

FOUND

Story By

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EXT. FORESTED AREA - DAY

In the middle of a darkened forest stands a soldier dressed in American WW2 infantry gear. He looks upwards at the sky, his eyes closed, his body caked with dirt and mud.

A light snowfall drifting down. The weariness of his face subsides slightly as he savors a moment at ease, snowflakes melting on his face.

Blurry, obscured movement rushes by his sides in slow motion, giving him a small jostle in the process. His eyes open.

SOLDIERS P.O.V - FOREST SKY - DAY

A cloudy, grey sky drifts by far above the tall trees.

The serene image of snow falling through the tree tops is broken by a series of black, out of focus shapes streaking into view.

Their numbers increase, the shapes now dotting the sky. They explode into white flashes, followed by showers of burning wood and metal.

Blinding light flashes his vision to white.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LAGRANGE, ILLINOIS - DAY

A small, well kept, suburban home fades into view from the white flash. The numbers 225 are fixed on the door of the house.

We see an officer in uniform walk up the flagstone sidewalk and steps to the door of the house. He knocks on the door and a woman answers.

He hands her an envelope and the woman frantically opens it and starts reading. They exchange brief words, then he stoically walks away.

The woman reads further then breaks down sobbing at the door. Another older woman comes out to comfort her.

DARKNESS

Sudden, black darkness. It lingers uncomfortably.

## INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

The same soldier from the forest scene abruptly jolts upright from a slouched position, awaking from a nightmare. Army Technical Sergeant JOHN BUTLER clenches his armrest and steadies himself.

He assesses his surroundings from his seat on the passenger train that is currently in transit.

A few soldiers are strewn about in different seats, but none seem to be paying attention to Butler. Some are playing cards, some sleeping, and others are staring vacantly out the window.

Butler rubs his face and takes out a deployment order from his bag. The words "DECEMBER 8th, 1945. REPORT TO GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE, OSAKA PREFECTURE, 0900 HOURS" is visible on the paper.

He puts the paper back in his bag and glances out the passenger side window next to him.

The world that is rushing by outside the train is one that feels a million miles away from the dark forests of his dreams. Blue skies, bright sunlight, and buildings with fusuma panels dot the landscape.

As the train progresses further into Osaka he is greeted with the familiar site of a civilization destroyed by war. In many areas the devastation wrought by repeated fire bombings is thorough, entire neighborhoods burned down to rubble and ash.

His expression hardens once more.

## EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Butler steps off the train with his bag. He and other men are shuffled into the back of an open-air transport pickup truck.

Once the truck is at capacity, it drives away from the train station. The external devastation visible during the train ride in is now compounded with the personal, human toll of the war.

The soldiers in the truck pass by children in dirty bandages who are huddled in shells of obliterated buildings. Malnourished adults, clothes hanging off their bodies, mill about on the streets. Some pick through enormous piles of debris scavenging for anything of worth.

Most of the soldiers stop looking outside the truck after a few moments of the scenery, uncomfortably staring down at the floor. Butler never looks away.

The transport pulls up to a Japanese military base that American forces have occupied as a staging area. Butler and the men hop out of the transport and start making their way into the facility. Two grunts getting off the truck near Butler are still shocked by the views on the way to the base.

GRUNT #1

Jesus, Mary and Joseph. I knew we hit this place hard but...

GRUNT #2

Hey! Better them than us right? Can you imagine if the Japs had made it to the states? Remember Pearl Harbor?

GRUNT #1

I guess. At least it's over.

GRUNT #2

Yeah. No way anybody starts a war like this again.

Butler, overhearing the conversation, snorts ruefully. He picks up his bag and walks between the two men as he heads towards the HQ.

JOHN BUTLER

Only people who won't see a war like this again are dead.

The two grunts are caught off guard by the comment. They stare at each other and Butler, not sure how to respond. Butler disappears into the HQ and the other soldiers trickle in after.

INT. ARMY HQ - PROCESSING AREA

An Army PROCESSING OFFICER and a few grunts are helping shuffle people in the right directions. Butler walks up and hand the man his papers.

JOHN BUTLER

Looking for Lieutenant Ballard sir.

The officer starts scanning his paperwork.

PROCESSING OFFICER

Glad to have someone from recon  
over here. Down the hall, to the  
left.

Butler starts to take his papers back when the officer stops  
him.

PROCESSING OFFICER (CONT'D)

Whoa whoa, son. Says here you  
didn't complete orientation. Why  
wasn't that done when you  
transferred to GRS?

JOHN BUTLER

Shipped over from Europe as soon as  
tour ended sir. Wasn't stateside  
long enough for orientation.

PROCESSING OFFICER

I see. Well Sergeant, over here we  
require a different approach than  
lining up Germans in the sights of  
an M1.

JOHN BUTLER

Understood sir, but I think...

PROCESSING OFFICER

No buts soldier. I get it's not a  
Rita Hayworth picture, but top  
brass says it's important to what  
we're doing over here. So that  
makes it important to you. We  
clear?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir.

PROCESSING OFFICER

Good. One just started over there  
past the barracks. If you hurry  
now, you can catch it.

JOHN BUTLER

Thank you sir.

He hands the papers back to Butler. Butler turns, salutes,  
and hurries over to where the orientation film is been shown.

INT. ARMY HQ - ORIENTATION ROOM

Butler is herded into a small room with a few other stragglers. The film is already started.

They all find empty seats in a group of chairs placed facing a large projection screen that takes up most of the front wall. A reel to reel projector in the back is whirring along.

On the screen, the film is showing various clips of the Japanese population. A FILM NARRATOR drones on under the footage.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)

What does a conquering army do with  
the family of the Japanese soldier.  
Fathers... brothers... mothers...  
cousins... of the soldier.

The film shows clips of Japanese generals screaming at soldiers. Masses of soldiers saluting in unison. People whipped into a frenzy by figures of authority.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What to do with these people...  
people trained to play follow-the-  
leader? What to do with people  
trained to follow blindly wherever  
they are told?

Images of illustrated brains superimposed over live action footage of Japanese people are shown.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Japanese people can make  
trouble or make sense. We have  
decided to make sure they make  
sense and that job starts here. Our  
problems start in the brain inside  
of the Japanese head. Physically  
these are no different than any  
other brains in the world. They are  
all made of exactly the same stuff  
as ours. These brains like our  
brains can do good things or bad  
things, all depending on the kind  
of ideas that are put inside.

A soldier, CARL GADDIS, sits next to Butler. An Irish bruiser, 6'3", working class muscle, he leans over towards him and scoffs quietly.

CARL GADDIS

(quietly)

That's bullshit. Those nips are  
nothing like us.

Butler ignores the soldier. The film shows more scenes of Japanese Shinto religion being practiced in various ways.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The warlords of Japan convinced the people that they were specially created for one single purpose. To crush. To conquer. To rule like gods over all the other people of the earth. They make them bow and believe what they say. And when they've bowed enough, when they said it enough, when they've heard it enough... they'll begin to believe it. They tell it to the school kids, tell it to the bank clerks, tell it to the farmers. They drill it in their heads.

Footage of American soldiers being carted off on stretchers is shown, intercut with fanatical Japanese soldiers rushing and screaming.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

We had years of dirty, stinking, heartbreaking struggle. All because of one idea that was sold to the Japanese brain. It will cost us time. It will cost us patience.

Imagery of Japanese battleships and other military equipment are being dismantled and blown apart on the film.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But we are determined that this fact will finally sink in: This is Japan's last war. We are starting to prove that point by completely destroying their power to make war.

The film switches to footage of cooperation between Americans and Japanese. Soldiers playing with Japanese kids. Adults learning new farming and industrial techniques. Japanese people clapping and greeting American soldiers.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Most of the Japanese people, the sincere ones, the ones who really want to make sense of being given every opportunity, are looking to us to help them prove that our idea is better than the Japanese idea. These people are going to judge America and all Americans by us.

Footage of Americana and American soldiers of all race, color, and creed are shown on the screen. Clips of newspapers and posters being put up all around Japan are shown. People are huddling around them to read them. One paper shows the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, with the headline "I Am No Deity, Japanese No Master Race".

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

That means we've got another job to do. That job is to be ourselves. By being ourselves we can prove that what we like to call the American Way, or democracy, or just plain old golden rule common sense is a pretty good way to live. We can prove that most Americans don't believe in pushing people around, even when we happen to be on top. We can prove that most Americans do believe in a fair break for everybody regardless of race or creed or color. We can show that most Americans believe that religion is a matter of a man's own conscience and not something to be used for a political shakedown, or to make trouble, or to start wars.

Footage of more American soldiers interacting with the Japanese flickers by, then the film cuts to the pacific ocean, along with dead American soldiers on the beach and in the water.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

We're sticking around. We're sticking around because we take no more chances. We took our big chance with the Japanese. We took a chance at the waters of an ocean would protect us. We bet that 6,000 miles of ocean could hold back a dangerous idea. We lost that bet.

(MORE)



FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

That bet has been paid by almost every family in America today.

The film rolls into its conclusion with an inspirational montage of images showing collaboration and harmony between Americans and Japanese.

FILM NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

We're here to make it clear to the Japanese that we are not the kind of people who forget such things overnight. We're here to make it clear to the Japanese brain that we've had enough of this bloody barbaric business. We're here to make it clear to the Japanese that the time has now come to make sense... modern civilized sense. That is our job in Japan.

The film closes with a title card that says the name of the film "Our Job In Japan". The title card cross fades into another one, showing the following information:

War Department Orientation Film. Information and Education Division. The official war department logo is emblazoned in the middle of the frame.

The title card fades out.

The film projector in the back of the room gives up the last of its film from the original reel and starts slapping the filmstrip around on the receiving reel. The lights go up.

One or two other soldiers have fallen asleep, their squad mates waking them up as they start to file out of the room. As they leave, their papers are getting stamped confirming that they have viewed the orientation film.

The soldier sitting next to Butler stands up and stretches.

CARL GADDIS

Fucking waste of film. Right buddy?

He gives Butler friendly pats on the shoulder between stretches. Butler stands up beside him.

JOHN BUTLER

Bit of advice pal? Don't be yourself over here.

Butler walks off.

CARL GADDIS

Oh, I wont. I'm gonna ... wait...  
what?

INT. ARMY HQ - BALLARD'S OFFICE

Through the frosted glass inset in a wooden office door, we see the abstract, distorted outline of Butler. He knocks on the door.

PAUL BALLARD (O.S.)

Come in!

Butler steps into the office of LIEUTENANT PAUL BALLARD and drops his gunny sack. He snaps into a salute.

JOHN BUTLER

Sergeant Butler reporting for duty  
sir.

Ballard looks up from a mess of papers and reports, reading glasses resting low on his nose. He is a short, burly man with wispy, receding hair. His office is a clutter of papers with several maps of Osaka posted around the room, most of them marked up with lines and circles. Additional files and papers are stacked haphazardly around the room in box after box.

PAUL BALLARD

At ease son. Butler huh?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir.

Ballard walks over to another part of the office and shuffles through some files. He pauses at one, does more digging, and then takes out two more. He walks over and sits down on the front edge of his desk, flipping the pages of the top most file. He looks up at Butler.

PAUL BALLARD

You... don't make sense son.

Butler is almost startled by the comment.

JOHN BUTLER

Sir?

PAUL BALLARD

Why are you here?

JOHN BUTLER

I had orders to...

PAUL BALLARD

Yes, yes... you got orders to show up for duty. I get that Butler. But why? Unless this file is a marvelous work of fiction I'd say you earned the right to clock out after your last tour. Yet you re-enlisted voluntarily. And of all things, you asked to join this unit. Why?

Butler stiffens back into a perfect formal stance.

JOHN BUTLER

There's work still to be done for the American people sir.

PAUL BALLARD

This isn't an audition for a recruitment poster Sergeant. The war is over. You realize that right?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir.

Ballard pauses for a beat as he looks at the file, then him.

PAUL BALLARD

For God and country huh?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir.

PAUL BALLARD

Hm.

Ballard stares at him for a beat longer.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D)

All right then. You fully aware of what we do here at GRS Sergeant?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir. GRS recovers the dead after combat has ceased.

PAUL BALLARD

And you're ready to find these poor bastards and put them back in the dirt they grew up on?

JOHN BUTLER

Yes sir.

PAUL BALLARD

As you can see from the state of things outside, it's a bit of a FUBAR situation. We knocked humpty dumpty off his wall and he shattered into a million pieces. So you can't do this one lone wolf like you did in recon son.

Ballard holds up two folders in front of Butler with the names "Kehn" And "Gaddis" on them.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D)

These men right here...

(waves folder at Butler)

... are just like you. They make no goddamn sense at all.

He tilts the folders towards Butler. Butler takes them.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

(yelling)

GADDIS! KEHN! GET IN HERE!

Butler jumps slightly at the sudden outburst.

The office door opens once again and two men eagerly stride in. CARL GADDIS and GEORGE KEHN stand beside Butler. They snap a salute.

Bulter recognizes Gaddis as the obnoxious soldier from the orientation film and his eyes squint at him. Gaddis looks shocked upon seeing Butler, gulps, but then rigidly stares back straight ahead, overly tense.

Kehn is a 5'7" skinny, bookish looking, African-American with thin wiry glasses.

As the men enter, Ballard goes over to a different stack of boxes. He starts collecting a map and some more papers. As he rummages through, he starts addressing the men.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D)

Butler, I'd like you to meet Pfc. George Kehn and Pfc. Carl Gaddis. These men are assigned to you for the duration of your tour here.

Ballard finds what he was looking for and turns to face the men.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D)  
 You gentlemen ready to help  
 Sergeant Butler with this last  
 great service for our fallen men?

CARL GADDIS  
 Yes sir!

GEORGE KEHN  
 Yes sir!

PAUL BALLARD  
 Good.

Ballard unceremoniously dumps a collection of maps and a thick report notebook into Butlers arms. Butler starts shuffling through the bundle of documents trying to put them in some rough order.

PAUL BALLARD (CONT'D)  
 Go meet rest the team before you  
 head out. Sergeant Davis is over in  
 the morgue area. He'll get you  
 squared away with the gear you  
 need.

Butler gets the bundle in a manageable carrying state and regains his composure.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Copy that sir.

PAUL BALLARD  
 Good hunting and Godspeed  
 gentlemen. Dismissed.

Ballard goes back over to his desk and then starts filling out paperwork. The soldiers salute then start to head out. Butler starts sorting through the documents again as he nears the door. His face grows puzzled.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Sir?

Ballard responds without looking up.

PAUL BALLARD  
 There a problem sergeant?

JOHN BUTLER  
 There are hundreds of reports in  
 this document and maybe hundreds  
 more scribbled on this map. I don't  
 quite get the priority here? Where  
 do we start?

Ballard looks up from his desk over his reading glasses.

PAUL BALLARD

Son, there are over 8,000 service men missing on these islands. Not to mention the 60 million or so starving Japanese that not one damn person in Washington seems to know what to do with. This entire country has been bombed back to the stone age and your standing there asking me where you start? Anywhere you damn well please. Understand?

The composure of Kehn and Gaddis is slightly rattled by this revelation. Butler almost inquires further, but then decides against it. He tucks the documents between his arm and salutes.

JOHN BUTLER

Understood sir.

PAUL BALLARD

Good. Welcome to the Graves Registration Service gentlemen.

The other two men salute as well. Butler turns and exits the office, the two soldiers following him. As the men exit, the processing officer walks in the room immediately after them and shuts the door behind him.

He drops some folders on Ballard's desk.

PROCESSING OFFICER

Here are some reports from the dock district sir.

Ballard takes the papers nods. He sits them by the paperwork he's actively examining.

PAUL BALLARD

I'll take a look in a bit.

Ballard leans back and rubs his eyes. The processing officer smirks and thumbs back towards the door.

PROCESSING OFFICER

Interesting group back there. A head case, a burnout, and an idealist. I give it a week before they end up in the brig.

Ballard smirks back.

PAUL BALLARD  
Lost causes to chase down a lost  
cause. Seems fitting.

The processing officer lets out a small chuckle.

PROCESSING OFFICER  
This whole damn island is a lost  
cause sir. I'll let you know when  
next group comes in.

Ballard nods back.

PAUL BALLARD  
Dismissed.

The processing officer salutes and then leaves the room.

INT. ARMY HQ BARRACKS

Butler, Gaddis, and Kehn head back to the barracks.

Once they arrive, both soldiers stand in file next to Butler,  
awaiting orders. He drops the maps and documents on his bed.

JOHN BUTLER  
Let's see what you two bring to the  
table.

He picks up the folders with their service history and does a  
quick read through.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
Private Kehn, looks like you're the  
mouth piece of this operation. How  
long you been speaking Japanese?

GEORGE KEHN  
Five years Sergeant. Majored in it  
at college.

Gaddis snorts. Butler looks at him.

JOHN BUTLER  
Something funny Private?

CARL GADDIS  
Kehn went to college to learn that  
Nip mumbo jumbo? Five years down  
the shitter if you ask me.

Kehn flushes with embarrassment and anger, but maintains form. Butler looks down at Gaddis' file.

JOHN BUTLER

Private Gaddis. Looks like you've seen a little action on the front line out here. Iwo Jima. Okinawa. That left you with some pretty strong opinions it seems.

CARL GADDIS

If you saw the things I saw, you'd have same opinions Sarge.

Butler steps up to Gaddis, almost nose to nose, and looks him in the eye. Despite his height advantage, Gaddis is clearly rattled by this.

JOHN BUTLER

You have no idea what I've seen Private. And I honestly don't give a shit what you saw either. If I want to hear your opinions on what Kehn should or should not do with his life, rest assured I'll ask for them. We clear on that?

Gaddis stiffens and tenses from being scolded.

CARL GADDIS

Yes Sergeant.

JOHN BUTLER

Good.

Butler turns back to Kehn.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

With this much school I should be saluting you private. Shame the brass is getting hung up on your year round tan.

GEORGE KEHN

(shrugs)

Works out okay Sarge. Wanted to be on the ground with the people we're helping. Make more of a difference that way.

JOHN BUTLER

The brothers in the 5th platoon saved our ass once in Europe. That made a difference to me.



Kehn politely nods to Butler. Butler puts down their files and picks up the field reports, starts thumbing through.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Also... judging from these reports, we'll all have a few thousand more chances at making a difference. Works cut out for us, so let's load up. We can start poking around for at least a good half day if we hustle.

The men break off and start packing up their gear. As they are packing, other soldiers in the barracks are mingling in and out going about their business.

A few minutes later Butler looks up to see Gaddis discretely chatting with another soldier in the distance. He sees the soldier slip Gaddis a bottle of pills. The soldier leaves after Gaddis slips him cash. Gaddis quickly looks around and pops one in his mouth, dry swallows, then stashes the bottle.

Butler files a mental note and continues packing.

EXT. MORGUE TENT - DAY

The soldiers approach RIBS, a tall, lanky, bone thin soldier with a bald head and pale complexion. Even though the temperature is chilly, he seems perfectly warm in his thin tank top. He drags a bag off the side of a truck and gently, but awkwardly, and lowers it to the ground. A cigarette dangles from his lower lip, seemingly stuck to it by magic. The group gag a bit, the smell around the area being awful. Piles of personal effects are scattered about in the process of being filed away and shipped.

JOHN BUTLER

Hey buddy, we're looking for Sergeant Davis?

RIBS

Ribs.

JOHN BUTLER

Come again?

RIBS

Your looking for Ribs friend.

JOHN BUTLER

No... I'm looking for Sergeant Davis.

RIBS

Only people who call me Davis are my mama, God rest her soul, and the brass. You can call me Ribs.

JOHN BUTLER

Well... okay Ribs, we...

RIBS

Always been a bit of a skin and bones fellah, so mah ribs poke out. Since you asked.

JOHN BUTLER

I didn't... look pal, Ballard sent us over here. Said you had some gear for us before we head out?

RIBS

Ah! Fresh meat! Welcome aboard the GRS gents! Ballard told me about you three. You two saps got the short end of the stick, but you...

Ribs tilts his head at Butler and his expression grows grave.

RIBS (CONT'D)

You volunteered for this job. Nobody's that crazy. Nobody.

Ribs stares Butler up and down with intensity, then breaks into a big grin.

RIBS (CONT'D)

My kind of crazy! Haha!

Ribs goes over to each man and puts one hand on their shoulder, then shakes their hand vigorously with the other. He rubs off gunk and blood on them in the process and Kehn is especially skittish of it.

RIBS (CONT'D)

Let me getcha what y'all need so you can be on your way. Follow me.

Ribs goes over near the truck and rummages through a bag, he pulls out severed hand and gives it to Gaddis. Gaddis grimaces but is otherwise fine and holds on to it. Kehn turns away to hold it together.

RIBS (CONT'D)

Hang on to this for a second.

GEORGE KEHN

Oh jesus... oh jesus..

RIBS

I know pal. That one is a doozy.  
Probably have remove the skin to  
get good prints for the ID.

Ribs takes a small field manual from one of the bags and  
tosses it to Kehn.

RIBS (CONT'D)

You look like your the only one who  
can read in this outfit so that's  
yours. FM 10-63, the GRS field  
manual. But I'm gonna save you  
fellahs some the time. There is a  
jeep loaded up with shovels, bags,  
and other goodies right over there.  
Go find some bodies, then bring 'em  
back to me. Simple as that! Have  
fun boys!

Ribs goes back to moving bags of bodies and parts into the  
tent. The men aren't sure what to make of any of this and are  
clearly off balance by such limited direction.

JOHN BUTLER

Wait... Ballard dumped a truckload  
of reports on us, how do we know  
were not chasing down the same lead  
as another GRS patrol?

RIBS

Another GRS patrol? Didn't the good  
lieutenant tell you? Every member  
of the 604th GRS Company is  
currently present and accounted for  
friend.

The three men are taken aback by this.

JOHN BUTLER

They expect the four of us to find  
and process all these MIAs? That  
would take years!

RIBS

Well, good news is most of the men  
your lookin' for ain't goin nowhere  
anytime soon.

Gaddis scoffs and turns to Butler.

CARL GADDIS  
Sarge, this guy is a loon and this  
is a shit detail. We..

With a speed that seems impossible for such a tall and lanky  
frame, Ribs darts right up to Butler and stares him in the  
face.

RIBS  
Private, you don't have to like  
this job, but you better damn sure  
respect it. The men your lookin'  
for sacrificed everything for our  
country. We don't do this job and  
were letting down every soul back  
home that's waitin for these boys  
to return. We clear?

Guilt spreads across the faces of all three men.

CARL GADDIS  
(sheepishly)  
Ye...yes Sergeant.

RIBS  
Good to hear.

Ribs yanks the hand out of Gaddis hand and steps back. He  
sizes them up one more time.

RIBS (CONT'D)  
Y'all are so serious. Lighten up,  
enjoy life! War's over fellahs!

Ribs pats Kehn on the arm playfully with the severed hand.  
Kehn manages not to crawl out of his own skin.

JOHN BUTLER  
Thanks for your help Serg... Ribs.  
We'll go find these men.

RIBS  
That's the spirit! Good luck  
friends!

The three men walk towards the jeep, not really sure what  
just transpired.

EXT. STREETS OF OSAKA - DAY

Butler, Gaddis, and Kehn drive a jeep down the streets of Osaka. Gaddis is at the wheel, Butler is looking at the surroundings and then down at the map. Khehn rides quietly in the back.

JOHN BUTLER

Here. Pull over.

Gaddis pulls over along a burned down stretch of buildings. Shell shocked people are wandering about while the majority of the street's occupants are trying to carve out what normal existence they can from the rubble.

Butler gets out of the jeep, Gaddis and Kehn follow.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

I guess starting here is as good of a place as any.

CARL GADDIS

This place? This place is a bombed out shithole.

GEORGE KEHN

The whole city got burned to the ground Gaddis, what do you expect?

CARL GADDIS

I sure as hell don't expect to find anything worth a damn. Why here Sarge?

JOHN BUTLER

Because the only thing that even remotely makes sense is starting at the epicenter. This area has the most concentrated reports. Area is riddled with alleged sightings of downed planes and captured soldiers.

CARL GADDIS

Yeah but these reports are from months ago. What good does that do us?

GEORGE KEHN

He's got a point Sarge. With all the chaos after the war I'm not sure how accurate those leads are going to be.

JOHN BUTLER

Doesn't matter whether these leads are accurate or not, point is this area has a lot of eyeballs who saw a lot of things. Eventually the math will shake out in our favor. So, time to win over some local support. Kehn, you up for giving us a little Japanese 101?

GEORGE KEHN

(excitedly)

Hell yeah Sarge! Have you guys speaking like a native in no time.

CARL GADDIS

Uh... Hell no. I'm not talking to these nips. You guys are on your own. Let me know if I need to pull a trigger.

Butler shoots Gaddis a frustrated look.

JOHN BUTLER

Probably for the best private. Subjecting the natives to what comes out of our mouth will get us strung up on war crimes.

Gaddis scoffs. Butler looks at the map and ponders the area to investigate first.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Eeny, meeny, miny...

As he says the words, he jabs his finger at random locations around the areas of interest.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

...Moe.

Butler jabs his finger at his final choice of starting locations on the map.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

We have a winner, the Shitenno-ji temple is nearby. Lets roll.

The soldiers head towards the location on the map.

EXT. SHITENNO-JI - DAY

The men continue to make their way through the streets to their destination. Along the way Kehn and Butler are practicing some basic Japanese. Gaddis shows no interest, just following along and kicking rubble down the street from boredom.

They arrive at an area that appears to have been surrounded by a wall before bombs turned it into rubble. Inside the broken wall chunks, wooden remains of the temple interior structures still jut up from the ground. A few stone statues and features are still in somewhat decent condition.

A small group of people are scattered through the temple. Some are praying, some are wandering aimlessly. Some are huddle up near each other for warmth.

CARL GADDIS

What kind of nonsense did they worship here?

GEORGE KEHN

It's a Buddhist temple Gaddis. Older than Christianity, believe it or not. Just means being mindful and aware of your thoughts and actions, developing wisdom and understanding while....

Kehn looks over and sees Gaddis has gone to one of the somewhat intact Buddha statues and is rubbing it belly.

CARL GADDIS

Look at the beer belly on this guy! I can get behind this!

Kehn starts to protest and then decides it's pointless. He turns to Butler who is looking at some of the people in front of the former entryway to the shrine.

GEORGE KEHN

You ready to give it a whirl Sarge?

JOHN BUTLER

Here goes nothing.

GEORGE KEHN

Hey hey! You got this. Just remember a lot of Japanese words sound very similar, but have very different meanings. Keep those phrases as tight as you can to what we practiced. Be polite, formal.

(MORE)

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

Don't rush right into questions,  
respect the need for introductions.

Butler nods, then walks over to a man and woman who are getting up from meditation at one of the few remnants of the shrine.

JOHN BUTLER

Konnichiwa!

The couple looks up at Butler. They are cautious. Butler looks back and Kehn, who gives a nod of encouragement. Butler looks at the woman and then her husband and gestures to him.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Goshuuujin?

The woman and man look horrified and scurry off. Butler looks back at Kehn.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

What? I asked if it was her  
husband?

GEORGE KEHN

Uhm... close sarge. But.. uh... you  
actually called her husband a  
prisoner?

Butler drops his head and sighs.

EXT. BOMBED OUT STREET CORNER - DAY

Butler is offering a piece of candy to a young boy standing by a group of his friends. Kehn and Gaddis are standing by. The boy has never seen western candy before and doesn't trust it. Butler eats one to demonstrate, then motions for the boy to take the next piece.

JOHN BUTLER

Ushi Okashii! Ushi Okashii!

The children make gagging noises and run off. Butler looks back at Kehn stunned.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Apparently tasty sweets aren't a  
universal thing for kids?



GEORGE KEHN

Uh... no... I mean yes... they  
are.. but "weird cows" are not.

JOHN BUTLER

Are you... ugh.

Gaddis snickers behind them.

EXT. DOCK AREA - DAY

The three soldiers approach a father and his daughter. As the  
Butler gets ready to speak to the two, Kehn stops him.

GEORGE KEHN

Let me... uh... lead off with this  
one okay? Then maybe you just chime  
in with a compliment?

Butler does not want to play second fiddle or admit defeat,  
but he relents.

JOHN BUTLER

Fine.

Kehn turns to the Japanese man and smiles warmly.

GEORGE KEHN

Konnichiwa! Kore wa anata no  
musumedesu ka?

The Japanese man nods.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

I asked him if this was his  
daughter, he says yes.

Butler nods and turns to the man. Kehn holds his breath.  
Gaddis just closes his eyes and shakes his head. Butler  
gestures to his little girl.

JOHN BUTLER

Kowai.

The man is momentarily shocked, then unleashes a barrage of  
angry Japanese and Butler jumps back. The man grabs his  
daughter, and then storms off. Butler looks at Kehn, arms  
motioning "What now?" Kehn grimaces.

GEORGE KEHN

You called his daughter pitiful.

JOHN BUTLER  
 You know what? You should really  
 just take it from here.

Gaddis is relieved.

CARL GADDIS  
 Oh thank God.

Kehn pats Butler on the shoulder and the men head to chat up  
 another local in the area.

MONTAGE

The three men scour the neighborhood talking to as many  
 locals as they can and visiting the sites of reported crashes  
 and captures.

The locals range from outright hostile to docile and helpful,  
 but ultimately are too shell shocked to remember anything  
 worthwhile. The devastation of the city is so thorough they  
 find little of use, mostly scraps of nondescript plane parts  
 and bombs that failed to detonate.

The men get increasingly weary as their resolve and  
 frustration builds throughout the day.

EXT. STREETS OF OSAKA - DUSK

Day turns to dusk and the squad heads back to the base, empty  
 handed and frustrated. Kehn is profusely apologizing to  
 Butler.

GEORGE KEHN  
 I'm sorry Sergeant, maybe I didn't  
 get some of the dialect just right?  
 I tried to be very....

JOHN BUTLER  
 (interrupting)  
 You did what was asked of you  
 private, it just didn't work.  
 That's the military, you'll get  
 used to it.

CARL GADDIS  
 Talking with a bunch of Japs ain't  
 gonna get you shit Kehn. This whole  
 thing is a fubar detail.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Remember what I said about opinions  
 Gaddis?

Ahead of Butler, Gaddis become fixated on something in the distance.

CARL GADDIS  
Stop, right now.

Butler is startled and furious at Gaddis attempting to give him orders.

JOHN BUTLER  
Private! You're not the one....

CARL GADDIS  
No... Sergeant! Look!

Gaddis points down a row of buildings to one where the entire side has been blown off by a bomb. Inside the building we see three figures illuminated by a makeshift fire in a supply drum. The figures are trying to keep warm in the chilly dusk that is giving away to a cold winter night.

JOHN BUTLER  
A bunch of locals huddled around a fire. So what private?

GEORGE KEHN  
Sergeant look at the jacket!

Butler squints and looks closer at the Japanese men. One of them is wearing a leather bomber jacket. Across the arm of the jacket there is an American flag.

CARL GADDIS  
Sergeant, that is an air force issued bomber jacket. Only flight crews get jackets like that. How the hell does that Jap have it?

JOHN BUTLER  
Only one way to find out.

Butler and the squad walk towards the men.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
Let's see if I've learned anything today Kehn.

GEORGE KEHN  
Sarge, maybe you should just let me...

JOHN BUTLER  
No no! I'm a quick learner! I can do this.

Butler smiles broadly and waves at the men.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
 (slowly)  
 Kon'nichiwa minasan! Konbanwa!

The locals look up at the approaching soldiers, startled. Kehn is surprised how well Butler did.

GEORGE KEHN  
 Excellent enunciation there  
 Sergeant!

The three men look at the soldiers, then back and forth at each other. Then they bolt in separate directions to escape.

CARL GADDIS  
 (sarcastically)  
 Yeah... excellent Sergeant.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Shit! Gaddis, right, Kehn left!  
 I've got the jacket!

The three soldiers take off after the men. Butler chases the man with the jacket through the remains of a destroyed building. The chase is frantic and swift, the man knocking over obstacles to slow Butler down.

Finally, Butler closes the gap and grabs the man. They tumble to the ground. Butler flips the local around for the first clear look at his face. Butler sees that it's not a man, but in fact a frightened Japanese boy barely old enough to shave.

The realization of this startles Butler and shocks him into a flashback.

EXT. FORESTED AREA - DAY - FLASHBACK

The same wooded area from the previous nightmare flares to life. The same succession of events plays out, with a faster pace and more violent execution.

Additional memories bubble to the surface. Explosions throwing dirt and debris. Soldiers running. Tracers from machine gun fire. Butler's face splattered with blood and quick flashes of an additional individual that can't be made out.

The last few images of the flashback is Butler slamming his rifle bayonet down on something again and again in a manic rage.

INT. BOMBED OUT BUILDING - NIGHT - (DECEMBER, 1945)

Butler is still holding the boy by the jacket, shell shocked in silence. He is breathing erratically, staring at the boy with wide eyes.

JOHN BUTLER  
(softly)  
You're just a... a boy.

The frightened boy senses his hesitation and throws Butler off balance, breaking free. The boy darts off toward an opening in the building.

Just before he reaches it, Kehn comes charging around the corner and tackles him. Kehn holds him tight while he calms the boy down, speaking to him in Japanese.

Butler struggles to snap out it, turning towards Kehn and the boy.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
(calmly)  
Kid were not gonna hurt you... we  
just want to know where... easy..  
easy... where you got that jacket.

Kehn translates and continues to calm him down. There is a short, slightly calmer exchange.

GEORGE KEHN  
(translating)  
He says he can't say. Foreigners  
aren't allowed.

JOHN BUTLER  
Tell him we'll trade him. Food for  
the jacket and information.

Butler takes out two MRE food rations from his pack and hands them to Kehn. The kid reaches for them but Kehn pulls them back and translates the terms of the offer. The kid contemplates the offer then blurts out his answer.

YOUNG KID  
Burakku Doragon.

Kehn looks incredulously at him and makes him repeat it to make sure he heard it right. After the he repeats it, the group is startled by Gaddis entering the area.

CARL GADDIS  
 (offscreen)  
 Fucking nip! Your little shit  
 friend cut me.

Gaddis comes around the corner, pissed, with a gash on his forearm. Flushed and red, he makes a beeline for the Japanese kid.

The kid panics, then in quick succession takes the MRE's and gives Kehn an elbow to the stomach. Kehn releases his grip and doubles over holding his gut. Gaddis picks up his pace and starts to run towards them.

Kehn weakly grabs after the boy and snags part of his jacket. The jacket comes off as the boy slips out of it. The boy ducks through a hole in one of the walls and out onto the street.

Kehn and Gaddis start to head towards the hole to give chase and Butler yells out.

JOHN BUTLER  
 PRIVATES! STAND DOWN!

The men stop, turning around to face Butler. He slowly gets to his feet. Gaddis and Kehn both stop. Gaddis looks at Butler, dumbfounded.

CARL GADDIS  
 Sergeant?? What the hell? That Jap  
 killed one of ours! And you wanna  
 let him go??

JOHN BUTLER  
 Kid didn't kill anyone private. Now  
 stand down.

GEORGE KEHN  
 Kid was just scared. He told us  
 where he got it anyway.

CARL GADDIS  
 Oh, I'll tell you where he got it!  
 Off the body of dead fucking airman  
 he probably shot himself! And you  
 two don't seem to give a shit!

JOHN BUTLER  
 Shut up Gaddis!

Gaddis bottles his rage forcefully.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
What did he say Kehn?

GEORGE KEHN  
He said...  
(hesitates)  
.. Burakku Doragon.

JOHN BUTLER  
What the hell does that mean?

GEORGE KEHN  
It means The Black Dragon. We  
should let this one go Sergeant.  
Find another lead.

CARL GADDIS  
You afraid of dragons now Kehn? See  
Sergeant, this is what happens when  
you read books instead of chasing  
girls.

JOHN BUTLER  
Private if I hear one more word out  
of your useless mouth today, I'm  
sticking your ass on KP duty for  
the rest of your short, miserable  
career. Understand?

Gaddis slumps against the wall.

CARL GADDIS  
(reluctantly)  
Yes Sergeant.

GEORGE KEHN  
It's not a real dragon, asshole.  
The Black Dragon is Burakkumaketto.  
A black market.

JOHN BUTLER  
You know where this place is?

GEORGE KEHN  
Yes Sergeant, but...

JOHN BUTLER  
Good, we'll head there first thing  
tomorrow and see what we can find.  
Fall in and let's head back to  
base.

GEORGE KEHN  
Sergeant, I don't think you understand. This place... it's one of the worst. It's Yakuza.

JOHN BUTLER  
What are you talking about Kehn?

GEORGE KEHN  
Yakuza are Japanese mafia. They make American mafioso look like choir boys Sarge. My professor told stories about these guys in school and none of them good. Gaijin... foreigners like us... we shouldn't be near this place.

JOHN BUTLER  
Welcome to the new world order Kehn. Even dragons have to fall in line.

Gaddis perks up.

CARL GADDIS  
Damn straight.

Butler holds out his hand for the jacket.

GEORGE KEHN  
But Sarge....

JOHN BUTLER  
You made your case private, now zip it. That's an order.

Kehn sulks and then hands the jacket to Butler. Butler starts heading back to the base. Kehn and Gaddis follow.

INT. ARMY HQ BARRACKS - NIGHT

Butler arrives back at his bunk and wearily dumps off his gear. As he does so, an Army mail delivery man goes by handing out letters.

MAIL DELIVERY MAN  
Rogers! Letter! Smith! Letter!

Butler solemnly eyes the other men as they get their letters and start reading the. He looks back as his own gunny sack, pauses for a second and reaches in. He pulls out a letter, looks at the address, then sits down on the bunk.



He stares at the letter and taps it in his hand a few times. We get a fleeting glance the return address of the letter says "Cleveland, OH".

He tosses the letter aside on the bed and looks down at his feet. His gaze switches back and forth from his feet to the letter, then finally settles on the letter. He picks it back up and tears open the top, taking out the paper within.

Butler fidgets slightly as he reads the letter. His eyes get glassy. On the letter we are treated to brief glances of phrases and words such as "Dear son", "We miss you...", and "Please come home."

Butler closes his eyes and looks away for a beat, then looks back at the letter and crumples it up. He tosses it into a nearby trash bin.

Butler takes a deep breath to compose himself. He looks over at the jacket they took off the boy and starts examining it. He gives the outside of the jacket a brief once over and then runs his fingers over the name tag on the front. The letters "Witte" are stitched into the material.

JOHN BUTLER

(softly)

Hello Mr. Witte. Where might you be?

He opens the jacket up and looks on the inside. On the edge of the coat lining he notices that several threads are frayed, like it's torn. He prods around the seam and feels downwards towards the bottom of the jacket. He feels something flat on the inside surface.

He reaches into the opening, tearing a few more threads to make room for his hand. He pulls out a small leather journal. On the front of the journal it states "Property of Harrison Witte". Butler leans back in his bunk and starts flipping through the pages.

Among the pages is a photo of a bomber crew in front of their plane. He accelerates to the last dated page, marked June 1st, 1945. The voice of Harrison Witte fills his head as he reads.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

Here's the one thing no one ever tells you about flying in a bomber: you have to be a little insane.

EXT. SKIES OVER OSAKA - DAY - (JUNE 1ST, 1945)

A squadron of B-29 bombers are in flight at high altitude, along with their fighter escorts. AA fire is exploding all around them. The fighters are engaging Japanese Zeros, trying to keep them away from the formation. We move through the conflict towards a bomber with the lettering "A Square 16" on the tail.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

You're trapped in a large, slow moving sardine can while drag, thrust and twenty other things are there to remind you of one simple fact: human beings aren't meant to fly.

Flak, machine gun fire, and fighters swoosh by in a ballet of death.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

But like anything in life, you get used to it. It helped the Jap AA guns were pretty much shit against the altitude of our planes. In the end, maybe we got a little too used to it.

We move closer to the wing of the bomber and an AA round hits the number one engine of the plane. Fire, smoke and debris shoot everywhere. Shrapnel from the explosion tears a hole in the side of the plane.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

I guess that's a twenty one other things.

We move towards the fuselage of the plane and through the hole in the side.

INT. A SQUARE 16 BOMBER - DAY

A member of the bomber crew is struggling to push debris off his body. He attempts to re-orient after the blast. HARRISON WITTE is wearing the jacket bearing his nametag. He yells out over roar of wind and engines further down the plane.

HARRISON WITTE

BECK!!! ARE YOU OKAY??

Sgt. GEORGE BECK is straining to prop himself back up while holding his arm. His jacket is shredded and blood is oozing out of the bad arm.

GEORGE BECK

Negative Witte! My arm is meat.  
 Agggh!  
 (flinches from moving arm)  
 I can't move it.

Beck slumps back down, grimacing in pain. Witte crawls over to Beck. He helps him get his oxygen mask back on.

HARRISON WITTE

You're still here pal! Hold tight!

Witte looks out the hole in the side bomber and sees the number one engine belching furious plumes of black smoke.

HARRISON WITTE (CONT'D)

It's gonna be alright Beck... gonna be alright.

Harrison slumps down by Beck and they look out the cracked window bubble on the side of the plane. They see the rest of the bomber squadron outside. The plane starts banking down and away from formation, the squadron getting smaller and smaller in view.

The two watch this, feeling helpless.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

I hated being a liar.

Another round explodes near the plane. Blackness.

INT. A SQUARE 16 BOMBER - DAY

Chaos and frantic screaming from the bomber crew members. Beck struggles to get on a parachute.

INT. A SQUARE 16 BOMBER

Witte is bracing himself at the side door of the bomber with his parachute on. Below the bomber we see one other parachute, but also other men falling downwards without chutes open or damaged. Witte grits his teeth as wind whips against him and jumps.

EXT. A SQUARE 16 BOMBER - COPKIT - DAY

A barrage of trees rush the glass of the copkit shattering it. The pilots' hands come up in front of their faces.

Wood and debris smashes into and through the opening. Then darkness.

FADE IN:

EXT. JAPANESE FOREST - DAY

Witte lies unconscious, dangling from a tree in his parachute harness. He is even more banged up than before. He suddenly jolts awake, in shock at his new surroundings.

Once the shock has subsided some, he takes out his knife and cuts the straps on the chute. Witte falls awkwardly on one foot and screams in pain. He crawls over to a nearby tree and props himself up.

He looks around at the heavily wooded area, trees everywhere. He tries to move his leg and the grimaces again. Taking a breath and steadying himself, he reaches in the pocket of his jacket and pulls out his journal and a pen. He starts writing.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

Well... this is a bit of a pickle. Fall was a little further down than anticipated. Foot feels like something more than a sprain. The guys.... I don't even wanna think about it. Plane isn't nearby so maybe they're okay. Just somewhere else on this...

Witte looks around at his surroundings trying to get a bearing.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

...mountain.

Witte tries to scoot his body up and pain shoot through him. After a minute he continues writing.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

Writing usually helps me focus... pain makes it harder.

He looks upwards through the treetops to see glimpses of a bright blue sky, with wispy clouds. It's a calming moment that gives Witte a small push of resolve.

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.)

Spent so much time looking down a Norden bombsight I forgot what it's like to look up.

(MORE)

HARRISON WITTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Looks pretty from down here. Going to rest for a few minutes then see if I can limp my way out of this mess. This can't be the end of my story. I won't let it be.

INT. ARMY HQ BARRACKS - NIGHT - (DECEMBER, 1945)

Butler pauses for a minute to reflect on the last entry in the journal and then closes the book. He takes out some of the maps and journals Ballard gave them and starts scribbling notes. Satisfied, he puts his documents away and then turns out the light by his bunk.

INT. ARMY HQ - BALLARD'S OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Kehn and Gaddis stand outside Ballard's office, in file. There are muffled conversations coming from inside that office. The two look worried.

CARL GADDIS

Why the hell has Butler been in there that long? It was supposed to be a quick debrief.

GEORGE KEHN

I don't know. Everything seemed fine till I heard him mention the black market stuff. At least I think that's what he said.

CARL GADDIS

I'll tell you what's going on. We're about to be scrubbing toilets while they round up some other poor goons to finish the job we failed at. We didn't find jack shit yesterday, except for some torn up jacket.

GEORGE KEHN

No way, not after one day. They know we'll get better as...

Butler walks out of the office and slams the door harder than he should have. He looks disgusted and frustrated.

CARL GADDIS

See, I told you Kehn! How bad is it Sarge? Level with us.

GEORGE KEHN

You okay sarge? You look...

JOHN BUTLER

I'm fine. We are resuming our assignment. Black market is our first stop.

GEORGE KEHN

But what was that all about? That debrief...

JOHN BUTLER

I said, it's fine. Fall in.

Butler marches off. Gaddis and Kehn look at each other and then march after him.

EXT. OSAKA DOJIMA MARKET - DAY

Butler, Gaddis, and Kehn arrive outside an old rice market. Like everywhere else in Osaka, the damage from war is apparent.

One warehouse sized building seems to have received the least damage of the bunch and has small crowds of people coming and going. Most of the visitors appear to be sketchy and suspect. Several are other enlisted men. Drugs and prostitution are on full display.

In front of the building, atop a wooden beam of a traditional Japanese torii, sits a black dragon sculpture. Butler stares grimly, while Gaddis fumes. Kehn shakes his head.

GEORGE KEHN

You sure about this Sarge? These are bad people.

Butler nods. Gaddis shakes his head.

CARL GADDIS

How the hell are these bastards getting away with this? In broad daylight? Jap police got better things to do?

GEORGE KEHN

What police you idiot? Law and order doesn't exist anymore. The Japanese considered their emperor to be a living god and supreme ruler. Two atomic bombs put some kinks in that concept.

CARL GADDIS

Blah blah blah! Sarge, can't we just go back and get some grunts to burn this place to the ground?

JOHN BUTLER

We will do no such thing private.

CARL GADDIS

Why the hell not? The brass would never let this stand.

JOHN BUTLER

The brass are exactly why we're not going to do anything in there except ask polite questions.

GEORGE KEHN

What are you talking about? You mean your okay with this place?

JOHN BUTLER

I'm very much not "ok" with this place Kehn. In fact, I had a rather spirited debate about it with Lieutenant Ballard earlier. He informed me this particular black market, among many others, is also a brothel sanctioned by the US government.

Gaddis looks at Butler stupefied. Kehn starts to stammer.

GEORGE KEHN

I... I... don't understand. There is no way that we would...

JOHN BUTLER

Apparently the United States government and the what's left of the Japanese empire agree on more than we think. For one, they both agree that this place should exist for the alleged greater safety of Japan's female population.

CARL GADDIS

Safety? Your saying they think our soldiers would...

JOHN BUTLER

Brass thinks the nature of man is inevitable, so they'll settle for regulating it.

CARL GADDIS

(muttering)

What kind of shit have they dropped  
us in?

JOHN BUTLER

You'll get used to it. Just need to  
get more of it on you. Come on.

The men just stare at the black market trying to make sense  
of this new information. Butler breaks the silence.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

No time like the present. Come on.

Butler starts walking towards the warehouse and the other two  
reluctantly follow. As the crew walk through the tori, eyes  
dart up at them and then look away. Some scamper out of their  
path, and some beg for food. The men push through the doors  
of the warehouse.

INT. BURAKKU DORAGON

The inside of the building has become an extremely slapdash  
bazaar of nooks and tables catering to the black market  
trade. While food seems to be the number one commodity, drugs  
and sex are not far behind. Small clusters of people are  
passed out on ratty straw mats from heroin use. Young girls  
are being led into rooms with random men. As they pass the  
more afflicted addicts, Gaddis becomes visibly uncomfortable.

In front of the group, one smaller, skittish Japanese man  
with patchy facial hair desperately pleads for something. He  
is wincing and scratching, tell tale signs of addiction.  
Another taller man has some pudginess to him and aggressively  
berates him. He threatens to strike him and the smaller man  
runs away.

The smaller man continues to bolt towards the door, crashing  
into Butlers arm. The Japanese man flinches, looking at him  
in terror. Butler attempts an apology.

JOHN BUTLER

Sumimasen.

The man scampers away as Butler starts to say more. Gaddis  
nervously approaches Butler.

CARL GADDIS

What's our play here Sarge? We  
shouldn't be in here with these  
junkie freaks.



Butler looks back at the taller man that was threatening addict who fled. The man has gone over near a group of crates and is examining them with other men. He barks orders at people in the market and they swiftly obey.

JOHN BUTLER

Now we do something you've never done before private. We make some friends.

Gaddis scoffs and Butler heads toward the man barking orders. Kehn follows. With the man's back turned Butler approaches and greets him.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Konnichiwa senpai.

The black market boss turns around, while a large Asian man standing beside him steps in front to shield him. Upon seeing the men are soldiers, the boss waves the bodyguard off. He stares at the soldiers then gives a short bow. Butler follows suit.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Kehn, inform this fellow we need some information and would appreciate his help.

Khen translates to the boss. The boss smiles broadly, revealing dirty, stained teeth and then speaks in broken English.

MARKET BOSS

Ah... information. Most valuable. Most expensive.

The three soldiers are taken aback he speaks English. The man laughs.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

So surprised! Wise to learn ways of new customers? Yes?

Butler nods.

JOHN BUTLER

Yes... it is.

Butler takes the jacket out of his backpack and shows it to the man.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

We were given this jacket. Belonged to an American soldier.

(MORE)

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Heard it was acquired in your establishment. Think you could share with us where you found it?

The market boss takes the jacket and examines it, running his fingers over the surface.

MARKET BOSS

American leather... nothing like it. Good quality. I remember. Yes, know where this from.

JOHN BUTLER

That is good to hear.

MARKET BOSS

Yes. I tell you exactly where. Information is yours... for twenty crates of American MREs. Big discount for new customers!

The three soldiers are stunned at the request. Gaddis gets visibly tense.

JOHN BUTLER

I'm afraid I don't have access to that much food.

The market boss shrugs and tosses the jacket back to Butler.

MARKET BOSS

Then I have no information.

The market boss starts to turn around and Gaddis loses his temper. Before Butler can reach in to stop him, he steps to him and grabs the Japanese man's shirt.

The market boss is dragged within inches of his clenched, angry face. Everyone in the market freezes and looks shocked. The boss' resolve never wavers.

CARL GADDIS

Listen here shit stain! Maybe you haven't been paying attention, but we won the war. So you don't get to sit here and tell us what YOU need. If you know where that jacket came from, you best tell us right now before I beat it out of your ass.

The market boss giggles a bit and then turns sickeningly agreeable and sympathetic.

MARKET BOSS

Hey... hey... you have no food? No problem gaijin.

(his expression turns fierce and sinister)

But I hope you have bullets.

The market boss snaps his fingers. Suddenly several dozen of the men that were milling about the warehouse step forward and surround the soldiers. They all look like hardened men, many with yakuza tatoos. They steady themselves for confrontation.

Gaddis looks around with nervous tension. He slowly lets the man go and steps back. A deadly, silent stillness hangs in the air as the groups size each other up.

The market boss chuckles again and walks towards the group.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

Don't worry gaijin! I grateful for American troops on this island. I owe life to you.

Butler never takes his eyes off the men surrounding them. His hands are clenched into fists.

JOHN BUTLER

Do tell.

The market boss grows solemn.

MARKET BOSS

Hai. Before war, I was nothing. I work in charcoal factory. Was worked hard. Every day. Slept on ground like dog. Hungry all time. No future. But then Americans came.

The market boss walks up to each soldier, and looks them up and down.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

Hai, you came. Brought your fire from above. Bombed charcoal factory where I worked. Bombed homes. Destroy lives.

He pauses, then walks over to a much older Japanese man lying on a mat. The man appears be very frail and delirious. The old man flails a bit as the market boss props him up on his feet. The boss drags him over in front of the trio. The man is deep in the clenches of addiction and malnutrition.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

And your greatest gift? This  
kyodatsu. This rotting of our  
spirit.

Still holding on to the arm of the old man, the market boss shoves the him directly in front Gaddis. Gaddis tries to stumbles back away, gagging at the smell and sight. He is stopped by a gangster behind him and turns his head to avoid looking at the old man.

The market boss leans in close to Gaddis. He presses the old man towards him.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

(bitterly)

Take good look gaijin. This is  
world you make.

Beads of sweat are rolling down Kehns forehead. After a few seconds of watching Gaddis squirm, the market boss laughs and pulls the old man back.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

Ha ha ha! But me? I don't mind.  
Some see pain. Some see suffering.  
I see gift. I see opportunity. I  
make new life selling girls to  
gaijin. New life selling shabu.

The market boss holds up a packet of drugs and dangles them in front of the old man. The old man screeches and tries to claw for them. He pushes the old man down. Two gangsters come drag him off to the side.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

Doumo arigatou Americans. You give  
me this life. Only reason you  
alive. But... you not respect this  
life? Try take away new life?  
Well...

The market boss walks over and reads their name tags one by one.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)

....Butler-san, Kehn-san, Gaddis-  
san... we yakuza? We have long  
memory. Long reach.  
(shouting)  
Kare wo korose!

Across the room the two thugs start beating and kicking the old man. The old man screams and wails.

Kehn and Gaddis flinch, looking away in horror. Butler remains rigid. He looks at the market boss sternly and the market boss grins back. He looks back towards the men beating the older man.

JOHN BUTLER  
(low voice)  
Stop.

The market boss cups his ear mockingly and leans closer to Butler.

MARKET BOSS  
What was that gaijin?

JOHN BUTLER  
You made your point. Stop it.

The market boss expression grows stern and he stares Butler down.

MARKET BOSS  
(shouting)  
Yamero!

The thugs stop on order. The old man is still moving, but slowly and painfully. One of the thugs wipes the blood from his foot off onto his body. They pick up the old man and haul him away.

The market boss is still staring Butler down. Butler turns to look at the market boss. They meet eye to eye and he nods. The market boss nods back.

MARKET BOSS (CONT'D)  
Now leave. Never come back.

A small group of gangsters step near the soldiers. One of the gangsters nods towards the exit. The men head towards it, the gangsters following close behind.

EXT. BURAKKU DORAGON, BACK ALLEY - DAY

The three men are herded into a back alley behind the market and the doors slam behind them.

Kehn is hyperventilating and trying to catch his breath. Gaddis has let his fear turn into rage. He starts kicking debris in the street. Butler just bends over and takes a deep breath.

GEORGE KEHN  
Oh God... oh God....

CARL GADDIS  
Who the fuck do they think they  
are?? We fucking own this island!

Gaddis storms over to Butler.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
Sergeant, we can't let this shit  
stand! We've got to..

JOHN BUTLER  
Shut it Gaddis, you've helped  
enough for one fucking day. It  
doesn't matter anyway.

CARL GADDIS  
What??? These guys are scum Sarge!

JOHN BUTLER  
Did you hear a word I said out  
there private? We take this place  
down and the only we'll have  
waiting for us is a jail cell at  
the end of the world's shortest  
court martial. Meanwhile three more  
places just like this one will pop  
up in its place. Just focus on our  
job. At least we have a chance  
there.

A silence hangs in the air. Gaddis nods.

GEORGE KEHN  
But Sergeant, we're right back to  
square one. They didn't tell us  
anything about where this jacket  
came from.

JOHN BUTLER  
Maybe not, but we might have  
something better.

Gaddis and Kehn look at Butler surprised.

GEORGE KEHN  
Sergeant?

Butler walks down the alley to a section of a bombed out  
building. Inside the building he finds a table still in  
working order and lays out one of their maps. He then takes  
out Witte's journal he was reading from the night before and  
lays it on the map.

JOHN BUTLER

This is the journal of Harrison Witte, bombardier of the B-29 super fortress A Square 16. That bomber went missing during the June 1st bombing run on Osaka. Based on the original flight plan of that bomber, it was due to drop its payload over this area. Last entry in the journal had it losing an engine before it reached the target, heading back to base.

Butler places his finger over the original target indicated on the map. He picks up the journal with his other hand and holds it up.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Witte also says he bailed out near a mountain. So that changes the potential flight path to these areas here, here, and here.

Butler points his finger at three mountain regions outside of Osaka on the map. Gaddis looks at the areas trying to follow along.

CARL GADDIS

So what? Those three areas are huge. We could spend months combing through any of them, even in the best conditions.

JOHN BUTLER

Right. However, our new entrepreneur friend back there said his charcoal factory got bombed. Why would we bomb a charcoal factory? A target like that is too small to be of any military significance.

Kehn starts to shake his head up and down.

GEORGE KEHN

Unless.. Unless.. they were freeing up weight? They were probably trading weight for fuel mileage. This had nothing to do with bombing targets!

Gaddis is now catching up to the chain of the investigation and leans down to look at the map.

CARL GADDIS

And looky which area happens to  
have a small charcoal factory.

Gaddis plants his index finger down on a map location far  
outside of the original flight plan. A small building is  
indicated on the map, inside of an area marked: SEI - NARA  
REGION.

Butler smiles.

JOHN BUTLER

This journal was hidden in the  
inside lining of that jacket. The  
only reason he would hide this  
thing is if he knew he was going to  
be captured. Our boy can't be far.  
Let's find him.

The three soldiers nod at each other, pack up their  
documents, and head out of the building towards the charcoal  
factory.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF BOMBED CHARCOAL FACTORY - DAY

Butler and the men pull up to the outskirts of the factory in  
a military issued jeep. They climb out and begin to take a  
look around.

As they approach the factory, they see what they've seen so  
many times before: a wrecked building that once teemed with  
lives and commerce. The remaining tin panels that once  
covered the building are scorched and black, exposing broken  
wooden beams.

A couple of looters are rummaging about on the inside. A  
groggy man appears from a nearby doorway, shouting in  
Japanese at the looters. He throws a piece of rubble at them  
and the looters scatter. The man slumps down beside the  
building.

As the soldiers get closer, Butler realizes the man in front  
of the factory is the same one that bumped into him running  
from black market.

JOHN BUTLER

I'll be damned. Small world after  
all.

Butler approaches the man.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Konnichiwa.



The man looks up at him and through him. Then he lowers his head to the ground again, fighting off some kind of mental fog. Gaddis groans.

CARL GADDIS  
(muttering)  
This should be fun.

Butler ignores Gaddis and kneels down by the man, then speaks as earnestly as he can.

JOHN BUTLER  
We think some American soldiers  
were lost not far from here. This  
jacket belonged to one. If you've  
seen any, we could use your help.

Butler looks to Kehn and Kehn translates. The man cocks his head. Butler takes out the jacket and shows it to him. The man speaks back in Japanese.

GEORGE KEHN  
He knows the jacket. Says he sold  
it to black market.

Butler gets a dash of hope.

JOHN BUTLER  
Do you remember where you found it?  
Have you seen a plane like this?  
The jacket's owner was on that  
plane.

Butler takes a photo of the missing bomber and shows it to the man. The man takes the photo and looks at it. The lost expression on his face turns to anger. He stands up and throws the photo at Butler.

The soldiers take a quick step back, surprised at the sudden change in demeanor. Butler drops the jacket in the process. Gaddis takes out his side arm and levels it at the man. The man starts shouting at them in rapid fire bursts. Kehn tries to keep up with the translation.

GEORGE KEHN  
(translating)  
He says for years he worked hard to  
build his factory here. Gain  
respect in his community. And in  
one single night the Americans took  
it all away. He lost his business  
to the bombs. His home to the  
fires.

The factory owner picks up the jacket off the ground, gripping it tightly. He sneers at the group. He continues speaking.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

After the bomber destroyed his factory, he saw it fly towards Mt. Sanjo. So he went to his cousin Maeyama in the Volunteer Fighting Corps. He asked him to track down the gaijin bomber crew and take their lives. Like they had taken his. This jacket came from that plane.

The man throws the jacket at their feet. He starts shouting at them one person at a time, spittle flying from his mouth.

FACTORY OWNER

GAIJIN! BAIJO! DOUJIN!

Gaddis starts strolling up to him, gritting teeth, pistol leveled.

CARL GADDIS

I don't know much Japanese pal, but I know that ain't nice.

Butler steps in front of Gaddis. Kehn starts chatting with the man to calm him down. The man drops to his knees again, anger turning to despair. Butler looks at Gaddis.

JOHN BUTLER

We're not doing it this way private.

CARL GADDIS

Sergeant, you know this asshole won't talk. He just admitted to sending a mob after our guys.

JOHN BUTLER

He'll talk. Now give me the pep pills private.

Gaddis looks stunned and taken aback.

CARL GADDIS

Sergeant... what are you talking about? I don't...

Butler snatches off his backpack on his shoulder and goes for the pocket he saw Gaddis stash the pills in earlier. He holds up the bottle and stares Gaddis in the eye.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
Sergeant... I don't... I just....

JOHN BUTLER  
No. We deal with this druggie shit later. Right now, we do our jobs. Understand?

Gaddis swallows and gulps, lowering his pistol. He nods weakly. Butler puts a single pill from the bottle into his free hand then caps it. He walks over to the man and kneels down again. The meth between his index finger and thumb, he holds it up and waves it by his face.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
Hey... hey... up here. You like Shabu? Hmmm? Shabu?

The factory owner looks up and his eyes widen a bit as he sees the meth. He starts to reach for it but Butler pulls the pill away and puts it back in the bottle. He rattles the bottle in front of him.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
You want all these? Help us find our men. Take us to Maeyama.

Kehn translates. The factory owner protests.

GEORGE KEHN  
(translating)  
He says he doesn't trust you. You deceive him.

Butler walks over and reaches down to gently help the man to his feet.

JOHN BUTLER  
What's your name?

Kehn translates Butlers question.

FACTORY OWNER  
Kimura. Riku Kimura.

Butler places his hand on his chest.

JOHN BUTLER  
John Butler.

Butler gives a short, polite bow. Kimura does the same.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
 Help us find our men, and these are  
 yours. You have my word.

After hearing Kehn translate, Kimura nods and agrees in Japanese.

GEORGE KEHN  
 (translating)  
 He accepts Sergeant. He says he  
 lives in the village of Shimoichi  
 not far from here. If we start now  
 we can get there before sundown.

Butler nods.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Lead the way.

Kimura nods at the translation from Kehn and they head off to Shimoichi.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF OSAKA - DAY

The jeep with the three soldiers and Kimura drive towards the edge of the Osaka prefecture, heading towards Nara. Gaddis is driving, Butler is next to him. Kehn and Kimura are in the back.

As they near the outskirts, they come upon a group of Japanese gathered near a train track. A train is currently idle on the track, a young Japanese woman in tears sobbing over what appears to be a body under a piece of cloth. A small boy is with her, also sobbing next to the woman. There is blood on the cloth and around the area of the tracks.

As the jeep slows to weave its way through the cloud, recognition flickers over Kimura's face.

KIMURA  
 Hinata!

Kimura leaps out of the jeep in motion and heads towards the scene. Kehn tries to stop him.

GEORGE KEHN  
 Wait!

Butler turns back to see what has happened.

JOHN BUTLER  
Shit! Gaddis stop!

Gaddis pumps the brake and brings the Jeep to a halt. The men jump out of the jeep and head after Kimura.

When they reach Kimura, he has knelt down besides the sobbing woman and is attempting to comfort her. The woman has a black and blue bruise on her face. She speaks to him between hushed sobs.

Gaddis notices she has a bruise on her face. His face tenses.

CARL GADDIS  
What's going on? What are they saying?

Kehn listens into the conversation.

GEORGE KEHN  
It looks like Kimura knows this girl. Her friend just jumped in front of the train.

The group is surprised and dismayed by this. Kimura pulls the girl close and tries to console her. He turns to Butler and starts talking.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)  
(translating)  
He says the girl used to work for him at his factory... before the war. Her name is Hinata. The dead girl was her friend. She chose to take her own life and jumped.

CARL GADDIS  
Damn. Why?

Kehn gets ready to translate the question and Butler looks back at both of them and shakes his head no.

JOHN BUTLER  
Not now.

CARL GADDIS  
Sarge, we gotta do something for her. She got a kid for christ sake...

Butler looks at Kimura.

JOHN BUTLER  
Is that her son?

Kehn and Kimura converse.

GEORGE KEHN  
 (translating)  
 Yes. The father died during the war.

JOHN BUTLER  
 What will happen to her? And what about the body?

Kehn translates, Kimura responds.

GEORGE KEHN  
 (translating)  
 The dead girl has no family. They were all killed in the war. Hinata took the girl in as part of her family after the war's end. The villagers are going to bury her near a temple where Hinata lives, in Shimoichi.

Butler looks around briefly, contemplating the situation.

JOHN BUTLER  
 We can take Hinata to the village with us. We'll make sure she gets home safe.

Kehn translates. Kimura nods. He leads the sobbing girl back to the jeep with him and they climb in. Hinata's son sits in her lap. Kimura wedges himself in the back between Kehn and the girl. They drive off towards Shimoichi.

EXT. SHIMOICHI, NARA PREFECTURE - DAY

The jeep with Kimura, Hinata, and the soldiers continues towards Nara. Along the way there is minimal American activity, a random Army transport here and there.

Soon, the jeep rolls into the streets of the sleepy village. Here the damage is far less apparent and there is still a semblance of everyday village life.

Butler looks upwards at the blue sky above him, white clouds drifting by. He closes his eyes for a brief second. The black exploding dots and splintering wood from his previous dream start flicking in his mind as he starts to drift to sleep. He is abruptly awakened by Kimura's voice before he drifts too far.

Kimura speaks in the back.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

We can let her off here near the market. Her house is around in back.

The jeep pulls to a stop near one of the buildings. Gaddis looks back and studies the girls bruise.

Kimura climbs out and helps Hinata down, along with the boy. Kimura and Hinata exchange words for a minute and then both bow to each other. She turns to the men in the jeep and speaks a few short phrases.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

(translating)

She says thank you. She is grateful for our help.

The men nod. The boy, still flush and red from crying but now calmer, looks up at Gaddis. Gaddis makes a funny face back. The boy smiles and shyly hides behind his mother. Hinata also manages a smile at the moment, then timidly turns heads back inside the shop.

Kimura comes back to the car. Gaddis' smile fades once Kimura draws near.

CARL GADDIS

(angrily)

Alright pal, tell us what the fuck went on back there? That other girl just splattered herself all over the train tracks and no way that shiner on Hinata's face was an accident.

JOHN BUTLER

Private, I told you this isn't....

Gaddis looks at Butler and pleads.

CARL GADDIS

Please Sarge, I need to... I'd like to know.

Butler studies Gaddis for a moment. Then nods to Kehn. Kehn translates the question to Kimura. Kimura shoulders appear to slump in shame. He continues climbing in the car and sits down. There is a pause, then a sigh, then he starts speaking to the men.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

He says after the war, both women were devastated by the losses of the families. Their old jobs were gone because of the bombings, which left them with no way to feed themselves or Hinata's son. Soon after the war ended, they received letters for office work in Osaka. The "New Women of Japan" the ad said. The office work turned out to be a government program to work as comfort women.

CARL GADDIS

What the hell does that mean?

Butler lowers his head.

JOHN BUTLER

Prostitutes. What you saw a glimpse of back there at the black market.

Gaddis turns red and grips the steering wheel tightly. Kimura continues speaking.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

They had a choice, starve or feed themselves and her son. So they took the work.

Kimura swallows hard. His voice starts trembling.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

(translating)

Some men were... less polite than others. Like the one that hit Hinata's face.

Gaddis eyes grow glassy, his grip tightens further on the wheel. Kimura continues to speak.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

(translating)

Hinata's friend could not bear the shame of her new life any longer, nor continue to be a burden to Hinata. May her spirit find peace in the next world.

Then men are all silent for a moment.



GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

(softly)

What kind of world is this?

CARL GADDIS

Not the one I fought for.

Gaddis punches the wheel of the jeep and silently rages. Kehn and Kimura jump back but Butler does not flinch. He just stares into the distance. After a long pause, Butler speaks up.

JOHN BUTLER

We should get going. It's gonna be dark soon.

Kehn asks Kimura for further directions. Kimura points down the road.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

Were almost here. Just go left at the fork.

Gaddis throws the jeep into drive and resumes the journey. The jeep approaches a fork in the village road, clustered by a hand full of isolated farms and shops. They turn left and follow a path that leads to the front of modest, rural Japanese home surrounded by tall trees.

EXT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - DAY

As the group gets out, Kimura approaches the house.

The sliding door of the house opens and an upper middle-aged man walks out in a traditional Japanese yakuta. His head is mostly bald with a darker ring around the sides that is rapidly turning grey. His face shows more weight of age than it should.

Kimura says something in Japanese to the older man. There is a bit of terse discourse between the two of them. Butler looks at Kehn.

JOHN BUTLER

What's all this about?

GEORGE KEHN

Maeyama isn't too happy there are Americans at his doorstep.

More conversation ensues between the two Japanese men. Maeyama sighs, nods at Kimura and then walks inside the house. Kimura beckons for the men to follow him.

INT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - DAY

After passing through the doorway, the men proceed to follow Maeyama. Before they can leave the front door area, Kehn starts taking off his shoes. Gaddis looks at him like he's a moron.

CARL GADDIS

What's wrong Kehn? Your boots gagging from smelling those feet all day?

GEORGE KEHN

It's Japanese tradition to remove your shoes in the genkan, sign of politeness. When in Rome right?

Butler starts taking off his boots. Gaddis still doesn't understand.

CARL GADDIS

What the hell do the Italians have to do with any of this?

Kehn rolls his eyes and sighs.

GEORGE KEHN

(walking away)

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Gaddis grudgingly follows along and removes his shoes.

They are led into a living area with a tatami mat on the floor. Kimura beckons for the men to sit. Maeyama is on the other side and begins pouring them tea. Butler starts to talk, but Kehn stops him. His hands make a motion of "wait".

The men begin to sip on their tea. Gaddis tries to restrain himself from making a face, never having tried tea. Butler and Kehn sip their tea quietly. After a minute, the tea ritual complete, Kehn speaks to Maeyama. Maeyama nods and turns to look at Butler.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

I complimented him for his tea and hospitality, so now you can speak.

Butler nods and takes out the photo of the plane and the jacket.

JOHN BUTLER

We are searching for lost American troops. Your cousin told us that you may have tracked down a plane like this one. This jacket belonged to a man on that plane. We were hoping you could tell us where?

Kehn translates to Maeyama. Maeyama takes a measured sip and then talks. Butler notices that Kimura stiffens and looks down during his response.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

They followed the path of the plane but found nothing. No bodies, no wreckage. They were thorough, covered the entire area.

JOHN BUTLER

But what about the jacket? Kimura said it came from the plane.

Maeyama looks at Kimura sternly, who is still looking at floor, and speaks again.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

He says you must forgive his cousin. He is not well and easily confused.

Frustration bubbles inside Butler. He looks over at Kimura and shoots him a stare. Kimura blurts out a nervous phrase. Kehn is getting uncomfortable with the awkward tension in the air.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

(translating)

Kimura... apologizes for any miscommunication.

JOHN BUTLER

(incredulous)

So... neither of you gentlemen know anything about this jacket? Or this plane?

Kimura starts to apologize again as Kehn starts to translate. He is cut off by Maeyama, who surprises everyone by speaking a word in English.

MAEYAMA

(sternly)

No.

Butler switches his glare back to Maeyama and Gaddis sneers.

CARL GADDIS

You speak English now old man?

Maeyama looks back at his tea and takes another calm sip.  
Gaddis cracks his knuckles.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

Sergeant, maybe I can jog the  
memory of these Nips another way.

JOHN BUTLER

I don't think that will be  
necessary Private Gaddis. I'm sure  
that our host is fully aware of the  
complications that could result in  
interfering with a official  
military investigation.

Kehn nervously starts to translate. Maeyama cuts him off once  
more, but switches back to Japanese. Kehn processes it and  
swallows hard.

GEORGE KEHN

He says... he says that unless it  
was ordered by the emperor himself,  
our business here is finished.

JOHN BUTLER

(temper simmering)

I see.

Butler stands. Gaddis and Kehn follow and stand with him.  
Maeyama and Kimura remain seated. Butler looks around at the  
home.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

You have a lovely home Maeyama-san.  
I'm sure your emperor approves.

Butler walks over to a black and white photo sitting on a  
table. The photo is of a younger Maeyama, flanked by a small  
boy and woman. He taps the photo against his hand.

GEORGE KEHN

Sergeant... that's incredibly rude  
in Japanese...

JOHN BUTLER

(interrupting)

Now Kehn... these people are famous  
for their... how do you say  
hospitality in Japanese?

GEORGE KEHN

Om.... omotenashi Sergeant.

JOHN BUTLER

Omotenashi. Rolls off the tongue,  
don't you think Gaddis?

Gaddis has gone over to another section of the house and is  
lifting things to examine them, sliding items around.

CARL GADDIS

Not my tongue Sergeant. I don't  
know how anyone pronounces this  
crap.

Gaddis fakes dropping an item that was on a shelf, but  
catches it with his other hand. He smirks.

Maeyama is fuming and stands up. He starts barking at the men  
in Japanese and gesturing for them to leave. Kimura stands,  
looking very worried. Butler starts poking around the house a  
bit, further infuriating Maeyama. Kehn tries to calm Maeyama  
down, but to no avail.

Butler wanders over to a sliding shoji door.

JOHN BUTLER

It's been a very long day Maeyama-  
san. I was asked to find these men.  
And that's exactly what I intend to  
do. But the funny thing about an  
investigation like this? You never  
know where it's going to....

Butler opens up the sliding shoji door to reveal a small  
closet sized room on the other side.

The room feels as if it has been built to enshrine a single,  
breathtaking painting on the far wall. The painting is almost  
six feet tall, 3 feet wide. It is a classic shijo style  
watercolor. The colors are vibrant blues and whites against a  
dark grey backdrop.

It depicts a small figure in the middle of a foreboding, dark  
forest. It is unclear if the figure is entering or leaving  
the forest. Tall trees twist up around the man's shape.  
Strewn among the trees are the silhouettes of people who look  
like they are trapped in the forest, looking for a way out.

The painting radiates sadness and desolation. It also stops Butler dead in his tracks. A few scenes from his reoccurring nightmare flash before his eyes.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

(softly)  
... lead.

Maeyama comes over and wedges himself between Butler and the painting, closing the door. He is shouting at them in Japanese and continues to point towards the door. His face is red with rage. Butler composes himself.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

We're done here. Let's head back to base.

CARL GADDIS

But Sergeant we...

Butler ignores the protest and goes to grab his boots. Without putting them on he walks outside. Kehn and Gaddis follow.

EXT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Outside the house Butler is leaning on his jeep and putting on his boots. Butler and Kehn walk up to join him, struggling to get theirs on.

CARL GADDIS

So that's it? We're just gonna walk away from this guy?

JOHN BUTLER

That man is a true son of the Japanese empire. He's not going to talk. And you say one more word about roughing someone up? I'll personally knock you on your ass private. That's not our way.

Kehn nods.

GEORGE KEHN

I saw a film reel about the fighting at Saipan. Mothers threw themselves over cliffs with their babies. Maeyama will die for his cause, just like them.

Kimura steps out of the house and slowly starts walking around the Americans. He is trembling.

Maeyama stands in the doorway and watches. Kimura trembles and twitches. Right before he passes the soldiers, he looks over and blurts something in Japanese at the group.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

He wants to know if he still gets his drugs.

Gaddis becomes enraged and starts towards Kimura with a hostile gait. Kimura panics and runs off down the road. Gaddis doesn't bother to chase him. Kehn puts his hands on the jeep and lowers his head, exasperated.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

So, what are we going to do now Sergeant?

JOHN BUTLER

Boys, I'm tired. I think I'm just gonna sit here for a while.

Butler reaches over into his backpack and takes out a bottle of whiskey. Kehn is shocked. Gaddis comes back over and takes the bottle, looking like he's holding the holy grail.

CARL GADDIS

How in the hell Sarge?

JOHN BUTLER

Quartermaster at the base served with me over in the Ardennes. Owed me a favor.

Gaddis hands the bottle to Kehn.

CARL GADDIS

Ladies first.

Kehn opens the bottle and takes a swig, but almost gags from the strength. Butler and Gaddis laugh and then Kehn hands the bottle to Butler. He salutes Maeyama with the bottle, who is still standing in the doorway down the road.

Maeyama's face remains expressionless as he steps inside and shuts the door.

The other two soldiers sit down next to the jeep with Butler as the dusk turns to night.

EXT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hours later the men are still leaned up against the jeep, taking turns sipping from the bottle. Gaddis has had the most and is in the process of crooning a song.

CARL GADDIS  
 (singing)  
 Blue skies smilin' at me....  
 Nothin' but blue skies do I see...

Butler and Kehn laugh.

GEORGE KEHN  
 Your not half bad Gaddis!

CARL GADDIS  
 Half Bad?? \*hic\* Half bad? Son  
 Sinatra himself couldn't sing that  
 better.

JOHN BUTLER  
 Don't quit your day job private.

Gaddis grows serious.

CARL GADDIS  
 Look.... guys... I know you think  
 I'm... a piece of shit. That I'm  
 some... loser addict...

JOHN BUTLER  
 Gaddis, forget it, it's not...

CARL GADDIS  
 No... no... listen. We were pushed  
 hard in the pacific man. Those  
 monsters....  
 (points wobbly to  
 Maeyama's house)  
 ...were relentless. They fought us  
 for every square inch of those  
 fucking islands. I watch my friends  
 burn alive in napalm. Come back to  
 base in bags. Day after day. Wave  
 after wave. We were exhausted.. to  
 the bone man.

Kehn and Butler grow solemn.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
 They started giving us pills. Said  
 we need to keep going.  
 (MORE)



CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

We didn't know anything... what they were. So we took 'em. They kept us alert... alive. But nobody told us how they'd make us feel when the fighting stopped.

Gaddis takes another swig. The other two men listen intently.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

I tried to stop. I did. But every time I looked in the mirror I saw my old man looking back at me. Telling me I was trash. Same thing he'd tell Mom while he punched her. I got real acquainted with what a bruise from a punch looks like. For years I tried to stop him, but it just meant he'd beat two people for the price of one. When I finally got big enough to put him in his place, Mom defended him. She actually asked me... to stop. So, I ran off and joined the service. Mom died a year and half ago. Cancer. Dad didn't even bother to tell me.

Gaddis just stares ahead, his eyes get glassy. After a beat, he keeps talking.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter tho, he's back in Sing Sing serving a dime for robbery. Last time I checked there aren't jobs back home for dumb grunts hooked on bennies... so here I am. I guess I proved him right.

GEORGE KEHN

You get to choose who you are Gaddis, not your old man.

Gaddis scoffs.

CARL GADDIS

And what the hell would you know about that college boy?

GEORGE KEHN

My mom and pops died when we were young. Drugs. Went to live with my Grandma. She tried... but we were a lot to handle. My older brothers, they landed in jail for dealing.

(MORE)

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

Too much mom and pop in them I guess. But me? I wanted to learn. Didn't want no part of drugs or combat. My brothers laughed at me, told me I was weak. They tried to... toughen me up sometimes. Said it was for my own good.

Gaddis stiffens, expecting more of a silver spoon tale.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

So, I worked my ass off to get good grades. Get into college. Wanted to help with the war, but not with a gun. After graduation, I came here. Whole damn world had just fallen apart. Thought I could help put it back together a little better than it was before.

Gaddis nods hands the bottle to Kehn, who takes a small sip.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

What about you Sarge? What's your story?

Kehn passes the bottle to Butler. Butler takes the bottle and takes a swig.

JOHN BUTLER

Fought in Europe. 1st Battalion. 141st Regiment of the 36th. Forward observer.

The other two soldiers wait for more, but nothing comes.

CARL GADDIS

Annnnd?

Butler shrugs.

JOHN BUTLER

Not much else to say. Saw same shit everybody else saw over there. Coming over here seemed like it might be a nice change of scenery.

GEORGE KEHN

Ah come on sarge! Don't give us that rank, name, and serial routine.

(playfully nudges Butler)  
(MORE)

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)

Maybe you got a little lady back home? Brothers and sisters? What about your folks?

JOHN BUTLER

The son they knew is long gone, Kehn. They deserve better than the man that replaced him.

Kehn is surprised by the response. Gaddis scoffs like he can't believe what he heard.

CARL GADDIS

That's a bunch of bullshit Sarge.

(leans towards Kehn)

Bumped into some guys from his old platoon in the barracks. Said Butler was a legend during the Bulge! Stories of him taking out krauts with his bare hands in the trenches.

(turns back towards Butler)

Our man here is a damn Nazi killing machine.

Gaddis slaps Butler on the chest proudly. Butler looks grim.

JOHN BUTLER

If that's what they say, I guess it's true.

CARL GADDIS

Come on Butler, tell us a....

The group is interrupted when a cry cuts through the still of the night air. The three react immediately to locate the direction of the sound. The cry out happens again, something distinctly Japanese punctuated by a female scream.

JOHN BUTLER

What the hell was that?

The cry rings out again.

GEORGE KEHN

Tasukete kudasai! That was a cry for help!

Butler charges off down the road in search of the source. Kehn and Gaddis run behind him.

EXT. FORK IN ROAD - NIGHT

Butler and company dart back into the fork in the road that led to Maeyama's home in the village.

Near the fork, a small US army service truck is parked oddly near one of the village buildings, doors open. Three officers, BRAD, EDDY, and a THIRD OFFICER are hassling Hinata. Part of her robe is off her shoulder.

Kimura is in the mix struggling to get between her and the men. His face has blood streaming down it and he is holding his side. The men have a bottle of Sake in their hands, passing it back and forth, and are laughing at their actions.

One of the men punches Kimura in the gut and he goes down. A small crowd of Japanese villagers have gathered around, but are too frightened to confront the men.

Butler starts approaching the group and yells at them.

JOHN BUTLER

Evening officers! You need some help getting back to base?

The three officers are startled by this turn around to face Butler and company.

BRAD

What the hell Eddy! You said there wouldn't be anyone around this far out!

EDDY

Doesn't fucking matter Brad! These boys here don't give a shit if we have some fun with these Nips. Right guys?

Eddy turns to look at Hinata.

EDDY (CONT'D)

I just couldn't WAIT till this little pretty made it back to the whore house. Thought I'd pay her an early visit.

JOHN BUTLER

Actually, we do mind. Get back in the truck. Head to base. I wont ask again.

EDDY

You best piss off and mind your own  
business soldier. That's an order.

Brad grabs Hinata and yanks her close. She swipes at him scratching his face. He yelps, but doesn't let go. He spins back around quickly and backhands her, knocking her down.

Gaddis is enraged by this and charges Brad, knocking him to the ground. Butler jumps into the fray and clocks Eddy in the jaw. Butler swings again, but misses and Eddy catches him with a cross to the jaw.

While the officers are distracted fighting Butler and Gaddis, Kehn goes over and helps Hinata and Kimura get further away to safety.

The third officer tries to pull Gaddis from pummeling Brad on the ground. He yanks him back up to his feet in a head lock and Brad recovers his bearings. Brad starts punching Gaddis in the face and blood flies.

Butler sees this and dodges a punch from Eddy. With Eddy off balance, Butler knees him in the gut, then throws him towards Brad. The officers crash together, tumbling down to the dirt.

Gaddis elbows the third officer in the ribs and he crumples over. He then grabs him and throws him into the back of the truck where he crashes hard against its interior.

The other two officers help each other up and bolt towards the truck, Gaddis and Butler heading after them. They hop in and peel the truck away down the road. Gaddis and Butler halt their run.

Gaddis wipes blood from his lips, as they pause to catch their breath. He watches the truck drive away.

CARL GADDIS

(eyes following truck)

Harder with someone your own size  
isn't it assholes?

Gaddis turns back towards Hinata and Kimura. He looks at her and then at Kehn.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

She okay?

GEORGE KEHN

Yeah.

Gaddis nods. As Butler approaches, Kimura manages to get to his feet, although worse for the wear. He starts yammering at Butler.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)  
 (translating)  
 He's... apologizing. Says he was  
 mistaken, that we are men of honor.

Butler rubs his jaw and looks at Kimura and nods. Kimura keeps talking.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)  
 (translating)  
 He asks forgiveness for how he has  
 behaved.

Butler walks over to Kimura and puts a hand on his shoulder.

JOHN BUTLER  
 And I ask forgiveness for what  
 those men those men just did. Those  
 men don't represent us, or our  
 country. We seek closure and peace  
 for our fallen soldiers. Nothing  
 more, nothing less.

Kehn translates. Kimura nods takes the girl towards her house. Butler rubs his jaw.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
 Come on, let's get back to the jeep  
 and crash for the night. No way  
 we're driving back in this  
 condition.

Kehn and Gaddis nod, following Butler down the road to Maeyama's house. As the men walk away, Kimura turns back to look at them. He pauses thoughtfully, then continues to help Hinata.

EXT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Butler, Gaddis, and Kehn are tucked in sleeping bags around their burned out makeshift campfire. Suddenly a foot wearing a Japanese Warazori gives a nudge to Butler's bag. Butler stirs, but does not wake. The foot tries again, but with a swift kick. Butler darts up and scrambles, waking up the others in the process.

JOHN BUTLER  
 (groggly)  
 Wha....

Butler gathers his bearings enough to see Maeyama standing by him sternly, with Kimura close behind him. The men back up and awkwardly steel themselves for some kind of confrontation. After waiting a moment for them to calm down, Maeyama speaks. Kehn starts trying to translate.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

He says... he says... Kimura has informed him of the events that happened earlier in the evening. He wishes to speak with us inside the house.

Gaddis, still on edge from being awoken so quickly, slips over by Butler.

CARL GADDIS

How do we know this isn't a trap sarge? They could kill us in there!

JOHN BUTLER

They could have killed us instead of waking us, you knucklehead.

Gaddis processes it as quickly as he can and then exhales.

CARL GADDIS

Good point.

JOHN BUTLER

Tell him we will join him inside.

Kehn nods and translates his response. Maeyama bows curtly and walks towards the house. Kimura does the same, and the men follow, stumbling half awake.

INT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Once inside the house, Kimura turns to the men and starts to speak. Kehn translates.

GEORGE KEHN

(translating)

They are apologizing for misleading us. Kimura says they both know the location of the plane. Maeyama did not wish to reveal it to gaijin invaders and Kimura felt obligated to lie for the honor of his family.

CARL GADDIS  
I knew these little shits weren't  
telling us....

Butler gives Gaddis a look and he reluctantly clams up.  
Kimura continues to speak and looks at Maeyama.

GEORGE KEHN  
(translating)  
But Kimura told Maeyama of our  
brave actions assisting himself and  
Hinata earlier in the evening.

Kimura and Maeyama have a tense exchange. The banter  
continues between the two men at a frantic pace, but Maeyama  
is listening more than he did before.

CARL GADDIS  
(whispering)  
So, uh... is this going our way?

GEORGE KEHN  
(whispering)  
Seems like it.

Finally there is silence between the two men and Maeyama  
looks at the ground, pondering his thoughts. He looks up at  
Kimura, and then the men. He speaks.

GEORGE KEHN (CONT'D)  
(translating)  
He says that if what Kimura says is  
true, we are indeed honorable men.  
He will lead us to the site of the  
crash on Mt. Sanjo, but the journey  
is long. We can stay in the guest  
rooms of his house and depart in  
the morning.

Butler and Kehn thank Maeyama in Japanese. Both men bow  
slightly. Everyone in the room looks at Gaddis. At first  
oblivious, Gaddis notices their looks and looks back at them  
confused. He leans close to Kehn.

CARL GADDIS  
(whispering)  
What???

GEORGE KEHN  
(whispering)  
Thank him!



CARL GADDIS  
 (whispering)  
 How???

Butler sighs.

GEORGE KEHN  
 (whispering)  
 Have you not paid attention at all  
 today?

CARL GADDIS  
 (whispering)  
 No! Talking is your job!

Kehn slowly mouths the pronunciation of "Thank You" to Gaddis. Gaddis frets with his face to Kehn for a bit more, then looks at Maeyama. He gives it his best shot in a drawn out train wreck of an attempt.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
 Arrrrr-reee-gatt-oooh.

A slight awkward pause by everyone in the room as his attempt sinks in. Maeyama and Kimura look at each other, then back to the men. They curtly nod and walk off to show the men to their quarters.

Gaddis smiles broadly at his attempt and looks for approval from his squad. Kehn's face says "oh boy" and then pats Gaddis on the back. Butler just rolls his eyes slightly and follows the Japanese men. Gaddis, still beaming, trails behind.

INT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Butler, Gaddis, Kehn, and Kimura are all sound asleep on mats in the guest room. After a minute, we see Butler start to twitch and turn in his sleep. It becomes more pronounced and spastic.

EXT. FORESTED AREA - DAY - FLASHBACK

Butler is back in the forested area looking up at the drifting snowflakes coming down towards him. The blurry shapes of people start darting by his side.

Above him, the black dots of mortar shells come into focus. They explode high in the trees, sending shrapnel and splintered wood flying into the American troops.

Butler gets knocked backwards by the force of soldiers and explosions. He shakes dirt off of his body and looks around, eyes wide and startled.

Around him, the pure chaos of combat is raging. Tracers fly through the mass of people and trees. Next to him, a soldier gets viciously impaled by a large splinter of flying wood. We see other soldiers get hit by machine gun fire.

The Germans are advancing and some are engaged in man to man combat with bayonets and fists. Butler starts scrambling at any opening he can find to get away. Explosions and death blossom all around him as he constantly adjusts his course to find an opening in the chaos.

Suddenly, another explosion lands close and he is thrown into an empty ditch. Another soldier in a German uniform goes tumbling down with him in the dirt and debris.

The two men get to their feet as quickly as they can. The German seems to be scuttling back. Butler sees the uniform and attacks the soldier on instinct. The men engage in a physical struggle, the German's face hidden from view in the scuffle.

Finally Butler gets the upper hand and the German is disarmed. In a rush of adrenalin and fear, Butler brings his bayoneted rifle down on the German again and again. Blood splatters over his face.

As his panic subsides, he looks down to see a soldier who is no older than 16 looking back up at him, eyes wide with terror. Blood is gurgling out of his mouth. Butler stops stabbing and just stares, shocked at what he's done.

The boy starts pushing at the rifle, trying to get it out of him. His hands smear blood all over the rifle and Butler as he struggles. The shelling escalates nearby but Butler remains immobile.

American infantry rush up to their location and start dragging Butler out of the ditch. Debris bounces off him and the soldiers from nearby explosions. Butler screams as he is dragged away.

INT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Butler jolts upright in bed, gasping and soaked with sweat. He gathers his composure and looks around to see the other men, still asleep. He rubs his face for a second to center himself. Butler then gets up and leaves the room as silently as he can.

INT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Butler is walking as quietly as he can towards the door to get some fresh air and he hears a voice off to his side.

MAEYAMA (O.S.)

Sleep is hard to come by these days.

Butler looks over to see Maeyama standing in the room with the painting. The door is wide open and he's standing respectfully in front of the canvas, gazing at it thoughtfully with hands behind his back. His back to Butler, he continues talking.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

Thought it would come easier once the war was over, but I was wrong.

Butler walks up and stands beside Maeyama, looking towards painting. Like before, the painting tugs at the memories of Butler's nightmare, clawing at his soul. Butler tries to shrug it off.

JOHN BUTLER

Your English is better than I suspected.

MAEYAMA

I joined Kokumin Giyutai at start of the war. Volunteer Corps. If conflict was to reach our homeland, we would deliver first aid and evacuation to our people. My family was assigned to handle captured Americans. I never imagined to be called for such a duty.

JOHN BUTLER

None of us ever do.

Maeyama nods. He sees that Butler is taking an interest in the painting, far more than just a glance.

MAEYAMA

It tugs at the soul, doesn't it?

Butler nods.

JOHN BUTLER

It reminds me of... a memory. One I haven't quite come to terms with.

MAEYAMA

The painter called this  
 "Ushinawareta tamashi no mori". The  
 Forest of Lost Souls. His last  
 painting as the war drew to an end.  
 He said the soul of humanity had  
 suffered greatly in the darkness of  
 these times. That we had lost our  
 way to find one another.

JOHN BUTLER

The painter has quite a gift.

MAEYAMA

Indeed. My son had many gifts.

Butler pauses at this bit of news.

JOHN BUTLER

You must be proud.

MAEYAMA

I... did not approve of my sons  
 path. I told him he should be  
 focused on his duty to the empire,  
 to fight for the glory of the  
 homeland. I felt his compassion as  
 an artist made him soft... weak.  
 When my wife died... it was hard on  
 us both. She understood his gift.  
 For far too long I did not.

JOHN BUTLER

Sorry for your loss.

Maeyama nods.

MAEYAMA

She passed from this world many  
 years ago... long before the war...  
 long before he painted this.

JOHN BUTLER

Now the war is over, hopefully he  
 can start painting again.

MAEYAMA

(gravely)  
 No... he will not.

Butler starts to speak further but decides against it,  
 sensing this is something Maeyama does not wish to continue.  
 The men stare at the painting together in silence.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

We should both get some rest. The journey tomorrow will be long.

Butler nods and walks out of the room. Maeyama follows sliding the door to the room shut behind him.

FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD TO MT. SANJO - DAY

The jeep with Butler, Gaddis, Kehn, Kimura, and Maeyama is driving through winding roads to reach Mt. Sanjo. Wide vistas of a beautiful countryside and the mountain loom in the distance. Maeyama and Kimura are in the back with Kehn, while Gaddis is once again driving with Butler riding shotgun.

As the Jeep draws closer to the mountain, Maeyama takes a deep sigh. Kimura places his hand on his shoulder and nods at him. Maeyama nods back and they both look back towards their destination.

EXT. BASE OF MT. SANJO - DAY

The jeep rolls up to the end of the road at the base of Mt. Sanjo. The weather at this location is colder than where they've been. The ground and trees are dusted with a heavy amount of snow. The group gets out of the vehicle and starts checking their packs.

JOHN BUTLER

All right gents, double check those rucksacks.

Butler walks over to Maeyama.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

What's it look like from here?

MAEYAMA

The hike is difficult. Your plane is around the other side of the mountain. Will take us at least three hours.

JOHN BUTLER

Lead the way.

Maeyama and the men set off to find the plane.

EXT. MT. SANJO MOUTAINSIDE - DAY

The men begin to traverse the mountain. A good portion of the terrain is steep. At one spot Kimura struggles with the incline and almost falls. Gaddis stops his fall and props him up. Kimura nods respectfully, as does Gaddis.

After a short rappel across a small chasm, the terrain evens a bit and the snow on the ground starts to thin out. A light snowfall starts to drift through the trees.

Butler looks upwards once again to the sky, the white dots of big flakes descending towards him. He closes his eyes to take a breather. One or two quick flashes from the scenes in his nightmares flash by.

CARL GADDIS (O.S.)  
Sergeant I found something!

Butlers eyes snap open and he looks towards Gaddis. Gaddis is clearing some Snow off something that is wedged into the ground.

As Butler walks over and approaches the find, he sees it's a small section of bent metal, some of the rivets still intact. Part of a number is stamped on the side.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
Part of the fuselage Sergeant.

The rest of the men come over to look. Maeyama looks up and ahead to scan the terrain.

MAEYAMA  
We are close.

The men forge head following Maeyama. As they proceed forward bits and pieces of the plane become more and more prevalent. The trees become more blackened and shattered from the force of the crash.

Soon they come upon a small, bright clearing where most of the trees have been flattened by the main body of the fuselage, which lies broke in three large chunks. Debris is still everywhere, partially buried by the snow and the earth.

Maeyama walks up and puts a hand on the fuselage. The soldiers advance and start poking around the plane.

JOHN BUTLER  
Kehn, mark this location on the map.

Kehn takes out a map and starts scribbling notes.

CARL GADDIS

I don't see any of the bodies?

Maeyama takes his hand off the plane and turns to the men.

MAEYAMA

Six months ago my city burned from American bombings. We put out what fires we could. As the fires raged, we saw this bomber fly low towards Mt. Sanjo. My cousin came to me the next day, full of rage and despair, his life reduced to ashes. He wanted revenge. I told him I would honor our family, find the men and make them pay.

Kimura looks downward. Kehn stops writing and looks up.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

Two search parties left that morning to find the bomber. I led the second party. The first party captured two men at a temple a few miles from this site. Your man Witte was one.

Maeyama nods at Kimura. Kimura reaches into his back pack and pulls out two dog tags. He bows and hands them to Butler. Butler looks at Kehn and nods. Kehn takes out his notebook and gets ready to write. Butler reads the names on the tag.

JOHN BUTLER

Lt. Witte. Sgt. Hart.

Kehn checks off the names against his list as Butler says them.

CARL GADDIS

(slightly upset)

You had these all along?

Maeyama does not answer. He starts walking and goes around to the front of the plane. The soldiers follow him.

He comes to an area where the debris and brush have been cleared out and six elongated dirt piles are lined up in a row. Snow and nature have reclaimed portions of them, blending them into the mountainside floor. At the head of each dirt pile is five foot tall piece of wood, with Japanese writing on each side.

Maeyama and Kimura both approach the graves and bow. They rise up from the bow, still facing the graves.

MAEYAMA

My party found the crashed bomber.  
Six of your men were dead on  
impact, their bodies badly damaged  
from the crash.

KIMURA

Bachi ga ataru.

Maeyama nods. Butler and Gaddis look at Kehn.

GEORGE KEHN

Karma. He says the death of the men  
was karma balancing itself for  
their actions.

Gaddis starts to look even more pissed.

CARL GADDIS

Karma? Are you fucking kidding me?

Kehn senses this and tries to put out the fuse that has been  
lit inside of Gaddis. Gaddis puts down his backpack and rifle  
near the graves and starts to advance.

GEORGE KEHN

Woah woah. Easy... easy man. I know  
it doesn't seem like it, but those  
men were buried with dignity and  
honor. See those graves? A  
soldier's grave. That's respect.  
They didn't have to do that, they  
could have left them to rot.

Maeyama reaches into his pack and pulls out six dog tags. He  
bows and hands them to Butler. Butler reads the tags while  
Kehn checks them off.

JOHN BUTLER

Lt. Crowe, Lt. Young, Lt. Manning,  
Lt. Jonstan, Sgt. Strong, Sgt.  
Beck.

GEORGE KEHN

Three still missing Sergeant.

Maeyama starts walking again, this time into a wooded area  
away from the plane crash. The crew follows.

EXT. MT. SANJO ALCOVE - DAY

Maeyama leads the men to a small, natural alcove at the edge  
of the mountain.



Over the top of the alcove the valley below is visible. A single grave points towards the alcove where another, more ornate grave marker is standing between the dirt and the alcove wall.

Maeyama gently falls to his knees and bows. Kimura stands behind and beside him, and bows as well.

MAEYAMA

I was in charge of the initial questioning of the captured air men. They claimed the remaining men died during the jump from the plane.

Butler shakes his head and walks up to Maeyama.

JOHN BUTLER

Wait... that doesn't make any sense. That's eleven men total, the entire flight manifest. So, who the hell is this?

Butler points to the grave. Maeyama is visibly tense now, fighting back emotion.

MAEYAMA

The leader of the first search party. My son.

This startles the three soldiers.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

After burying your countrymen, we rejoined the first search party in Osaka. I instructed my son to hand over your men to the Kempeitai for... further questioning.

Kehn stops writing and looks up, his eyes get wider. Gaddis looks at him, confused but sensing something is off.

CARL GADDIS

What the hell does that mean?  
What's Kempeitai?

GEORGE KEHN

The Kempeitai are...  
(gulps)  
... secret police. The Japanese version of the Nazi SS.

Gaddis' rage rises and walks over in front of Maeyama.

CARL GADDIS  
 You knew they would be tortured!  
 Killed! Didn't you old man???

Maeyama nods.

MAEYAMA  
 Our duty was to our family and our  
 emperor.

Gaddis pulls out his side arm and rest the barrel on  
 Maeyama's forehead. Maeyama doesn't flinch. Everyone freezes.

GEORGE KEHN  
 Gaddis! What the hell??

JOHN BUTLER  
 Stand down RIGHT now private!

CARL GADDIS  
 Those men... were somebody's sons  
 pal! Somebody's brother! Somebody's  
 father!

MAEYAMA  
 (visibly emotional now)  
 Indeed they were. My son shared  
 your feelings Gaddis-san. When our  
 emperor ordered Kokumin Giyutai to  
 become a combat unit, he protested.  
 As the Kempeitai arrived to  
 interrogate your men, he  
 protested. And when the Kempeitai  
 sword cut off my son's head... only  
 then did his protest stop.

Maeyama looks up at Gaddis, tears streaming down his cheeks.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)  
 This war brought us nothing but  
 shame and dishonor. Your people  
 brought us nothing but fire and  
 death. My countrymen branded my son  
 a traitor. Bachi ga ataru. Do what  
 you must... gaijin.

Gaddis is seething, dealing with too many emotions at once.  
 His teeth still barred, he pulls back the hammer on his  
 pistol. Kimura starts to babble in Japanese and move toward  
 Gaddis. Kehn restrains him and he seems to plead for Gaddis  
 to stop.

JOHN BUTLER

GADDIS! I'm giving you a fucking order. Lower. Your. Weapon.

CARL GADDIS

Why the hell should I? This god damned nip turned our brothers over to be tortured and killed! Japs aren't people! They're monsters!

JOHN BUTLER

Let this go private! This man doesn't need our help to pay for his sins.

CARL GADDIS

What the hell is wrong with you Butler? You killed krauts over in Europe for doing half as much! Why are you defending this asshole?

JOHN BUTLER

BECAUSE I KILLED A FUCKING KID MAN!

Gaddis looks over at Butler startled, as does Kehn. Maeyama tilts his head slightly towards Butler, tears streaming, but head still against the barrel of the pistol. Gaddis stumbles one step back, but does not drop the pistol.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

(softly)

That's what your nazi killing machine did. He killed kids.

CARL GADDIS

What... what're you talking about sarge?

JOHN BUTLER

My squad was scouting the front lines in the Ardennes, making our way through a forest. Fighting had been going for days. For one lousy minute the fighting stopped long enough for me feel human again. Then all hell broke loose. The Germans knew our position. They started shelling the shit out of us. They detonated the mortars above the tree line so we'd be impaled by the splintering wood.

Butler takes a step and slumps down on his knees by Maeyama.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

For the first time in two years since I deployed to that godforsaken war, a single thought went through my mind. I didn't want to die a million miles from home.

Butler pauses and takes a breath.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

So, I ran. I ran and the Germans started advancing troops. Turns out they had gotten desperate. Started drafting kids into the front lines. One of them got blown into a ditch with me. We fought. And I didn't stop until I was covered with that kid's blood. Blood from a kid who was just as scared shitless as I was. When they dragged me out of that hole... that boy was still spitting blood... pulling at the bayonet I'd jammed in his gut.

No one says anything while Butler pauses and tries to compose himself.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Day after day I used to just scout ahead of the squad... direct mortars and watch 'em scatter like chickens as the shells came down. I just figured... the more I killed, the faster I could go home. But then when the Germans finally surrendered, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go home. Not now. I couldn't let my folks know I murdered a boy. I couldn't let them see this... thing... I'd become.

Butler finally gets up and steps over by Gaddis.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

You need to put that gun down. Because truth is... we're all monsters private. Us. Them. Were no different. But it doesn't have to be that way today. Today we need to pull each other up out of this hell... out of this darkness we've lived in for far too long. `Cause if we can't help each other be human beings again today?

(MORE)

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

Well then... heh... tomorrow?  
Tomorrow it'll be somebody else's  
brother. Somebody else's father.

Butler looks toward the grave marker by Maeyama.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Somebody else's son.

Gaddis stares back and Maeyama and continues to grit his teeth. His eyes grow glassy. Everyone is on pins and needles. Tears are still streaming down Maeyama's cheeks, his head bowed and eyes closed.

Gaddis slowly lowers his gun and shakes his head slightly. Without saying a word, he walks back out to the clearing with the fuselage of the bomber. Butler helps Maeyama up and the group wearily follows Gaddis.

EXT. MT. SANJO MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Once they are back in the clearing by the graves, they see Gaddis picking up his rifle, his back to the group. Once the rifle is in hand, Gaddis just looks at the ground. His hands tighten on it. The men slow down but still inch forward. Gaddis turns around to face the men, his features expressionless. The men stop and go rigid. He starts walking towards them, rifle in hand. The group reflexively steps back a bit.

JOHN BUTLER

Private what do you think your....

Gaddis stops by Butler and offers the rifle to him.

CARL GADDIS

I think you should do the honors  
sarge.

The group relaxes just a little and Butler looks at the rifle. He takes it from his hand and looks back at Gaddis. Butler looks over to Maeyama and he nods.

Maeyama and Kimura turn to the graves and bow. Kehn and Gaddis fall in line by Butler. Butler turns his head to the side, towards the bright blue sky.

JOHN BUTLER

For all the people we've lost.

Butler loads the round in the chamber.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)  
Gaddis, sound it off.

Gaddis nods.

CARL GADDIS  
Ready!

The rifle then gets shouldered in position, preparing for the start of a gun salute.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
Aim!

Butler points his rifle to the sky.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)  
Fire!

Butler squeezes the trigger and fires a round.

EXT. SKIES AROUND MT. SANJO - DAY

We drift above the trees and the mountainside and see the valley below. The remainder of the gun salute rings out through the still peace of snowy mountainside, sunlight beaming down through the blue skies from the heavens above.

Each shot punctuates a different scene that gets further and further away from earth and towards the sky.

EXT. ROAD TO MT. SANJO - DAY

The men drive back to Maeyama's house. During the drive, no one says anything. They all stare out at the horizon where the sun is lowering in the sky.

EXT. MAEYAMA'S HOUSE - DUSK

The jeep pulls up to the house and the men step out to stretch their legs and unload. While Maeyama takes his belongings into the house, Kimura walks over and sits on the steps, frazzled from the events of the day. Butler walks over hands Gaddis bottle of pills.

JOHN BUTLER  
I guess our friend earned these.

CARL GADDIS  
Sergeant, I....

JOHN BUTLER

I'm not saying shit to anyone private. But you're better than this.

Butler looks over at Kimura, then back at Gaddis.

JOHN BUTLER (CONT'D)

You both are. You just need to let yourself believe it.

Butler walks back to the jeep. Gaddis looks down at the pills. He walks over to Kimura and holds the pills out to him. Kimura stands up and looks at the pills.

CARL GADDIS

They're yours now. Go on... take 'em.

Kimura takes the bottle and stares at it. He clinches his hand around the bottle and then closes his eyes.

He looks back up at Gaddis and places the bottle back in his hand. His hand is clasped on Gaddis' hand as he speaks, blurting out rapid fire phrases in Japanese. Gaddis doesn't expect this and gets a little uncomfortable. He starts to look around for Kehn trying to figure out what's going on. Kimura slows down and points at the bottle and then out to the woods, making a sweeping, throwing motion. He lets go of Gaddis' hand and looks at him plainly.

KIMURA

Mo iya. Mo iya.

Gaddis looks at the pills and then back to Kimura. He nods slowly, coming to an understanding.

CARL GADDIS

You said a mouthful pal.

Gaddis chucks the bottle as far as he can into the woods. Kimura grins and gives Gaddis a respectful bow. Gaddis turns and does the same. The men nod and Gaddis walks back to the Jeep.

As he does he sees Kehn has been watching the whole scenario play out. He smiles at Gaddis.

CARL GADDIS (CONT'D)

Put a sock in it Kehn.

Gaddis plops down in the drivers seat of the jeep. Kehn smiles wider and hops in the back.

Butler starts to climb in when Maeyama steps back outside the house. He is carrying a small bamboo box.

MAEYAMA

Butler-san! A word before you go.

Butler climbs out and walks up to Maeyama.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

I want to thank you for your actions on the moutainside... and apologize for mine.

JOHN BUTLER

That's not necessary.

MAEYAMA

I think it is. This war has taken much from us Butler-san. If our people are to find our way to one another, it must start with the actions of honorable men.

Maeyama hands Butler the box.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

This box holds what other possessions we could find from the men on that mountain. I believe it is time for these things to return to their families.

Butler takes the box.

JOHN BUTLER

I will see to it that they do.  
Arigatou Maeyama-san.

Butler and Maeyama bow. Butler starts to turn away and go down to the jeep.

MAEYAMA

Butler-san?

Butler stops and turns back to face Maeyama.

MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

Go home.

Butler is taken aback.



MAEYAMA (CONT'D)

If I am to forgive myself for what I've done in this war, you must forgive yourself as well. My son and I will never see each other again in this life. Your father can still see you. Go to your family Butler-san. Go home.

Butler's eyes grow glassy, as do Maeyama's. The men nod to each other and then Butler heads back to the jeep.

EXT. ARMY HQ BARRACKS - NIGHT

Butler plops down on his bunk and puts Maeyama's box over to the side. He rubs his face, still trying to process the day. Butler looks back up after a beat, and glances around at the other soldiers in the barracks.

Some are quietly reading letters quietly to themselves, a faint smile across their face. Some are showing off pictures of family and friends, laughing and joking. Butler looks over to Kehn's bunk. Gaddis is there, talking away, expressive arms punctuating his words. Butler listens in.

CARL GADDIS

You Giants fans talk alllll day long about Hubbel. Those days are over, okay? I'm from Brooklyn. We KNOW Baseball. Real baseball. Yuh with me?

GEORGE KEHN

Uh huh. That why the Dodger's suck so much? Are they still in the league even?

CARL GADDIS

You... little... shit. What do you know about baseball? You guys don't even have a ball team out there!

GEORGE KEHN

Man, you know they gonna move the whole league out west where the real action is!

CARL GADDIS

Oh, yeah, right.  
(sarcastically)  
"San Francisco Giants"

GEORGE KEHN

(laughs)

I know, I know. Crazy talk. Brother  
gotta have a dream though.

The two laugh. Butler smiles.

Butler turns away from the conversation and reaches over to Maeyama's box. He sets it up on his lap. Popping open the lid, he starts cataloging various items in his notebook. A medal here. A photo there.

Near the bottom of the box there is a single letter from one of the men that remains undelivered. He stares at the letter for a beat, then looks at all the other items on the bed. He nods his head in resolve and then looks back at the letter. It is addressed to: Lois Ann Beck, 225 South Brainard, LaGrange, IL.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LAGRANGE, ILLINOIS - DAY (JULY, 1946)

It's a bright sunny day with no clouds. A row of suburban houses line the street, bright green lawns buffering the gap between the house and sidewalk. Large trees are planted parallel to the street in each direction. Butler pulls up in a Taxi, which stops in the street in front of a modest red brick house. After paying the driver and stepping out, he retrieves the letter from Beck in his jacket pocket.

Butler surveys his surroundings. Inhaling a deep breath, he heads up the curving flagstone walk and steps to a solid wooden door with a small window in the upper portion and the numbers 225 just below.

He knocks on the door and LOIS BECK answers. They start talking, but the dialogue is not audible.

Lois seems to be apprehensive at first. She trembles and starts to break down, but then opens the door wider and takes the letter from him. She gives Butler a fierce hug and appears to thank him. Butler nods, and then walks away.

INT. BECK HOUSEHOLD - DINING ROOM - DAY

Lois sits down at the dining room table with the letter, emotion washing over her. She is flanked by LOIS' MOTHER and LOIS GRANDMOTHER. Lois' Mother hands Lois her infant son DICKIE.

As she cradles her son in one arm, she starts to read the contents of the letter. Tears roll down her cheeks.

We hear the voice of George Beck Jr. as she reads the words.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

Dear Lois- How do you start a letter like this? I honestly don't know. I guess maybe I'll start with the truth and find my way from there. The truth is, I hope you never read this. It should never, ever reach you. I've always felt that I was coming back to you. But since you're reading this, it means I'm not.

EXT. GREYHOUND STATION - CHICAGO, IL - NIGHT

Butler hops off a Greyhound bus with his gunny sack. He starts walking down a busy city street, tall buildings flanking him on each side. The crowd is bustling around him and by him as he makes his way down. In his dress greens, he stands out among the flood of men and women. Butler walks by a movie theatre where a young teen couple is seen waiting in line to purchasing tickets. The marquee lights cast a magic glow on their faces as they giggle and talk.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

The truth is also May 5th, 1943. That was the last movie we saw together. It was "Going my way". I remember under the marquee lights you were the most beautiful girl in the world. I remember my hand in yours. I remember your sweet, short sighs. I remember all those things that pull my heart home to you.

INT. UNION STATION, CHICAGO - DAY

Butler walks up to the counter and scans the train schedule. As he looks at the schedule, a younger woman nearby accidentally drops some of her baggage on the ground. The contents go everywhere. A young man approaches and stops to help her.

As their eyes meet, there is chemistry. They both blush and gather her belongings.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

The truth is, if another love can make you happy, rest assured it's the right thing to do.

(MORE)

GEORGE BECK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Don't for heaven sakes think  
because I say this I love you less.  
It's because I love you so much,  
because you are so young, and  
because have so much to live for.  
However you choose to live your  
life, I'm sure it will be right and  
true.

Butler advances to the counter and pays for a ticket. Ticket in hand, he walks towards the boarding area for the train. Off to the side of Butler, a man and woman are pushing a baby stroller. A young girl besides the couple comes up and peeks in the stroller, playing with the baby.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

The truth is, you made me very  
happy when you became my bride. And  
you made me even happier when you  
gave me a son. You've given me all  
I ever dreamed of darling. Always  
remember that. Hopefully Dickie  
will have a brother or sister  
someday. Raise him the way we both  
wanted and let him choose his own  
way, even if it's flying.

INT. CB&Q RAILWAY TRAIN - DAY

Butler is sitting in a train staring out the window. Summer scenery of the American rust bowl basin zip by outside.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

The truth is, war is Hell for the  
men fighting it. And it's a deeper  
hell for the folks with families  
that are left behind. You have to  
be one of those people. For that,  
I'm so very sorry. The time we  
spent together was... to me... my  
complete life. Nothing else  
mattered. You were everything I  
lived for and everything I was  
willing to fight for. I only hope  
that all of this hasn't been in  
vain. I hope that something good  
comes out of all this fighting.  
That giving up the life we wanted  
lets others live the life we won't.

EXT. OSAKA STREETS - DAY

Gaddis and Hinata are walking down the street, while he carries her son on his shoulders. He reaches up and tickles the boy and they both laugh. Hinata beams at him lovingly.

INT. OSAKA CLASSROOM - DAY

Kehn is inside of a barracks classroom. He is teaching Japanese to the other soldiers. They are willing students who laugh at his random jokes dispersed throughout his lectures. They are raising their hands and seem to be eager to participate in class.

EXT. SUBURBAN OHIO HOUSE - DAY

JOHN BUTLER'S MOM is hanging up clothes to dry in the summer air. The sun that hangs in the bright, clear day envelops her and the clothes in a heavenly aura.

GEORGE BECK (V.O.)

I need to get some rest now, so I should probably stop. I was never a great writer, but I did my best to tell you how you make me feel. I love you... now and always. Whatever comes after this life, I hope someday I'll hold you in my arms once more.

Love, George

Butler's mom freezes when she hears a voice behind her.

JOHN BUTLER

Hey Ma.

His mother turns around and drops her clothes upon seeing her son. It takes her a beat to process what she is seeing, then runs over and hugs him tightly.

As she sobs, they walk towards the door to the house. JOHN BUTLER'S FATHER comes out of the house to see what the commotion is about, followed by JOHN BUTLER'S SISTER. The group joins arms in an emotional hug.

In the sky above, peaceful, wispy clouds slowly drift by on a sea of endless blue.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER:

It is my earnest hope, and indeed the hope of all mankind, that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past -- a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice.

- General Douglas MacArthur