

# Flying Fortress

ACX Audition — Scenes 1 & 2

Auditioning narrator: Mike Vendetti | [mikevendetti.com/booth-ready/](http://mikevendetti.com/booth-ready/)

## Pronunciation guide

**Merseburg** MAIR-seh-boorg

**Luftwaffe** LOOFT-vahf-uh

**Witkowski** wit-KOW-skee

**flak** flak

## Scene 1 — Opening

*Direction: Narrator (Walt) — Gen-Am, central PA. Internal voice, weary, defensive, building.*

I'm not crazy.

I know that's what they're saying about me. I know that's where this road is leading; Section 8, the loony bin, the funny farm, Land of Padded Rooms and one-size fits all jackets.

But I saw what I saw. And all of us — those that made it back, at least — were in agreement that we had to tell the truth of what happened. We owe it to those who didn't make it back.

We owe it to the rest of the world. They have no idea what's out there. And so we spoke truth to power, and paid the price for it.

It was just another mission, if that is such a thing. Given the casualty rate for B-17 crews on any given mission, every time

you went up into the air, you knew there was a pretty good chance you weren't coming back.

But it started out like any other. We had our officer's briefing, sitting around in that big conference room with an easel in the front. They always kept it covered with a curtain, like it was some sort of secret prize giveaway to the lucky ticket holder, and then once everybody was there, the brass would lift the curtain with a flourish to show us all what section of Germany we'd be bombing the hell out of that day.

We didn't act like we'd just won a prize when the curtain lifted. Mostly, you heard groans and curses and "You gotta be kidding me!". I know everyone back home likes to put our guys on a pedestal and call us heroes and think of us as constant Dudley Do-Rights who never have a cross word to say about a lousy situation, but we're still men. Men doing an ugly job, and when we were in an environment where we felt safe to express ourselves, we griped like anybody else. We still got on the plane, of course, and did our jobs even when the flak was thick enough to walk across and it seemed like every damn fighter in the Luftwaffe had personally chosen your bomber as their favorite target.

Our pilot, Captain Albert Mitchell, always seemed to get a kick out of the gripes and moans, chuckling a little to himself during

every briefing. This mission was the same. The curtain fell, and we saw we were headed to bomb the shit out of an oil refinery near someplace called Merseburg in Germany.

There were the normal moans and groans, and then the requisite demands from the brass for us to knock it off and pay attention. We were told to expect heavy flak and the strong possibility of fighter intercept.

No shit. That was pretty much every mission.

Captain Mitchell got that grin on his face and started to chuckle. He had a hell of a sense of humor. When we painted the name of our plane, Sky King, on the nose, our co-pilot, Lieutenant "Skip" Witkowski, started giving him some static.

**SKIP**

"Sky King?"

*Direction: Skip — slightly older, ribbing tone, smiling on the line.*

**SKIP**

"Jesus, Bert, why didn't you just call it 'Massive Erection'?"

Captain Mitchell tipped his hat back and gave him that same little grin.

**MITCHELL**

"Everybody already knows that about me, Skip."

*Direction: Mitchell — easy authority, dry humor, a hint of a Midwestern lilt.*

He was a good guy, Captain Mitchell. It was a damn shame when he bought it. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

## Scene 2 — The Bomb Bay

*Direction: Tense, low-volume opening — Walt is talking himself across the catwalk. Pace tightens through the scene.*

The manual release for the bombs was by the cockpit, on the far side of the catwalk. Because nothing's goddamn easy.

I didn't see him at first, because I was staring at the catwalk, trying to psyche myself up, staring at the narrow beam of steel as if I could somehow make it wider and easier to cross if I stared at it hard enough. Right when I went to take my first halting step into the wind-swept bomb bay, the corner of my eye caught a pair of boots standing on the far side of the catwalk.

Skip? I had time to wonder before I looked up and nearly lost my mind.

It wasn't Skip. It was Bob.

Dead as a doornail Bob, insides ripped to shreds by shrapnel Bob, lost all the blood in his body Bob. Standing there, pale as a ghost from having bled to death, with absolutely zero expression on his face.

His eyes were flat and blank, like a sleepwalker's. Part of me thought that it was a miracle, that my friend was somehow still alive, but when those lifeless, blank eyes rolled toward me with no recognition in them, I knew that he was dead.

Everything else was instantly forgotten. The shattered plane I stood in. The alien skies we flew through. The loss of the Maggie Baby and their haunting last transmission. Even the live bomb hanging on the one side of the bomb bay. All forgotten.

**WALT**

"Bob?"

*Direction: Walt — barely a whisper, disbelieving.*

Big Country heard me and came up behind me to look into the bomb bay and see what I was seeing. I could feel his bulk behind me more than I could see it.

**BIG COUNTRY**

"I thought you said he was dead?"

*Direction: Big Country — Oklahoma accent, big-framed, plainspoken, NOT cartoonish drawl.*

**WALT**

"He is."

Not he was. He is. Saying it like that sealed it for me in my mind, that I was witnessing the laws of reality fail me yet again that day.

Even as lost as I was to what I was seeing, a distant part of me realized that there was a deeper, more immediate danger. Skip was in the cockpit right behind Bob. He was wounded, the only one who could fly the plane, and there was nobody at all between Bob and him.

Fortunately, Bob seemed more interested in us and the bomb bay than in getting up to some sort of mischief in the cockpit. He looked all around the bomb bay, at the catwalk, the two guide ropes, and then back at me.

When he spoke, his voice was flat and emotionless and the words came out as if he was unpracticed in using his mouth. It almost looked like he was wrapping his lips around the words, trying to feel them before they came out. What he said didn't make much sense.

**BOB**

"Walt. Walt. You are a Walt."

*Direction: ZOMBIE BOB — flat, hollow, unpracticed. NOT a horror-movie growl. Think: someone learning the shape of human words for the first time. Slight pause between each word. No breath support behind the line.*

**BIG COUNTRY**

"Sir? Sir, are you okay? You need to step away from that catwalk, sir. You might fall."

He was right about that. With most of the bombs gone, there was plenty of space past the guide ropes to slip off the catwalk

and down into the void.

**BOB**

"Big Country. You are a Big Country."

Then, his dead eyes rolled back toward me once more and he said,

**BOB**

"What are you?"

When we didn't answer, but just stood there staring at him, Bob seemed to lose interest in us. He looked down at the narrow catwalk and the guide ropes on either side. Without a word, he detached one of the guide ropes, letting it fall into the wide open bomb bay.

**BIG COUNTRY**

"Don't do that, sir! We have to get that other bomb out of there before we can close the doors, and without those guide ropes, we'll fall!"

Bob stood still for a moment.

**BOB**

"Other bomb. Other bomb. What is a manual release lever?"

**BIG COUNTRY**

"He's in shock or something."

No, he's not, I couldn't say. He's not in shock. He's dead.

I couldn't say it, though. I should have. Maybe that would've changed things. But it was too crazy and too impossible and the words wouldn't form.

**BOB**

"Walt. Come here, Walt."

Now taking a step onto the catwalk, not bothering to hold the remaining guide rope.

**BIG COUNTRY**

"Sir, don't, you're going to fall!"

**BOB**

"Walt. Come to us, Walt. You will all stay here with us."