVY
 (dubious)
 Okay.

ORAY begins to unbuckle and LEVY does too. Oray stands first, holding in his hand his conspicuous black case. Levy gets up and opens the cockpit door.

INT. B-36 - NIGHT

ANGLE ON COCKPIT DOOR

LEVY and ORAY emerge from the cockpit.

LEVY
 This is craziness.

Oray says nothing.

From the cockpit Levy leads Oray to the COMMUNICATIONS TUBE, a long narrow metal cylinder, approximately 18 feet long, that horizontally connects the forward compartment of the B-36 to the bomb bay.

LEVY (CONT'D)
 Through here.

ORAY
 You're kidding.

Levy pulls himself head first into the tube, rolls onto his back, and then with the use of a pulley above pulls himself into the next compartment of the plane.

He sends the pulley back down to Oray, who then pulls himself - and the case - through.

INT. B-36 BOMB BAY - NIGHT

LEVY enters the bomb bay accompanied by ORAY. SHERO and DAVIES are still strapped in, adjacent to the Mark IV.

LEVY
(to Shero)
You know how to arm one of these?

SHERO
Of course.

ORAY
Then it's time to get to work.

SHERO
What?

DAVIES
Yee ha!

LEVY
He wants you to arm it.

SHERO
What the -

ORAY
Arm the mark IV.

LEVY
You didn't know about this?

SHERO
Does it look like I knew about this?
(pause)
When?

RAINSLEY
Now.

SHERO
You've got to be kidding me.

DAVIES
Hey cap, this is Valentine's, not
April fool's!

SHERO
Shut up.

DAVIES
But -

ORAY
Shut up.

SHERO
But I can't arm it.

ORAY
There was a reason you were chosen
for this mission. And that is because
you can arm a Mark IV with a nuclear
core.

SHERO
Listen dipshit, I can't arm this
because we don't have a nuclear core.

Oray walks over to the crate marked AEC012. He sets down his black case and opens it, retrieving from inside some keys that are tethered to the case. With one of the keys he unlocks a heavy duty padlock on the crate. Now unlocked, he lifts the lid of the crate revealing, inside, what is known as a birdcage housing the plutonium core for the bomb.

SHERO (CONT'D)
(to Levy)
Who is this guy?

LEVY
Meet Lt. Dipshit, of the Atomic Energy
Commission.

SHERO
What?
(pause)
Look I need more than a guy in a
suit telling me to do this. Do you
have any -

Oray extends some papers toward Shero.

Shero takes the papers from Oray and reads them.

SHERO (CONT'D)
Holy shit.
(MORE)

SHERO (CONT'D)
(looking up)
But that will -

ORAY
Arm the bomb.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

RAINSLEY is at the controls as LEVY and ORAY re-enter the cockpit.

RAINSLEY
Well? Is he doing it?

Levy shoots a glance at Oray, who is buckling himself in.

LEVY
(motioning to Oray)
What choice does he have?

Oray reaches into his breast pocket, catching the attention of both Levy and Rainsley.

ORAY
Relax.

Oray pulls out a golf magazine from his pocket and opens it.

RAINSLEY
Easy for you to say.

INT. B-36 BOMB BAY - NIGHT

SHERO, with Davies at his side, is removing the outer sphere of the Mark IV bomb. Gingerly, he hands it to Davies.

SHERO
Easy. Set it down over there. And be careful.

DAVIES
No kidding. What is it?

SHERO
Explosives.

A bead of sweat appears on Davies forehead as he stops what he is doing.

SHERO (CONT'D)
It's okay, just be gentle.

Shero removes an inner sphere and hands that, too, to Davies.

SHERO (CONT'D)
More of the same.

Shero then reaches right in and removes the PILOT PLUG and hands that to Davies.

DAVIES
More explosives?

SHERO
No, just a plug, but we'll be careful
just the same, won't we?

DAVIES
Yes sir.

Davies sets the pilot plug down and Shero retrieves some thick, black, rubber gloves.

SHERO
Here, put these on.

DAVIES
Why?

SHERO
Just put them on.

As Davies puts on the gloves, from within the crate Shero retrieves a chrome-looking rod, about the length of a baseball bat and the same circumference as a bat's tip. On the end of the rod is a black, for want of a better term, suction cup. Shero motions to the cylinder inside the crate.

SHERO (CONT'D)
I need you to reach in there and
retrieve the plutonium core.

DAVIES
You gotta be kidding me.

SHERO
Does it look like I'm having fun
here?

DAVIES

You're the weaponeer, why don't you do it?

SHERO

Because I am going to place the core into the bomb. Would you rather do that?

DAVIES

(affirming)

Reach in here?

SHERO

Now use both hands, and pull the core from the cylinder. C'mon.

The bead of sweat on Davies' forehead has multiplied as he reaches into the cylinder. In what seems like forever he gets both hands on the core, and slowly pulls it from the cylinder.

SHERO (CONT'D)

You're doing fine.

We can now see, in Davies' hands, a chrome ball, marginally larger than a baseball. It is the plutonium core. Shero points the tip of the chrome rod toward Davies' hands.

SHERO (CONT'D)

I am going to hold this up and you place the core into the cup. You can do it.

Davies puts the core into the suction cup.

SHERO (CONT'D)

Give it a little push, make sure it's secure.

DAVIES

You sure?

SHERO

I'm sure.

Davies presses the core onto the rod. Shero then cautiously turns and inserts the core into the hollow of the Mark IV. Gingerly he pushes the rod into the bomb when suddenly the entire plane lurches from momentary turbulence. Shero stops what he is doing. The plane seems settled again.

SHERO (CONT'D)
That was close.

Davies looks as white as a ghost.

SHERO (CONT'D)
You okay?

TILT DOWN TO REVEAL DAVIES HAS WET HIMSELF.

Davies says nothing. Shero pulls the chrome rod out of the Mark IV.

SHERO (CONT'D)
Now hand me the pit plug.

DAVIES
Captain, I -

SHERO
I know, it's okay. Hand me the plug.

INT. B-36 COCKPIT - NIGHT

LEVY and RAINSLEY are at the controls, ORAY seated behind them.

LEVY
What the hell was that?

RAINSLEY
(surprised)
Turbulence I guess.

LEVY
But there was nothing on the radar.

ORAY
Where are we?

RAINSLEY
About half way down the coast of
British Columbia.

Suddenly a blinding light flashes right to left past the cockpit window, whiting out the cockpit momentarily.

LEVY
That sure as hell wasn't turbulence.

Again the flash, same direction.

RAINSLEY
Holy shit. Take her down.

ORAY
Down? We're over the Pacific!

RAINSLEY
(to Levy)
To twenty thousand.

LEVY
(looking at his
instruments)
There's something wrong!

RAINSLEY
No shit.

LEVY
With the instruments - look!

CLOSE ON INSTRUMENT PANEL where needles are spinning, and suddenly all lights on the panel darken.

LEVY (CONT'D)
The props are surging.

RAINSLEY
Which ones?

LEVY
All of them.

RADIO (O.S.)
We have a fire in engine one.

Again a flash, two flashes, zooming past the cockpit window, this time from left to right.

LEVY
What the hell *is* that?

RAINSLEY
Levy, shut down one.

LEVY
Shutting down one.

RADIO
Captain, fire in engines two and -