

INVASIVE SPECIES

We'll make great pets.

Written by

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EXT. SKIES OVER DENSE JUNGLE - NIGHT

SUPER: January 1945

Rain drenches the countryside. Lightning highlights the silhouette of a transport plane flying through the storm.

INT. COCKPIT - DOUGLAS C47 'THE SHANGHAI EXPRESS'

Captain ZACHARY 'Pork Chop' Burton and co-pilot DANTE Colon battle the elements as the plane bucks and pitches.

ZACH

All things considered, I'd rather be in Philadelphia.

DANTE

I'll take Old San Juan. Sure we can't go back to Hong Kong?

ZACH

Too late now, we're committed.

DANTE

Why don't we just fly over this?

ZACH

Too risky. Zeroes have been thick around here. We'd be sitting ducks.

A spot of unexpected turbulence jolts the plane.

DANTE

Even ducks would stay out of THIS.

ZACH

Can't argue with you there. Go check on our passengers, will you?

DANTE

Aye aye, Cap.

Dante unbuckles and exits the cockpit. He passes by the navigation/radio station and taps the metal roof.

DANTE (CONT'D)

How we doin' fellas? Red?

With the blue and yellow insignia of the 322nd Fighter Group on his sleeve, navigator Roscoe 'RED' McGee studies a chart.

RED

Es al garete, broki. They must be crazy to be sending us *THIS* way.

Radio Operator HARVEY 'Fudd' Futterman lowers his headset and raises his beat-up Dodgers cap to scratch his head.

HARVEY
Radio silence, no less.
Y'know what that means.

RED
Yeah, OSS. So what gives?

DANTE
You know why they call us the
Flying Mushrooms, right?

HARVEY
Sure, because they feed us shit and
keep us in the dark.

INT. PLANE FUSILAGE - CONTINUOUS

Dante enters the main fuselage. Crates are stacked chest high and cargo is stowed everywhere. 5 people sit on the starboard bench with safety harnesses strapped to the wall.

First is GENERAL Roderick 'Hot Rod' CARPENTER, accompanied by Native American serviceman LT. Steven NAGURSKI.

Next is young KEYE Wing, who stares up in fascination at the Navajo man. Beside him is the child's Grandmother MIAOYIN, who frets and wrings her hands anxiously. On the floor at her feet is a wooden box covered by an ornate silk shroud.

Sitting alone, JOHN DOE wears a suit under an overcoat and hat. Seemingly bored, the anonymous man reads a newspaper with a wrist handcuffed to an attaché case in his lap.

DANTE
Sorry about that turbulence, folks.
We'll be clear of this pretty soon.
Just hold on, Captain Zach's the
best in the business. He'll put us
down in Burma safe and sound.

Reaching into his pocket, the co-pilot produces a bar of Hershey's chocolate and kneels next to the young man.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Your abuela hanging in there?

The boy looks to his Grandmother. They converse in Chinese.

KEYE
She worries about my grandfather.

Dante nods and points at the small covered box.

DANTE
How's your little buddy?

Keye smiles and claps his hands. A high-pitched giggle burbles from the box and something inside begins to hum in an unearthly falsetto. Dante leans in, his eyes wide.

DANTE (CONT'D)
It's-- *beautiful*.

He hands the candy to Keye, who opens it eagerly and digs in. Dante breaks off a block of chocolate and lifts the silk shroud to feed the furry occupant.

The cooing song stops and a tiny voice asks: 'Yum yum?' Mrs. Wing's bony hand comes down swiftly on Dante's wrist and she scolds him angrily. Keye stops munching and translates.

KEYE
Oh no, sir! Too late now.
Must wait until morning.

John Doe chimes in.

JOHN DOE
You should listen to them. That critter's already caused quite a stir in Hong Kong. Tokyo wanted it pretty bad, but we got there first.

DANTE
What in the world is it?

JOHN DOE
Beats me. Once we get it stateside, Magruder's boys can dissect it and figure out what makes it tick. Until then it's property of the War Department. Sure is cute, though.

The frail woman speaks to her grandson worriedly.

KEYE
Sir, she asked how much longer?

DANTE
Tell her we'll be on the ground by the time you finish that candy.

Keye relays the info to his grandmother. Dante rises to leave but is stopped by the senior military man.

GEN. CARPENTER
Is that some sort of monkey?

DANTE
Not sure WHAT it is, General.
Kinda looks like a teddy bear.

The wary Lt. Nagurski shakes his head with a concerned look.

LT. NAGURSKI
Be'ádíláhi ni'. Yee naaldlooshii.

SUPER: Mischievous elf. Shapeshifter.

DANTE
Huh? What'd he say?

GEN. CARPENTER
Damned if I know. Can't understand
a word. DOE wants us back in Nevada
ASAP. Something big going on out in
the desert. Real hush-hush.

LT. NAGURSKI
Sir, the creature in that box is--

A muffled explosion rocks the plane. The lights flicker.

DANTE
Looks like we've been spotted.

Dante hustles back to the cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Dante straps in. Searchlights crisscross the sky as anti-aircraft guns thunder into the darkness. Flak blossoms burst dangerously close and the C47 shudders.

ZACH
You guys ain't supposed to be here.

The pilot pushes the throttle levers forward and pulls up hard on the controls. The plane climbs steeply into the storm clouds and the muffled booming subsides.

ZACH (CONT'D)
That'll buy us some time. Won't be
long until they dial us in again.

DANTE
Hey Red, what's the word?

RED
If you can keep them off us for 7
minutes, we're home free.

DANTE
Any word from our friends?

HARVEY
Nah, still too far out. We'll
switch to short wave on approach.

The booming stops, replaced by eerie stillness. Zach and Dante take a deep breath in anticipation of what comes next.

ZACH
Here we go.

DANTE
Out of the frying pan--

The plane breaks free of the storm and into a clear night sky. Dawn peeks from a sliver of sunlight on the Eastern horizon. A pair of fighters streak toward the cargo plane.

ZACH
Only 2 this time.

DANTE
It's like they aren't even trying
any more. You ready, Red?

RED
Just say the word, primo.

The C47 ascends and turns to face the oncoming fighters. Zach deftly raises the nose and decelerates as the Zeroes make a strafing run. They fire and miss as the plane stalls.

ZACH
Amateurs.

DANTE
Now!

Red pulls a handle. A string runs through a series of pulleys and eye-hooks winding through the internals of the plane. It ends tied to a smoke grenade mounted on 1 of the plane's 2 engines.

The ring pops free as the propeller sputters and stops. A plume of thick smoke pours from the grenade and envelops the wing. The C47 noses over gracefully and spirals in freefall.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Drop 'em, Fudd.

HARVEY reaches under his seat and pulls a handle of his own.

EXT. PLANE FUSILAGE - SAME TIME

A net releases 4 mannequins from the belly of the plane with parachutes opening as they fall. The decoys drift to Earth with smoke billowing from the wing of the 'crippled' plane. The Japanese pilots make another pass at the C47. Deeming it mortally wounded, they turn towards the parachuting dummies.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Dante reads the altimeter as the ground rushes to meet them.

DANTE
6000. 5500. 5000.

ZACH
Hold until 1500.

DANTE
Cutting it kinda close aren't you?

ZACH
It's gotta look convincing.

DANTE
4500. 4000. Airspeed's too high.

ZACH
She's fine. Be ready to drop at 2.

DANTE
3500. 3000. 2500.

ZACH
Now!

Dante pushes a button under his seat as Zach restarts the engines and pulls back on the yoke with all his might.

EXT. PLANE FUSILAGE - SAME TIME

The landing gear extends, revealing a small barrel mounted to a strut. A fuse ignites and a clasp releases the keg.

The C47 pulls out of the dive, brushes the treetops, and resumes level flight as the barrel explodes in a fireball.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

DANTE
Think they bought it?

ZACH
Why wouldn't they?
Those guys are just kids.

DANTE
Where are we, Red?

RED
Too low to be sure, but we aren't
far off. Adjust to heading 225.

ZACH
We need to be on the ground before
sun-up. It's getting too bright--

A string of machine gun rounds suddenly tear through the plane's left wing. Alarms sound as hydraulic fluid and smoke stream from the shredded metal.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Son of a-- Hey Red?

RED
Yeah Cap?

ZACH
Go make biscuits.

RED
I'm on it.

Red unstraps and dashes to the cargo bay, hustling past the passengers to reach a small port at the rear. 4 of them are white-knuckled and bracing for impact.

John Doe calmly watches Red open an oval hatch and raise a length of flexible duct. He attaches it to the opening and flips a switch. An electric motor hums to life.

EXT. SKIES OVER CHINA/BURMA BORDER - SAME TIME

The lone fighter closes in from above and behind the C47. From the side of the transport, a thick plume of white powder is blown behind the plane, partially obscuring it.

The Japanese plane flies right into the heavy cloud, flour coating its windshield and caking on the wing actuators. The Zero wobbles and abandons its pursuit.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

DANTE
That did it.

ZACH
Gotta shut down number 1.

DANTE
More concerned with hydraulics.
How's she feel?

ZACH
Sluggish. She ain't happy.

HARVEY
Hey, I got something! Limited
bandwidth, but we're in range.
Source is 5 miles southeast.

ZACH
Looks like we may be walking.
We're gonna have to improvise.
You see what I see?

DANTE
I have visual. You sure about this?

ZACH
Prepare for landing. Might be a
little rough, we're coming in hot.

EXT. SKIES OVER BURMA - CONTINUOUS

Feathering the engine, the stricken plane glides along a narrow road bisecting a vast rice paddy. A man leads a pair of oxen down the raised earthen path. The C47 touches down just beyond the startled villager, who ducks as it roars by.

INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

ZACH
This is gonna be close.

Dante crosses himself and pulls the brake lever.

EXT. JUNGLE RUNWAY - SAME TIME

A panicked farmer drops his hoe and dives into the rice field. The front tire hits the tool and blows, causing the wheel hub to bend and dig into the packed dirt. The plane's nose dips, grinding to a halt inches from the lush jungle.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

ZACH
With room to spare.

DANTE
One more for the good guys.

ZACH
It's all in the reflexes.

EXT. JUNGLE RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lt. Nagurski dabs at some blood on the General's forehead. Miaoyin grimaces as Red puts a sling on her injured arm. Keye kneels at her feet shielding the cage from the sun.

Still cuffed to his briefcase, John Doe joins the crew examining the mangled landing gear. With hat and overcoat over his arm, he squints at the rising tropical sun.

JOHN DOE
Did we get a fix on our contact?
My rendezvous is at 1600 sharp.

HARVEY
Yup. We're a few miles out. Hey,
how'd you get that overcoat off?

ZACH
May not be wise to break radio
silence just yet. Those Zeroes were
local, they'll look for wreckage.

DANTE
And the AA guns? They weren't
supposed to be there. How did
reconnaissance miss them?

ZACH
It's like they were waiting for us.

JOHN DOE
But how? The Brits hand delivered
that flight plan yesterday.

ZACH
One thing's for sure. The Japanese
don't want us to make it to Akyab.

General Carpenter and his Navajo companion join the group.

GEN. CARPENTER
As the highest ranking military
officer, I'm assuming command here.

JOHN DOE
Are you now?

GEN. CARPENTER
My mission is a Priority 1
directive and takes precedence over
any secondary considerations.

JOHN DOE
Sorry, but I don't work for you.

GEN. CARPENTER
The orders come directly from the
desk of Brigadier General Steven
Lucas MacGuffin in Washington.

JOHN DOE
I don't answer to DC. My job is to
get that fuzzball to Virginia. I'll
go solo if I have to--

ZACH
We need to stick together. This is
no place for women and children.

JOHN DOE
Nobody said anything about them.
They're expendable.

GEN. CARPENTER
Gentlemen, the Allies are days away
from taking these barrier islands.
The airfield is a crucial staging
point for our efforts in Iwo Jima.

JOHN DOE
Good luck. There's 1500 Japanese
soldiers hiding in those caves, and
they mean to make a fight of it.

GEN. CARPENTER
Well, half the British fleet is
offshore ready to unleash hell.

ZACH
If we can get to Akyab, maybe we
can kill 2 birds with 1 stone.

A flour-dusted Japanese fighter passes by overhead.

HARVEY
Your boyfriend's back, Cap.

DANTE
His pals will be here in no time.

ZACH
Let's grab what we can and get moving. OK with you, General?

GEN. CARPENTER
Agreed.

JOHN DOE
I say we ditch the civvies.
They'll just slow us down.

DANTE
No. They'd be shot on sight.
Besides, do you know how to care for that-- that-- *whatever* it is?

JOHN DOE
I know I'm supposed to keep it dry and dark. But you've got a point.

The group scatters and crew members ransack the cockpit to scavenge gear while the military men head to the cargo hold. The Marine officer scours the manifest and finds his box.

GEN. CARPENTER
Here it is! 9906753. Grab an end.

The men struggle to move the heavy crate, so they resort to pushing and sliding it over to the side door.

EXT. JUNGLE RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

With the crew hustling around him and the Asian civilians shuffling away from the plane, John Doe lingers by the cargo bay. Zach calls out to him from a cockpit window.

ZACH
What is it?

The mysterious man grins and raises a finger. A loud *CRASH* is heard. The crate lies smashed and splintered on the ground. A golden box tumbles out, spilling its broken clay shards before coming to rest upside down.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Is that what I think it is? I flew an archaeology professor all over hell and creation looking for that.

JOHN DOE
Wait til they find out it's fake.

ZACH
That's why those AA guns were here?
Is that what they're after?

JOHN DOE
It's OK. We want them to find it.
Trust me, if that had happened with
the real McCoy, the Japs would be
the least of our worries.

ZACH
They *found* it? I almost got shot by
the Krauts over that thing.

JOHN DOE
Well, don't worry. It's been tucked
away for safe keeping.

John Doe chuckles as the General berates his subordinate.

JOHN DOE (CONT'D)
I suppose I'd better go let Abbott
and Costello off the hook.

ZACH
Make it quick. We're ghosts in 2
minutes with or without you.

EXT. - END OF JUNGLE RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The group enters the dense jungle. Monkeys howl and birds screech as the Heart of Darkness welcomes its new guests. General Carpenter slaps at the buzzing mosquitos.

GEN. CARPENTER
Reminds me of Parris Island.

EXT. - JUNGLE PATH - CONTINUOUS

In the humid shade of the jungle, Nagurski points out a vaguely coherent path leading away from the runway. Captain Zach turns to address the ragtag group.

ZACH
Stick to the plan. Single file,
walk in each other's footsteps.
The Lieutenant and I are on point.
Red, you cover our asses.

RED
Back of the bus.

HARVEY
Could be worse. You could be
lugging this around.

He jostles the salvaged equipment he carries.

ZACH
Keep it down. We don't know if the
natives are friendly.

DANTE
Judging by our welcoming committee,
I'd say probably not.

Dante follows Keye and his grandmother through the jungle.
The diminutive old woman darts expertly through the terrain
as the boy cradles the box and it's mysterious cargo.

JOHN DOE
We might have an ally in the area
who can help us out.

ZACH
What makes you say that?

JOHN DOE
Give a listen to the birds.

The party freezes and listens to the wildlife. A peculiar
warbling call is answered by another in the near distance.

LT. NAGURSKI
I hear it.

Another mournful call echoes in reply.

JOHN DOE
THAT. Right there.

GEN. CARPENTER
Is it the Japs?

ZACH
I know that sound from back home.

GEN. CARPENTER
So is it the Japs or not?

ZACH
No General, it's a loon.

JOHN DOE

Correct.

HARVEY

You can say that again.

RED

What's it doing *here*?

With a knowing grin, John Doe cups his hands and returns the loon call with a loud, parrotlike squawk.

JOHN DOE

AWWK! Hitler's a sissy! AWWK!

The forest falls silent. The group stops and listens.

GEN. CARPENTER

Has that boy gone off his nut?

Harvey notices that the mystery man has removed his suit jacket and draped it over his arm. Somehow, the handcuffed briefcase remains firmly attached to his left wrist.

HARVEY

Wait. *How?* How did you-?

DANTE

Zip it, Fudd.

GEN. CARPENTER

Never did trust them OSI fellas.

After a moment, the squawk of a parrot breaks the silence.

IAN (O.S.)

AWK! Charlie says Fuck Hitler!

With a grin, John Doe strides forward confidently past Lt. Nagurski and further up the trail, abandoning the rest of his confused party while humming 'Yankee Doodle'. A tiny voice inside the box joins in, adding a cheerful harmony to the familiar melody. Miaoyin tugs her grandson's ear and Keye whispers tersely into the box.

KEYE

Xiànzài bù chànggē.

SUPER: *No singing now.*

The voice trills in disappointment and goes quiet as the group cautiously follows the spy. Anticipating trouble, Zach puts a finger to his lips and raises his pistol.

EXT. BRITISH JUNGLE OUTPOST - CONTINUOUS

The path opens into a small clearing. In the middle stands a pair of enormous teak trees. Together, they form the massive wooden support columns used to raise a clever pulley-driven observation platform, where a short wave radio broadcasts from high above the dense canopy. IAN Dunsmore approaches John Doe while humming 'God Save the Queen'.

IAN

Blimey, I should have known.
Leave it to you Yanks to cock-up a
perfectly good plan.

JOHN DOE

Ian, you sly bugger!
How's Winnie?

IAN

Cantankerous as always. 2 bottles a
day and smokes like the Queen Mary.

The men smile, salute one another and shake hands.

JOHN DOE

Did he enjoy the bourbon?
I know he prefers scotch.

IAN

Why, yes. From what I hear, he was
quite taken with it.

JOHN DOE

Well, sorry for the
misunderstanding.

IAN

Water under the bridge, old chap.

JOHN DOE

I was only following orders.

IAN

No need to apologize, we've all had
to make sacrifices for our country.

JOHN DOE

Hope all is forgiven.

IAN

Yes, well, Love and War and all
that. So, what say you introduce me
to your charming companions?