

MR. STEWART GOES TO WAR

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EXT. WORLD WAR II BATTLEFIELD. DAY (BLACK AND WHITE)

A muddied US ARMY CAPTAIN crawls through barbed wire.

He stands and wipes his muddy face revealing JIMMY or Captain James Stewart, 35-year-old movie star turned war hero. Although battle-hardened, his uniform can't hide his gangly frame and boyish looks.

Jimmy turns to US ARMY MEN crawling though the barbed wire.

JIMMY

You're doing a swell job boys. Now,
show these Nazis who's boss!

Jimmy and the US Army Men march towards a NAZI ARMY while FIRING bullets.

Across the landscape bombs FALL with a whistle and EXPLODE. Jimmy SHOTS, KNOCKS and PUNCHES a stream of Nazi Soldiers. He's a seasoned warrior.

A nearby EXPLOSION sends Jimmy flying --THUD.

Jimmy races to his feet as flames and smoke sweep by. He's separated from the US Army Men.

Outnumbered by the enemy, Jimmy races towards a grounded US plane as Nazi bullets WHOOSH and ZIP by.

A creepy old NAZI OFFICER with a devilish grin exits the plane's cargo door.

Jimmy -- TERRIFIED -- comes to a complete stops. His feet SKID in the dirt.

NAZI OFFICER

Captain James Stewart, we've been
expecting you.

NAZI SOLDIERS encircle Jimmy, there's no escape.

Jimmy attempts to fire his gun -- CLICK-CLICK-CLICK -- it's empty. With a sly narrowing of his eyes, Jimmy reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a secret weapon -- war bonds!

JIMMY

(to camera)

Hi folks, it sure is hairy out here. To ensure our men get the best chance possible buy war bonds today. With your help we can supply the fellas with ammo and keep our pilots in the sky.

US Planes ZOOM overhead. A spray of bullets RAIN DOWN taking out the unwitting Nazi Soldiers. They twirl and fall with a collective THUMP.

JIMMY

Yes sir, we've got fifteen thousand pilots in training and we need to get them their wings--

(angry)

Fifteen thousand? Is that right?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Cut!

REVEAL it's not an open battlefield but a film studio:

INT. FILM STUDIO. DAY (IN COLOR)

Jimmy marches from the set and passes DIRECTOR, 40s, a calm influence and good worker bee.

DIRECTOR

Oh come on Jimmy, not again. Just one more take and we're wrapped.

JIMMY

Darn right not again! I'm sick of being your poster boy. I'm one of those fifteen thousand pilots.

Jimmy passes a tired FILM CREW but Director blocks the exit.

DIRECTOR

You can't keep doing this.

JIMMY

That's what I told the General. I should be in the air I say, but you know what he says to me?

DIRECTOR

One more film.

JIMMY

I come in, we shoot the film. But what do you say to me?

DIRECTOR

One more take.

JIMMY

It's a dirty jip. I should be on the battlefield.

DIRECTOR

Look Jimmy, I wish I was on the battlefield too, at least my wife does. You just gotta do your job--

JIMMY

But I can't do my job! Not here, not teaching flying lessons to the trainees. I'm a pilot darn it!

DIRECTOR

Take it to the General.

JIMMY

I'd be delighted.

JIMMY grabs stage door handle.

DIRECTOR

But after this take.

LATER: Everyone is repositioned including a sulking Jimmy.

DIRECTOR

Attaboy Jimmy. Everyone ready? One last take!

Jimmy puts on his fake smile for the camera as GENERAL, 60s, confident and built like a barrel, enters.

GENERAL

How's my film unit doing?

Jimmy STORMS towards General. Director slaps his forehead.

DIRECTOR

Take five everybody.

Jimmy salutes General with perfect army composure.

GENERAL

At ease Captain.

General and Jimmy walk and talk as Director follows.

JIMMY

What's the big idea sir?

GENERAL

Pardon, Captain?

DIRECTOR

Jimmy's a little highly strung. Too long in a studio gives a guy cabin fever. Right Jimmy?

JIMMY

General, I want to be transferred to the battlefield.

GENERAL

We all get a little bloodthirsty now and again Captain--

JIMMY

Sorry sir but this isn't just blood thirst. Only partly.

A group of ACTRESSES enter from a nearby studio door. Jimmy stops to hold the door and takes off his hat.

JIMMY

Good afternoon ladies.

General and Director rip their hats from their heads, embarrassed for forgetting.

The Actresses pass. Jimmy puts on his hat and drops the smile. The three men return to walking.

JIMMY

I was the first Hollywood actor to join the war effort and I've been locked in this studio or stuck training new pilots ever since.

GENERAL

Of course. A movie star is a fine propaganda tool in modern warfare.

A PROP ASSISTANT walks by and drops his props. Jimmy rushes over and helps pick them up as the General talks.

GENERAL

And your pilot's license is worth more in a training room than any battlefield.

Jimmy piles the last prop into the grateful Prop Assistant's hands. He stomps towards General, who walks on unaware.

GENERAL

You're a valuable commodity. Your Ma must be proud.

JIMMY

Oh she is, General, why when I see her face-- Let's not get off topic.

GENERAL

I want to personally thank you for your service Captain.

General shakes hands with Jimmy and exits. Jimmy follows.

DIRECTOR

That's a wrap! I guess.

EXT. FILM STUDIO. DAY

Director catches up to Jimmy and General as they walk.

JIMMY

Sir, the men I trained have pilot licenses. Let them teach.

In the background TWO STUDIO WORKERS try to back a B-17 bomber plane through a stage door. Jimmy runs over and switches to his friendly self.

JIMMY

Hey fellas, this is a B-17 Bomber with a hundred and three foot wingspan, it won't fit. I suggest studio five next door.

STUDIO WORKER

Thanks Captain Stewart.

JIMMY

And remember, this baby goes two hundred miles an hour. You'll need to double those wind machines if you wanna re-create that kind of speed on camera. Tell them Dick!

DIRECTOR

Oh, sure. What the captain says.

Jimmy catches up to General, ready to defend.

GENERAL

You see, you're a leader of men. We can't have anyone train the boys.

JIMMY

I joined the war to fight the enemy.

GENERAL

And you're doing that. One trained pilot at a time. Right Dick?

DIRECTOR

Sure, General.

INT. PRODUCTION HALLWAY. DAY

Jimmy and Director follow General along a run of edit bays.

JIMMY

After two years I've done my time.

GENERAL

Each man and woman is doing their part. They don't get to choose how they do it. Why are you so special?

JIMMY

I'm not, General. That's the point. I'm tired of being coddled.

Newsreel music BLASTS from an open edit bay. In the bay footage plays of CLARK GABLE, 42, dashing and handsome, his charisma beams as he shakes hands with ARMY GENERALS.

NEWSREPORTER (V.O.)

Film star Clark Gable has enlisted in the United States Air Forces--

JIMMY

Well I'll be darned. Let Clark have a turn as your poster boy. The King of Hollywood himself will make a wonderful leader of men.

GENERAL

I can only offer to do what I've already done. Send a telegram.

General ducks out through a stage door.

INT. EMPTY STAGE . DAY

Jimmy and Director catch up with General. In the background Studio Workers taxi in the B-17 bomber through large doors.

JIMMY

How long'll it take them to respond?

GENERAL

They'll get to it as soon as they can. After all, there is a war on.

General walks on as Jimmy gives up the chase.

JIMMY

(sombre)

So everyone keeps telling me.

Jimmy longingly watches the B-17 as it's pushed into the spotlight. *His heart belongs in the pilot's seat.*

A nervous MESSAGE BOY runs up.

MESSAGE BOY

Telegram for Captain Stewart.

Jimmy, General and Director all look at each other. Jimmy snatches the telegram, opens, and reads.

JIMMY

I'm transferring to England as a B-17 pilot. You came through General.

Jimmy kisses General on the cheek.

GENERAL

Congratulations Captain.

JIMMY

It says I'm to report immediately. We'll be shipped out tomorrow!

Jimmy runs off with a hop and skip.

DIRECTOR

What about my shot?

JIMMY

Sorry Dick. Orders are orders and from now on I'll be taking them in the clear blue skies of England!

EXT. RAF STRATTON AIRFIELD. DAY

Dark gray clouds and heavy rain cover an airbase surrounded by British countryside.

A jeep containing Jimmy and star-struck MILITARY MEN parks.

Military Men march along muddy tracks. Jimmy looks up at the wet clouds and down to an "All Flights Grounded" sign.

INT. RAF STRATTON - BRIEFING ROOM. DAY

COLONEL, 50s, a commanding and proud American, stands in front of seated Military Men. Jimmy sits upright and excited.

COLONEL

Welcome to England boys. The second greatest country in the world, and no mistaking. The weather is wet and the food is dry but I'm told we'll get used to it.

A STAR-STRUCK MILITARY MAN, young and anxious, darts his eyes between Colonel and Jimmy. Jimmy gives an awkward nod.

COLONEL

It's custom to give your assigned barracks a nickname. Yours is currently named Leaky. Pick a new name and the Crew Chief will loan you a paint can. Any questions?

Jimmy raises his hand.

COLONEL

Yes, Captain Stewart.

JIMMY

When will we see the battlefield?

COLONEL

This is the battlefield, son. By air you're a mere twenty minutes from the enemy. Now review the board for your placement.

LATER: Excited Military Men find their names and run off. A confused Jimmy approaches Colonel.

JIMMY

Colonel, there seems to be a mistake. My name's not on the list.

COLONEL

You must be on the reserve list.

JIMMY

Excuse me sir, this ear still hasn't popped from the flight.

COLONEL

We're out of pilot positions.

JIMMY

Too many trained pilots I bet.

COLONEL

Plane shortage. We send them off but they don't all come back.

JIMMY

So you're waiting on new planes?

COLONEL

Ha! Yes, new planes. It's more likely you'll replace a pilot.

JIMMY

When they're relieved?

COLONEL

Or killed in action, the trouble with dead pilots is they usually take the plane down with them.

JIMMY

So we're waiting for?

COLONEL

Just waiting, Captian. Now get to your barracks or you'll end up with the last bunk.

INT. RAF STRATTON - BARRACKS. DAY

Jimmy examines his bunk bed. SNORING MILITARY MAN sleeps below while the top bed collects water from the ceiling.

He turns to his Military Men bunk mates. They stare. Jimmy gives a welcoming smile. Caught, they return to unpacking.

INT. RAF STRATTON - MESS HALL. DAY

Jimmy lines up for food. Sat behind him, Military Men mutter and whisper. Jimmy turns to them. They silently stare back.

JIMMY

Hello. Captain James M Stewart.
Pleased to meet you.

The shy Military Men all turn to their food.

Jimmy reaches the LUNCH LADY, 50s, a dumpling-shaped English woman with a constant sneer. She wipes her nose on her hand.

JIMMY

Good day ma'am. What's on the menu?

LUNCH LADY

Bubble n' squeak.

JIMMY

Sorry, what's the choice?

LUNCH LADY

There ain't no choice. It's bubble
n' squeak.

She points to a saucepan of dark boiling broth with bobbing
vegetables. It makes a continuous squeak noise.

JIMMY

Oh my, you know in America we
describe a food by its ingredients
rather than its, uh, attitude.

She slops a ladle's worth on Jimmy's plate.

JIMMY

Uh, thank you kindly.

Jimmy turns to see the Military Men at a table, they've saved
a seat for him.

WALLY WEINER, 30, a naive Englishman with a sunny attitude,
attempts to sit in the seat. Military Men shoo him away.
Rejected, Wally sits at his own table.

JIMMY

Now Gentlemen, you should be
ashamed of yourselves. This man is
your brother in arms.

Jimmy joins Wally's table. Wally looks embarrassed. Military
Men all gawk at Jimmy.

JIMMY

I'm just a regular army man serving
my country like you. That Hollywood
nonsense stays in Hollywood. OK?

In the distance, the faint sounds of singing grows louder and
louder. Men are singing 'Goodnight Sweetheart'.

One voice outshines the others. Jimmy listens with a hint of
recognition.

The doors BURST open and a singing Clark Gable, as dashing as
ever, enters with more Military Men; all singing with gusto.

Clark signs autographs as he leads the chorus.

Jimmy crosses his arms.

Clark waves his hands to silence the crowd.

CLARK
Goodnight sweetheart--

Clark points to FAT SINGING MILITARY MAN.

FAT SINGING MILITARY MAN
When we meet tomorrow.

CLARK
Dreams enfold you, in them--

Clark points to SHORT SINGING MILITARY MAN.

SHORT SINGING MILITARY MAN
Dear I'll hold you.

CLARK
Goodnight sweetheart...

Clark points to Jimmy. Jimmy stares.

CLARK
Go... Good...

Jimmy doesn't flinch.

CLARK
Everyone!

MILITARY MEN
Goodnight!

Applause RUPTURES throughout the hall. Jimmy stands between the Military Men and Clark.

JIMMY
OK boys, let's not make a fuss.
Lieutenant Gable is an ordinary
army man like ourselves.

CLARK
Who wants an autograph?

Dozens of hands SHOOT up waving paper and pens. Clark signs.

CLARK
How you doing Jimmy?

JIMMY
It's Captain Stewart.

CLARK
Oh of course. How are you Captain Stewart?

Jimmy leans in.

JIMMY
(whisper)
It's Captain Stewart sir, you being a lieutenant and all.

CLARK
(whisper)
Oh, I'm now a captain too.

JIMMY
A captain! You just joined?

Clark pulls away rubbing his ear.

CLARK
Easy there fella. I'm still a simple gunner.

JIMMY
How's a gunner become captain so fast?

CLARK
Why, by assignment. I'm here to make a documentary to show training gunners what to expect. Give a sense of the camaraderie and fighting spirit I feel electrifying the air. Ain't that right, boys!

Military Men CHEER. Jimmy pulls away rubbing his ear.

CLARK
They wanted me to make films, I told them I belong here. You want a film then send me with a crew.

Clark gestures to the other side of the room where a spindly SCREENWRITER, round CAMERAMAN and hunched SOUNDMAN record.

CLARK
That way the air force gets it's film and I'm in the air giving the enemy what they've been asking for.

Military Men CHEER as Clark bites into a raw onion and winks.

CLARK
Goodnight Sweetheart.

MILITARY MEN
Til we meet tomorrow.

Jimmy eyes crowded tables of singing Americans.

He sees Wally Weiner still alone and focused on his food.

JIMMY
May I join you?

WALLY
What? Oh, yes. Do!

Jimmy joins Wally, who eats while eyeing Jimmy.

JIMMY
Captain James M. Stewart. May I
make your acquaintance?

WALLY
Wally, Wally Weiner.

JIMMY
Wally Winner huh? We could do with
a few winners to fight the Nazis.

WALLY
No Weiner. My uh, Grandfather was
German.

JIMMY
Oh right. Sorry... Have you been
stationed here long?

WALLY
A month.

JIMMY
What are you trained in?

WALLY
Supermarine Spitfire pilot. I
escort the US bomber planes.

JIMMY
B-17 Bomber Pilot myself. How'd you
like the spitfire?

WALLY

Oh it's great. Yeah... Aim seems to be off on my plane but otherwise--

JIMMY

The aims off! You shot anyone down?

Jimmy slurps some bubble and squeak.

WALLY

I gave a few Jerry fighters some war wounds but I can't be sure.

JIMMY

That's criminal.

WALLY

It's fine. I'm sure I'll get used to the target sooner or later.

JIMMY

Oh, I meant the food. It's criminal. What's a guy got to do to get a good hamburger around here?

WALLY

What's a hamburger?

Jimmy slurps more bubble and squeak.

JIMMY

Ugh, do you know where I can get a postage stamp?

WALLY

It doesn't taste that bad does it?

JIMMY (V.O.)

Dear Ma. Hope you are well.

EXT. RAF STRATTON. DAY

Jimmy and Military Men exercise in the pouring rain.

JIMMY (V.O.)

England is a fine place with pleasant weather.

INT. RAF STRATTON - MESS HALL. DAY

Jimmy pours his soppy porridge from spoon to bowl.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 Although I miss your cooking the
 food is enjoyable.

As Jimmy eats he sees Clark sign autographs with a smile.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 You won't believe this but our
 friend, Clark Gable, is here too.

Clark winks and Jimmy rolls his eyes.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 Don't ask me how. Why, they sent
 him straight here. Guess it was
 that darn pilot license that kept
 me at home.

A NEEDY MILITARY MAN gestures to Jimmy for an autograph by waving a paper and pen while holding his own mother's photo.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 While Clark 'unskilled' Gable just
 waltzes in with a gunner position.

Jimmy shakes his head. Needy Military Man slumps, so Jimmy signs. A DOZEN MILITARY MEN show letters.

Jimmy signs letter after letter but the pile grows. He's bombarded and frustrated.

EXT. RAF STRATTON - GAMES ROOM. DAY

Jimmy and Clark play chess.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 Ignorance is bliss ma', and Clark's
 got it in spades.

Clark places his knight.

CLARK
 Checkmate!

INT. RAF STRATTON - SHOWERS. DAY

Jimmy soaps himself while the other Military Men stare.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 The other men were intimidated at
 first but have come to know me as
 an everyday Joe like I hoped.

Jimmy awkwardly smiles.

EXT. RAF STRATTON AIRFIELD. DAY

Jimmy walks along barracks.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I'm glad all the Hollywood hokum is
behind me for now.

CLARK (O.S.)
Cut!

Jimmy has walked into Clark and his Cameraman's shot.

EXT. RAF STRATTON - FIELD. DAY

Men play football. Jimmy is brutally TACKLED. A clean Clark helps up the mud-covered Jimmy.

JIMMY (V.O.)
In fact the men really respect me
as their captain.

Mud-faced Jimmy tackles SMALL FOOTBALL PLAYER -- WHAM. Jimmy jumps in celebration. OTHER FOOTBALL PLAYERS look concerned as the tackled Small Football Player isn't moving.

JIMMY (V.O.)
In fact I'm quite popular.

Jimmy helps the Small Football Player off the field while the Other Football Players give him evil looks.

As Jimmy applies ice to the Small Football Players foot. Jimmy sees Clark score a touch down.

Other Football Players pick Clark up on their shoulders.

INT. RAF STRATTON - SQUADRON HEADQUARTERS. DAY

Jimmy can't find his name on the Alert List.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I arrived a month ago and I haven't
flown a single mission.

EXT. RAF STRATTON AIRFIELD. DAY

A METEOROLOGIST examines grey clouds, studies his weather machine and shakes his head. Jimmy throws his cap and runs for the Meteorologist. Clark holds him back.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Why, it's been so wet even the
birds are grounded.

Jimmy picks up his hat and leans on a fence. Rain pours. Jimmy holds his hat over a chirping SPARROW sat on the fence.

INT. RAF STRATTON - BRIEFING ROOM. DAY

Jimmy writes his letter while Military Men listen to Colonel.

JIMMY
Today's my first air raid and I'm
over the moon. I'm just a co-pilot
but I'm in the air. With love,
Captain James Maitland Stewart.

EXT. RAF STRATTON - RUNWAY. DAY

Jimmy and FLIGHT CREW head towards a B-17 Flying Fortress with "Southern Dandy" painted on the side of its nose.

INT. SOUTHERN DANDY - COCKPIT. DAY

Jimmy buckles in. The DANDY'S PILOT, square jawed and short tempered, checks the controls.

DANDY'S PILOT
You better kiss your rabbit foot.
Charlie's our lucky mascot and he
ain't here, see.

JIMMY
Why not?

DANDY'S PILOT
Broken foot in a football game so
you've got his seat. Boy, I'd like
to get my hands on the son of a
bitch that hurt our poor Charlie.

JIMMY
Did, uh, you get a good look at him?

DANDY'S PILOT

No. Bet his plane'll be safe with
luck like that.

JIMMY

Well then, you might like to know--

Dandy Pilot studies Jimmy with suspicion.

JIMMY

Never mind.

EXT. RAF STRATTON - RUNWAY. DAY

Southern Dandy takes off with a squadron of planes.

EXT. GERMAN SKIES. DAY

Southern Dandy's squadron flies over a German village.

INT. SOUTHERN DANDY - COCKPIT. DAY

Jimmy surveys the cockpit window's awesome view.

JIMMY

Boy, it feels great to finally be
in the battlefield!

DANDY'S PILOT

This is your first mission? Oh
Jesus, that's bad luck. Don't tell
the gunners. We don't need them
spooked you hear me?

JIMMY

How's that?

DANDY'S PILOT

The biggest percentage of flyers
that bite it are first timers.

JIMMY

I'll have you know I'm an excellent
pilot. Your superstitions--

DANDY'S PILOT

It's statistics, pal. The numbers
don't lie. God help us.

DANDY'S NAVIGATOR (O.S.)

We're coming up against the target.

DANDY'S PILOT
Bombardier, ready the missiles.

DANDY'S BOMBARDIER (O.S.)
Roger, Captain.

JIMMY
I'm finally gonna see some action.

Out the window Jimmy notices the accompanying spitfires.

JIMMY
Where's the Nazi defence? No
fighters? No ground attacks?

DANDY'S PILOT
The enemy only protects their war
assets. Factories, oil refineries--

JIMMY
Then what are we bombing?

DANDY'S PILOT
Hearts and minds my friend, hearts
and minds.
(off Jimmy's look)
Why don't you take a trip back
there and look for yourself.

INT. SOUTHERN DANDY - BOMB BAY. DAY

Jimmy steps onto the catwalk, a steel beam above the bomb bay doors that connects the cockpit to the mid-section. He checks the bombs on the walls as the bomb bay doors RATTLE below.

JIMMY
No missile pins?

DANDY'S PILOT (O.S.)
On target, switching to auto pilot.

The bomb bay doors below Jimmy open, nothing but the steel beam he stands on separates Jimmy from a 30,000ft drop. He CLUTCHES onto the rope handrail.

JIMMY
Woah! I'm standing right here!

DANDY'S PILOT (O.S.)
Ah, you ain't no different. Those
doors can't even hold sixty pounds.

DANDY'S BOMBARDIER (O.S.)
Bombs away!

The missiles DROP. In mid-air the bombs release thousands of leaflets. The leaflets dance in the wind as they fall over a village. It's spectacular, unless you're anticipating an explosion.

JIMMY
What in the Sam Hill?

A leaflet flies in and SMACKS against Jimmy's face. He grabs it. A bright red headline reads "Hitler ist kaputt!"

INT. SOUTHERN DANDY - COCKPIT. DAY

Jimmy enters clutching the leaflet.

JIMMY
Propaganda?

DANDY'S PILOT
Most valuable weapon in modern warfare!

JIMMY
Ah phooey.

DANDY'S PILOT
Looks like someone needs to let off some steam at the party tonight.

JIMMY
What party?

END OF SAMPLE.

INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS MAY REQUEST THE FULL SCREENPLAY BY
E-MAIL: scameron.uk@gmail.com