

TORPEDO JUNCTION

An Original Screenplay by

Christopher J. Musser

and

U. S. Naval Reserve (retired)
Commander John F. Musser, Jr.

Script No. _____

WGAw No. _____

CAST LIST:

BYRON MCKENZIE - A young U.S. NAVY LIEUTENANT

The MARY DEL - An old but seaworthy 250' CANADIAN CARGO FREIGHTER

JEANETTE DUBAR - A beautiful, young, FRENCH CANADIAN WOMAN

CHARLES (CHUCK) BLOYD - COMMANDER of a Canadian Navy FRIGATTE

CAPTAIN TIBBS - CAPTAIN of the MARY DEL

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS and TERMS:

C.U. - Close Up

M.S. - Middle Shot

L.S. - Long Shot

O.C. - Off Camera

INT. - Interior

ExT - Exterior

P.O.V. - Point of View

F.G. - Foreground

B.G. - Background

SUPER - Superimpose

DISSOLVE - Mix one scene into another

FADE IN - Fade from black

FADE OUT - Fade to black

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PROLOGUE:

In October of 1942, four Allied freighters, one of them the 'Mary Del,' left Halifax, Nova Scotia, bound for Point X, a spot 200 miles southeast in the Atlantic Ocean.

There they would rendezvous with a Main Supply Convoy out of New York, SC 160, bound for Londonderry, Ireland.

Their route would take them through an area menaced by the greatest concentration of German U-boats in World War II.

Ships would be assigned to 'fast' or 'slow' convoys based on optimum speed, and personnel would man vessels based on experience, expertise, and luck.

Of the 61 ships in SC 160, only 30 made it to the British Isles.

Convoy SC 160 traveled at a top speed of 4.5 knots

This is the story of TORPEDO JUNCTION.

FADE IN:

EXT. BROOKLYN NAVAL YARD - DAY

CLOSE: its a hot, muggy AUGUST DAY in BROOKLYN, NEW YORK in the summer of 1942, and we see a tall 20-year-old, dark-haired, U.S. NAVY LIEUTENANT (J.G). BYRON MACKENZIE, enter a brick, multi-story office building , accompanied by a friend and school-ship acquaintance, LIEUTENANT (J.G.) JACK CLIFFORD.

REVERSE L.S. BROOKLYN NAVAL YARD - DAY

CARS pass by in the STREET in the F.G. as they enter. A SIGN above the building advises: U.S. NAVY--ATLANTIC COMMAND ARMED GUARD CENTER, and they identify themselves to U.S. MARINE GUARDS as they enter.

The CAMERA follows as they proceed to an upstairs OFFICE and approach a U.S. NAVY LIEUTENANT sitting in front of a desk in a section titled OPERATIONS, in big black letters.

BYRON

(to LIEUTENANT)

Can you tell me something 'bout a friend of mine?

LIEUTENANT

Sure. Who?

CLIFF

(interrupting)

Seaman Second Tom McCall. He's a Fireman on the 'Sea of Victory.'

The LIEUTENANT looks them over closely for a few moments, checking their uniforms, posture, and faces.

LIEUTENANT

(brusquely)

Sorry, no word . . .

The LIEUTENANT starts to turns away, to go about his DUTIES in the busy wartime office, but he notices their DOWNCAST expressions.

LIEUTENANT

(cont. turning slowly back to them)

. . . but the 'Mercy' isn't in yet. And we know she's full.

Maybe he's onboard.

BYRON looks at CLIFF and back to the LIEUTENANT.

BYRON

Thanks.

BYRON and CLIFF look at each other again, both of them trying to remain HOPEFUL, then The CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM DOWNSTAIRS, bumping into OFFICERS and ENLISTED MEN as they navigate through the busy office, to a large COUNTER behind which many people scurry about performing assignment and operations DUTIES.

BYRON
(to CLIFF as they descend the stairs)
Too bad.

CLIFF
(unconvincingly)
Don't worry . . . he'll show up.

CUT TO:

A NAVY CHIEF approaches the men standing at another COUNTER.

CHIEF
What's your pleasure, Sirs?

BYRON
Assignments. Here's my orders.

BYRON hands the CHIEF his ORDERS and ID CARD.

CLIFF
Here's mine.

THE CHIEF looks over the SEALED ORDERS and MILITARY IDENTIFICATIONS the two young OFFICERS present him and turns to walk to another area of the OFFICE. The TWO MEN watch him with more than passing curiosity.

CLIFF
(cont. smiling)
I bet I get a 25,000 tonner that makes 20 knots.

BYRON
Fat chance.

The TWO are BUMPED from BEHIND by PASSING SERVICEMEN, and turn to watch a MONTAGE of a busy WARTIME MILITARY OFFICE.

CUT TO:

The CHIEF reappears with TWO ENVELOPES, which he hands to them.

THE CHIEF
Good luck . . .

The CHIEF turns away and leaves them to open their ORDERS alone. BYRON opens his first.

	CLIFF
What'd you get?	
	BYRON
(disappointed)	
The Mary Del.	
	CLIFF
So?	
	BYRON
I've heard of her.	

CLIFF finishes opening his ENVELOPE and reads his orders. He starts with foreboding, but soon looks excited.

	CLIFF
Wow.	
	BYRON
(sarcastically)	
25,000 tons?	

CLIFF can't conceal his happiness.

	CLIFF
28. The Victor. She's new.	
	BYRON
(smiles)	
Congratulations.	

BYRON'S sincere, but soon looks back down again at HIS ORDERS, looking WORRIED and resigned.

The TWO MEN walk away from the COUNTER.

FADE TO:

EXT. CANADIAN RAILROAD STATION - DAY

BYRON gets out of a TAXI and enters a busy station in NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA. In THREE QUICK CUTS he boards a TRAIN, travels through CITY STREETS, and soon arrives at an office building with a sign out front that reads, CONVOY OPERATIONS, 12TH NAVAL DISTRICT.

CLOSE: He speaks to the ROYAL MARINE GUARD posted at the front door of the stately building.

BYRON

Captain Wesley's office . . .

BYRON hands his identification to the grizzled GUARD, who looks it over carefully, glancing occasionally at the too-young, UNITED STATES NAVAL OFFICER.

GUARD

Second floor.

BYRON salutes. The GUARD salutes back, and BYRON enters the building. He walks upstairs to the second floor, where he approaches yet another COUNTER, meeting a beautiful, civilian, OPERATIONS SECRETARY, JEANETTE DUBAR.

JEANETTE is 21 years old and FRENCH CANADIAN, with long black hair, a perfect figure, (concealed under her 1942 wide-shouldered suit), and an occasionally radiant smile.

JEANETTE

(with FRENCH accent)
Yes, May I help you?

BYRON

(quickly in awe)
Uh . . . may I speak to Captain Wesley?

JEANETTE

(cooly)
What would you like to speak to him about?

BYRON

(importantly and truly)
About the configuration of Convoy SC 160.

JEANETTE

And who are you?

BYRON

Lieutenant . . . McKenzie. Byron, McKenzie.

JEANETTE

(after an appraising beat)
Rear-Admiral White is briefing the rest of the lieutenants,
Mr. McKenzie, at 0615 tomorrow morning.

BYRON

(slowly, building confidence, he smiles)
Thanks.

JEANETTE

(as BYRON stares)
You're welcome, Lieutenant.

BYRON turns to leave, but he can't seem to tear his gaze away from her, and turns back to face her.

BYRON

Good bye.

He hesitates for a moment in front of smiling JEANETTE before leaving the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAB DRIVING DOWN CITY STREETS - NEXT MORNING

Halifax seems quiet and deserted, belying the turmoil in the world, as a TAXI takes BYRON to the 12TH NAVAL DISTRICT.

The CAB stops outside, and BYRON walks inside and then into the MEETING ROOM of the Allied Supreme Command.

INT. NAVAL OPERATIONS OFFICE - MORNING

He passes by JEANETTE and glances at her. She looks back, smiling, as usual. OFFICERS of many NATIONALITIES are assembling in the large WOOD PANELED room.

BYRON meanders through the crowd to a CONFERENCE TABLE where he locates his new CAPTAIN, MR. MARCUS TIBBS, who he finds talking to a heavily-decorated young CANADIAN FRIGATE SKIPPER, CHARLES BLOYD.

BYRON waits for them to finish talking before he introduces himself.

BYRON

Excuse me. Captain Tibbs, I'm Lieutenant McKenzie.

CAPTAIN TIBBS

Ahh . . . we meet at last. They told me you'd be here a week ago.

BYRON

I'm sorry for the delay, Captain. I only received my assignment Thursday.

CAPTAIN TIBBS

(surveying him)

Well then, dig in, Mr. Macenzie . . . and be sure to listen to everything said here very carefully.

TIBBS pauses for a beat. He is sizing up his GUNNERY OFFICER.

TIBBS

(cont.)

Byron, this is Lieutenant Commander Charles Bloyd of the Canadian Navy. He's skipper of one of the escorts.

CHARLES and BYRON take an immediate dislike to each other. Perhaps it is chemistry, perhaps its because a Canadian Frigate is only 40 feet long and a marginal defense against the U-BOAT.

CHARLES

(shaking hands with BYRON)

Call me Chuck. First convoy?

BYRON

Yeah.

CHARLES

I wish you luck, then, for your first.

TIBBS

I'm wishing us all luck, and I hope Macenzie can give me the Gunnery support I need to keep those damn U-boats from tearing up . . .

They are interrupted by CAPTAIN WESLEY, who is rapping on the table with a MALLET, calling the meeting to order.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(shouts)

Gentlemen, please be seated!

He waits for everyone to sit down and stop talking.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

Welcome to the convoy SC 160, gentlemen.

The last traces of CONVERSATION in the room subside.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

In the next 30 days I expect us to accomplish our loading, training, and convoy assembly functions. As a matter of fact, I expect us to accomplish them earlier than that.

There are WHISPERS in the audience. CAPTAIN WESLEY looks them all over for a couple of beats. He waits for the conversation to subside, again.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

Most of you are new. I suspect a lot of that has to do with the fact that we have a new contingent of United States Gunnery Officers and Crews.

A portly, bearded, NORWEGIAN SKIPPER is the first to offer his appreciation.

NORWEGIAN SKIPPER

Here, here!

The CROWD bursts into spontaneous CHEERS.

CLOSE: BYRON, looking appreciative.

After the cheers subside, CAPTAIN WESLEY continues.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

. . . but I'm sorry to have to tell you new men, part of it is because SC 159 sustained 40% losses.

The room quickly becomes SILENT.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

I'm here, along with Rear Admiral Roland White of the Royal English Navy and his competent staff, *to see that that doesn't happen again* But I'm not going to try and fool anybody. You've got a big job ahead.

CAPTAIN WESLEY waits for this to sink in.

CAPTAIN WESLEY

(cont.)

Now, without further ado, here's Admiral White.

A fit-looking, SILVER HAired, 55-year-old ROYAL NAVY ADMIRAL gets up from his chair next to CAPTAIN WESLEY and walks to the PODIUM. He waits for APPLAUSE to subside before he addresses the assemblage.

ADMIRAL WHITE

Gentlemen, the plans for SC 160 are in the folders in front of you. Please open them now, and may God sail with you.

BYRON glances at TIBBS and CHARLES as they open their FOLDERS and look back at him. The CAMERA CLOSES on BYRON, EXCITED, about to enter a GREAT ADVENTURE.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALIFAX DOCKS - EARLY MORNING OF THE NEXT DAY

BYRON bounds down a GANGPLANK onto a bustling WHARF, bearing a large DUFFEL BAG over his back. It is early, just getting light, and in the background we see the MARY DEL, an old 250' CARGO FREIGHTER.

CLOSE: There is a new 3-INCH GUN on her bow, and a 4-INCH GUN on her stern.

EXT. MARY DEL - EARLY MORNING

The CAMERA follows BYRON as he stops at a checkpoint, presenting his papers to more MARINE GUARDS, then walks up the GANGPLANK to board the MARY DEL.

As he goes forward to the BRIDGE, he passes several SEAMEN hoisting a HEAVY CRATE with a CRANE.

EXT. MARY DEL - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE: The CRATE becomes DISENGAGED from the ropes holding it and FALLS, barely missing some of the MEN. BYRON rushes to help a CANADIAN MERCHANT MARINE SEAMAN who has narrowly escaped being crushed by the falling CRATE.

BYRON

You OK?

SEAMAN #1

(SEAMAN CRUZ)

Yeah, yeah, I am.

BYRON helps him up.

BYRON

Who secured this equipment?

CRUZ

Me and Seaman Jones.

SEAMAN CRUZ gestures to another SAILOR, who shrugs his shoulders.

BYRON

(turning back to CRUZ)

And you are?

CRUZ

Seaman Cruz, sir.

BYRON

Sailor, I won't tell the Captain about that blood knot.

The two SEAMEN look at each other, relieved.

BYRON

(cont.)

But you're gonna be a little more careful in the future, right?

CRUZ

Yes. Yes sir, we will.

BYRON sternly struts off down the deck, the CREWMEN looking askance at the UNITED STATES NAVAL OFFICER on their CANADIAN MERCHANT MARINE VESSEL.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE OF MARY DEL - EARLY MORNING

BYRON encounters CAPTAIN TIBBS on the BRIDGE.

BYRON

(walks up, saluting SMARTLY)
Good morning, Captain.

TIBBS

(looking annoyed)
What are you doing here, Lieutenant?

BYRON

Reporting as ordered, Sir.

TIBBS

Not as ordered, Lieutenant, where on your orders does it say 0630?

BYRON

I'm a half an hour early, sir.

TIBBS

Exactly, Lieutenant.

BYRON

(after a beat)
I'll go stow my gear, sir.

CAPTAIN TIBBS

Fine, Lieutenant. See Mr. Gower for your billet.

BYRON leaves, looking back over his shoulder at TIBBS.

When he reaches the stanchions at the edge of the deck, he looks over at the DOCK and notices a 1940 FORD SEDAN pulling up to the WHARF. The SEDAN stops, out steps COMMANDER BLOYD, and then, from the driver's side, JEANETTE DUBAR.

JEANETTE kisses CHARLES goodbye, and after he leaves, notices in the distance BYRON watching her from the MARY DEL. She slowly gets back into her car and drives away. BYRON watches her leave, then speaks to COMMANDER BLOYD walking by on the way to his ship.

BYRON

Ho, there!

CHARLES

Ho, there? Is that an American Navy expression?

BYRON

United States Navy, Limey.

BYRON is smiling, but not joking.

CHARLES

Ho there. I think you mistake me.

BYRON

Yeah?

CHARLES

Yes. You didn't call me a 'Canuk.' So, either you're misinformed, or you just want to bite the hand that feeds you.

BYRON

Who is feeding who in this little war is pretty obvious, Charles.

CHARLES

What's obvious, Byron, is that we'll have to work together to be able to accomplish anything, and if you don't want to work together, you'll be very sorry.

CHARLES continues walking past BYRON, to his 42', FOUR-STACK CORVETTE, the 'STRIDENT,' leaving BYRON to consider what he has just said.

BYRON scowls after him for a few moments and then walks below to stow his gear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MARY DEL BRIDGE - MORNING - 30 MINUTES LATER

BYRON appears back on the BRIDGE. He's not going to salute the Captain at first, but thinks better and does smartly, again.

BYRON

Lieutenant McKenzie, reporting as ordered, sir.

CAPTAIN TIBBS looks up from the CHART he is looking at.

TIBBS

Very nice, Lieutenant, right on time. Why don't you go

out on the afterdeck and supervise the loading until my exec returns. Some of the crew is pretty new at this, and I wouldn't like to see anything we need get broke.

BYRON

Yes, sir.

TIBBS

And go easy. They haven't just graduated from an academy, like you have.

BYRON

Yes sir.

BYRON hesitates for a moment as TIBBS looks at him, then turns and walks out on deck. BYRON has entered a world of CONFLICT, one of those between NON-UNION U. S. NAVAL PERSONNEL and MERCHANT MARINERS, who competed with them in wages and benefits.

FADE TO:

EXT. HALIFAX PARK - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

It's a beautiful early-summer day in HALIFAX, all the trees are in BLOOM. The CAMERA PANS the PARK, finding CHILDREN PLAYING, then FOLLOWING THEM until we see JEANETTE and CHARLES strolling HAND in HAND.

More CHILDREN are playing in the background, and the War seems far away. They are EARNEST in CONVERSATION.

JEANETTE

(stopping and looking at him)
When will you know?

CHARLES

After this convoy, probably, maybe the next.

JEANETTE

Oh, Chuck, I'm so happy for you.

CHARLES

It'll give me the time for more important things in my life. Like Seeing you.

JEANETTE

Oh, I want this bloody war to end. I want you to stay home, I want everyone to be safe again.

CHARLES

And after I get the headquarters job, then maybe you and I can move in together, OK?

CHARLES pulls JEANETTE close. She resists ever-so-slightly, then KISSES him.

JEANETTE

(pulling away)

After you work for the admiralty you won't have to go out on that dank, rotten, sea anymore. You will be extra careful, this trip, for me?

CHARLES

Don't worry about me.

He kisses JEANETTE again.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY DEL CABIN – THE NEXT DAY

In his small PRIVATE QUARTERS below decks on the MARY DEL, BYRON is lying on his bunk writing a letter and occasionally looking at framed pictures of his FAMILY and FRIENDS on a bureau close by.

There's a knock on the cabin door. BYRON gets up to open it and finds TIBBS.

BYRON

Hello, Captain.

TIBBS

Making yourself at home, McKenzie? I hope so. This'll be your only respite for the next 6 weeks, as much as it can be, with all this noise and commotion.

BYRON

I'll make the most of it, Captain.

TIBBS

Call me Tibbs, when it's just you and me, OK? And by the way, we can dispense with the custom of saluting at sea.

BYRON

Sure . . . Tibbs.

TIBBS

We're going across the sound tomorrow morning to pick up equipment in Graton. I hope you'll spend some time with your crews.

BYRON

Sure. Is there any thing I should know about the manifest?

TIBBS

We're just picking up some mechanized equipment. I will expect you to keep out of the way while we're loading.

BYRON

Certainly, Cap . . . Tibbs.

TIBBS

I hope you'll get a chance for some practice. The Strident'll accompany us. If everything proceeds as planned, she'll drop some cans for us to sink. So have your crews ready.

BYRON

Yes sir.

TIBBS

Very well, McKenzie.

CAPTAIN TIBBS walks off and leaves BYRON to go back to his bunk, reflecting on the conversation they have just had.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALIFAX USO CLUB - EVENING

BYRON and two SHIPMATES, HERB HASKINS, a LIEUTENANT COMMANDER in the ROYAL NAVY, (and the executive officer of the MARY DEL), and GRIEVES, a ROYAL MARINE LIEUTENANT, show up at the CLUB.

Its in a BUSY section of town; there are lots of cars in the street and MILITARY MEN with festive outlooks, many of them with their dates.

BYRON stops at the door and flirts with a pretty 22-year-old USO HOSTESS, DORIS, as they peer inside at the wailing 1940'S SWING BAND, and DANCING COUPLES.

BYRON

(to HOSTESS)

Hi, you available, beautiful?

BYRON puts his arms around her.

HERB

You've gotta watch these U.S. Navy blokes, Doris, they don't understand 'no.'

DORIS

(smiling)

They understand a kick you-know-where.

BYRON quickly releases DORIS.

DORIS

(cont.)

But come in anyway, Lieutenant. And remember, GENTS . . .

DORIS looks pointedly at everyone, especially HERB.

DORIS

(cont.)

. . . the Ladies are not supposed to date the clientele.

HERB

(smiling)

I knew you'd cheer us up, Doris.

HERB kisses a reluctant DORIS on the cheek as they walk in. DORIS looks after him as the three SHIPMATES duck inside. HERB looks back at her.

BYRON

(catching everything)

Nice.

HERB

(unconvincingly)

Awww, we're just friends.

The SHIPMATES walk past TABLES filled with weekend REVELERS and stop at the edge of the DANCE FLOOR. The BAND has just finished a song, and the M. C., LIBERTY LARRY, walks on stage.

LIBERTY LARRY

Well, wasn't that the bee's knees?

EVERYONE cheers.

LIBERTY LARRY

(cont.)

For those of you who don't know, or who have maybe just arrived, or were maybe just born . . .

LAUGHTER from the CROWD.

LIBERTY LARRY

(cont.)

. . . this is Phil Gremiere, and his wonderful orchestra, featuring the trumpet of Billy James.

More CHEERS from the crowd, as the BAND MEMBERS on the STAGE smile at each other and back at the audience.

LIBERTY LARRY

(cont.)

And now, just to lighten things up even more, here's Chester and Clyde.

The crowd CHEERS again at the STAND UP COMEDY intro. CHESTER, the straight man, and CLYDE, the funny man (dressed up as a baby HITLER), show up on STAGE. CHESTER notices CLYDE'S diapers.

CHESTER

Nice underwear.

CLYDE

(giving NAZI salute)
Deutsland Uberunder!

CHESTER

Oh, God, you didn't pee again?

CLYDE

(looking down)
Deutseland Uberpeepee!

The CROWD ROARS.

CLYDE

(cont.)
I vill send the SS to look into this.

CHESTER

Not too deeply, I hope.

The CROWD ROARS again.

Meanwhile, BYRON and his friends start moving to the BAR.

And just as they get there, BYRON is bumped by the CROWD and turns around to face JEANETTE and a CANADIAN OFFICER, who is TURNED AWAY from us, but is standing so CLOSE to JEANETTE, he seems to have his ARM around her.

JEANETTE

Hello, Lieutenant McKenzie.

BYRON looks at them, jealously.

BYRON

(to JEANETTE)

Hello, Miss Dubar. Having a good time?

JEANETTE

Are you?

BYRON

Certainly. A nice convivial place, with interesting people,
a place where you can put your arms around your date,
and feel at ho . . .

Suddenly the CANADIAN OFFICER turns to face BYRON completely.

He is MISSING an ARM, the reason he could stand so CLOSE to JEANETTE. He also has a chest full of medals, including a CANADIAN PURPLE HEART.

BYRON looks at them both, not knowing what to say. It's a moment when the real man peeks out, and in BYRON we see a mixture of apology and dismay.

JEANETTE'S anger is soon tempered with understanding as she sees BYRON'S sincere distress.

JEANETTE

(as the BAND starts)

Well, we were going to take a turn on the dance floor.

BYRON

Don't worry about me, I'm here with friends.

BYRON motions to his nearby FRIENDS. Just then, the CANADIAN OFFICER, in a true show of strength, sticks out his good left hand to BYRON.

CANADIAN OFFICER

Nice meeting you.

BYRON

(shaking his left hand)

Very good meeting you, too.

JEANETTE and the CANADIAN OFFICER move towards the DANCE FLOOR, while BYRON walks over to his friends.

CUT TO:

INT. USO CLUB - LATER IN THE EVENING

BYRON is talking with FRIENDS a few feet from the DANCE FLOOR, where he notices JEANETTE, standing by a table, conveniently alone. JEANETTE looks BYRON'S direction, but not at him.

INT. USO CLUB - LATER IN THE EVENING - ANOTHER ANGLE

BYRON approaches her.

BYRON

Hi.

JEANETTE looks back seemingly DISINTERESTED.

JEANETTE

(soon)

Well, did you come over to ask me to dance?

BYRON

No, I came over to apologize. You know, I'm not really a bumbling idiot, I just act like it occasionally. When I see something I don't know how to handle . . .

JEANETTE

But an officer's supposed to act like an officer . . . while he's learning, how to handle situations.

BYRON pauses for a while, looking at her. JEANETTE sees a bit of the little boy in our hero.

JEANETTE

(cont.)

Well, would you like to dance, or not?

BYRON

Yes, if you can fit me in . . .

BYRON looks at his FEET for a few beats.

BYRON

(cont.)

But what I'd really like to know is if I could see you.

BYRON alternates looking at his FEET, and straight in her eyes. JEANETTE, although attracted to BYRON, has been caught off guard.

JEANETTE

(soon after, a little coy)

You know I have a relationship.

BYRON stops looking at his feet.

BYRON

(slight smile)

You could have a better one.

JEANETTE

You're awfully confident, Lieutenant.

BYRON

I come from good stock.

BYRON has. His FATHER was a hard working BAPTIST MINISTER, and with his MOTHER and little BROTHER, they farmed the rolling hills of the PENNSYLVANIA countryside, carving a living out of sunshine, earth and rain.

BYRON had grown up working hard from sunup to sunset; had already seen life and death in many forms, and believed you could have anything you wanted, if you worked for it.

He was also 22, handsome and intelligent, and an officer in a NAVY that was soon to be the greatest in the world.

JEANETTE

(soon)

Maybe lunch.

BYRON smiled, put his hat on a table and his hand on her back, looked JEANETTE in the eyes and guided her to the DANCE FLOOR.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALIFAX HARBOR - MORNING

We see a view of the HARBOR ENTRANCE, with the MARY DEL and STRIDENT in line astern, proceeding across the SOUND.

(DAD, please write at least a scene on Charles' Frigate to help develop his character and explain some of the technical details of an escort. Take us across the harbor to Gratton(?) to pick up some 'secret' mechanized equipment (what could this be . . . it should have some basis in fact and be very important to the war effort.) Enhance mystery angle--give us lots of interesting interplay and conflict between characters/strident/mary del. Sketch out a loading scene--(do they debark, walk into town, etc.) then get us back across the harbor to Halifax (much shorter scene) You can cut/copy stuff out of the following you already wrote to show us the scene where Byron's gun crews shoot at cans dropped from the Strident.)

FADE IN:

EXT. HALIFAX HARBOR - MORNING

We see a view of the HARBOR ENTRANCE, with a column of MERCHANT SHIPS in line astern, proceeding to sea.

EXT. MARY DEL BRIDGE - MORNING

CAPTAIN TIBBS, the WATCH OFFICER, HELMSMAN, and BYRON are on the BRIDGE.

TIBBS

Mr. White, follow in the wake of the ship ahead and be sure to keep your distance. Mr. McKenzie, muster your gun crews on station, integrate those of the ship's crew assigned by the Chief Officer, and walk through a couple dry run drills. Report to me when finished.

BYRON

Aye Aye, Sir.

BYRON

(cont. soon after)

How much time will we have until clear of the entrance and in steaming formation?

TIBBS

About another hour 'til clear, then about ten hours until we join up with the main convoy.

TIBBS smiles, for the first time, seeming to enjoy his GUNNERY OFFICER'S attention to DUTY (and the fact that they are going to SEA again.)

TIBBS

(cont.)

They're veering north to enable us to join up earlier. That'll limit our exposure with this bloody small escort.

CUT TO:

The 4" GUN PLATFORM aft on the fantail, where BYRON is addressing THREE MEMBERS of his detail and ANOTHER THREE of the ships crew assigned to the GUN.

BYRON

(addressing the GUNNERS MATE 2ND CLASS)

Guns you're the Gun Captain. The strikers (the other two NAVY MEN) are the pointer and trainer. You are the loader and you other two are the ammunition passers. Now Guns, explain how the gun crew works as a team and show each man his duties in detail. I will be forward on the 3" mount if you need me.

FADE TO:

The bridge as Byron arrives there and salutes the Captain. There is a new Watch Officer on the Bridge.

BYRON

(cont.)

Sir, the gun crews are organized and are making dry runs as you directed.

TIBBS

Mr. Meecham, saluting is dispensed with at ea. But why are you not supervising the dry runs?

BYRON

When we go to real drills I will supervise. However in any action I will be on the bridge, not at the guns, so it is better that the training is performed under the gun captains, who will command the guns in action.

TIBBS

That makes sense. Now I suggest that any of you who have nothing pressing to do immediately get some rest. We will be joining up in about five or six hours, and after that rest and sleep will be luxuries we cannot afford.

FADE TO BLACK;

FADE IN To panoramic view of large (60 ship) convoy.

CUT TO;

Bridge of the MARY DEL. The Captain, Byron, a Watch Officer and helmsman are on the bridge. A voice is heard through the open tube from the flying bridge above.

SIGNALMAN (O. C.)

Bridge, Signals: Message from Commodore, Prepare to exercise guns on safe bearing on command.

TIBBS

Signal understood and acknowledged. Byron, pass the word for the gun crews to man their stations. You personally check the bearing of gun to insure that it is a safe one. Do not fire until I give the order. Two rounds only for each gun.

BYRON

Aye, Aye Sir. I will report by phone when ready and safe.

Byron leaves the bridge.

CUT TO:

The 4" gun platform on the fantail, with the gun crew at their stations, the gun trained out to the port quarter.

BYRON

(cont.)

Keep the gun trained on this bearing Guns. I will check the 3"gun forward then take station on the flying bridge.

Do not load until I give the order.

Byron leaves and heads forward.

CUT TO:

The 3" gun platform on the forecastle head. The gun is trained on the port bow, the gun crew is at their stations.

BYRON

(cont.)

Guns, keep the gun trained on this bearing. Do not load until I give the order from the flying bridge.

Byron leaves for the bridge.

CUT TO:

The bridge. The Captain, a Watch Officer and Helmsman are on the bridge. Byron's voice is heard through the flying bridge voice pipe:

BYRON

(cont.)

Both guns are manned and on safe bearings. There is a signal coming in now so stand by for the test firing. (slight pause) Captain, message from the Commodore: "Proceed to exercise guns, two rounds only per barrel."

TIBBS

Mr. Meacham, load and fire in accordance with the Commodore's signal.

BYRON

Aye Aye, Sir.

To be continued.

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ideas:

more of Charles on his ship

Byron slightly hungover for trip across sound?

church w/Jeanette?

Action in the North Atlantic w/Humphrey Bogart and Raymond Massey.

Book, "A Measureless Peril"

Movie "Malta Story"