

SUPER OVER

Based on the true story of the first female fighter Ace.

FADE IN:

MOSCOW STREET - EARLY MORNING - WINTER - 1920S

The city breathes cold and quiet under a blanket of snow. Gray morning light filters through low-hanging clouds, casting long shadows across frozen cobblestones.

A tram clatters down the tracks, sparking faintly as it turns past rows of tenement buildings. Horse-drawn carts creak along the street, wheels crunching over ice. The buildings are a patchwork of brick and stone, some proud Tsarist relics, others hastily repaired.

On the sidewalk, a man in a thick wool coat sweeps snow from the front of a bakery, his breath fogging the air. A few early risers trudge past, heads bowed against the wind. A Red Army patrol moves steadily through the fog, rifles slung over shoulders, boots leaving heavy impressions in the slush.

Faded propaganda posters flap against weathered walls, promises of progress, unity, and a better tomorrow.

From an upper window, a faint radio crackles with a patriotic march, mixing with the distant sound of a factory whistle calling workers to the morning shift.

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - DAY

The modest 1920s Moscow apartment is a reflection of its occupants: worn but dignified. The small living room is sparsely decorated, with simple wooden furniture and faded wallpaper. The only sign of any luxury is a small, intricately carved cabinet that holds a few precious keepsakes. The flickering light from a single, old lamp casts long shadows on the walls.

LILYA LITVYAK (7) sits on the floor, absorbed in a book about famous Russian aviators. Her small, delicate fingers trace the images of planes and pilots with reverence. From the adjacent room, muffled voices escalate into a heated argument.

ADJACENT ROOM

Lilya's father, VLADIMIR LITVYAK (early 40s), stands tall and resolute, though his face shows the strain of the conversation.

Across from him, two NKVD AGENTS in dark uniforms and stern expressions are clearly not interested in anything Vladimir has to say.

VLADIMIR

I've always been a loyal servant of
the Party. I have done nothing
wrong!

One of the agents, older and more seasoned, steps forward with an air of finality.

NKVD AGENT 1

Loyalty is not in question. This is
about duty. You will come with us.

Vladimir glances toward the doorway where his wife, ANNA LITVYAK (mid-30s), stands pale and trembling. Her eyes are fixed on Vladimir, just a glance at their daughter.

The agents step closer to Vladimir. He looks past them and spots Lilya standing in the doorway, her wide, innocent eyes filled with confusion and fear. He lowers his head to hide the frown and tears that begin to flow, and then wipes his eyes. He raises his head and masks his pain with a stern look and tight-lipped smile.

VLADIMIR

Lilya, take care of your mother.

Before Lilya can respond, the agents roughly take Vladimir by the arms and lead him out the door. Lilya's gaze follows her father, her face terrified. The door slams shut, leaving an oppressive silence in its wake. Anna crumples to the floor, her body wracked with silent sobs.

Lilya stands frozen, her small frame trembling. The book she held falls to the floor with a soft thud, the pages flipping open to an illustration of a lone biplane soaring through the clouds.

EXT. MOSCOW STREETS - DAY

SUPER OVER: "EIGHT YEARS LATER"

Moscow streets are alive with activity, a stark contrast to the gray, oppressive atmosphere of the apartment. Teenage LILYA (14) weaves through the busy streets on her bicycle, her long blonde hair escaping from under her woolen cap, fluttering in the cold wind. Her face is set in a determined expression.

She reaches the gates of the LOCAL FLYING CLUB, her eyes lighting up as she watches planes taking off and landing in the distance. The loud roar of engines and the sight of aircraft soaring through the sky fills her with a sense of excitement and longing.

Several young men, all in their late teens, laugh and joke as they walk past her, dressed in the sharp uniforms of the flying club. They barely notice Lilya, who stares at them with envy and determination.

She spots the INSTRUCTOR (late 50s), a grizzled man with a permanent scowl etched into his weathered face, supervising the students as they prepare for their flights. Summoning all her courage, Lilya approaches him.

LILYA
I want to join.

The Instructor turns slowly, looking her up and down with a mixture of disbelief and amusement.

INSTRUCTOR
You're too young. And this isn't a place for girls.

Lilya's eyes flash with anger, but she keeps her voice steady.

LILYA
Please, just give me a chance. I know I can do it. I've studied everything about flying. I've read all the manuals.

The Instructor shakes his head dismissively.

INSTRUCTOR
There's more to flying than reading a few books, girl. This is serious business. Go home and play with your dolls.

Lilya's face hardens. She's not leaving without a fight.

LILYA
I'm serious. I can fly better than anyone here if you'd just give me a chance.

The Instructor looks at her again, this time with a flicker of interest in his eyes. But he quickly pushes it aside.

INSTRUCTOR

Come back when you're older... and
if you're still interested.

Lilya watches him walk away, frustration and disappointment washing over her. But she doesn't leave. Instead, she finds a spot near the airfield and sits down, her eyes glued to the planes in the sky. She spends hours watching them, imagining herself in the cockpit, soaring through the clouds.

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lilya and her mother, Anna, sit at the small kitchen table, eating a simple meal of bread and soup. The apartment has aged along with its inhabitants; the wallpaper is peeling, and the furniture is worn. Lilya shiver slightly as she tightens her cowl over her shoulders.

Lilya's mind is elsewhere as she pushes her food around on the plate. Anna notices and sighs, putting down her spoon.

ANNA

What is it, Lilya?

Lilya looks up, her face suddenly alive with passion.

LILYA

Mama, I went to the flying club
today. I want to join. I know I can
do it. I just need your permission.

Anna's face falls. The memory of her husband's arrest still haunts her, and the thought of losing her daughter to something as dangerous as flying terrifies her.

ANNA

Lilya, it's too dangerous. You're
still so young, and it's not
something a girl should be doing.

Lilya leans forward, her eyes pleading.

LILYA

But Mama, I've always dreamed of
flying! I've read everything about
it. I know it's dangerous, but it's
what I want more than anything.
Please, just give me a chance.

Anna studies her daughter's face, seeing the fire in her eyes that reminds her so much of Vladimir. She closes her eyes for a moment, battling her fears. Finally, she nods, though her expression is pained.

ANNA

Alright. If it's what you truly
want, I won't stand in your way.
But you must promise me... promise
me you'll be careful.

Lilya's face breaks into a wide smile, and she jumps up to hug her mother.

LILYA

I promise, Mama! I'll make you
proud!

Anna holds her daughter tightly, tears welling up in her eyes.

INT. FLASHBACK - MOSCOW APARTMENT - NIGHT

A flashback scene shortly after the arrest of Lilya's father. The apartment is dim, the weight of his absence is palpable.

Young LILYA (8) sits at the dinner table with her mother, ANNA, who is staring blankly at her plate. The silence is suffocating.

LILYA

When is Papa coming home?

Anna's eyes fill with tears. She wipes them away quickly her mouth tensing.

ANNA

Your father... won't be coming
back.

Lilya's grips her spoon tightly, a look of confusion on her face. Anna reaches out and gently touches her hand.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You have to be careful, Lilya.
Don't stand out. Don't make
waves... I can't lose you too.

Lilya looks away, her face hardening with resolve.

LILYA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Later, Lilya sits by the window, staring at a picture of her father. She clutches it tightly, her fingers trembling.

LILYA
(softly to herself)
I won't be scared like Mama.

She places the photo in her book margin the page with the plane in mid flight as she looks up to the sky.

BACK TO PRESENT - FLYING CLUB - DAY

The next day, Lilya returns to the flying club. She approaches the Instructor once more, her face determined.

LILYA (CONT'D)
I'm back, and I'm ready to learn.

The Instructor raises an eyebrow, surprised by her persistence. He crosses his arms, contemplating her for a moment before nodding.

INSTRUCTOR
Alright. We'll see what you're made of. But don't think for a second that I'll go easy on you.

Lilya nods and follows him.

AIRPLANE HANGAR- DAY

Inside a Soviet I-16 is propped against chock blocks, the drab olive green plane adorned with a large red star on the tail and matching stars behind the propeller painted in White and Red. The Instructor hands her a helmet and goggles, his expression still doubtful.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Get in the cockpit. I'll talk you through the basics.

Lilya nods eagerly and climbs into the cockpit, her hands trembling slightly as she grips the controls for the first time. The plane feels both enormous and exhilarating.

The Instructor guides her through the controls, pointing out the instruments, the throttle, the ailerons, and the rudder pedals. Lilya listens intently, soaking in every word.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Flying isn't just about the mechanics. You have to feel the plane, understand it. It's an extension of yourself. Now, let's see if you've got what it takes.

He starts the engine, and the biplane's propeller roars to life. Lilya's heart races as the plane begins to taxi down the runway.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
(shouts over engine noise)
Keep it steady! Hands on the yoke,
feet on the pedals!

Lilya follows his instructions, though her movements are stiff and uncertain. The plane wobbles as it picks up speed, and for a moment, she panics, thinking she might lose control.

INSTRUCTOR (V.O) (CONT'D)
...Feel the plane, understand it.

She takes a deep breath, relaxing her grip slightly, and the plane begins to stabilize. As it lifts off the ground, Lilya's fear is replaced by a rush of exhilaration. The world below her shrinks, and for the first time, she feels truly free.

LILYA (V.O.)
I'm flying... I'm really flying...

The Instructor watches her closely, his eyes narrowing as he assesses her performance.

INSTRUCTOR
Don't get cocky! Keep your eyes on
the horizon!

Lilya quickly corrects her posture, focusing on the horizon as instructed. She flies in a straight line, the thrill of being in the air coursing through her veins.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Alright, let's see you land this
thing. Bring it down nice and easy.

Lilya's excitement turns to anxiety as she realizes she has to land the plane. She carefully follows the Instructor's directions, but her nerves get the better of her, and the plane comes in too fast, bouncing awkwardly on the runway before skidding to a stop.

The Instructor winces but doesn't say anything immediately. Lilya sits in the cockpit, her heart pounding and her hands trembling.

LILYA
I... I'm sorry. I'll do better next
time.

The Instructor studies her for a long moment before nodding.

INSTRUCTOR

You've got potential, but you've got a lot to learn. We'll work on it.

Lilya nods, a mix of relief and determination on her face. She knows she has a long way to go, but she's ready to put in the work. Lilya heads to the front gate.

INT. MOSCOW FLIGHT CLUB - ADMIN OFFICE - DAY

A cramped room, cigarette haze hanging low. Maps of the USSR and aerodromes cover the walls; a samovar hisses in the corner. Faded photos of club pilots in leather helmets.

MARINA RASKOVA (early 30s), immaculate and composed, studies a wall map. MAJOR GRIGOROV (mid-50s), battle-hardened and blunt, flips through a thin stack of personnel files.

GRIGOROV

Aeroclub rosters, parachute schools, glider lists, even the Komsomol's "future flyers." You've cleaned out every desk in Moscow.

RASKOVA

Not cleaned out, sorted. I want pilots, navigators, mechanics. Real ones. We'll need all three to build a regiment that fights, not smiles for Pravda.

She pins colored tacks between MOSCOW and ENGELS.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)

Conversion at Engels. Ground school first—engines, instruments, dead reckoning and radio. Gunnery and formation next. Then the Yak—if we can get enough of them.

GRIGOROV

"If." Your favorite aircraft lately is the conditional. We're short on Yak-1s, Yak-7s are spoken for, and Saratov's starving for aluminum. What do you plan to fly—good intentions?

RASKOVA

U-2s for primary. Po-2s for night-familiarization. When they're ready, we move them to Yaks. If we must, MiG-3s for high cover, but they're temperamental and hate low altitude. I want machines that forgive a young pilot's hands.

GRIGOROV

"Young" is generous. Some of these are eighteen. Some stitched uniforms last month. Half don't meet the height table. Boots alone will swallow them.

RASKOVA

Then we cut boots and re-stitch. Harnesses fit bodies, not the other way around. I want billets near the line, a separate barracks, baths that aren't a circus, and medical staff that understands women aren't "delicate instruments" but pilots.

GRIGOROV

You're asking for a regiment and a revolution.

RASKOVA

No. I'm asking for what wins wars: discipline, fuel, ammunition, and the right people.

She lays out three index cards like chess pieces.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)

Three units. Fighter-586th-day fighters. A bomber regiment-587th. A night harassment regiment-588th. The press will love them. Command will point at them. They'll earn their place like everyone else-by coming home on three wheels with empty guns and full logbooks.

GRIGOROV

Why this, Marina? You could warm an office in Kuibyshev and lick stamps with your medals. The state already has its icon.

RASKOVA

Icons don't shoot back. Pilots do. We've got women who've flown since school—OSOAVIAKHIM clubs, gliders on frozen fields, parachute towers taller than their flats. They've been told to "wait their turn." The Germans aren't waiting. Neither am I.

GRIGOROV

You want me to sell this upstairs as morale. "Look, Comrade Commissar—women with guns."

RASKOVA

Sell them the truth. Morale, yes. Propaganda, fine. But they'll get sorties flown, convoys covered, bridges saved. And tell them I'll sign my name to every casualty list that comes back—so they know I mean it.

He flips to a slim file: a fierce-eyed girl in a passport photo.

GRIGOROV

Recruitment pool. Where?

RASKOVA

Everywhere. Flight Clubs in Moscow, Saratov, Gorky. Factory brigades with glider badges. University aero-sections. Parachutists who can land on a postage stamp in a crosswind. I'll send letters under my signature. They'll come.

GRIGOROV

How long to turn seamstresses and students into fighter pilots?

RASKOVA

Twelve weeks for the best to convert from U-2s to Yaks—if we don't waste a day and they arrive with logbooks. Longer for bomber crews—navigators who can plot in the dark and remember the Volga by smell. Night raiders—eight to ten weeks to be effective if they fly every night. We can cut that if you cut the inspection speeches.

GRIGOROV
I'll try to keep my poetry to
myself.

A YOUNG SECRETARY pokes his head in.

SECRETARY
Comrades... there's a situation at
the gate.

INT. MOSCOW FLIGHT CLUB - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They stride past framed diplomas. An engine test thrums
somewhere on the field.

GRIGOROV (LOW)
If we do this, you'll have enemies.
The kind who smile in meetings and
sharpen knives after lights-out.

RASKOVA (LOW)
Then they can meet me in daylight.
I fight better there.

EXT. MOSCOW AEROKLUB - MAIN GATE - CONTINUOUS

Through the gate: boys in threadbare coats jostle a smaller
figure in a wool cowl. A hangar door clatters. A Yak's prop
turns lazily on a stand. The small figure shoves back-fast,
fearless. A punch lands. The scuffle sharpens.

GRIGOROV
Your recruitment speech writes
itself.

Raskova's eyes take in the stance, the refusal to give
ground.

RASKOVA
Not a speech. A unit.

She unbuttons her flight jacket and steps into the light.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
You wanted proof they're out there,
Major. Keep your eyes open.

Grigorov hesitates, then follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLYING CLUB GATE - CONCURRENT

As Lilya walks out the gate of the club, 3 older boys 16 to 17 are waiting there and begin teasing her.

BOY 1
Hey boys, look at this, she thinks
she can fly with us.

All the boys point and laugh at her.

LILYA
Just try to keep up!

BOY 2 pushes her and she punches him in the face. A fight ensues and the boys overpower her when an older woman in a flight jacket walks by and breaks it up. She reaches out her hand and helps pick Lilya up.

WOMAN
You are going to have to toughen up
cause boys won't stop messing with
you if you want to fly.

LILYA
It's okay I will just outfly them
soon.

As she wipes blood of her lip and wipes her hands on her pants. The woman takes off her jacket and hands it to Lilya.

WOMAN
Take this, maybe I will see you up
there one day.

Lilya stands with shocked look on her face and as the woman walks away she calls out.

LILYA
Tha..tha. Thank you!

Lilya looks down at the chest as she puts on the jacket and reads the name "RASKOVA".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./INT. MONTAGE - SERIES OF SHOTS - VARIOUS

A montage, shows Lilya's journey:

Struggling with her landings, the plane bouncing on the runway. The trees around the airfield changing color as the grass slowly dies and turns brown.

Sweating in the cockpit, her hands gripping the controls too tightly as she tries to master turns and maneuvers. Snow beginning to fall.

Slowly improving, her landings becoming smoother, her control more precise even when the runway is beginning to ice over

The Instructor CAPTAIN MIKHAIL ORLOV (50s), stocky, sharp-eyed, with a cigarette permanently hanging from his lip. A stern expression gradually softening as he sees her progress. The colorful spring flowers peaking through the grass while a light rain falls.

FLYING CLUB - DAY

Lilya executes a perfect landing. The biplane touches down smoothly, rolling to a stop with a grace that surprises even her.

The other young pilots, mostly boys, watch from a distance, some with grudging admiration, others with thinly veiled envy. Lilya climbs out of the cockpit, her face flushed with pride but not arrogance. She's earned this moment, and she knows it.

The Instructor approaches her, a rare smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

MIKHAIL ORLOV
Good job, Litvyak. You're ready for
more advanced training.

Lilya beams with pride.

INT. FLYING CLUB HANGAR - DAY

MIKHAIL ORLOV (CONT'D)
Litvyak, these past two years you
have proven yourself to be one of
the best pilots here. We need more
instructors, and I think you're
ready to take on that
responsibility.

Lilya is taken aback, the shock and excitement evident on her face.

LILYA
Me? An instructor?

The Instructor nods, his expression serious.

MIKHAIL ORLOV

It's not going to be easy. You'll be responsible for training new recruits, making sure they're ready for whatever comes their way. But I think you can handle it.

Lilya's face lights up with a mix of pride and determination.

LILYA

I'll do my best. I won't let you down.

MIKHAIL ORLOV

Umm, and Lilya, well, Happy Birthday.

EXT. FLYING CLUB - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Lilya, is instructing a group of young male pilots and one female. Mikhail Orlov watches from a distance. KATYA BUDANOVA 19 and ALEKSEI SALOMETAN (early 20s), are glancing in her direction. He's tall and broad-shouldered, with a quiet intensity that sets him apart from the others. Their eyes meet for a brief moment before he looks away, busying himself with his own gear.

Lilya watches closely as the planes circle around, her knuckles white on the edge of the clipboard she holds. She whispers under her breath, barely audible.

LILYA

(to herself)

I won't let anyone get hurt...

Mikhail Orlov approaches, noticing her tense stance.

MIKHAIL ORLOV

You can't keep them safe forever, Litvyak.

Lilya doesn't look away from the sky.

LILYA

(Softly to herself)

No, but I can try.

EXT. FLYING CLUB - DAY

Lilya is overseeing a training exercise when a military vehicle pulls up to the airfield. A tall, imposing woman in a crisp military uniform steps out-Raskova.

Lilya recognizes her immediately and feels a surge of excitement and nervousness.

Raskova approaches Lilya, her eyes sharp and assessing.

RASKOVA
Do you remember me?

Lilya stands at attention, her heart pounding.

LILYA
Yes, comrade.

Raskova looks her up and down, her expression unreadable.

RASKOVA
I've heard good things about you.
Your instructors speak highly of
your skills and leadership. I'm
here to offer you an opportunity,
an opportunity to join the 586th
Fighter Regiment.

Lilya's eyes widen in surprise and excitement.

LILYA
The 586th? But... I'm still just an
instructor. I haven't even seen
combat.

Raskova's expression softens slightly, a hint of a smile
playing on her lips.

RASKOVA
You have the potential, Litvyak.
And we need pilots like you. The
war is escalating, and we need
every capable pilot we can get.
This is your chance to make a real
difference.

Lilya's chest swells with pride and determination.

LILYA
I accept. I'll do whatever it
takes.

Raskova nods, satisfied with her answer.

RASKOVA
(grimly)
Good. But know this, Litvyak war is
not like training. It's brutal,
unforgiving.
(MORE)

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
You'll see things that will change
you forever. But if you're willing
go talk to Grigorov.

Lilya nods, her face set in determination.

LILYA
I'm ready.

RASKOVA
Good, you once told me you were
going to outfly the boys. Now it
is time to prove it.

LILYA
You remembered.

INT. FLYING CLUB - OFFICE - DAY

The office is dim, lit by a single desk lamp. Maps and flight charts litter the walls. Grigorov, leans against the edge of the desk, arms crossed. He eyes Lilya, who stands straight but nervous in front of him.

GRIGOROV
So. Raskova wants you for her I
should've known she'd come sniffing
around. 586th.

LILYA
Yes, Comrade Major. I... I want to
go.

Grigorov lets the silence stretch, studying her.

GRIGOROV
I've watched you since the first
day you set foot here. A girl too
stubborn to quit, even when the
stick nearly broke her arms.

Lilya's lips curve in the faintest smile.

LILYA
I had to prove I belonged.

GRIGOROV
You did. To me, at least. But
Raskova's unit... that's no
classroom, no training field. War
doesn't forgive. It takes. And it
won't care that you're the best
flyer in this club.

Lilya steps forward, her voice steady.

LILYA

I know the risks. But I can't stay
here while others fight.
If I can help, if I can protect
even one life... then it's worth it.

Grigorov exhales slowly, his jaw tightening.

GRIGOROV

You sound like your father when you
talk like that.
He had the same fire. The same damn
stubbornness.

Lilya bows her head at the mention, her eyes moist but
unflinching.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)

Yes, I knew him, not well but I
remember his fortitude even in the
end.

LILYA

Then let me honor him. Let me
fight.

Grigorov studies her for a long beat, then places a heavy
hand on her shoulder. His tone softens.

GRIGOROV

You've grown, Lilya. More than you
know. If you go with Raskova,
you'll see things no one should.
But if this is the path you choose...
I'll not stand in your way.

Lilya nods, swallowing hard.

LILYA

Thank you, Comrade Major. I won't
let you down.

GRIGOROV

Don't prove me right or wrong.
Just... come back alive. That's all I
ask.

Lilya salutes. Grigorov returns it slowly, almost
reluctantly. As she turns to leave, his voice rumbles after
her.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)
And Litvyak... make them remember
your name.

Lilya pauses at the door, a small but fierce smile on her
lips, before stepping out.

INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - NIGHT

LILYA
Mama... We need to talk.

Anna sets her cup down with a trembling hands, and grasps
Lilya in her own.

ANNA
What is it, my dear? You're scaring
me.

LILYA
I've received my orders, Mama. The
586th... We're being sent to the
fight.

The color drains from Anna's face, her breath catching in her
throat. She pulls her hand away, her eyes wide with fear and
disbelief.

ANNA
No... No, Lily, they can't do this.
It's too dangerous. They can't send
you there. You're all I have left.

Lilya tries to stay composed.

LILYA
(tearfully)
Mama, I know it's dangerous, but I
have to go. It's my duty. I've
trained for this. I'm ready.

Anna stands abruptly, her chair scraping against the floor.
Her hands grip the edge of the table as if trying to prevent
herself from falling.

ANNA
Duty? To what, Lilya? To a country
that took your father away? To the
same government that came in the
dead of night, dragged him from
this home, and labeled him a
traitor without a shred of proof?

Lilya opens and then closes her mouth stunned by her mother's words.

ANNA (CONT'D)

They stole him from us, Lilya! Your father, my Vladimir, he was a good man, a loyal man. He loved his country, just like you do. And how did they repay him? They ripped him from his family, accused him of crimes he didn't commit, and took him away in the middle of the night like a common criminal. And what did we get in return? Nothing. Not even the decency of a letter telling us where he was sent, or if he was still alive. Just silence.

Lilya bows her head, unable to look her mother in the eyes.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You don't owe them anything, Lilya. They've taken enough from this family! How can you give them the one thing I have left? They don't deserve your loyalty, not after what they've done to us. Not after what they did to your father! Don't you see? You're walking into the same fate, the same trap. And once they've used you up, they'll cast you aside, just like they did him.

Lilya stands, tears brimming in her eyes, but her resolve is unwavering. She steps closer to her mother, taking her hands and holding them tightly.

LILYA

Mama, I know what they did to Papa was wrong. I know it broke your heart, and mine too. But this... this is different. I'm not fighting for them, for the ones who took him away. I'm fighting for the people who have no one else to protect them. For the families who are suffering, like we did. I'm fighting so that others won't have to lose their fathers, their daughters. I can't just stand by and do nothing. I have to make sure that all of this, everything we've lost, means something.

Anna shakes her head, the tears streaming down her face.

ANNA

But you're my daughter, Lilya. I
can't lose you too. Not to them,
not to this war. You're all I have
left.

Lilya pulls her mother into a tight embrace, her own tears
falling freely now.

LILYA

You won't lose me, Mama. I promise
I'll come back. I have to do this,
but I'll come back to you. I swear
it.

Anna clings to Lilya, her sobs quieting but her voice still
raw.

LILYA (CONT'D)

I'll be careful Mama. But I have to
do this. For Papa, for you, and for
all the others who need me to be
strong.

Anna looks into Lilya's eyes, searching for any sign that she
might reconsider, but she sees only the steely resolve that
she knows so well.

ANNA

Just... come back to me, Lily.
Please.

Lilya nods, as she releases her mother's hands and hugs her
tight. She turns and leaves the apartment, the door closing
softly behind her, Anna standing alone in the dimly lit room.
She moves slowly to the window, her hands trembling as she
stares out into the night. The camera lingers on Anna as she
stands by the window, a solitary figure in the darkness
looking towards the sky.

INT. MILITARY BASE - DAY

SUPER OVER: "586th Fighter Regiment, (May 5, 1942)"

The sun hangs low in the sky as the pilots of the 586th
Fighter Regiment gather in the briefing room. The walls are
lined with maps, photographs, and tactical diagrams. The
atmosphere is tense, filled with the murmur of nervous
chatter and the clinking of gear being adjusted.

Marina Raskova stands at the front, commanding attention with her presence. She surveys the room, her eyes resting momentarily on each pilot. The group is diverse, with women from different regions and backgrounds, all united by the uniform they wear and the mission ahead.

RASKOVA

Tomorrow, we fly to defend Satova.
The Luftwaffe is planning a massive
assault, and our job is to ensure
they don't succeed. For most of you
this is your first combat mission.

The room is silent, the gravity of the situation weighing heavily on everyone. Raskova's gaze shifts to Lilya, who stands near the back, her posture rigid with focus.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)

Litvyak, you'll be flying with
Squadron Two. Remember, this isn't
just about you. This is about
protecting your comrades and your
country.

Lilya nods, swallowing the nervous lump in her throat.

LILYA

Yes, Comrade Raskova.

As the briefing concludes, the pilots disperse, each lost in their own thoughts. Lilya lingers by the map, tracing the flight path with her finger. A soft voice interrupts her thoughts.

KATYA

You know, staring at that map won't
make the mission any easier.

Lilya turns to see KATYA, smiling warmly. Lilya's shoulders rise as she returns the smile.

LILYA

I know... I just want to be
prepared. This is it, Katya. Our
first real mission. Friends and no
longer just the teacher and the
student.

Katya giggles, her expression softening.

KATYA

We'll be fine. We've trained for
this.

(MORE)

KATYA (CONT'D)
 You taught me everything I need to
 know. Just remember, you're not
 alone up there.

Lilya nods, grateful for Katya's support. The two women share a brief hug before heading to the barracks.

BARRACKS - NIGHT

The barracks are dimly lit, the low hum of conversation filling the air. The women of the 586th are busy with last-minute preparations—some writing letters, others cleaning their weapons or adjusting their flight suits. The tension is palpable, but there is also a sense of camaraderie that binds them together.

Lilya sits on her bunk, carefully inspecting her helmet and goggles.

ALEKSEI
 Instructor Lityvak...I
 mean...comrade.

Aleskie yells as he jogs briskly towards them.

ALEKSEI (CONT'D)
 I am flying with the male squadron
 in the neighboring camp. Are you
 flying out with us tomorrow?

LILYA
 Don't you mean you are flying out
 with us? And you can call me Lilya
 by the way.

Lilya lowers her head and looks up from between her eyelids a slight smile caressing her cheeks.

ALEKSEI
 Of course, with you comra...Lilya

He shuffles awkwardly and looks away when saying her name.

ALESKEI
 Best of luck I better go hit the
 bunk.

Aleskie runs off quickly.

Katya, ever observant, notices the exchange and nudges Lilya with a smirk.

KATYA

Seems like someone's caught the eye
of our dear Comrade Voronin. Or is
it Aleskie? Call me Lilya.

Lilya flushes slightly, shaking her head.

LILYA

It's nothing. We're just... focus
on the mission.

Katya raises an eyebrow, clearly unconvinced.

KATYA

Sure, sure. Just focus on the
mission. Well, if you ask me, a
little distraction might not be
such a bad thing.

Lilya gives her a playful shove, but the truth is, she's
noticed Aleksei more too.

BUNKS - NIGHT

Lilya lies awake, staring at the ceiling, her mind racing
with anticipation and fear. She reaches under her pillow and
pulls out a small photograph of her father, the edges worn
from years of handling.

LILYA (O.S.)

(whispering)

Papa, if you can hear me... watch
over us tomorrow. Give us the
strength to do what needs to be
done.

She closes her eyes, clutching the photo to her chest, and
finally drifts off to sleep.

EXT. MILITARY BASE - DAWN

The base is shrouded in the early morning mist, the sky
tinged with the first light of dawn. The pilots of the 586th
move with purpose, their breath visible in the cold air. The
time has come.

Lilya suits up in her flight gear, her hands steady despite
the adrenaline coursing through her veins. She glances around
at her fellow pilots, finding comfort in their shared
resolve. They're all in this together.

As she walks toward her aircraft, she notices Aleksei standing by his plane, checking the engine. He looks up as she approaches, offering her a nod of acknowledgment.

ALEKSEI

Lilya. Are you ready for this?

Lilya nods, her expression serious.

LILYA

I am. And you?

Aleksei gives a slight smile, his eyes betraying a hint of admiration.

ALEKSEI

You'll do fine. Just remember your training and what you taught us... to trust our instincts.

There's a brief, unspoken connection between them, a mutual respect and understanding of the dangers they're about to face..

LILYA

Thank you, Aleskie. You too.

With that, they part ways, each heading to their respective planes.

RUNWAY - DAY

The planes of the 586th are lined up, a silent army of sleek, deadly machines glinting under the midday sun. The engines rumbling to life the ground beneath them trembling under the power building inside, their growing roar echoing across the airfield. The propellers spinning faster, catching the light with each rotation. By the control tower, Raskova stands, her hands clasped behind her back. Her eyes are fixed on the line of aircraft, a mix of pride and unease etched across her face. Lilya approaches her plane. She pauses for a moment, standing in its shadow. Slowly, she runs her hand along its fuselage, from the nose to the tail, her touch deliberate and reverent. Lilya's hands gliding across the cold metal, tracing the rivets and seams. Her fingers linger at the edge of the cockpit.

Raskova, her eyes narrowing as the pilots, one by one, climb into their cockpits. A final look of determination crosses her face.

Lilya climbs into the cockpit of her Yak-1, the familiar controls beneath her hands a source of comfort. She takes a deep breath, steadying herself for what's to come.

The radio crackles to life, Raskova's voice coming through with calm authority.

RASKOVA (O.S.)
Squadron Two, you are clear for
takeoff. Godspeed, comrades.

Lilya tightens her grip on the yoke, and she pushes the throttle forward. The plane surges down the runway, the force pressing her back into her seat. The ground falls away beneath her as she climbs into the sky, joining the formation of fighters heading toward Stalingrad.

EXT. SKIES OVER SARATOV - DAY

The ammunition depot looms below, a sprawling landscape of factories, buildings, and rivers. The sky above is clear, but the distant drone of enemy aircraft signals the approaching storm.

Lilya's squadron flies in tight formation, each pilot scanning the horizon for any sign of the Luftwaffe. The tension is suffocating, every second ticking by in agonizing anticipation.

Suddenly, the radio crackles with the voice of the squadron leader.

SQUADRON LEADER (O.S.)
Enemy fighters spotted, two
o'clock! Prepare for engagement!

Lilya's heart leaps into her throat as she spots the incoming formation of German Messerschmitts, their sleek forms cutting through the sky like daggers. The battle is about to begin.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The sky erupts into chaos as the two forces collide. Planes dive, twist, and turn in a deadly dance, machine guns blazing. The roar of engines and the crackle of gunfire fill the air, drowning out everything else.

RETURN TO SCENE

Lilya's maneuvers her plane with precision, dodging enemy fire and lining up her shots. Her first burst of gunfire misses, but she quickly adjusts, her second volley finding its mark. A German fighter spirals out of control, smoke trailing from its engine.

LILYA (O.S.)
Focus. Stay focused.

The radio is alive with chatter, the voices of her comrades mixed with static and the sounds of battle.

KATYA (O.S.)
Litvyak, your six! There's one on
your tail!

Lilya glances back, her breath catching as she sees a Messerschmitt closing in on her. She yanks the yoke to the right, narrowly avoiding a burst of gunfire. The enemy pilot stays on her, determined to take her down.

LILYA (O.S.)
Come on, come on...

TRACKING PLANE

The battle rages around Lilya and her squadron. Planes zoom past her as she locks in on a German Messerschmitt, but the cockpit starts to feel smaller as her thoughts close in. Her hands tighten on the yoke, her breath short.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't make waves. Don't stand out.
I can't lose you too...

She shakes her head, trying to focus. Her vision blurs as the memory of her father flashes before her eyes.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't let them take me. Don't let
them take anyone else...

A bullet rips past her wing, jolting her back into reality. Aleskies VOICE breaks through the static on the radio.

ALEKSEI (O.S.)
Litvyak! Focus! Behind you, I'm
coming around to assist.

Lilya's eyes snap open. Her hands loosen just slightly on the yoke as she dodges an incoming attack, breathing heavily.

LILYA (O.S.)
(determined now)
No one else. No one else is getting
taken.

She dives back into the fray, her face set with fierce determination.

She pushes her plane into a steep dive, the ground rushing up toward her at an alarming speed. The German pilot follows, trying to keep up with her aggressive maneuvering.

At the last possible second, Lilya pulls up sharply, the force of the Gs nearly blacking her out. The enemy plane, unable to react in time, overshoots her and zooms past, exposing its vulnerable tail.

Lilya seizes the opportunity, pulling the trigger and sending a stream of bullets into the Messerschmitt. The enemy plane bursts into flames, spiraling downwards before crashing into the city below.

ALEKSEI (O.S.)

Nice shooting, Litvyak! That was close.

Lilya takes a deep breath but quickly refocuses on the battle raging around her. She glances to her right and sees Aleksei's plane flying alongside hers. He flashes a brief smile and salute.

LILYA (O.S.)

Thanks, Aleskie. Let's keep it up.

They fly back into the fray, working in tandem to take down enemy fighters. Despite the chaos, their planes move almost in sync, covering each other's backs as they weave through the sky.

As the battle intensifies, Lilya finds herself locked in her first real one-on-one dogfight with a particularly skilled German pilot. The two planes twist and turn, each trying to outmaneuver the other. It's a deadly game of cat and mouse, with neither pilot willing to give an inch. The German plane clearly faster than her old Yak-1

Lilya's focus narrows to the plane in front of her, her world reduced to the cockpit and the enemy in her sights. She pushes the Yak-1 to its limits, the engine roaring in protest as she forces it into sharp turns and dives.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I won't lose. Not today.

The German pilot tries to shake her off with a series of evasive maneuvers, but Lilya stays on his tail, matching him move for move. Even as she can hear her plane creaking with the stress.

With one final, precise burst of gunfire, Lilya hits her mark. The enemy plane shudders, then bursts into black smoke. Lilya watches as it spirals downward, her face steady but her eyes holding back tears

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Got you.

The battle continues to rage around her. She scans the sky, searching for any sign of her comrades.

KATYA (O.S.)
Litvyak, we're pushing them back!
Just a little more!

Lilya's sits up straighter. She can see the tide turning, the Luftwaffe is beginning to retreat, their formation breaking apart under the relentless assault of the Soviet pilots.

As the remaining enemy planes flee, the radio crackles with the voices of the squadron, relief and exhaustion evident in their tones.

SQUADRON LEADER (O.S.)
Good work, everyone. Let's regroup
and head back to base.

Lilya takes a deep breath, her body finally relaxing as the adrenaline begins to wear off. She glances to her right and sees Aleksei's plane once again flying beside hers. He gives her a nod, she smiles and nods back.

They fall into formation with the rest of the squadron, the planes flying in a tight, disciplined line as they make their way back to base. The once chaotic sky is now calm, the battle over but its echoes still lingering in their minds.

MILITARY BASE - LATER

The planes touch down on the runway, one by one, the pilots expertly guiding their aircraft to a stop. As the engines die down, a heavy silence falls over the airfield, matching the darkness creeping in with sunset.

Lilya climbs out of her cockpit, her legs feeling unsteady as she touches the ground. She removes her helmet, her blonde hair falling messily around her face. She's drenched in sweat, her body exhausted, but she bounces as if full of energy she can't release.

Katya is the first to greet her, pulling her into a tight hug.

KATYA
You did it, Lilya! We did it! Our
first mission, and we're still in
one piece!

Lilya laughs, the tension finally breaking as she returns the hug.

LILYA
Yeah, we did. I can't believe it's
over.

The other pilots gather around, congratulating each other, the relief and camaraderie palpable.

Aleksei approaches, his usually stoic face softened by a rare smile.

ALEKSEI
You were incredible out there,
Litvyak. I'd fly with you any day.

Lilya hand covers her heart briefly and she quickly drops it, but she keeps her expression neutral.

LILYA
You're not so bad yourself,
Voronin. Maybe next time, you can
try to keep up.

Aleksei chuckles, shaking his head in mock defeat.

ALEKSEI
I'll do my best. Just don't leave
me behind.

Their banter is light, and somewhat flirtatious to outsiders.

As the group begins to disperse, heading to the barracks to rest and recover, Lilya takes a moment to look back at the sky. The sun seems to set faster now emitting a deep red almost bloody reminder of the battle across the horizon.

Lilya turns and walks toward the barracks, her mind already shifting to what lies ahead. She's a pilot now—a true fighter—and she's ready to face whatever challenges come her way.

INT. COMMAND TENT - THE NEXT DAY

The pilots on base including Lilya, Katya, and Aleksie, gather inside the command tent. Raskova stands in front of a large map, detailing the day's mission. The air visibly foggy with the breath and heat emanating off all the bodies

RASKOVA
Today, we'll be intercepting a
German convoy attempting to break
through our defenses.
(MORE)

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
 Their objective is to supply their troops, but we will ensure that doesn't happen.

The group exchanges determined glances.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
 Squadron Two, led by Lityvak and Squad Four led by Salomaten, will be responsible for engaging the enemy fighters. Your mission is to clear the skies so the bombers can do their work.

Lilya snaps to attention and offers a salute. Aleksei follows her and also salutes.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
 Remember, the enemy is getting desperate. Expect fierce resistance. Stay sharp, trust your instincts, and watch each other's backs.

The pilots nod, their stances becoming more rigid as the briefing continues and fades away.

EXT. MILITARY BASE - AIRFIELD - LATER

Lilya is bending under her plane, double checking the aircraft and preparing for the mission.

MAJOR KARPIN, a robust but strong senior pilot in his later 40's with hints of grey along his temples, approaches. He's is moving briskly, his expression stern. Karpin is built like a brick house with broad shoulders a thin waist and legs that look like he has been flying longer than he has been exercising. He moves with in a few feet of Lilya unseen.

MAJOR KARPIN
 Attention!

Lilya almost hits her head moving from her crouched position to attention so quickly. She see the Major rank insignia and clumsily salutes.

MAJOR KARPIN (CONT'D)
 (Scoffingly)
 Lityvak, You're leading this mission? They're really putting a girl in charge?

Lilya stiffens, trying to keep her composure.

LILYA
I've earned my place here Comrade
Sir.

Karpin spits on the ground in front of her feet, leaning in slightly.

MAJOR KARPIN
You've earned nothing. You're here
because the higher-ups think it'll
be good for morale to see a woman
flying. Don't forget who really
keeps this squadron in the air.

Lilya's eyes narrow.

LILYA
I'm not here to boost anyone's
morale. I'm here to help win this
war.

Karpin glares at her, his voice lowering.

MAJOR KARPIN
Let's hope you don't get anyone
killed while you're at it.

He turns quickly and walks away, leaving Lilya fuming. She takes a deep breath, adjusting her helmet, and climbs into the cockpit, her face set in cold determination.

As she climbs into the cockpit, Aleksei arrives.

ALEKSEI
We've got this, Litvyak. Just stay
calm and trust your training. Don't
let the Major deter you. He is an
old brute but he means
well...Usually

Lilya nods, her focus unwavering anger still in her eyes.

LILYA
We'll make sure they don't get
through. I'll prove the old man is
wrong about me and all of us women.

With that, they part ways.

EXT. SKY - EASTERN FRONT - DAY

A sea of clouds drifts below as dozens of SOVIET FIGHTER
PLANES roar overhead.

The older Yak-1s of the 586th Women's Fighter Regiment fly in determined formation. Sleek MiG-3s glint nearby in the sun, flown by male pilots, cutting through the sky like knives.

WIDE ANGLE — The Soviet squadrons sweep across the sky in layered formation. Below, the vast expanse of the Eastern Front stretches—snow-covered trees, villages in ruin, rivers like silver veins.

Inside the cockpit of her Yak-1, Lilya, resolute and calm, scans the skies. Her white lily emblem painted just beneath the canopy glints in the sun. Next to her, Katya keeps a sharp eye on the flank. A tense silence. Then...

RASKOVA (O.S.)
(urgent)
Enemy fighters incoming! Break
formation and engage!

EXT. SKY — CONTINUOUS

Engines howl as the formations scatter. The Yak-1s break left, climbing into the sun. Lilya pushes her stick forward.

LILYA
Let's go, girls.

WIDE ANGLE — From above, GERMAN MESSERSCHMITT Bf 109s dive from the clouds in perfect formation, sunlight glinting off their black crosses. Their attack is swift—clean, professional, lethal.

EXT. SKY — DOGFIGHT — CONTINUOUS

The air erupts. Machine guns rip through the sky. Planes crisscross, some spinning out of control. Trails of smoke coil in the air like dark ribbons.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT — CONTINUOUS

She grits her teeth, banking hard into a slashing attack, a classic Soviet maneuver. Her target: a Messerschmitt veering into Katya's six.

LILYA
I've got him!

EXT. SKY — CONTINUOUS

Lilya's Yak-1 pulls into a shallow dive, lining up her shot.

INSERT - GUNSIGHT POV - The crosshairs align. She fires.

RAT-A-TAT-TAT! Bullets rip through the German plane's wing. The right flap tears away. The Messerschmitt spirals downward, smoke trailing, flames licking its side.

INT. ENEMY COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The GERMAN PILOT, eyes wide, tries to eject-too late. The fuselage explodes in a ball of fire.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Lilya banks to avoid debris.

KATYA (O.S.)
Nice shot, Litvyak!

Suddenly, BULLETS STRIKE past her canopy.

LILYA
I've got one on my tail!

She dives steep, hugging her control stick. The Yak-1 groans, metal trembling under G-force.

INT. ENEMY FIGHTER - CONTINUOUS

The pursuing German pilot leans in, focused. His finger squeezes the trigger.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Lilya rolls sharply, then pulls up into a looping vertical climb, textbook yo-yo maneuver. The German stays on her. Too close.

KATYA (O.S.)
I see him! Coming in high!

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Katya's Yak-1 dives from above like a raptor. Her burst of fire rakes across the enemy's wings.

INT. ENEMY COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The German jerks the stick, caught off-guard. Smoke pours into the cockpit.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Lilya pulls a tight turn and loops behind him. She fires. Her bullets stitch across the Messerschmitt's spine.

BOOM. The plane explodes, engulfed in flame.

LILYA (O.S.)
Thanks, Katya. Let's finish this.

They move together now, slicing through the chaos. More German planes peel off-panicked, disoriented. The Soviets regroup, attacking in pairs, textbook doctrine.

THE TIDE SHIFTS. FLAMES TRAIL THROUGH THE SKY. PARACHUTES BLOOM IN THE DISTANCE.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Breathing hard, she wipes sweat from her brow with her sleeve. The skies begin to clear. She looks right..

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

A squadron of MiG-3s, led by Aleksie, swings into view. His plane dips a wing in salute as they slide into formation beside the women.

LILYA (O.S.)
Good work, everyone. Let's regroup
and head back to base.

The last of the smoke trails fade behind them.

WIDE SHOT - SKYLINE

The battered Soviet squadron reforms in loose formation. Below them, the frozen front sprawls, silent, scarred.

Their engines hum low. The sky is still.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. MILITARY BASE - HANGAR - DUSK

The planes touch down one by one, the pilots climbing out of their cockpits with loud breaths of exhaustion and relief. Lilya removes her helmet, her hair sticking to her forehead with sweat. Katya rushes over, her face alight with excitement.

KATYA
(excited)
Litvyak! You were amazing out there!

Lilya smiles, but her mouth quickly turns to a grimace as she see Major Korpin headed her way with Aleskei trailing close behind.

LILYA
(Loudly)
We all were. We did what we had to do men and women!

Major Korpin arrives and this time no call to attention as Likya and Katya are already starting their salutes.

LILYA (CONT'D)

We're all in this together. Right Major, Comrade, Sir?

Major Korpin begrudgingly returns the salute.

MAJOR KARPIN
(Mockingly)
Well surprisingly you survived, so there's that.

He doesn't stop and spits on the ground as he walks past them.

Aleksei mouths the words great job silently and just shrugs his shoulders as he follows behind.

AS the Major and Aleksei fade from view Raskove arrives in front of Lilya.

RASKOVA
Well done, Litvyak. You've proven yourself today. But remember, the war is far from over. Keep that fire, and it will serve you well.

Lilya nods, and salutes.

LILYA
Yes Comrade Ma'am

EXT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

The base is cloaked in the quiet stillness of night, with only the distant hum of machinery breaking the silence. Lilya stands alone on the tarmac, gazing up at the starry sky.

Aleksei approaches from the shadows, his footsteps soft on the concrete. He sees the pensive look on Lilya's face and hesitates before speaking.

ALEKSEI
Litvy...Lilya, You were incredible
the other day. But I can see
something is weighing on you.

Lilya doesn't immediately respond, her eyes still fixed on the stars. Finally, she sighs, her voice a mixture of determination and unease.

LILYA
This was different, Aleksei. I've
trained for this, but nothing can
truly prepare you for the reality
of war. For what we have to do.

Aleksei takes a deep breath.

ALEKSEI
It's not easy, and it never will
be. But we're fighting for
something greater than ourselves.
And you, Lily. You've got the heart
to make a real difference.

Lilya finally turns to him, tears wet her face but a small smile breaks through.

LILYA
Lily, no one has called me that
since my Father was taken..

Her voice breaks.

LILYA (CONT'D)
And I know that what you said is
true. But I'm starting to realize
how much I'm willing to sacrifice.
And that terrifies me.
(MORE)

LILYA (CONT'D)
 The more we fight, the more I feel
 myself changing, Am I becoming
 someone I won't entirely recognize.

Aleksei reaches out, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

ALEKSEI
 That change... it's what keeps you
 going. It's what will make you
 stronger when things get tougher.
 But don't lose sight of who you
 are, Litvyak. Remember why you're
 here.

Lilya crosses her arm in front of her chest and places her hand on his. She takes a deep breath and wipes her tears away on her own hand her hair brushing against his fingertips. Aleksei squeezes her hand gently and as he moves his face towards her he pulls his hand away and walks to her other side looking up the stars himself. Aleksei walks away, Lilya once again alone. She watches him disappear into the night as a teeth showing smile shows on her face in the light of the stars.

MILITARY BASE - BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

RASKOVA
 Ladies, we've been given new
 orders. Command is sending some of
 you to the front lines. You'll be
 supporting the ground troops in one
 of the most heavily contested
 areas, Stalingrad. This is going to
 be the most intense combat you have
 faced.

The room falls into a heavy silence. Lilya exchanges a look with Katya, seeing the fear and determination in her friend's eyes.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
 This mission is critical to the war
 effort. Failure is not an option.
 You've all trained for this, and I
 have no doubt you'll perform with
 the same courage and skill you've
 shown before. Lityvak and Budanova
 be ready to ship out at 0800.

Lilya takes a deep breath and lets out a war cry. The other females follow suit and the room is filled with the yells of the pilots.

EXT. MILITARY BASE - RUNWAY - NIGHT

As they prepare for tomorrow Katya approaches Lilya, her usual playful demeanor replaced by a rare serious look on her face.

KATYA

Lilya, I know we've been through a lot, but this... this feels different. We're really heading into the fire now.

Lilya nods, her face set with determination.

LILYA

I know. But we've got each other. That's what matters.

Katya smiles, though it doesn't reach her eyes.

KATYA

Just promise me we'll come back, okay? We've been lucky so far, but...

Lilya interrupts, her voice firm.

LILYA

We will come back, Katya. We have to.

They share a brief yet deep hug. Katya steps back, giving Lilya a look that says everything they're both too scared to put into words.

BARRACKS - LATER

All the other pilots are sleeping their bodies and minds worn out from the day's news. Lilya lies in her bunk, staring at the ceiling.

She reaches under her pillow and pulls out her father's photograph, holding it close as she whispers a promise to herself.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'll keep fighting, Papa. For you, for Katya, for everyone who's counting on me. And for Aleksei.

As sleep finally takes her, Lilya's face softens, the weight of the day lifting from her shoulders her body slumps into the cot.

ACT 2

EXT. SKIES OVER STALINGRAD - DAY

The city burns below. Smoke coils into the sky, mingling with clouds as the SOVIET AIR FORCE surges forward into battle. Lilya leads through the chaos, her Yak-1 slicing through the air with precision.

Her face is set-focused, unblinking. A mask of resolve. Gunfire explodes around them like popcorn in a storm.

KATYA (O.S.)
Litvyak, they're hitting us hard!
What's the plan?
(a beat)
Stay tight and follow my lead!
We're going to break through their
defenses and take out those
bombers!

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The German Luftwaffe dominates the upper field—Messerschmitt Bf 109s and Heinkel bombers loom above, weaving through flak bursts. The Yak-1s maneuver through the blizzard of gunfire—tight rolls, barrel dives, and scissors turns keeping them alive by inches.

WIDE SHOT

Lilya's squadron pierces the enemy curtain, streaking through a formation of bombers, bullets lighting the sky.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Lilya grips the yoke, knuckles white, eyes scanning. Her lips are tight, a bead of sweat rolls down her cheek.

She spots a Messerschmitt zeroing in on Katya's six.

LILYA
Katya—break left!

KATYA (O.S.)
I can't shake him!

Lilya jerks her stick, pulling her Yak-1 into a steep, punishing descent, the plane shudders violently, the G-force pushing her into the seat.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

She intercepts the German fighter at full speed, getting in tight-too tight.

KATYA (O.S.)
Lilya, no! You're too close!

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

No answer. Her face is stone. Her eyes lock onto the Messerschmitt.

She fires. RAT-A-TAT-TAT.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Bullets shred the German plane. It bursts into flame, spinning downward in a trail of smoke. The explosion sends a spray of debris toward Lilya's plane.

A metal shard slams into her right wing.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The plane bucks violently, alarms shriek, the controls jerk in her hands. She's thrown forward, slammed back.

GROUND POV

The Yak-1 noses down, falling fast, slicing through cloud.

KATYA (O.S.)
Lilya! Pull up! Get out of there!

Lilya's jaw tightens. Tears rim her eyes-not from fear, but from frustration. Her grip is iron on the yoke.

LILYA
Come on. Come on!

She yanks hard. The plane resists.

The wind howls past the canopy-meters from the ground, then...

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

At the last second, the Yak-1 levels out, skimming treetops, engines screaming. Snow and ash kick up in its wake.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Lilya breathes raggedly. Her chest heaves, her fingers tremble on the stick. Her eyes flutter, exhaustion and relief collide. But she's alive.

KATYA (O.S.)
That was too close, Lilya. You
scared the hell out of me.

LILYA
(soft, almost inaudible)
I couldn't let them take you,
Katya. Not while I'm still here.

INT. KATYA'S COCKPIT - SAME

Katya blinks. A pause. She swallows, moved.

KATYA (O.S.)
You're not alone up here. We've got
each other's backs. Always.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Their planes regroup, diving back into the fray. The Luftwaffe bombers loom ahead. Soviet pilots fly tighter now, a renewed fire in their maneuvers.

Lilya wipes her face with her scarf. Her gaze finds the bombers, and she locks on like a hawk.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

In the reflection of her cracked canopy, the burning city of Stalingrad flickers behind her.

LILYA (O.S., RADIO)
All units, this is Litvyak.
Let's finish what we started.

WIDE SHOT - THE SKYLINE

The squadron dives together toward the bombers. Trails of flak follow them like fingers from below. The battle rages on.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MILITARY BASE - RUNWAY - EVENING

Hours later, the planes return to base, the pilots exhausted but victorious. Lilya lands her plane with precision, but her face is pale as her shoulder finally relax.

As she climbs out of the cockpit, Katya rushes over, her face a mix of relief and gratitude.

KATYA

Lilya, you saved my life out there.
I don't even know what to say.

Lilya smiles weakly, brushing off the praise.

LILYA

We're all in this together, Katya.
I just did what I had to do.

Katya pulls Liya into a tight hug, the reality of what they've just survived sinking in.

KATYA

I'm glad you're here with me,
Lilya. I don't know what I'd do
without you.

As the sun sets on the airfield, casting long shadows over the planes and pilots, Lilya looks out at the horizon.

INT. RUSSIAN AIR BASE - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dim light filters through a cracked window. ERWIN MAIER, late 20s, lean and proud, sits at a metal table. His Luftwaffe uniform is worn and dirty, the insignia dulled. A bandage is wrapped tight around his temple. His posture is rigid but tired. A Russian guard leans against the wall, bored.

ERWIN

(quietly)

Who was the pilot that shot me
down?

The guard doesn't respond. A door creaks open. Lilya enters, composed, confident. She removes her leather gloves as she walks, her boots echoing sharply against the floor.

ERWIN MAIER
(without turning)
You sent in a translator?

LILYA
No. I'm the one who clipped your wings.

Erwin turns to look at her then bursts into a laugh that borders on disbelief.

ERWIN MAIER
A woman? You're telling me a
Fräulein brought down me one of the
most decorated German pilots?

LILYA
Not telling. Showing.

She leans across the table, her eyes unblinking.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Let me remind you how it happened.

EXT. FLASHBACK - SKIES OVER RZHEV - DAY

The sky is split between angry clouds and sunlight breaking through like judgment. Wind screams. Lilya's Yak-1B tears through the air - agile, fierce, painted with a red star on the wings. In the distance, a Bf 109G-2 banks to port, climbing fast - ERWIN MAIER'S plane.

LILYA (O.S.)
You thought you had altitude
advantage. You always try to hunt
from above.

Lilya pulls the stick back, climbing to match. Her engine whines in protest. She flips a toggle. The guns arm.

Erwin's cockpit: his gloved hand rests steady on the stick. He scans below. A flicker of shadow. His instincts kick in - he pulls a wide arc, forcing a spiral climb.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You were trying to get the sun
behind you. To blind me. But I
broke the line before you could set
it.

Lilya rolls hard left, skimming beneath the clouds, then pitches upward, now behind and to the side of him. Her guns bark a short burst.

Bullets graze Erwin's right wingtip. He curses, banking left sharply. His 109 snaps into a half-roll, diving.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That was smart, dive to regain
speed, draw me out.

The Yak follows. They drop fast slicing through low cloud cover and plunging toward a birch forest. The ground rushes up. At the last second, both planes pull out, treetops whipping by.

Lilya's engine shudders as she levels off behind him.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But I stayed with you.

Erwin rolls again, juking left then right, trying to shake her. He fires blind behind, his cannons screaming, tearing through empty air. Lilya dips low and swoops back up, cutting a diagonal line across his tail.

Erwin pulls vertical. The planes spiral in a dizzying climb engines growling, tracers flying.

They burst above the clouds, sunlit silence for half a second, then dive together like hawks.

Lilya gets a lock. Fires. Bullets rip into his rudder.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's when I had you.

Erwin's plane shudders. A trail of black smoke pours out. His controls stiffen. He levels briefly, then jerks the stick hard, barrel rolls. Lilya tracks him like a predator.

She squeezes the trigger again. This time, her rounds punch through his left wing root, fuel begins to leak. Fire trails behind.

ERWIN MAIER (O.S.)
(reluctantly)
You hit my fuel line...
And still didn't finish me off.

Erwin's hands fly over switches. He yanks the canopy open. Wind howls. He braces and ejects. His body tumbles, spinning in open air.

Lilya eases her Yak into a level glide above him. She watches.

LILYA (O.S.)
Because you weren't worth another
bullet.

Erwin's parachute deploys, a blossom of white silk against the blood-stained sky.

BACK TO PRESENT - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Erwin says nothing for a long moment. His face has changed, not from shame, but from recognition. He finally meets her gaze fully.

ERWIN MAIER
You fly like... like you were born
in the sky.

He reaches into his coat and produces a battered gold Luftwaffe watch. The face is cracked. He sets it on the table.

ERWIN MAIER (CONT'D)
Take it. For... honor. And mercy.

Lilya picks it up, studies the engraving on the back. She smirks.

LILYA
I don't accept gifts from the
enemy.

She sets the watch down in front of him, still ticking faintly. She stands, straightens her jacket, and walks toward the door.

ERWIN
(calling after her)
You fly like a devil...

LILYA
(without turning back)
Then pray the devil never finds you
again.

The door shuts behind her. Erwin stares at the watch. He finally exhales.

EXT. SKY OVER STALINGRAD - DAY

SUPER OVER: "NOVEMBER 1942" "437th Regiment"

The sky is a grim gray veil, heavy with smoke and winter haze. Below, Stalingrad burns—its factories and apartment blocks mere shells of stone and fire. Black smoke pours upward like ghosts. The Volga River reflects nothing but flame and ash. A squadron of Yak-1Bs soars overhead, cutting through the bleak sky like blades. Red stars emblazoned on their wings flash in and out of the haze. Their engines thunder, echoing over the ruined city. At the tip of the V-formation flies Lilya, face taut, eyes unblinking. Her Yak-1B flies steady, unwavering.

INT. LILYA'S YAK-1B - SAME TIME

The cockpit rattles with the vibration of the engine. Gauges flicker. Outside, the wind howls. Inside, it's tight, suffocating.

LILYA

Stay tight. We've got incoming—six o'clock high.

KATYA (O.S.)

Visual on bandits—eight Messerschmitts. They're diving fast.

Ahead, the black dots of Bf 109s streak downward, backlit by pale sun through smoke. Their wings glint, shark-like, slicing the sky. They fan out in a pincer attack, engines screaming.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT

She squints into the glare. Adjusts her goggles. Her fingers flex, then tighten on the yoke. The throttle handle is worn, metal scuffed from past missions.

LILYA (O.S.)

Engage on my mark...

(beat)

Now!

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The sky erupts—like gods throwing knives. Planes snap into rolls, diving, turning—machine guns blaze. The roar of engines and the scream of steel fills the heavens. Each plane jerks and shudders under strain. Tracers streak through the sky like burning needles. Yak and Messerschmitt twist together in lethal aerial ballet.

INT. KATYA'S YAK - SAME

Katya loops hard, stomach pulling into her spine as the G-forces crush her against the seat. Sweat beads across her forehead. She locks on.

TRIGGER SQUEEZE

A burst-RAT-A-TAT-TAT-rips across a German fighter.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Messerschmitt's fuselage shreds. It rolls violently, trailing fire and black smoke as it corkscrews downward.

KATYA (O.S.)
(breathless)
Scratch one!

Another Yak explodes mid-turn-CANOPY SHATTERS. A pilot ejects, chute barely deploying before the plane slams into the ground below.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT

She spots a Bf 109 peeling away through a cloud bank-trying to vanish. Her heart hammers in her chest. She rolls left, forcing her body sideways. The pressure compresses her lungs. Her head snaps back as she pulls into a chase. Her Yak-1 screams downward, the airframe vibrating. The wind whistles so loud it drowns her own breath. The plane bucks, turbulence kicks up from the riverbed below. Lilya adjusts the trim, fighting to keep level.

EXT. SKY - LOW ALTITUDE - CONTINUOUS

She follows the Bf 109 dangerously low, weaving between smoke columns and anti-aircraft flak. She locks on. Fires.

INT. ENEMY COCKPIT

The German pilot jerks in panic-warning lights flare-his engine ignites.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Messerschmitt dives, trailing flame, and crashes into the Volga, a fiery splash.

LILYA (O.S., RADIO)
One down. Where's the rest of them?

INT. LILYA'S YAK - MOMENTS LATER

Suddenly, IMPACT. A jarring explosion shakes the fuselage.

WARNING LIGHTS FLASH RED.

A cannon shell punches through the canopy—glass shards slice her cheek—and the round rips into her left thigh.

LILYA
(screams)
AHH!

CLOSE ON

Blood splattering across the inside of the canopy. Her leg is soaked. Pain radiates, blinding. The plane veers, nosing down slightly. The yoke trembles in her weakening hands. Her vision blurs, edges going gray.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Smoke pours from the Yak's tail. Lilya dips below cloud level, the plane wobbling with every gust.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

She's white-knuckled. Her body slumps slightly. Every breath is labored. She glances down: the wound is deep, dark red soaking through her uniform. She grits her teeth, the steel returning to her eyes.

LILYA
(strained)
Mayday. I'm hit. Attempting
emergency landing...

She reaches for the landing gear lever—but her hand shakes too much. She switches to manual—cranks the handle with effort. The canopy fogs. She smears it with her glove. Every sound is muted—her heartbeat thuds louder than the engine.

KATYA (O.S.)
Lilya! Respond! Where are you?
What's your position?

LILYA
(weak, whispering)
South sector... riverbank... flaps
jammed...

She pulls the yoke back—tugging with everything she has. Her body is slick with sweat. Teeth clenched, jaw shaking. The plane dips, wavers, then—levels out, skimming treetops.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Lilya's Yak clears a burned-out warehouse, grazes a chimney, then straightens. A narrow clearing by the river appears below.

INT. COCKPIT - FINAL SECONDS

She lowers speed—engine sputtering, blood dripping from her lip. Her hands shake uncontrollably—but she holds steady.

EXT. GROUND - RIVERBANK FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The Yak-1B comes in low and fast, bounces once—then slams down, wheels screaming, dirt flying. It skids, wing shears off a snowbank, and the plane grinds to a halt, engine coughing into silence.

INT. COCKPIT - SILENCE

Smoke hisses from the dashboard. Her head drops forward. But she's breathing. Alive. Her hand trembles as it reaches to open the canopy.

LILYA
(whispers)
Still flying...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. FIELD MEDICAL TENT - LATER

Her thigh is bandaged tight. The field doctor, DR. IVANOV, 44 stern and exhausted, finishes stitching.

DR. IVANOV
 You're lucky. Half an inch higher
 and you'd be dead. You've lost a
 lot of blood.

Lilya winces but sits upright, gripping the cot.

DR. IVANOV (CONT'D)
 You're grounded. For good this
 time. The leg needs weeks to heal.

LILYA
 (flatly)
 I don't have weeks. Stalingrad
 doesn't have weeks.

DR. IVANOV
 You won't be able to fly! You could
 pass out from the pain alone!

LILYA
 Then I'll fly in pain.

She rips the sheet off, standing on shaking legs. Her face is
 pale, but her will ironclad as she limps out the office.

EXT. AIRFIELD - TWO DAYS LATER

Dawn. Frost clings to the tarmac. Planes are being prepped.
 Mechanics give worried glances.

Lilya limps toward her replacement Yak, newly patched, its
 canopy glass replaced. A bright single white lily painted on
 the side. Katya meets her halfway.

KATYA
 You shouldn't be here.

LILYA
 Tell that to the ones dying out
 there.

She hoists herself into the cockpit. Winces. Straps in.
 Breathes deep. The Yak's engine growls to life. The propeller
 spins.

DR. IVANOV (O.S.)
 (watching from the medical
 tent entrance)
 She's going to kill herself...

EXT. SKY OVER STALINGRAD - MOMENTS LATER

The Yak-1B climbs into the air again, Lilya's plane leading once more. Her face is clenched, leg trembling...

But her hands are steady on the stick.

LILYA (O.S.)
This is White Lily. Rejoining
formation.

INT. RUSSIAN AIR BASE - MESS HALL / COMMON AREA - NIGHT

A large canvas tent reinforced with sandbags and salvaged wood. Oil lamps flicker along the walls, casting long, distorted shadows. A coal stove in the center radiates heat. It's the only real warmth against the biting Russian winter. The air smells of burnt fuel, cabbage soup, and cheap tobacco.

Outside, the wind howls and distant artillery thunders. But in here, there's laughter, music, and the aching desire to feel human.

LIVE MUSIC NEAR THE STOVE

An older corporal with frostbitten fingers plays a button accordion with surprising grace. He squeezes out an old Russian folk melody, slow, nostalgic, mournful. It tugs at the hearts of everyone listening.

A few soldiers tap their boots in time. A couple brave souls stand and begin a modest waltz. A young woman pilot, still wearing her flight jacket, dances stiffly with a red-cheeked airfield mechanic. They're both grinning like schoolkids.

CORNER TABLE - LOW-STAKES CARD GAME

Katya and TANYA, two pilots with soot-smudged cheeks, sit with SERGEI, a weathered soldier. They play with a near-worthless deck of faded cards. Their poker chips are buttons, matchsticks, and cigarette ends.

KATYA
(teasing, holding up three
queens)
Sergei, if you put down one more
pair of twos, I swear I'll shoot
you in the arm.

SERGEI
When I lose, at least I do it with
dignity.

Tanya snorts, takes a drag from a hand-rolled cigarette, and tosses her cards in.

TANYA

We're fighting fascists by day and
liars by night.

KATYA

And both need to be shot.

They all laugh, low, rough, tired laughter.

LILYA'S CORNER

Lilya sits near the stove, her injured thigh elevated on a stool. Her flight jacket is unzipped just enough to reveal the tunic beneath, stained and worn. She cradles a dented tin mug filled with watered down kvass or maybe a drop of vodka, no one asks.

The firelight dances in her eyes as she watches the room, half part of it, half removed. The music stirs something in her. Grief, maybe. Or longing. She closes her eyes for a moment and breathes deeply.

INT. MEDIC TENT AREA ADJACENT TO THE HALL

The wall between the hall and the base infirmary is thin more a curtain than a wall. A field nurse, a quiet woman named ANYA, peeks out from behind it, watching the party.

She sees Lilya sitting quietly and walks over with a fresh bandage and some gauze.

ANYA

Still bleeding?

LILYA

Just the music, maybe.

ANYA

(smiling gently)

They'll try to ground you again,
you know.

LILYA

Let them try.

Anya kneels and carefully unwraps the outer cloth on Lilya's thigh.

ANYA

You know, my brother flew once. He said the sky is the only place war feels clean.

LILYA

It's the only place I feel like I can breathe.

Anya rewraps her leg, tighter this time. Lilya winces but doesn't flinch. Their eyes meet, shared understanding.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - MAKESHIFT CELEBRATION

The music quickens, a folk tune with a stronger rhythm. The accordion player's fingers dance. Two young infantrymen begin stomping out a Russian squat, dance, daring one another with increasing energy and shouts. A cheer goes up from the onlookers.

Katya grabs Tanya's arm and pulls her toward the center.

KATYA

Come on. Before your legs rot off from sitting.

TANYA

You just want to show off to the boys.

KATYA

Of course I do. I'm not dying in a bomber without someone remembering these hips.

They stumble into the dance. Stiff boots, aching muscles, and exhaustion don't stop them. They move like soldiers who have no idea if tomorrow will come.

LILYA'S CORNER

A young mechanic, maybe 17, approaches Lilya nervously. He removes his cap and speaks with formality.

YOUNG MECHANIC

Comrade Litvyak... may I ask you for a dance?

Lilya raises an eyebrow.

LILYA

I'd limp you into the floor.

YOUNG MECHANIC
Then I'd call it an honor.

She smiles, barely. But enough. She lifts her mug.

LILYA
You dance. I'll toast you from
here.

The boy nods, bows like a gentleman, and shuffles off. Lilya watches him go, her smile fading just slightly.

Outside the tent, a rumble of artillery echoes closer than before. Heads turn briefly. Then turn back. The music never stops.

NEAR THE BARREL BAR

A large barrel has been converted into a bar, covered with mismatched cups and dented tins. A crusty sergeant, VLAD, pours something that burns the throat and clears the soul. He slides it to young PETYA, a new recruit barely shaving.

PETYA
What is this?

VLAD
Fuel for courage. Or poison.
Depends on your strength.

Petya sniffs it, coughs just from the smell, then drinks. Instantly regrets it.

VLAD (CONT'D)
(laughing)
You'll be a real pilot by morning.

Behind them, a mechanic strums a balalaika, trying to pluck out a familiar tune. A couple of soldiers hum along, clapping in time. Someone beats rhythm on a crate.

WIDE SHOT - THE WHOLE ROOM

Flames in the stove. Soldiers dancing in heavy boots. Laughter over card games. Quiet toasts among comrades. Chess players at the barrel bar. And smoke slowly filling the tent from the cigarettes.

Outside, the wind carries snow across the barren steppe.

Inside, for just this night, there is music.

SUPER OVER: "A Few Weeks Later"

A dusting of snow settles on the tarmac. The cold air hangs still, broken only by the distant hum of a Yak engine warming up. A jeep rattles in from the outer road, tires crunching over gravel and frost.

It stops near the hangars. Aleksei, climbs out, his long coat dusted with snow. He carries a small satchel and wears the fatigue of war around his eyes but beneath it, something flickers. Hope.

A few soldiers glance over, another officer. Another transfer. But as Lilya walks toward the flight line, limping slightly, her eyes land on him.

LILYA
(quietly, to herself)
Aleksei?

He turns, their eyes meet. A breath. A heartbeat. Then she walks faster. He drops his satchel.

They embrace, not fiercely. Her arms around his waist, his arms wrapping around her shoulders with protective reverence. They say nothing for a moment.

ALEKSEI
I heard you'd been wounded.

LILYA
I'm still flying.

ALEKSEI
(softly)
Of course you are.

She pulls back, looks at him. There's emotion there, restrained. But her fingers linger on his coat sleeve a moment longer than necessary. And he doesn't let go right away.

INT. MESS TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The base is quiet, save for the crackle of the stove. Most soldiers are asleep or finishing quiet drinks. A few whispers, a few snores.

Lilya sits near the corner, staring into her cup of tea. Her leg aches, she massages it absentmindedly.

Aleksei walks in, removing his cap, eyes scanning the room, then finding her.

ALEKSEI
Cold tea?

LILYA
Colder than usual.

He sits beside her. Silence, but not uncomfortable.

ALEKSEI
I thought about you.
Even when I tried not to.

LILYA
Why try not to?

ALEKSEI
Because I knew if I let myself
hope... I might not survive it.

She swallows. Her hand rests on the table he touches it,
lightly. She doesn't pull away.

LILYA
Come with me.

INT. STORAGE SHED - NIGHT

A small oil lamp flickers in the corner, casting amber light
against stacked crates, canvas packs, and the long winter
coats draped nearby. Snow hushes the world outside. Inside,
there's only breath, and the soft rustle of cloth.

Lilya sits on a folded tarp, her injured leg outstretched,
bandage removed. The pale, raised scar visible through her
tight pants.

Aleksei kneels before her, coat off, sleeves rolled. His
palms rest on his thighs, but his eyes stay fixed on her leg.
Not with pity, but reverence.

ALEKSEI
Still hurts?

LILYA
Sometimes when I fly. Sometimes
when I sleep.
(beat)
But not now.

He places a hand near the scar—close, not yet touching. His
thumb brushes the air above it like he's tracing a sacred
map.

ALEKSEI

You're beautiful here too.

She doesn't flinch. She doesn't look away. Her eyes well up, not from pain, but from the way he says it, like he's memorizing her, rewriting her in gentler lines.

He leans in, and his lips find the scar with a kiss that isn't hurried or uncertain. A kiss of recognition. Of reverence.

Lilya's fingers slide gently into the nape of his neck. Her touch is featherlight, grounding them both.

LILYA

I was afraid no one would ever
touch me like that again.

(beat)

Like I was whole.

ALEKSEI

You're not whole because you were
untouched. You're whole because
you're still you.

Another kiss. This one a little higher. Then another—each a question, each given permission in the rise of her breath.

Her hand trembles against his shoulder, but she doesn't stop him.

He looks up, searching her face. She nods.

He rises slightly, kneeling now over her, cupping her jaw in one hand, his thumb tracing the line of her cheek.

ALEKSEI (CONT'D)

Tell me if I go too far.

She grabs him by the collar and pulls him in.

LILYA

You haven't gone far enough.

They kiss, deep, unhurried, exploratory. His hand cradles her face as if she's something fragile, rare. Her lips part under his, inviting more but rushing nothing.

As their kisses grow deeper, their hands move—careful, curious. He undoes the buttons of her tunic one by one, his fingers grazing the skin beneath. She lets it fall from her shoulders, revealing the curve of her collarbone.

He kisses the ridge softly, his breath warming the chill on her skin. Her fingers slide beneath his shirt, exploring the hardened muscle and scars'

When her hand flinches, fingers struggling at his belt buckle, he stops her gently. Presses a kiss to her wrist, then unbuckles it himself, never breaking eye contact.

They move slowly. Each layer of clothing removed deliberate, an look of release crosses over their faces with each item shed from their body.

They pause often. To look. To breathe. To brush fingertips along ribs and scars. His hands memorize the line of her waist, her spine, the dip just above her hip. She guides his hand to her heart and presses it there.

He lays her down slowly onto the blanket. Her leg elevated, a second one beneath it for comfort. He adjusts her carefully, intentionally and firmly.

She watches him, eyes wide, not with fear, but trust.

He kisses her temple, then her jaw, down to the hollow of her throat. Her back arches into his mouth. Her breath catches.

He pauses when she winces as her leg shifts. Pulls back slightly.

ALEKSEI

We can stop.

LILYA

Don't you dare.

A rare smile flickers across his face. He nods, adjusting again, positioning himself beside her instead of over her.

Their foreheads rest together. They breathe each other in. He cups her face, thumb brushing her cheek. Her fingers curl into the small of his back, pulling him in, grounding herself in his warmth.

Their bodies meet, not violently, not urgently, but with a rhythm forged not by lust, but survival and respect.

Every motion is tender, deliberate.

His hand cradles the back of her head. Hers traces the planes of his chest.

Every shift of hips, every inhale, every sigh feels is clearly a release for both of them.

Lilya gasps softly. Her hands grasp at the blanket, then him, then release. Her breath stutters, not from pain, but from how deeply she feels.

Aleksei kisses her shoulder, her collarbone, the space just beneath her ear. He never looks away. Never hides from her gaze.

Their love is not loud. But it is absolute.

MOMENTS LATER - QUIET AND WARM

Lilya lies draped across Aleksei's chest, their bodies curved toward one another like parentheses. Her leg is wrapped and elevated. A blanket cocooned around them both.

His fingers draw slow, lazy circles on her back. She hums softly with each motion.

LILYA (CONT'D)

Was it like this... before the war?

ALEKSEI

No. It was simpler. Louder. Less... earned.

She lifts her head to look at him.

LILYA

You think we've earned this?

ALEKSEI

After what we've survived? You earned this a thousand feet above Stalingrad.

She smiles, tired but warm, and rests her cheek on his chest again.

LILYA

Stay with me.

(Beat)

Just... a little longer.

ALEKSEI

Always. Even when I can't.

He kisses her temple. Then her jaw. Then the space between words.

They lie in silence, limbs tangled. Her breath rises and falls against his ribs. His heartbeat steady in her ear.

Outside, the snow falls heavier. A gust rattles the shed wall. But inside, the storm has passed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STORAGE SHED - LATER

Lilya lies against his chest, half-covered in a blanket. His hand strokes her hair slowly. Her scarred leg rests over his.

ALEKSEI

You don't have to be strong with me.

LILYA

I don't know how to be anything else.

ALEKSEI

Then let me remind you.

She lifts her head, studies his face.

LILYA

You're not afraid of me?

ALEKSEI

I'm afraid of losing you.

They kiss again not for passion this time, but for peace.

ALEKSEI (CONT'D)

I'm so damn scared of losing you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RUSSIAN AIRFIELD - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

A clear sky stretches wide overhead. The air is cold but still ideal for flight. Pilots and crew gather on the ground, watching two Yak-1Bs soar above the airstrip. One of them flown by Aleksei loops gracefully in a lead maneuver. The other, piloted by a new recruit, trails clumsily behind.

Lilya stands near the hangar, arms folded, eyes sharp and proud as she watches Aleksei guide the younger pilot through formation rolls.

Katya stands beside her, squinting at the sun.

KATYA
 (smirking)
 He's showing off. Trying to impress
 the recruit or you?

LILYA
 (softly)
 Doesn't matter. He's better when he
 forgets people are watching.

ALEKSEI'S COCKPIT - IN FLIGHT

Aleksei's face is calm but focused. He speaks into the radio.

ALEKSEI
 Stay in line. Ease off on the stick
 don't fight the plane, feel it.

The recruit adjusts behind him. For a moment, they glide
 together in sync.

EXT. AIRFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Ground crew clap at the smooth maneuver. Lilya allows herself
 the smallest smile. Then, the sound of metal straining. A
 sputter. One Yak dips sharply.

KATYA
 Wait... is he losing lift?

Aleksei's plane begins to nose down, fast. It spirals, smoke
 trailing from the engine.

LILYA
 (stepping forward)
 Aleksei

The radio crackles, his voice cuts in.

ALEKSIE (O.S.)
 Hydraulics are gone, no control

The Yak-1B plummets toward the earth, spinning. Lilya starts
 running, shouting

LILYA
 PULL UP! ALEKSei!!

The plane slams nose-first into the frozen field, shattering
 into pieces with a deafening explosion of steel and earth. A
 massive black cloud billows upward.

Silence. Smoke. Flames. Screams in the distance. But for Lilya, the world goes quiet.

CRASH SITE - LATER

Medics comb through the wreckage. The fire is mostly out. Katya holds Lilya tightly as she tries to walk toward the crash. Her eyes are glassy.

LILYA (CONT'D)
He could've bailed... why didn't he bail?

KATYA
Maybe he couldn't. Maybe... maybe he was trying to keep it away from the barracks.

Lilya's knees weaken. Katya holds her tighter.

KATYA (CONT'D)
I'm here. You don't have to be strong right now.

MONTAGE - DAYS PASSING

Lilya sits alone in the mess hall, untouched food in front of her. She reads a faded letter in her bunk, staring at the paper blankly. On the airfield, she looks to the sky as two planes fly overhead, her hand resting on the bench beside her, clenched into a fist. She limps through the snow, past the remnants of scorched earth where Aleksei's plane crashed.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Lilya sits at a small desk, bundled in her flight jacket. A lantern flickers beside her. She writes by hand, slow and deliberate. Her pen hovers for a long moment, then continues.

LILYA(V.O.)
Dear Mama,
There's been a loss. One that I wasn't ready for.
You see, he was not my type... but his insistence, and his love for me...convinced me to love him.

She pauses, eyes filling with tears. One drop falls onto the paper. She doesn't wipe it away.

LILYA (O.S.)
And now, it seems... I will never meet someone like him ever again.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NEXT MORNING

Lilya walks slowly toward her aircraft. Her face is pale but resolute. Katya watches from a distance.

The bandage on Lilya's thigh is tighter today, but she climbs into the cockpit alone.

She pulls her goggles down and looks ahead where Aleksei plane used to take off beside hers. Then her engine growls to life. The propeller spins. She takes off into the cold morning sky.

EXT. SKY OVER THE FRONTLINES - LATE AFTERNOON

A veil of haze hangs over the battlefield. Smoke coils from distant fires, darkening the horizon. The sun bleeds amber and crimson, its light fractured by the ash-filled sky.

Six Yak-1Bs streak overhead in a tight wedge formation, the tip of the spear in this late-day mission. Beneath them, the broken, blood-soaked earth of the Eastern Front—muddy roads, scorched trees, shattered armor.

Suddenly, twelve Messerschmitt Bf 109s rocket up from the treeline.

INT. KATYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Katya banks hard. Gunfire slices past her canopy. She drops altitude, pulls under her attacker in a tight combat roll, flips back upward.

KATYA
(to herself, through
gritted teeth)
Come on... come on...

She fires—tracers hammer into the enemy fuselage.

The Messerschmitt ignites, spiraling down in flames.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - ELSEWHERE IN THE DOGFIGHT

A Bf 109 buzzes past, firing. It clips her right wing—her Yak shudders, alarms blink red. She jerks the yoke, dives, and rolls under the German tail.

One burst. Direct hit. Mid-air detonation.

LILYA
(calmly, to herself)
One.

Another Yak is in trouble—smoke pouring. A German fighter dives on them.

Lilya pulls around, rips through the 109 just above the tree line. It explodes and crashes into the woods.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Two.

INT. KATYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

She banks out of her kill, chest heaving. Her eyes scan left, right. A sudden flash of light—the sun off steel. Then GUNFIRE.

Rounds slam through her fuselage. One punches into her chest. Another into her side. Blood bursts into the cockpit, across her face, the windshield, the controls.

Her body jerks violently, then falls limp. Her gloved fingers slip from the stick. Her head lolls. Eyes wide.

The Yak-1B coasts, dipping slowly—then spirals. No voice. No warning. It tears downward, one wing shears off midair. The plane craters into a frozen field. Fireballs. Silence.

EXT. SKY ABOVE - CONTINUOUS

Lilya climbs after a final fleeing 109. Her engine whines. Then... the Germans retreat. The sky clears.

LILYA (O.S.)
Regroup and return to base.

Her voice is low. Steady. Too steady.

EXT. SOVIET AIRFIELD - SUNSET

The horizon glows blood-orange, smoke and ash drifting like ghosts across the fading light. The wind kicks up dust, swirling around the remaining Yak-1Bs as they sit silent and still.

Lilya's plane rolls to a stop. She powers down the engine. The sudden absence of sound is a punch. She removes her goggles, then her helmet. Her face is pale, streaked with sweat and soot. Her eyes stay locked on the sky.

Waiting. One more plane should be coming in.

It doesn't.

EXT. OPEN FIELD BY THE RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ground crewmen and other pilots stand quietly along the edge of the field. Some scan the air. Others already know.

BORIS (19), the young mechanic, steps forward. His hands are black with grease, trembling slightly.

LILYA
Where's Katya?

No answer.

She takes a few steps closer, her boots crunching on gravel.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Where is she?

BORIS
(quietly)
She's not coming back, Lieutenant.
Her Yak went down behind enemy
lines.
(beat)
It... exploded.

A breath leaves her, short and sharp, like being punched in the gut. Her gaze turns to the wide, empty sky. Then she turns and walks toward her own plane.

EXT. LILYA'S YAK - CONTINUOUS

People watch her. Some glance away. Some don't.

She reaches her aircraft and suddenly, just for a moment, she breaks. With a sharp cry, she hurls her helmet across the open field. It tumbles, bounces, lands near a group of crates. She slams her fist against the side of her Yak. Once. Twice. A third time. A dull clang of metal echoes out.

Everyone hears it.

She leans forward—hands gripping the wing like a lifeline. Her shoulders rise and fall. Breath shallow. Wracked.

No one dares approach. No one speaks.

After a long moment, Lilya straightens. Wipes at her face with her sleeve. Her hand comes away streaked with blood from her knuckles.

She looks out over the field, eyes scanning one last time.

Still no plane.

No Katya.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHTFALL

Lilya sits alone on the ground near her aircraft. The cigarette between her fingers has burned almost entirely to ash. She hasn't smoked it. Behind her, the rest of the regiment moves in silence, fixing planes, counting damage, mourning the cost.

Lilya closes her eyes Just for a moment. The war doesn't pause. But she does.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LILYA'S BARRACKS - NIGHT

The room is dim. Lilya sits on Katya's bunk. Her hands rest on a scarf that Katya left behind, a threadbare blue scrap. Lilya clutches it, holding it to her chest.

LILYA (O.S.)
She was more than a comrade.
She was a piece of the sky I flew
with. And now... the sky is
quieter.

LILYA'S BARRACKS - BACK TO PRESENT

Lilya stares forward, expression unreadable. She does not cry. Not yet. She wraps the scarf around her hand. Then stands. Walking to her bunk, she lays down holding the scarf to her cheek as a single tear falls.

COMMAND TENT - AIRFIELD - NIGHT

A kerosene lamp casts a flickering glow over a large map table. Cold wind rattles the canvas walls of the command tent. Outside: the muffled sounds of machinery and boots on snow.

Grigorov, stands over the map table, flipping through a mission report. His hands are calloused, stained with ink and oil. A glass of vodka sits untouched beside him.

The flap of the tent opens. Lilya steps inside, cap under her arm, her face pale but composed.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV
You should be resting. You're down
a wingman.

LILYA
I didn't come to discuss the
roster, Commander.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV
(glancing up)
No? Then what's this about?

LILYA
I want permission to step back from
combat sorties.

Grigorov stiffens, clearly surprised.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV
You're asking to sit out?

LILYA
Not sit. Fly a different mission.
The German intelligence balloon
over Sector 12. It's still up.

He exhales. Leans back in his chair.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV
That damn thing again. Four pilots
have tried. None came back.

Anti-aircraft's thicker than Stalin's mustache.

LILYA
I know, but none of them were me.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV
(narrowing eyes)
And what makes you think you'll
succeed where others have failed?

LILYA
Because I'm not like them.
Because I've already become the
first female ace in Soviet history.
Because I'm a lieutenant now, and
you know damn well I've earned the
rank. Plus, I have this.

She steps forward and places a small notepad on the table. her flight plan, hand-sketched with precision.

LILYA (CONT'D)

I'll circle wide, low over the tree line. Then climb and attack from behind, outside the standard gun range. They won't see it coming. And I'll use tracer rounds – enough of them in a hydrogen balloon, it won't float long.

Grigorov looks down at her sketch, frowns, then gives the faintest trace of a smirk.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV

You pilots and your pride... Fine. You want the balloon? It's yours. But don't come back in pieces.

LILYA

Wouldn't dream of it, Commander.

She salutes. He returns it. She turns and walks out into the cold night, wind lifting her braid.

EXT. SKY - MISSION FLIGHT - THE NEXT DAY

We follow Lilya's Yak-1B, alone in the sky. The land below is a patchwork of frost and mud. The clouds are thin visibility is sharp.

In the distance: the silver dome of the German observation balloon, floating high over Sector 12. Beneath it anti-aircraft emplacements manned by German troops.

Lilya flies low, engines growling. She banks left, hugging the treetops, her brow beaded with sweat. She adjusts her goggles.

Then she climbs.

Her Yak arches into a steep ascent. She circles behind the balloon, coming in from the rear, as planned.

German gunners notice too late, they begin to fire, but her angle keeps her mostly out of range.

Lilya opens fire, a long, concentrated burst of tracer rounds tear into the base of the balloon.

For a moment, nothing happens. Then BOOM.

A massive, fiery explosion erupts from within the balloon. Flames consume it as it splits apart mid-air, hydrogen feeding the inferno like oil on fire. The sky lights up orange and white.

Below, the German gunners scatter in panic. Lilya banks hard and roars past the inferno, her cockpit briefly glowing from the blaze behind her.

She exhales, a small smile on her lips.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMAND TENT - SAME TIME

Commander Grigorov sits at the same table, phone receiver in hand. A quiet moment between the explosions.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV

Yes, Comrade Raskova...
She asked to be removed from combat rotations. No, not permanently.
But... she may need you here.

He listens to the response, his face unreadable.

COMMANDER GRIGOROV (CONT'D)

Yes. I think it's time.
She's carrying too many ghosts.

He hangs up the phone. Sits in silence. The tent flap flutters slightly in the wind.

SKY - LATER

Lilya flies level now, smoke trailing behind her from the balloon's wreckage.

She looks ahead to the horizon, then looks at the photo of Aleksei next to the flowers in her cockpit as she squeezes the blue scarf wrapped around the throttle.

INT. AIRFIELD OFFICER'S QUARTERS - EVENING

A small wooden structure lit by the dying orange light of sunset bleeding through frost-covered windows. Sparse furnishings, a desk, two chairs, and a samovar steaming faintly on the corner shelf.

Lilya sits with her arms crossed tightly, eyes red-rimmed but dry. Her flight uniform is rumpled and tossed on the side. A scarf, Katya's blue one is tied loosely around her wrist.

Across from her, in full uniform sits Major Raskova. Her posture is perfect, her voice low but commanding.

RASKOVA

So that's it? You take down a balloon and decide you're done?

LILYA

(quiet)

I didn't say I was done.
I just don't see the point anymore.

RASKOVA

The point?

She leans forward, the steel in her voice cutting through the quiet.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)

The point is that you are one of the best pilots the Soviet Air Force has. You're a symbol. For the women who come after. For the ones who can't fly anymore. For the ones who didn't come back.

LILYA

(bitterly)

Exactly. Katya didn't come back. Neither did Aleksei. Neither did half the girls I trained with. What good is being a symbol if I'm the last one standing?

RASKOVA

Then stand. Stand up like you did to those boys when I first saw you, Stand up and fight back instead of wallowing in self pity

A tense silence.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)

Or you can let your grief make you small? You want to give up now and prove every bastard who doubted you right? You want to prove those boys right?

Lilya doesn't respond, her jaw tightens.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
You think war is fair? That it
rewards the good and punishes the
cruel?

She leans in, her voice dropping, dangerous and intimate.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
You want to honor the dead? Then
don't fold into yourself and
vanish. Make the enemy regret they
ever looked to the sky. Pity is for
poets. Vengeance is much better. It
flies straighter. And it never
misses.

Lilya looks down at her hands one of them gripping Katya's
scarf without even realizing it.

LILYA
(softly)
I'm tired, Marina.

RASKOVA
Then rest. But not for long.
We didn't come this far to let
grief win.

Raskova stands. Straightens her jacket. Walks to the door,
then stops.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
There's a sortie scheduled for
dawn. Recon over the Volga line.
No combat orders... unless it turns
into one.

She glances back.

RASKOVA (CONT'D)
Your name's not on the list. Yet.

Then she leaves. The door closes gently behind her.

Lilya sits in silence. She unwraps the scarf from her
wrist... folds it carefully... and places it in her flight
jacket pocket.

She doesn't say a word.

But she reaches for her boots.

ACT 3

EXT. SKY - EARLY MORNING - FROST-LINED CANOPY

A pale sun climbs over a frostbitten Soviet tree line. Lilya's Yak-1B hums through the icy air. Condensation glints on the glass. Two Yak pilots fly in loose formation behind her.

Radio crackle cuts through the hum.

PILOT #1 (O.S.)
Nothing up here but clouds and cold.

LILYA (O.S.)
Eyes open. We're hunters, not tourists.

A German scout plane darts across the horizon, low and fast.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Contact! 9 o'clock low. Dropping in.

She banks hard, descending in a tight curve. The scout dips, trying to evade. She follows relentlessly, closing in.

She lets loose a short burst the first few rounds miss, but the next rip through the tail. The scout jolts, catches fire, and spirals downward.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
One down. Keep your eyes sharp more always follow the bait.

LOW CLOUD COVER - LATE AFTERNOON - WHITEOUT SNOW

A grey snow haze makes the horizon bleed into itself. Lilya leads a squad of three, the wind howls against the canopy.

YAK PILOT (O.S.)
I can barely see a kilometer.

LILYA (O.S.)
They'll use that. Stay tight, no showboating.

Out of nowhere, a pair of Bf 109s roar from behind a snowbank and open fire.

One Yak takes a hit and breaks left. Lilya flips into a steep dive, rolling under the enemy plane tailing her wingman.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Break high. I've got this one!

The pilot peels up. Lilya slips into the 109's six. Her engine growls under strain.

She fires, the German pilot dodges once, twice, but Lilya adjusts and shreds his engine with a precise burst.

The 109 rolls over, trailing black smoke as it crashes into the trees.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're clear. Don't say I never saved your ass.

NIGHT SKY - FULL MOON OVER A BURNING CITY

Searchlights slice the sky. Sirens echo faintly. Fires burn across rooftops below as a Soviet city defends itself.

Lilya and two others climb from the east. A Stuka dive bomber rises to flee.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stuka at two o'clock. I see you, coward.

She punches the throttle. Her Yak screams forward. Searchlights flicker across her fuselage.

The Stuka dips. Lilya follows, tight, almost reckless.

She fires a direct burst from above, flames tear through the Stuka's cockpit.

It nose dives into a burning rail station below, a second explosion blooms.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stuka down. They won't drop bombs on children tonight.

FADE TO:

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Rows of cots. Wounded pilots rest. Lilya walks the line, helmet under her arm. She pauses at a young pilot's bedside.

PILOT
You saved me out there.

LILYA
(shakes her head)
No. You saved yourself. I just gave
you a chance.

She grips his shoulder, then walks on.

MIDDAY SKIES - DOGFIGHT FURY

A full-blown six-plane Soviet-German engagement. Planes loop and dive in brutal chaos. Lilya is locked in with a high-skill Bf 109 ace, one of the enemy's elite.

They trade maneuvers. He spins, stalls, reverses. She mirrors him, her breathing sharp.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You like to dance, don't you?

The 109 slips behind her, a burst rakes across her wing, slicing off a few inches of metal.

YAK PILOT (O.S.)
He's got you! Break, Litvyak!

LILYA (O.S.)
Negative. I've got him right where
I want him.

She climbs. The German follows a fatal mistake.

She cuts throttle mid-climb, flips over in an inverted stall turn, and drops behind him.

Her guns blaze. The German ace explodes in mid-air.

Smoke fills her canopy. Lilya pulls out and doesn't speak for a moment.

LILYA (RADIO, LOW) (CONT'D)
...Three.

MOUNTAIN RIDGE - SUNSET - BLOOD IN THE SKY

Golden light bathes the ridges in fire. Lilya flies alone this time. Her plane is bruised, patched holes, scuffed paint. But her eyes are feral.

A Focke-Wulf 190 appears, banking along the mountains.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let's see if your machine bleeds.

She trails it at a steep angle. The German pilot tries tricks barrel rolls, vertical climbs, but she's faster, meaner.

Her burst shreds his wingtip. The plane rolls violently, struggling to stay airborne.

She fires again, this time straight through the fuselage. It explodes in two parts.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You don't belong in my sky.

A quiet sky. Thin air. Lilya flies alone, scanning. Her eyes are haunted. Then — there it is.

A lone 109 with a black eagle insignia.

LILYA (CONT'D)
That's the same mark that they said
took out Katya..

Lilya breathes once. Tightens her grip.

She circles, calculating, cold. The German pilot has no idea she's behind.

Her voice is low. Controlled.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
For Katya.

She dives. Full throttle. Every bullet from her guns is a scream.

The rounds slice through the 109's canopy, blood sprays. The plane jerks, loses control.

The German pilot slumps forward, already dead as the plane cartwheels into the earth.

Lilya levels off. Her breath hitches.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Never even stood a chance.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The chalkboard is updated:

Confirmed Solo Victories - Lilya: 9

Shared Victories - Lilya: 3

Officers glance her way as she walks past. No one speaks. She doesn't look back.

INT. LILYA'S QUARTERS - LATE NIGHT

She sits in silence, polishing her boots. A framed photo of her and Katya rests on the shelf. The scarf is folded neatly beside it.

Outside, a plane engine begins humming to life faintly. Lilya boots on her boots and runs out to her plane. Leaving the scarf behind this time.

LILYA

Time to take out some more.

INT. COMMAND TENT - EARLY MORNING

A storm rages outside. Canvas walls billow in the wind. Rain patters against the sides. Inside, dim lamplight flickers over maps, radios, and weather reports. Smoke curls from an ashtray left burning too long.

Commander Grigorov, thick-coated, square-jawed, weathered by war, stands at the map table with a telegram in hand. His brow is furrowed. He doesn't look up as the flap opens.

In steps Lilya, dripping wet, flight jacket unzipped, still wearing her gloves. Her eyes are steel. Her posture, ready for battle, even here.

GRIGOROV

You weren't on today's flight roster.

LILYA

I didn't ask to be.

GRIGOROV

I noticed. You shot down two more. That makes nine.

LILYA

Should I aim for ten before breakfast?

GRIGOROV

You'll be lucky if I don't ground you by dinner.

He slams a folder down, frustration flashing across his face.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing,
Litvyak? You're out there like a
flame with no wick. Breaking off
from formation, ignoring orders,
tailing enemy flights solo.

Lilya step closer folding her arms.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)
You're disobeying formation calls.
Going rogue mid-sortie. You're not
a one-woman army, Litvyak.

LILYA
No. I'm just the one who keeps
coming back.

Grigorov slams his hand down on the table.

GRIGOROV
At what cost? You think medals
matter more than your life? Than
your squads? You think you're
invincible just because you're the
best shot in the sky?

Lilya steps forward, soaked hair sticking to her forehead.
Voice cracking, but her tone unshaken.

LILYA
They shot Katya out of the sky like
she was nothing. Aleksei burned.
I have watched children dig
trenches with their bare hands.

(Her breath catches)

LILYA (CONT'D)
And I'm still supposed to fly like
it doesn't matter?

GRIGOROV
It does matter. That's why you have
to fly smarter.

LILYA
Smarter gets you medals. Angrier
gets you kills.

Silence between them, thick with tension.

GRIGOROV

You keep this up, you won't make it
to ten. And for what? Revenge?

LILYA

You're damn right!

Grigorov stares at her, the room seems to slow down around
them.

GRIGOROV

Then you're no better than the men
you shoot down.

A long pause. Lilya doesn't blink. Doesn't move.

LILYA

You're wrong.

Lilya steps closer

LILYA (CONT'D)

They fly to conquer. I fly to
remember.

A long silence. Grigorov studies her, sees the anger, but
also the pain.

GRIGOROV

Then you're not a pilot.
You're a loaded gun. And I don't
send loaded guns into the sky
without a target and a reason.
You want vengeance? Fine. But don't
confuse it with leadership.

Lilya stiffens.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)

Every girl on this base looks at
you like you're something more.
So act like it.

He walks past her, then pauses, his voice quiet, tired but
stern.

GRIGOROV (CONT'D)

You think you're the only one who's
lost people? You want to be a
weapon, you'll burn out. You want
to be a leader, you could change
this war.

Lilya doesn't move. Her eyes stay forward. But the words hit. You can see it in the small shift of her breathing.

LILYA
(softly)
I didn't ask to be anyone's hero.

GRIGOROV
You don't get to choose that
anymore.

A long pause. Lilya doesn't answer. She just looks at him, not with defiance, not quite with agreement either. She gives a small nod. Barely more than a breath.

LILYA
(quietly)
Understood, Commander.

She turns to leave the tent without another word.

GRIGOROV
You're dismissed Lt.

AIRFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Lilya steps out into the storm. But for once, she's not walking like she wants to outrun the grief. She's walking like she's headed back into the fire, this time, with purpose.

LILYA'S BUNK - MOMENTS LATER

A small metal stove glows in the corner. The room is modest, spare flight gear, a canvas cot, a single shelf. Lilya removes her jacket slowly and sits on the edge of her cot, removing her gloves one finger at a time. She picks up the photo of her and Katya as well as the blue scarf. She studies it for a long moment, thumb brushing the corner.

LILYA
I thought if I flew like I had
nothing to lose...maybe I'd feel
like I still had something left.

A silence. Just the creak of canvas in the wind.

LILYA (CONT'D)
I thought if I flew faster, fought
harder, maybe I could outrun this
pain.

She sets the photo back carefully. Rubbing the scarf between her thumb and finger, she brings it to her lips and breathes out deeply giving it a gentle kiss.

LILYA (CONT'D)
I miss you Katya.

Lilya lies back on the cot, staring at the ceiling. The storm outside starts to fade.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Maybe it's not about flying away
anymore. Maybe it's about flying
toward something.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INFIRMARY TENT - NIGHT

Soft moans and the low clink of medical tools echo through the canvas-walled tent. Dim lanterns cast long shadows on soldiers resting on cots. The air smells of iodine and smoke. A soft rain taps the canvas above.

Petya sits with his shirt off, a clean bandage wrapped around his left shoulder. He winces as a medic tightens the dressing.

Across from him, a YOUNG PILOT lies stiffly on her cot, staring at the ceiling. Her name tag reads: TUROVA, A. (18)

Her fingers tremble around a metal cup of tea that's gone cold. Her eyes are wide, red-rimmed, and haunted.

Lilya enters quietly, soaked boots leaving faint prints. She scans the room. Her gaze finds Anya. She crosses over.

LILYA
(softly)
Permission to sit?

Turova nods hesitantly. Lilya lowers herself onto the cot beside her.

LILYA (CONT'D)
You flew today?

TUROVA
First sortie. We got hit. I froze.

LILYA
You survived. That's more than some
do.

TUROVA

(shaking her head)

I didn't fire. I didn't even look through the scope. I just... ducked and held on.

LILYA

(sincerely)

That's instinct. That's human.

TUROVA

But I was supposed to fight. Everyone else—Tanya, Irina, even Nadia—they were ready. I wasn't. I don't think I'll ever be.

LILYA

Let me tell you something.

(pauses)

The first time I flew a combat mission, my hands were shaking so badly I couldn't unclip my goggles. I lied about hitting the target just so I wouldn't get pulled off the roster.

Turova finally looks at her.

LILYA (CONT'D)

Being brave doesn't mean you feel nothing. It means you go back up there anyway. You don't have to be like me, Anya. You just have to keep going.

Turova blinks. Her breath shudders. She nods, slowly.

TUROVA

Do you still get scared?

LILYA

Every single time.

(smiles faintly)

But I've learned something. Fear is the fire. You either let it burn you up... or you fly through it.

Lilya reaches over, takes Turova's shaking hand in her own, steady.

LILYA (CONT'D)

You'll fly again. And when you do... you'll remember this moment.

(MORE)

LILYA (CONT'D)
You'll know you made it through the
worst day, and you're still here.

Turova presses her lips together, fighting tears. Lilya stands.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Rest. Tomorrow's sky belongs to
you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The barracks are dim. Pilots clean gear, scribble letters, some already asleep. Lilya sits at a central table, poring over a map by lantern light. Tanya, Petya, and Irina sit nearby, chatting softly.

TANYA
You know they're all watching you,
right?

Lilya glances up, confused.

TANYA (CONT'D)
The younger ones. Petya, Anya, even
Irina back there. (smiles faintly)
You walk into a room, and they sit
straighter.

IRINA
It's true. When you call the shots,
we believe them. Even if they scare
the hell out of us.

PETYA
(half-joking) And even when they
get us shot at.

They all chuckle lightly. Lilya shakes her head, overwhelmed.

LILYA
I'm just a pilot, same as you.

TANYA
No. You're the one who pulls us
through. That's different.

Lilya sits back, the weight settling on her. She studies their faces: tired, scarred, but full of trust. A long silence.

LILYA
(softly) Then I can't afford to fly
for myself anymore. Not if you're
all counting on me.

Tanya smiles knowingly, almost like she's been waiting for
Lilya to say it.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING TENT - EARLY MORNING

The storm has passed. Early sunlight filters through the
canvas roof, casting a pale glow across the briefing table.
The air smells like wet earth and engine oil.

Four pilots gather around the table TANYA (mid 20s), PETYA
(20), IRINA (27), and a nervous new recruit who hasn't even
stenciled her name on her flight jacket yet. A large map is
pinned down with metal flares and coffee mugs. Penciled notes
and movement markers litter the surface. Silence hangs, not
tension, but anticipation. The flap opens. Lilya enters.
Jacket zipped, cap tucked under her arm. No swagger. No limp.
Just presence.

TANYA
(stands halfway)
Lieutenant.

Lilya gives a small nod and steps up to the table.

LILYA
We've been assigned patrol over
Sector 4. Scouts spotted three
Luftwaffe units heading north from
the ravine. We'll intercept them
before they reach the munitions
depot.

PETYA
Do we have confirmation they're
fighters?

LILYA
One recon plane. Two escorts, maybe
three. Could be a feint. Could be
the real thing. Either way, we
don't leave anything in the sky.

She pauses. Looks up. Her voice lowers slightly.

LILYA (CONT'D)
 We fly as a unit. If you lose
 visual, don't break off. You fall
 back. You don't get medals for
 dying alone.

The pilots nod, eyes sharp now. Tanya smiles and stands up
 straighter. The new recruit, NADIA(17), fidgets, clearly
 anxious. Lilya notices. She steps toward her.

LILYA (CONT'D)
 What's your name?

NEW RECRUIT
 Uh... Nadia. Nadia Belinskaya.

LILYA
 You flown a Yak before?

NADIA
 Once. With my trainer. I've
 never...

LILYA
 You'll be on Tanya's wing. She's
 got eyes like a hawk. You listen to
 her, and you'll land just fine.

Nadia nods, gulping. Lilya rests a hand briefly on her
 shoulder, steadying, not soft.

LILYA (CONT'D)
 Courage doesn't mean you're not
 afraid. It means you fly anyway.

Lilya nods at Tanya.

LILYA (TO ALL) (CONT'D)
 Gear up. We take off in twenty
 minutes.

AIRFIELD - MINUTES LATER

Engines roar. Mechanics scramble. The Yak-1Bs line up along
 the runway, their noses gleaming with frost and firelight.

Lilya walks across the tarmac beside Tanya, tightening her
 gloves.

TANYA
 You're different this morning.

LILYA
 (half-smiling)
 I slept.

TANYA
 That's not what I meant.

Lilya nods gently but doesn't answer. She just climbs into her cockpit, buckles in, and stares ahead, eyes locked on the open sky.

LILYA'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

As the squadron lines up for takeoff, she pulls a small photo from her jacket, the one of her and Katya, and tucks it beneath her altimeter.

A moment of silence. Then her voice crackles over the radio:

LILYA
 This is One. Squadron, sound off.

TANYA (O.S.)
 Two, ready.

PETYA (O.S.)
 Three, ready.

IRINA (O.S.)
 Four, ready.

NADIA (O.S.)
 (Nervously)
 ...Five, ready.

A soft smile touches Lilya's lips.

LILYA
 Let's fly.

The Yak engines thunder. One by one, the planes take off, wheels lifting from the earth. Lilya's aircraft is last, trailing a thin vapor of condensation as it climbs into the morning sky

EXT. SKY OVER SECTOR 4 - MIDDAY

The air is crisp and clear. The five Yaks fly in tight formation, sunlight flashing across their canopies. Below them: scattered trees, hills, and a narrow stretch of road leading to the munitions depot they're meant to protect.

LILYA (O.S.)
 White Lily to squadron, eyes sharp.
 They'll come from the west if
 they're aiming for the convoy line.

TANYA (O.S.)
 Nothing on my scope yet, wait.
 I've got movement. Low. Fast.

A pair of German Bf 109s cut across the horizon, just above the treetops. One Stuka bomber follows behind them.

LILYA (O.S.)
 That's our target. Irina, with me.
 Petya, cover the bomber. Tanya keep
 the rookie close.

LILYA'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Lilya banks hard, diving toward the lead fighter. She's locked in, a predator again. Her crosshairs dance toward the first 109. She lines up the shot. Her finger curls on the trigger..

NADIA (O.S.)
 (Panicked)
 He's on me! I can't, Tanya,
 he's...!

Lilya's eyes snap to her left.

A third 109 has slipped past Petya and is tailing Nadia, who's breaking formation, twisting erratically, clearly losing control.

TANYA (O.S.)
 Nadia! Pull right! You're too high!

NADIA (O.S.)
 I...I can't shake him!

LILYA'S COCKPIT

Lilya stares at the enemy in her sights. Her kill. The kill she's already claimed in her head. Then she looks left. Nadia. A blur of panic and inexperience, about to be torn out of the sky.

LILYA
 Petya, take my mark. Finish the
 lead fighter.

She peels off, breaking from the kill and diving toward Nadia's attacker with brutal speed.

CHASE SEQUENCE

Nadia's Yak wobbles in a steep dive. The German fighter chases close behind, guns lighting up. Lilya drops into view from above, her plane screaming like a storm. She opens fire a precise burst and rips the 109 apart. The enemy pilot ejects too late. The plane crashes into the forest below.

Nadia swerves away, barely stabilizing.

NADIA (O.S.)
(Breathless)
Lieutenant... thank you.

LILYA (O.S.)
Stay tight. Don't get grateful
until we land.

SKY - CONTINUOUS

Clouds roll past. The whine of the Yak's engine fades for a moment as Lilya coasts back into formation.

She glances at Nadia's plane ahead, a little too wobbly, still veering slightly left. Lilya exhales, chest tight with something other than exhaustion.

She flips the channel to Nadia's frequency.

LILYA (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)
Nadia.

NADIA (O.S.)
Yes, Lieutenant?

LILYA
You kept flying. That's what
matters.

A beat of silence. Then Nadia's voice breaks through, trembling.

NADIA (O.S.)
I thought I was going to die. I
thought if you hadn't...
(pauses, voice catching)
I've never felt that kind of fear
before.

Lilya's eyes soften. She's not looking at clouds anymore.

LILYA
Fear is part of flying. We all
carry it. The trick is to carry
someone else, too.

NADIA (O.S.)
I don't understand.

LILYA
You will. One day, someone will be
in your sights, and someone else
will be in danger. You'll choose
the living. Not the victory.

Lilya's voice falters slightly, then firms again.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Katya once did the same for me.

Nadia is silent. Lilya touches the photo near her altimeter,
Katya's smile, frozen in black and white.

LILYA (CONT'D)
It's not weakness to care. It's the
only reason we're still human up
here.

She switches back to the open channel.

LILYA (O.S.) (TO ALL) (CONT'D)
Regroup. We're heading home.

SKY - MOMENTS LATER

The remaining Stuka bomber is already trailing smoke. Petya
and Irina finish it off with clean precision.

The sky goes quiet. The enemy is gone. The depot is safe.

LILYA'S COCKPIT

Lilya exhales slowly, eyes scanning the clouds.

TANYA (O.S.)
That was clean work.

PETYA (O.S.)
White Lily, you could've had him.
That lead fighter was yours.

Lilya watches the horizon, calm, focused.

LILYA (O.S.)
 He'll be someone else's problem.
 I'd rather keep our own in the sky.

AIRFIELD - LANDING SEQUENCE

One by one, the planes land. Nadia's touches down shakily, but safe. Mechanics rush to help. She climbs out, visibly shaken but alive. Lilya steps from her cockpit. Her face is unreadable. Tanya approaches.

TANYA
 She would've been gone if you'd
 hesitated.

LILYA
 I almost didn't help her. But I'm
 not flying like I used to.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The chalkboard is freshly marked:

Confirmed Solo Victories - LILYA: 11 Shared Victories -
 LILYA: 3

She stands before it, chalk still in hand. A few mechanics and young pilots hover nearby, whispering, watching.

Lilya studies the numbers. Slowly, she writes beneath:

NADIA - 1 Mission Survived

The younger pilots glance at it, puzzled. Nadia stares wide-eyed.

Lilya turns, her voice steady, carrying through the hangar.

LILYA
 Kills don't keep us in the sky.
 Each of you does. The only victory
 that matters is landing together.

The hangar goes quiet. Mechanics pause, pilots straighten. Nadia blinks, eyes misting, as if something heavy just lifted off her shoulders.

TANYA
 (softly, proud)
 There's your leader.

Grigorov, leaning in the doorway unseen until now, watches. His expression hard, but his eyes softer than ever. He nods once, a silent approval and walks back to the command tent.

Lilya sets the chalk down, wipes her hands on her trousers, and steps away. As she passes Nadia, she places a hand on the young pilot's shoulder.

LILYA

We fly for each other. Never forget that.

Nadia nods, almost trembling.

Lilya exits into the night. A few pilots stand taller, a few even salute. The board remains: her kills at the top, but "Mission Survived" glowing like the truest honor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMAND TENT

A weak glow spills through the seams of the canvas. Inside, a map is spread out across the table. Markings in red and blue crisscross the terrain. Reports are stacked in piles beside a rusted coffee urn and a half-empty vodka bottle.

Lilya stands alone at first, running a finger along a sketched flight route.

Tanya enters, wrapped in her long coat, carrying two steaming cups.

TANYA

I figured you'd already be up.

Lilya doesn't look up, but her lips twitch.

LILYA

The sky doesn't sleep. Neither should we.

Tanya hands her a cup. They stand in silence.

TANYA

You were different yesterday.

LILYA

More tired?

TANYA

More... careful. Not with your aim. With us.

Lilya takes a sip, then sets the cup down. She stares at the map.

LILYA

They told us we were weapons. But weapons don't get haunted by the people they save...or the ones they couldn't.

TANYA

We followed you into fire. Even when you didn't want us to.

Lilya looks over.

LILYA

That was the mistake. I thought I could do this alone. That being the best meant flying solo.

(beat)

But leadership isn't about kills. It's about who's still in the sky when the smoke clears.

Tanya nods, eyes misting slightly.

TANYA

They believe in you.

LILYA

Then I better be worth that belief.

She folds the map. A long pause.

LILYA (CONT'D)

This isn't about vengeance anymore. Not just. If someone has to be the shield... it should be me.

TANYA

Don't talk like that.

LILYA

I'm not planning to die, Tanya.

She looks up, voice quiet but steely.

LILYA (CONT'D)

But I am planning to make sure someone else gets to live.

INT. COMMAND TENT - NIGHT

Maps, reports, and a single oil lamp glow across the table. Raskova stands by the map, marking positions. Grigorov sits on a stool, rubbing his temple. The flap opens, and Lilya steps in, her jacket zipped tight.

Both look up. She salutes sharply.

LILYA
Permission to speak freely,
Comrades.

Raskova nods.

Lilya crosses to the table, her voice steady but her eyes shining.

LILYA (CONT'D)
You gave me the sky. You gave me a
chance when nobody else would.
Whatever happens in the future... I'm
grateful.

She turns first to Raskova, offering a firm salute.

LILYA (CONT'D)
Thank you, Comrade Commander.

Raskova's expression softens, pride flickering behind her eyes. She returns the salute.

Then Lilya faces Grigorov. She hesitates a moment, then steps forward and embraces him quickly, tightly.

LILYA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Thank you, Papa.

Grigorov stiffens, caught off guard. Then, slowly, he returns the hug, his rough hand on her shoulder.

GRIGOROV
(whispering)
Come back, Lily. Please.

They separate. Lilya salutes again, crisp, formal.

LILYA
Good night, Comrades.

She turns and leaves. Neither Raskova nor Grigorov speaks, they just look at each other and nod.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EDGE OF AIRFIELD - NIGHT

A small grove of birch trees rustles in the faint wind. A wooden wall stands beneath them—weather-worn, hand-carved with names of fallen pilots. Some names are etched with dates. Others have photographs or scraps of personal cloth tacked beside them.

Lilya approaches alone, her boots crunching in the frost.

She stands silently before the wall. A few names are familiar. Budanova, K. is carved near the center. Next to it, a faded ribbon flutters in the wind.

She reaches into her flight jacket and pulls out a tiny folded page, a letter, creased, handled too often. She kneels and tucks it gently behind Katya's ribbon.

LILYA
(whispers)
You always said we flew for
something greater.

She swallows hard, fingers brushing Katya's name.

LILYA (CONT'D)
I didn't understand back then. I
just wanted to be faster. Deadlier.
(pause)
Now I think... maybe we're just
messengers. We fly to carry the
names of those who can't.

She stands, wiping her hands on her coat. Then she looks up, eyes shining, not with anger this time, but with clarity.

LILYA (CONT'D)
If I don't come back... let this be
enough.

She takes a slow breath and turns toward the runway, the sun just beginning to creep above the horizon.

Frost clings to the grass. Lilya kneels beside her Yak, her hand resting against the cold fuselage. Ina, her mechanic, watches from a distance.

Lilya whispers under her breath, as if to the machine itself.

LILYA (CONT'D)
 You and me, girl. We still got more
 flying to do. Let's make it count.

She pulls the small posy of wildflowers from her pocket, the ones she picked earlier, and tucks them into a seam by the cockpit, careful and reverent.

INA
 (quietly, almost to
 herself)
 She talks to the plane like it's
 alive.

Lilya overhears, smiles faintly without looking back.

LILYA
 It is. She carries me when no one
 else can.

She pats the metal skin once, then places her hand on the white lily and sighs, bowing her head.

LILYA (CONT'D)
 Goodnight Ina.

Lilya turns and walks back to the barracks.

AIRFIELD - SUNRISE - AUGUST 1, 1943

Golden light spills across the dewy grass. The silhouette of a lone Yak-1B gleams beside a weathered hangar. Lilya walks toward it slowly, her flight helmet tucked under one arm, her other hand reaching down to pick a small posy of wildflowers growing by the runway's edge. She pauses to tuck the bouquet under her arm and sees INA (30), her loyal mechanic, tightening the last bolt on the Yak's landing gear.

INA
 (smiling, tired)
 She's ready, Lilya.

Even cleaned the windscreen. Thought you might want a clear view for once.

LILYA
 (with a grin)
 Then I'll try not to bring her back
 in pieces.

They share a moment, brief, familiar, warm.

Lilya climbs into the cockpit, pins the flowers next to her instrument panel, right above the altimeter. She breathes in something like peace crosses her face. She waves once to Ina. Ina waves back.

EXT. SKY - OVER A FROZEN VALLEY - DUSK

A bitter wind rushes over a wide, jagged forest valley. Six Soviet Yaks fly in formation, sun bleeding out behind the clouds. Below a column of Soviet supply trucks winds along a narrow path through the trees.

In the distance, a swarm of German planes crests the horizon thirty strong, a wall of wings and steel.

INT. LILYA'S COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Inside her cockpit, Lilya squints through the windscreen. Her jaw tenses.

LILYA
Eyes up. We've got company.
Too many to count.

TANYA
(alarmed)
Jesus... there's over two dozen.
We're outnumbered three to one.

PETYA (O.S.)
Orders, Lieutenant?

Lilya stares ahead. Calm. Silent for a moment. Then she speaks, clear, firm, final.

LILYA (O.S.)
All units, fall back. Now.

NADIA (O.S.)
What? We can't just...

LILYA (O.S.)
You can. And you will.
This is an order.

The German planes draw closer, their formation tightening like a fist.

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
They're not here for you. They want
the strike leader. I'll give them
one. The White Lily of Stalingrad
herself...

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Lilya banks hard toward the incoming swarm. Her plane accelerates, roaring like a cannon. She breaks off alone, heading directly into the enemy like a single flame rushing toward darkness.

TANYA (O.S.)
(shouting)
Lilya, don't!

LILYA (O.S.)
I've flown this far with ghosts.
I can fly with them a little
longer.

A heavy silence falls over the radio. Then...

LILYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tell them... tell them we flew for
each other.

DOGFIGHT

Lilya opens fire, tearing through the flanks of the enemy vanguard. She takes out two German fighters immediately, spirals of smoke spinning down behind her.

But she's alone now. Enemy fire tears through the sky like lightning. Bullets slam into her fuselage. The left wing shudders. She keeps flying. She loops. Fires again another enemy wing clipped, sent burning into the trees. But her own plane is faltering. Warning lights flicker. The canopy is cracked. Blood spatters across her lap from a shoulder graze. She doesn't flinch. The final shot hits. Her plane jerks, flames bloom from the undercarriage. She dives, engines screaming, the trees rising fast.

FOREST - DISTANT BIRDS-EYE VIEW - CONTINUOUS

A black streak cuts through the trees. A plume of smoke and fire explodes upward. A still silence follows. But just as the smoke begins to settle, we rise higher and higher above the treetops. And then in the far corner of the screen, a small white parachute drifts down, caught in the wind.

AIRFIELD - NIGHTFALL

Ina stands at the edge of the runway, eyes red, staring into the darkening sky. Pilots and mechanics linger in silence. No one speaks. Lilya's plane never returns.

INT. OFFICERS QUARTERS- LATER THAT NIGHT

Tanya sits on Lilyas bunk, staring at a photo of the squadron.

Ina quietly sets a single white flower on Lilya's nightstand on top of the blue scarf.

INT./EXT. MONTAGE - VARIOUS - YEARS LATER

- SOVIET ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE - 1979: Villagers uncover a long-lost crash site. A flight jacket with the name Litvyak is lifted from the dirt.

- MOSCOW, 1990 - An official Soviet ceremony. YURI LITVYAK (62), accepts the Hero of the Soviet Union medal and Order of Lenin medal from Chairman Gorbachev.

- KRASNY LUCH - PRESENT DAY - A towering memorial statue stands beneath a canopy of trees. The bust bears Lilya's likeness, frozen in time. Beneath it: flowers, medals, paper cranes and toy planes rest.

EXT. SKY - DREAMLIKE VISION

A Yak-1B glides over the clouds, untouched, silent. In the cockpit: Lilya, young, proud, at peace. She looks down briefly towards the statue, then forward, vanishing into the horizon.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER OVER: PHOTO OF REAL LIFE MARINA RASKOVA

Major Marina Raskova 1912 - 1943

Founder of the Women's Air Regiments.

Pioneer of Soviet Aviation.

"The Mother of the Sky"

Navigator. Recruiter. Icon.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER OVER: PHOTO OF REAL LIFE KATYA BUDANOVA

Captain Yekaterina "Katya" Budanova 1916 - 1943

261 combat missions.

5 confirmed solo victories.

6 shared kills.

"The Firebrand of the Soviet Sky"

Pilot, Friend. Hero.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER OVER: A PHOTO OF REAL LIFE ALESKEI SOLOMATIN

Captain Aleksei Solomatin 1921 - 1943

266 combat missions.

13 confirmed solo victories.

Up to 16 shared kills.

"The Golden Hawk"

Mentor. Wingman. Warrior.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER OVER: A PHOTO OF THE REAL LIFE LILYA LITVYAK

Lieutenant Lilya Litvyak 1921 - 1943

268 combat missions.

12 confirmed solo victories.

3 shared kills.

"The White Lily of Stalingrad"

Fighter. Leader. Legend

FADE TO BLACK.