

Fathers, Sons and a Holy Ghost
(Based on a True Story)

Written by

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Forward

My father is a gentle mountain of a man. His hands are like baseball gloves that can swallow a handshake. Supposedly, there is a photo of Dad, standing like a strongman, in Korea with two GI buddies, sitting on each shoulder. Mom describes Dad as having an effortless smile and eyes of a combat soldier that look right through to your soul. Though I have never seen the misplaced photo, I am forever looking for it.

One day, while visiting my parents in Redondo Beach, I was rummaging through a box of old papers that my mom found. I was surprised to come across a letter dated, 1947, written by a Captain Oliver Orson to my grandmother after the second war. Captain Orson described how he knew her husband, Sport Jordan, as a civilian oil driller prior to the outbreak of war in the Philippines.

The letter described how the Japanese eventually overran the Philippines and both men were captured together spending three and a half years in prison camp. As the allies began retaking the Philippines, the Japanese put 1,619 POWs aboard a hell ship named the Oryoku Maru and set sail for Japan under the cover of a typhoon. When the storm cleared, the unmarked ship was repeatedly bombed by allied planes.

In his letter, Captain Orson mentioned a fancy silver belt buckle that my grandfather hid from the Japanese for 3 1/2 years in prison camp. The letter was an excellent template for which to research the experience of my grandfather while in the Philippines, complete with dates and locations.

My father never offered much about his past. I asked him about the belt buckle and what he remembered of his dad. My father described The Depression as the happiest childhood a boy could have. Sure, he ate frogs and beans but he adds, "Think about it. You're ten years old, your dad isn't working and you both spend the day together on adventurous food gathering expeditions. What could be better than that? At one time we even got to live in a tent!"

"Your grandfather was a dreamer and an optimist" my father wistfully said. "He had two adages, "Worry about today and let tomorrow worry about itself. And, there's no such thing as courage without fear." When things hit rock bottom, as they often did, dad could smile like a millionaire. We belonged to the richest family in the world."

Sport Jordan was a horseman and rode in amateur rodeos. On one occasion, he won the bronc riding contest and the silver rodeo belt buckle he later protected as a POW. Sport Jordan finally landed a dream job drilling oil wells in the Philippines in 1941, a job that would deliver his family from the hardships of The Depression. Little did anyone realize that he was headed into the teeth of a Japanese juggernaut.

During my months of research, in an eerie coincidence, my own son Patrick had terrible bouts of night terrors that suddenly ended when my research revealed the truth. This is our story.

FADE IN:

EXT. PALOS VERDES SHORELINE - DAY

A blood red 1967 Camaro pulls to a stop along a field near a rocky shoreline cliff. The October skies are ominous.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Inside is KURT JORDAN(40). He helps his eerily pensive son, PATRICK JORDAN(7), out of the back seat. Patrick imitates his dad as they walk to the edge of the cliff.

EXT. PALOS VERDES SHORELINE - CONTINUOUS

Patrick sits beside Kurt and they survey the ocean. Kurt points to a thin sunbeam that breaks through the dark clouds and broadens into a huge column of sunlight like Jacob's ladder to the sea.

PATRICK

Dad, can those angels see us?

Kurt DAYDREAMS a scene from WW II, 1945, that he overlays in the present day setting. From Kurt's Point of view, a passenger ship, labeled: "ORYOKU MARU", sails parallel to the coast towards the sunbeam.

KURT (O.S)

I suppose so. Patrick, do you ever see angels?

EXT. ORYOKU - DAY - KURT'S DAYDREAM

Japanese civilians and military bustle on the decks. A nasty soldier opens a hatch to the cargo hold and lowers a large bucket of rice by rope. He looks curiously to the skies.

PATRICK (O.S)

I don't remember.

EXT. PALOS VERDES SHORELINE - DAY - KURT'S DAYDREAM

In the distance, a squadron of four American Hellcats flies low in formation towards the sunbeam like prowling wolves.

KURT (O.S.)
Remember? -- What you know
about angels? -

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - DAY - KURT'S DAYDREAM

750 American POWs are crammed like sardines. In a scene from hell, they are emaciated, half-naked, and drip sweat. A few lie dead. They squint as they receive the bucket of rice. While some look towards the BUZZING of the planes, others ravish the rice.

PATRICK (O.S.)
They make me...

SMASH CUT - PATRICK - PRESENT

PATRICK
...hungry.

EXT. PALOS VERDES SHORELINE - DAY

Patrick's hands sweep the dirt. Kurt looks puzzled. He takes a deep breath. He stands and brushes the dust from his pants.

KURT
Hungry 'ey?
--Yeah, well, me too.

EXT. KURT'S CAR - DAY

The Camaro drives down a windy road past cliff-side estates to the gridded cul-de-sac streets of Redondo Beach.

INT. DUKE'S WORKSHOP - DAY

OLDER DUKE JORDAN, (72), is a very big teddy bear with large strong hands and an old cowboy's face. He sits on a stool wearing reading glasses and tinkers at a workbench. The workshop has plenty of vintage knick-knacks for a boy to explore. Kurt carries a large box as he and Patrick enter.

OLDER DUKE
Hey, Kurty.
(Enthusiastically)
Hello, Pat-trick.

PATRICK
Papa, you promised you
would make me a go-cart.

OLDER DUKE
That's right. And a promise means...?

PATRICK
...It's gonna happen.

Patrick smiles eagerly as Duke pulls out a shopping bag from behind the workbench and removes wheels, rope, and hardware. Kurt places the box on a table.

OLDER DUKE
What's in the box, Kurty?

KURT
Some stuff I dug up on your dad.
-- You never say much about him.
-- Do you remember much?

Duke stares wistfully at the mysterious box. He is conspicuously silent. He searches for wood as if to change the subject and studies its suitability. He can't escape this one.

OLDER DUKE
Remember? Yeah, I remember.
-- He was in the Philippines.
He was in Bataan.

KURT
Actually, he wasn't on Bataan.
-- I did a bit research.

OLDER DUKE
(soft but determined)
Your research is wrong.

KURT
Maybe. -- What was he like?
-- Before the war? Aunt Dodie
says you had it pretty tough.

Patrick STRUMS an old banjo hanging on the wall.

OLDER DUKE

Hell, it was one of the happiest
times of my life --until he left.

KURT

What was he like?

OLDER DUKE

Dad? -- -- He liked everybody
and everybody liked him. He
tended horses for Universal.

SUPER: "1932"

EXT. GORGE - DAY - 1932

A cowboy western is being filmed. SPORT JORDAN (30), is tall, handsome, looks you in the eye, and has a firm handshake. He is a member of a posse, their faces caked with make-up. The posse chases an outlaw who is cornered at the edge of a shallow gorge.

OLDER DUKE (V.O.)

Occasionally, he was an extra in
some of the old black and whites.
He dreamed of winning the audition
for a singing cowboy that later
became Hop Along Cassidy. -- Dad
had a stuntman friend we called
Crazy Harry. Harry's signature
stunt was that he was the only man
in Hollywood that could dive from
nearly any height into six feet
of water.

The outlaw is a high-spirited HARRY DIXON (28). He looks back at the approaching posse then down at the rushing river below. He stands on top of his horse and dives head first into the rushing river. Nearby, a director stops the filming.

Everyone, except Sport, runs to the edge of the gorge to see if Harry is still alive. Sport casually tends to the horses. He removes a gold colored pocket watch, looks at the sun and resets the time. Harry emerges down river and swims to shore.

OLDER DUKE (V.O.)

The two men were like brothers.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND UNIVERSAL STUDIOS APARTMENTS - EVENING

OPAL JORDAN, (27), is pretty in a homely way. Her large doe eyes hide a tiger. She removes laundry off a line while ragamuffin, kids, DODIE JORDAN (9), and YOUNG DUKE (7) chase each other.

OLDER DUKE (V.O.)

We lived in some apartments on the lot until The Depression when Universal replaced spaghetti westerns with horror films and Dad lost his job.

Sport sneaks behind Opal and kisses her neck and smells her hair like an intoxicating gardenia. A young German shepherd that always follows Duke wags its tail around Sport. Opal turns around, reaches into Sport's shirt pocket, and reads the pink termination notice. She frowns a worried look.

OLDER DUKE (V.O.)

We worshipped him, especially mom. If a man ever loved a woman, Dad loved mom. And, he made sure she knew it.

Sport kisses Opal passionately, lifts her in his arms, and walks towards the apartments. The kids follow. Sport stops and fumbles into his pocket. He hands the kids two pennies.

The two kids run off. Duke stops and wheels around. His eyes meet Sport's smiling face. Duke pauses with worshipping admiration. Sport carries Opal away. Duke follows his sister.

OLDER DUKE (V.O.)

And, when things hit rock bottom, as they often did, dad could smile like a millionaire. He would always say, "Think about today and let tomorrow worry about itself." We belonged to the richest family in the world.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND UNIVERSAL STUDIOS APARTMENTS - DAY

Sport, Opal, and the kids pack up an old truck. Harry gives hand picked flowers to Opal. As the family drives away forlornly, Harry looks at his own pink termination slip.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The truck pulls into the dirt driveway of a small two-bedroom house with a one-acre vegetable garden, a cow, chickens, rabbits and fruit trees.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Opal looks through the windshield at her mother, JENNY O'HOWELL, (55), overbearing, glasses, hair in a bun and stiff. Jenny sweeps the porch looking up with pursed lips. Sport braces.

OPAL

Let me tell mama about the baby.

SPORT

Okay.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Opal and Dodie kiss Jenny on the cheek. Duke looks up at Jenny for his turn to kiss her. Jenny clearly favors the girls and never shows affection to Duke. They walk inside while Sport unties the belongings from the truck.

LLOYD O'HOWELL, (35), is Opal's overly serious brother. He bounds out of the front screen door in his undersized train operator's uniform that he always wears. He's mama's big dork, and the only one that doesn't know it. Duke, right behind him, is knocked off balance and to the floor by the screen door. Neither men notice. Lloyd poses on the porch with knuckles on his hips. Sport tips his fingers off his brow.

SPORT

Well, look at you, Lloyd.

Lloyd proudly brushes his uniform.

LLOYD
Like it?

SPORT
Sure I do. Makes you look muscular.
Say, what needs to be done around
here?

LLOYD
Mom's been talking about a well.

SPORT
(Heaving a trunk)
All right.

LLOYD
W.P.A.'s hired for the month but
I got my connections.

SPORT
You know what they're paying?

LLOYD
Buck-and-a-half a day.

Sport grimaces as the two heave a trunk from the truck.

LLOYD
I'm warning you, Sport. Mom's
still foaming about you taking
that studio job. -- Say, you
still got your shotgun?

SPORT
I ain't gonna shoot your
mother for you, Lloyd.

LLOYD
Ah, go on. Duke will like it over
at our place. Tons of quail.

SPORT
What do you mean, your place?

LLOYD
Well, um mom wanted me to tell you...

SPORT
Say something, Lloyd.

LLOYD

Well, she thought it best if
Duke stayed with me and Claire.
You too, if you like.

SPORT

I appreciate the offer Lloyd
(Looks at Duke)
but, it ain't gonna happen.

LLOYD

Ah, hells.

SPORT

Relax, Lloyd. You're gonna split
your fancy britches. It ain't
your problem. Help me get this
back in the truck.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Opal plays a classical piece on a piano as Jenny watches approvingly.

JENNY

I would have let you take the
piano, if I thought that job of
Sport's was going to last.

OPAL

Mama, please be easy on him. He's
had it rough. He won't say so,
but this is really hard for him.

JENNY

He should have taken the motorman's
job with your brother when he had
the chance. If he hadn't been such
a star dreamer, he'd have a job.

Opal slowly plays as she tries to ignore Jenny's stinging words.

JENNY

Let's talk about sleeping
arrangements.

LATER - Sport enters looking for Opal.

SPORT
Hello, Jenny.

JENNY
(Snappy)
Hello.

SPORT
You look good, Gram.
You been okay?

JENNY
Been fine.

OPAL
Sport, where are the things?

SPORT
They're still in the truck.
I need to talk to you.

Jenny HUFFS out of the living room and into the kitchen. Sport looks like a man who can't pay his rent. He jams his hands deep inside his overall pockets and waits for a private moment.

OPAL
(Preempts him)
Honey, get the things, and have
Lloyd get his tent. The kids will
need a place to sleep. Here. Don't
worry about mama.

Sport fidgets and looks around with a clenched jaw.

OPAL
I got my old friend back -- I wonder
if the boogie keys are in tune?

Opal plays a boogie-woogie lick as Jenny re-enters.

JENNY
Opal Vernice, please.

OPAL
Sorry, mama.

JENNY

You know that gives me a headache.
You can play as you wish outside
my presence, but not...

SPORT

...Jenny, I understand you
need a new well.

JENNY

That's right. Don't you want
fresh water for the kids?

Jenny turns her back and rudely walks away.

SPORT

(Conciliatory)
Well, sure I do, and that's why I'm
gonna dig you a well. Just as soon...
(To no one)
-- as I unload the damned truck.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - LATER THAT DAY

Duke and Dodie explore a tent as Sport hammers tent stakes.

SPORT

(Serious)
Kids, come on over here and get your
chores. Do you remember how I
told you your 'ol dad used to work
on a farm back in Missoura?

The kids nod. Jenny marches out the back door wiping hands on
her apron with a staff sergeant's expression on her sour puss.

SPORT

Look around. This is gonna be
a good part of our food, and
everyone's gotta toe the line. Now...

JENNY

(Snapping orders)
...Dodie, you tend to the animals.
And keep 'em clean too.

DODIE

Yes, ma'am.

JENNY

Duke, you know the difference
between a weed and a vegetable?

Duke shakes his head then changes to a nod on Sport's cue.

SPORT

(Whispers to Duke)

Yes, ma'am.

YOUNG DUKE

Yes, ma'am Gram.

JENNY

Never mind. Just keep 'em good
and watered.

YOUNG DUKE

(Nods, then remembers)

Yes, ma'am Gram.

JENNY

Dodie, twice a day at sunrise and
sundown you milk Katie. You know
how to do it?

SPORT

I'll show her, Jenny.

Jenny snarls. Duke pees in the vegetable garden.

JENNY

Duke, get out of there.
What do you think you're doing?

YOUNG DUKE

I'm doing my chores, ma'am Gram.

SPORT

Whoa, Dukey. I'll take care
of it, Gram.

Jenny HUFFS back towards the house shaking her head.

YOUNG DUKE

Dad, why is ma'am gram mad?
I was just...

SPORT

...It's okay, son. She's always mad.
Dad's gonna show you how to do your
chores. - First thing, peeing ain't
watering. Use that bucket over by
that water barrel. Jenny, what about
the well? Where do you want it?

JENNY

Oh, I don't care.

Out of Jenny's sight, Sport kicks the dirt.

SERIES OF SHOTS: SPORT DIGS A WELL - DAY/NIGHT

--DAY -- Sport draws a circle and starts to dig.

--SUNSET -- All but Sport eat dinner.

--NIGHT -- Duke brings Sport a plate of food.

--NIGHT -- Sport flops into bed. Opal strokes his head.

--MORNING -- Duke crawls out of the tent and yawns as Sport
digs.

--DAY -- Sport digs in the hot sun.

--NIGHT -- Sport digs with a lantern.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - DAY - THREE WEEKS LATER

Duke looks down a finished well. He walks to the garden
and draws pictures in the dirt. Opal washes laundry on
a washboard. Jenny, removes clothes from a clothes line.
Jenny twitches for just the right moment to offer her opinions
trading glances between her work and Opal.

JENNY

Oh, that Roosevelt

OPAL

(long pause, she smells ambush)
What do you think of your New well?
Now you don't need to wait for the
water truck anymore.

JENNY

It's a folly to be wasting all that money on those silly work programs. Oklahoma should learn to look after their own. I see those Okies standing around with those stupid slack-jaw faces.

OPAL

Sport says they're decent men. They just want work to get by like everyone else.

JENNY

I just can't understand why they just don't stay put. Always out jaw breaking together with some big scheme to make some big dream come true.

A buck fifty a day moving dirt around for a road nobody needs isn't work. That Roosevelt ought to just keep his nose back east where it belongs.

Opal's attention is drawn to the little thief, Duke, who is stealing a big tomato while keeping an eye peeled on Jenny. Duke puts his arm around the dog and sits with his back to the conversation as if nothing happened. --He can't seem to find the right spot in his overalls to hide the tomato.

OPAL

(while watching Duke)

He's building roads. It isn't much, but He's working. When he can find something better, he'll move on. --God knows we can use a few decent roads around here.

JENNY

I've got everything I need, right here.
--And I certainly don't need another road.
--Some men can't be counted on. In fact, Most can't. And certainly not those Okies nor the likes of them. I know how to get along. And, you need to start getting along. And by God, you need to learn to do it quick, without a star gazer making all the decisions and dreaming away any chance of a real home! It's always someone else having to pick up the pieces. And this time it could be you.

JENNY (Cont'd)

--This isn't what I wanted for you.
And another baby, my Lord God!
And what kills me, is that I knew it all
along and I just kept my mouth shut.

OPAL

Your eyes never held back, Mama.
(pause as Jenny reacts)
He's trying. He's really trying.
He is up at dawn and home after dark.
He just dug you a well. Do you know
how hard that clay is to dig through?
Can you see how strong he is. He dug
That hole as fast as 4 men. Can you
see how handsome he looks when he smiles.
Looks you square in the eye and smiles so
wide with his face and eyes. He looks at
you as if you are the only one alive.

(pause)

He does it to everyone. Even you!
I know, I watch him any time I can.

(pause)

He watches me any time he can.

(giggles)

Mama, I'm crazy about him.
I'll pick up anything he drops.

OPAL

I'll find a job. I'll take care
of the house. I'll do anything
just to see him walk in the door
every evening. I'll follow him
anywhere he wants to take me.

(pause)

Look at Duke over there. He can't
Get enough of him. I'll bet he's
thinking about him right now.

(Duke feels his tomato)

He adores his father.

JENNY

He's teaching him the damned tools
of the trade showing his boy how to
dream away his future. That,

(points at Duke)

is just another one in training.

OPAL

Mama, pu-lease. Leave him out
of it.

With that, Jenny snatches the laundry and carries a full laundry basket back to the house. Duke has heard the entire conversation. He turns to watch the mean bitch wolf leave. He catches his mother's smiling eyes.

OPAL

Come here Dukey. --You miss your
'ol dad?

YOUNG DUKE

I liked it better when he didn't
have a dang job.

OPAL

He's gotta work, Dukey.

DUKE

But Gram says he's not even making
any money. We catch all kinds of
food when we go out. He should work
here like we dug the well together.

OPAL

Sweetie, it's about his pride. He
works because he needs to feel
like he's doing something --for us.
Duke, don't pay attention to Gram.
She's got her reasons. She loves
your father. -she just doesn't
know it. But we'll help her, right?
(glances to the back door)
Are you ready for your secret misson?
(Duke nods)
Good. We need another plan.

Opal whispers into Duke's ear. Jenny opens the screen door holding a, handkerchief-wrapped, bundle. She looks at Opal who suddenly doubles over with a moan.

JENNY

Duke. Take this down now.

Duke runs past Jenny takes the bundle and heads for the house. Jenny tends to Opal who fakes morning sickness.

JENNY

Take deep breaths, honey. It will pass. You poor Dear. I don't know why he's done this to you again.

OPAL

I'll be alright in a minute. It's just the notion of food.

JENNY

Sit here. Put your head down.

Duke is in the kitchen. He opens the bundle and takes apart Jenny's sandwich quickly. He opens the refrigerator and removes a few items. He spreads mustard on the bologna and slices the tomato redressing the sandwich. He grabs a hunk of cheese and tears it. He runs to a closet, kneels and opens a box full of a kid's treasures. On top is an orange soda in a bottle. He runs it back to the kitchen. He cleans up as well as a 7-year-old can in ten seconds and rewraps the bundle.

Duke bolts out of the back door, with the bundle, and runs to the road. The dog eagerly follows. Duke stops turning to wave to his mother while Jenny's back is turned. Opal stands upright, takes a deep breath and continues washing, miraculously cured.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Young Duke speed walks down a long hot road. In the distance, eight rugged men dig and pave the roads. Sport, wearing overalls, stops to watch Duke and the dog flicker in the heat mirage. (READER NOTE: This scene concludes p.106)

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN - DAY

A few homemade Christmas decorations hang in the window. Opal, very pregnant, soaks beans.

OPAL

Sport, what are we going to do about tonight?

SPORT

I'll rustle up something. Can't eat beans on Christmas.

OPAL

I mean the kids. We have to tell them something.

SPORT

I'll work something out at Zeke's.

OPAL

Honey, I bought shoes for the kids there. Zeke gave me another dollar fifty on credit. JoAnne must have been out. He's too kind for her.

SPORT

Ah hell. I'm not gonna worry about it today.

OPAL

But, we have to tell them something.

SPORT

All right. I'll do it.

EXT. RIVER - LATER THAT DAY

Duke and Dodie sit on a rock and fish with a hand line. Sport traipses towards them with a shotgun and two pheasants. He looks into their bucket of crawdads and sits.

SPORT

Nice.

Sport removes his gold pocket watch. He looks up at the sun and resets the time.

YOUNG DUKE

Dad, can I hold the watch?

DODIE

No, Dukey. Nobody touches the watch.

Sport passes the watch around to the kids.

SPORT

It's okay. You can both take a turn.
-- Listen, I need to talk to you.
-- You know times are tough on ol'
Santa. There's a good chance he may
not make it this year.

YOUNG DUKE

Is it on accounta we been bad? Gram says..

SPORT

...No Dukey, it ain't on accounta you
been bad. Y'all been as good as you
can be. If he could make it, he would.

DODIE

Will he be going to other houses?

SPORT

He might, but those kids aren't
any better than you are. It's just
that -- See, I don't think he's
feeling all that well and he won't
be able to get around to everybody.

YOUNG DUKE

I don't get it.

Duke studies his father's sullen face.

YOUNG DUKE

It's okay dad. He'll just owe us
for next year.

SPORT

That's right and we'll hold him to
it. Take your things to the truck.

The kids run to the truck as Sport lingers. He angrily grabs a
rock and throws it. He looks towards the kids climbing in the
truck.

SPORT

Shit.

EXT./INT. FOOD ASSISTANCE OFFICE - DAY

OPAL slips into the office with her hat pulled down over her brow. Opal takes a number, and sits behind a pillar. She picks up a newspaper and tries to be small. She doesn't notice a shift change where an attractive but frizzy-haired BITCHY JOANNE (30), steps to the counter.

BITCHY JOANNE

Number one-forty-seven.

Bitchy impatiently pounds on a desk bell.

BITCHY JOANNE

One, four, seven. One-forty-seven.

Opal schleps to the counter looking down into her purse.

BITCHY JOANNE

(Animated and loud)

Why hello, Opal. Is that you
under that hat?

Bitchy's tone successfully attracts the attention of others.

OPAL

(Surprised and embarrassed)

JoAnne.

BITCHY JOANNE

I haven't seen you in here before.
And look at you. My you look --well...

OPAL

Yes. I...

BITCHY JOANNE

If I had known, well, Mary Katherine
has some old dresses. I'm sure we
could probably let Dodie borrow one.

OPAL

No thank you, JoAnne.

BITCHY JOANNE

I just thought it would be the
charitable thing to do. Well,
may I have your form please?

OPAL

Sport's in the WPA.

BITCHY JOANNE

Do you have his card? I'm supposed to look at it. Some folks are just trying to get a free ham for Christmas, you know. Hmm, you qualify. Here ya go.

Bitchy hands Opal a grocery bag with a small ham sticking out. Opal fumbles with the grocery bag and walks quickly to the exit. Bitchy gloats as she exchanges condescending looks with a co-worker punctuated with a malicious wink until Opal nears the door.

BITCHY JOANNE

(Loud and condescending)

You hang in there, OPAL JORDAN.
I'll pray for you.

Opal STOPS abruptly at a small skinny dirty-faced LITTLE GIRL sitting with a pathetic woman. Bitchy's words have just registered. Opal removes her hat and black raven hair falls to her shoulders. She reaches into her grocery bag and hands the little girl an apple.

OPAL

Cute smile like that? Hmm, you qualify. Here ya go.

Little girl removes her gum ready to eat apple. Opal holds out her hand and the little girl reluctantly hands the gum to her. Opal walks back to the counter where bitchy braces with pursed lips. Opal jams the gum into Bitchy's bell.

OPAL

Pray for some dignity, JoAnne.
There's more of it on this side of your little bell.

The tired eyes of those waiting turn and burn a hole into Bitchy. Opal raises her chin proudly ready for any retort, then turns, and walks out. Bitchy looks back at the staring crowd. She is speechless. She slams at her bell that makes a faint "TINK."

BITCHY JOANNE

One forty nine, one four nine.

EXT./INT. ZEKE'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Young Duke and Dodie eye a cowboy outfit and a porcelain doll in the window display while Sport talks with ZEKE (36) inside. Zeke shows Sport a ledger. Sport hands Zeke the pheasants slapping his shoulder with a nervous smile.

Zeke makes a note in the ledger just as Bitchy enters carrying her coat in a wad. She snarls at Zeke and walks directly into the back room in a huff.

Sport waves to the kids to come inside. He whispers to them and they run off to look for a gift and try to agree while Sport sits on a stool. The kids bring a purple ceramic juicer over to Sport.

As the family leaves, Bitchy enters again, unwads the ham from her coat and shoves it at Zeke.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CHRISTMAS EVE

The Family finishes a ham dinner. They wander into the

LIVING ROOM where a fire burns in a potbellied stove. Opal sits at the piano and plays a soft Christmas song. In the

KITCHEN, out of Sport's view, Jenny hands the kids paper and whispers to them. The kids sit at the table and write. At

THE PIANO Sport has a failed look in his eyes. He looks at the scantily decorated Christmas tree with three small packages and squirms. He plunges his hands deep into his pockets. Opal pulls Sport's arm close to her and guides his hand to her hair.

OPAL

Come on in here, kids. You can open your presents from mom and dad.

YOUNG DUKE

Just a minute. Almost done.

Young Duke hands Sport a note.

SPORT

What's this?

YOUNG DUKE

Gram helped us write a note to Santa.

Sport snarls at Jenny who returns a self-righteous sneer. The kids give a wrapped package to Opal. The kids open their gifts of a pair of shoes. Sport fumes beat red. He bolts out of the back door. Opal looks at Jenny. Her eyes ask, "Why?"

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

Sport lights a cigarette and smokes it ferociously as he kicks the dirt and paces. He throws it to the ground and marches, with purpose, to the truck. Duke opens the back door of the house.

YOUNG DUKE

Where you going, dad?

SPORT

I'm going out to look for old Santa. -- If I find him, I'm gonna make him come to our house.

YOUNG DUKE

Can I come?

SPORT

(like a football huddle)
Our chances are best if we spread out. You keep an eye peeled for him here, okay?

YOUNG DUKE

Okay, dad. Dad? I won't give up.

SPORT

I know son. I won't either.

Sport smiles at Duke, hops in the truck and drives away. Duke walks to the back porch as he scans the night sky. He sits on the porch with the dog. Both look up.

EXT. ZEKE'S GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Sport's truck pulls up to the dark store. A "CLOSED" sign hangs in the window. He looks up at the lit residence above the store. Sport pulls his gold pocket watch from his pocket and stares down at it. He looks up into the upstairs window of a warmly lit residence adorned with Christmas decorations.

Zeke is cutting a ham while his wife, Bitchy Jo Anne, passes a serving dish to a young prissy little girl, MARY KATHERINE (7) who in turn passes the dish her over-sized brother, ARTHUR (9).

Sport rubs the watch and resets the time to a clock in Zeke's darkened general store. He walks up the stairs and knocks on the door of Zeke's residence.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Duke and Dodie each look out a window at opposite ends of the living room. The dog looks out a third window.

EXT. HARRY'S HOUSE - SAME

Sport holds a large bag as Harry answers the door of an old run-down house. Lloyd pulls up in his car.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Dodie is asleep at her window. Duke tries to stay awake. Duke and the dog exchange glances like two sentries.

INT. HARRY' GARAGE - SAME

Sport removes four small wheels, a broom handle, rope and hardware from his bag. They start building a go-cart.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Sport wearily enters, places the sleeping kids on the sofa, and covers them with a blanket. The dog climbs next to Duke.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Duke opens his eyes to the rising sun and sees a cowboy outfit with guns, a porcelain doll, a go-cart, and candy filled stockings beneath the tree. He screams with ecstatic panic.

YOUNG DUKE

He came!

EXT. ZEKE'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Harry and Sport wait outside Zeke's store. Sport looks at his gold watch in the window display. ORVILLE STANFORD (32), drives up wearing an oily hard hat. Harry makes an introduction and the men shake hands. They talk and then shake hands again.

EXT. OIL RIG - DAY

Harry, Sport, Orville and three other men work an oilrig with remarkable harmony that appears almost choreographed.

EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is small and in need of repair.

SUPER: "May 1941"

INT. JORDAN HOUSE - NIGHT

TEEN DUKE is 12, DODIE 14, and DOODLE (girl) 6. The house is scantily furnished. An oil-stained Sport rushes in as Opal darns a sock. Duke spins a football. He tosses it to Sport.

SPORT

Honey, where are you?
We're out of the hole.

OPAL

What?

SPORT

We got a contract overseas.
Three hundred buckaderos a month.
We won't have to rent. We can buy
a house.

OPAL

Where?

SPORT

Anywhere you like.

OPAL

No, where overseas?

SPORT

The Philippines.

OPAL

When would you leave?

SPORT

Two weeks Friday. Kids, dad's taking you to the rodeo.

OPAL

For how long?

SPORT

A year, maybe longer if I'm lucky. I'll be leading a crew.

OPAL

A year? But things are good now.

SPORT

They're better, but think about how they're gonna be.

OPAL

When have you ever talked about tomorrow?

SPORT

Hey, what's going on here? I've worked my tail off to make something for us. Now I've got my chance. I've earned this.

OPAL

So have I.

SPORT

What are you talking about?

OPAL

You heard me. How do you think I felt serving the kids beans night after night, making dresses out of rags? Why do you think I did it? We've got what I want, and I've earned it. Lucky? Are you kidding? You don't need to go chasing another wild dream, Sport.

SPORT

(Bristles)

That's it. I'm going. -- Jenny.

As Sport storms for the door, Duke tosses Sport the football. In frustration, Sport slaps the football in mid air unaware that it rebounds off the house and into Duke's face. The screen door slams and Sport is gone.

EXT. RODEO GRANDSTAND - DAY

APRIL (24), is Harry's southern girlfriend. Lloyd's wife, CLAIRE, is an uppity henpeck. Opal is not with them. They sit in the grandstands. Sport and Harry have numbers pinned to their shirts. Sport's number #77 is askew. Dodie coyly eyes some flirting boys as Duke sits upright protectively.

LLOYD

Opal didn't want to come?

SPORT

Nope.

A Loud speaker blares: "HARRY PLEASE REPORT TO THE PENS."

APRIL

Now Harry, you wait a minute.

Harry fidgets and looks around but obliges. Sport smiles, then looks down as April quietly folds her hands and bows her head.

APRIL

Dear Lord, protect my Harry as he rides in the service of your holy name. Amen.

EVERYONE

Amen.

LLOYD

(Winking)

You can ride now, Harry. You'll
be safe.

EXT. RODEO RING - SAME

Harry bursts out of the shoot on a bull and finishes his eight
second ride. The buzzer sounds. He falls hard to the dirt.

EXT. RODEO GRANDSTAND - SAME

SPORT

Nice one, Harry. You hurt?

HARRY

Not yet. --You riding today, Lloyd?

CLAIRE

He most certainly is not.

Harry gives a taunting smile to Lloyd.

SMASHCUT: RODEO RING - SAME

Lloyd comes out of the shoot on a wild bull and falls off.
Rodeo clowns distract the bull as Lloyd checks his uniform.

EXT. RODEO GRANDSTAND - SAME

A dirty Lloyd walks back to his seat.

SPORT

Nice one, Lloyd. You hurt?

LLOYD

Not yet.

Claire beats Lloyd repeatedly with her purse.

LLOYD

Yet, yet. Stop already.

APRIL

Oh hello, Opal.

Opal silently comes from behind Sport and sits beside him.

OPAL
Hello, April.

CLAIRE
Opal, these crazy fools are riding
out there, including your husband.

OPAL
Yes, I can see that, Claire.

CLAIRE
Well, aren't you gonna say
something?

Opal re-pins the number on Sport's shirt centering it.

CLAIRE
Opal?

OPAL
It's what they do, Claire.
It's who they are.

Sport holds Opal's face in his hand and kisses her cheek.

EXT. RODEO CONCESSION STAND - DAY

Duke seems to want to say something as Sport orders food.

SPORT
Let's see, nine hot dogs and
six sodas.

Sport pays and they walk through the crowd towards seats.

SPORT
Now Duke, you need to pull
a strain on things while I'm gone.

TEEN DUKE
Yes, sir.

SPORT
And you take care of the girls
while I'm gone.

TEEN DUKE

Yes, sir.

EXT. RODEO GRANDSTANDS - SAME

As they near their grandstand seats, Sport stops to watch a bronc rider. The rider falls and the rodeo clowns make a spectacle.

TEEN DUKE

Dad - dad - dad?

The laughing crowd muffles Duke's words.

SPORT

You say something, Dukey?

TEEN DUKE

(Nervously)

Well, I just wanted to tell you...

A Loud speaker blares: "SPORT JORDAN PLEASE REPORT TO THE PENS."

SPORT

Here, take these. I'm up. Sport hands the food to Duke. Sport runs down the grandstands towards the pens. Duke lags and sits dejected. Opal puts her arm around Duke.

TEEN DUKE

He's wrong to be leaving. It's like he can't wait to go. He said he would help me with football this year. You shouldn't have given in.

OPAL

He has to go. Your father's dreams are why we all love him, Duke. It's why you love him.

EXT. RODEO PENS - SAME

In the pen, Sport mounts a spirited jet-black horse. He is very serious as he wraps the rope carefully around his bare hand. The Loud speaker blares: "THE NEXT RIDER IS SPORT JORDAN WHO HAS THE MISFORTUNE TO HAVE DRAWN COAL CRACKER." The crowd moans.

EXT. RODEO GRANDSTANDS - SAME

Opal smiles nervously. Duke leaves the grandstand unnoticed and watches from where he can't be seen.

EXT. RODEO PENS - SAME

Sport looks up to the grandstands. He spots Opal and smiles broadly. He nods his head to the gatekeeper and bursts out of the pens spurring and bucking wildly.

He gives a spectacular ride, and as the buzzer sounds, he is somersaulted off the wild horse and waves to the roaring crowd.

EXT. RODEO PODIUM - DAY

Sport is awarded an envelope and a fancy silver belt buckle that is about the size of his palm. He kisses the buckle and holds it up for all to see. He smiles triumphantly.

EXT. BEHIND GRANDSTANDS - SAME

Duke stands behind the grandstand and throws stones out towards an open field.

EXT. DUKE'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT - PRESENT (2002)

Duke finishes painting the go-cart.

OLDER DUKE

And five days later, he was gone.

KURT

What was it that you wanted
to tell your dad at the rodeo?

Duke pauses pensively.

OLDER DUKE

I wanted to tell him -- I loved him.

KURT

Why then, at that particular moment?

Duke takes a deep breath, blinks repeatedly, looks out at the sky, then looks Kurt squarely in the eye. Duke is clearly vulnerable and with a long pause he finally confesses.

OLDER DUKE

I needed to hear him say he loved me too. -- But, I never tried again. I picked the wrong time to hold a silly grudge. The day he left, I didn't see him off. -- I wouldn't see him off.

INT. KURT'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kurt and his wife ELIZABETH, 32, finish washing dishes.

ELIZABETH

How did it go with your dad?

KURT

He's hard to read. He told me things He's never shared before. I feel like I drew him out only to set him up. I haven't told him anything yet.

Patrick SCREAMS from upstairs. Kurt bolts out of the kitchen.

ELIZABETH

Hurry.

INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Patrick, still asleep, runs out of his bed and races to the top of the stairs where Kurt runs up with arms outstretched to stop him.

KURT

Patrick! Patrick! You're asleep.
Wake up, Sonny. You're asleep.

Patrick wakes and cries with deepest sorrow.

KURT

It's okay, Sonny. Dad's here.

Kurt walks Patrick back to his bed and lies down with him. Kurt pets Patrick's head as Patrick rubs his sleepy face.

PATRICK

(mumbles)

A promise means it's gonna happen.

Kurt is clearly puzzled. Patrick rolls over to sleep and pulls up the back of his shirt for a back scratch.

EXT. REDONDO BEACH SHORE - DAY

Duke, Kurt and Patrick walk towards the ocean dressed in swimsuits. Kurt sits to talk to Patrick as Duke wades in.

KURT

You can stay here.

Patrick wipes tears.

PATRICK

Please, daddy. Don't go in.

KURT

I'll be alright, sonny. You'll see.

Kurt swims out to Duke.

OLDER DUKE

He doesn't want to come in?

KURT

The father of one of his classmates was killed in an accident. We're singing tomorrow --there's a service..

OLDER DUKE

Are you sure he's up for something like that?

KURT

He says if I go, he wants to go too.

OLDER DUKE

That's a lot for a boy to handle.

KURT

He's been having weird nightmares,
-- more than usual. He's got to
face it sometime.

OLDER DUKE

(Abruptly)

You need to pay attention, son.

KURT

Where you going? We just got in.

OLDER DUKE

I'm getting out.

They bodysurf to shore. Patrick bravely wipes a tear. Kurt sits beside Patrick and nudges him playfully. Duke dries with a towel.

OLDER DUKE

(Still peeved)

Yesterday, you said dad wasn't
on Bataan. How do you know?

KURT

Dad, I found out exactly what
happened to him.

Duke launches a guarded gaze. Kurt returns a therapist's smile.

EXT. DUKE'S BACK YARD - DAY

Two neighborhood kids push Patrick in the go-cart out of the backyard and into the driveway. Kurt and Duke sit at a patio table. Kurt opens the "box", shuffles through it and removes photos, letters, books, and documents.

KURT

Your dad was one of thirteen men
who went to the Philippines to
drill on an oil lease.

EXT. BERILI, CEBU - DAY - 1941

Six men drill on a noisy oil well. A heavy THUMPING noise prompts Sport to wave at the men to stop the rig.

HARRY

What the hell is that?

SPORT

It sure ain't the rig.

HARRY

You think Orville's rig blew?

SPORT

No, he's north. Sounds like Cebu.

The air BUZZES. They look up and point to airplanes.

HARRY

Maybe, the army is doing some drill.

SPORT

That don't sound right. Stay here.
Make sure we don't lose the hole.

Sport leaves by truck. The men restart the drilling rig.

EXT. CEBU CITY - SAME

Sport stops at the top of a hill and surveys the bombed city below. He looks up at the red dots on departing airplanes. He drives through the civilian pandemonium of the smoking city. He stops the truck, blocked by a teenage boy lying on the ground.

He runs to the bleeding boy and kneels beside him. The boy clutches Sport's shirt. The boy's mother runs to him, screaming frantically in Tagalog. Sport rips off his outer shirt and presses it against the boy's chest wound.

SPORT

(To Filipino woman)
Get a doctor. Doctor. Now!

FILIPINO MOTHER

(Running)
Padre. Cura. Cura.

Sport looks around confused. He places pressure on the boy's chest wound with one hand and cradles him with the other. The boy kisses his crucifix medallion and looks at Sport pleadingly. It's useless.

Sport places his face squarely in front of the boy's eyes intimately. If this boy is to die, he won't be alone.

EXT. BARILI, CEBU - SAME

The men shut the rig down as Sport races his truck and skids.

SPORT

We're done drilling boys.
Japs bombed the town.

Sport walks directly into shaded bamboo shelter. He is shaking. Harry follows him, motioning to the other men to stay put. Sport pours himself a drink and downs it.

HARRY

Why the hell would Japs bomb a shit
hole out in the middle of nowhere?

SPORT

It ain't just nowhere. Heard
they dropped a load of bombs on
Hawaii, too.

HARRY

Shit.

SPORT

You know what a Cura is?

HARRY

No.

SPORT

It's a damned priest.

HARRY

A what?

SPORT

We gotta get the hell out of here.
Round up the boys. We'll go pick up
Orville's crew and head back to town.

EXT. CEBU CITY PIER - DUSK

Eleven oil workers loiter in sight of a seaplane tied to a pier. Orville Stanford walks from the plane to the men.

ORVILLE STANFORD

Plane holds seven. He'll take
nine, but no bags. A hundred
a head to Manila.

HARRY

So, what do we do?

LATER: Sport stares at a two of spades playing card as the seaplane takes off. Harry crumples the Jack of Diamonds.

SPORT

You didn't have to stay, Harry.

HARRY

Yeah, I did.

EXT. STREET CORNER IN REDONDO BEACH, CA - DAY

Teen Duke stands at a street corner looking around. A truck pulls up and drops a bundle of newspapers.

TEEN DUKE

Get your paper here. Herald here.

Buyers approach Duke and his papers quickly sell.

BUYER

Son, do you know what you're
selling?

TEEN DUKE

Yes, Sir. The Herald Examiner,
the paper that tells the whole...

BUYER

...Son, you're selling history.

Duke stops calling out as buyers rush him. He looks down at the headline: "JAPANESE BOMB PEARL HARBOR". Then another headline "PHILIPPINES ATTACKED." Duke gulps hard, his face strained with anxiety. He grabs a paper abandoning his post and runs home.

EXT./INT. JORDAN HOUSE - SAME

Duke bursts through the door. Opal listens to the radio war news. She turns nervously to Duke's desperate face. Her eyes tell all.

EXT./INT. QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

A sign reads: "U.S. ARMY QUARTERMASTER" over a small office. A Captain OLIVER ORSON (38), who could pass for a parson at a rural church, is seated behind a desk. Sport and Harry enter.

OLIVER ORSON

Hello, fellas. What can I do for you?

SPORT

We're on the oil contract in Barili.

OLIVER ORSON

Yes, I know. Where are the other men?

HARRY

They made it out to Manila last night.

OLIVER ORSON

Please sit down. I may as well tell you what is happening. I'm Captain Oliver Orson.

HARRY

We know what's happening. We're trying to get the hell out of here.

OLIVER ORSON

I'm sure you are. It's just not possible.

HARRY

Oh, we'll find a way out. Let's go Sport. He can't help us.

OLIVER ORSON

Gentlemen, chances are your friends won't be going anywhere either. The Japs have launched a major campaign up there. Everything is shut down.

HARRY

How do we know you're giving it to us straight?

Sport lowers his head and fingers a buffalo nickel.

SPORT

Look at him, Harry. He's giving it to us straight.

HARRY

Shit.

SPORT

So, what do we do?

OLIVER ORSON

We could use all the help we can get.

HARRY

We're drillers, not soldiers.

OLIVER ORSON

Well, if it makes you feel any better, I'm a veterinarian, but I doubt I'll be doing much of that anymore. You men have families?

SPORT

Yes.

OLIVER ORSON

We'll see about a commission if you like. At least your family will get a paycheck.

SPORT

Sign me up. I don't have much choice, Harry. She'll need the dough.

INT. VISAYAN COMMAND - CEBU CITY - DAY.

GENERAL SHARP points to a map while conducting a military briefing to twenty military officers.

GENERAL SHARP

Gentlemen, the Japanese have attacked in overwhelming force. Bataan and Corrigador will be fighting for their lives. Needless to say, no relief will be coming from Pearl. It won't be long before the Japs do more than send a few planes. We're desperately short of everything, especially artillery.

Blockade-runners will try to move supplies in from Australia, but the Japs pretty much own the sea and air. I will be moving headquarters to the Dole plantation, HERE. Your individual assignments will be distributed shortly.
-- We have thirty-five hundred Americans and thirty thousand untrained Filipino reserves in the South. This is the Alamo, and I fully intend for a different outcome.

SERIES OF SHOTS - CEBU - DAY

- Filipinos dig defense trenches near the coast.
- Sport, Harry and Filipinos load a truck with crates.
- Americans drill Filipino conscripts who wear coconut shells for helmets and pretend to fire weapons.
- Japanese aircraft strafe workers on the beach.
- Sport, Harry and Filipinos stack crates in a cave.

EXT./INT. QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Sport and Harry enter still dressing. Oliver Orson sits at a desk.

SPORT

You wanted to see us?

OLIVER ORSON

Yes, the Colonel wants you men to accompany our inter-island supply ships. Some of the native crews haven't been reliable.

HARRY

Where we going?

OLIVER ORSON

We need food runs to Bataan and ammo in Mindanao.

HARRY

Aren't those are in opposite directions?

OLIVER ORSON

I'm sorry, but we're too lean. I'm headed south to headquarters immediately. Be careful. Especially you, Jordan.

--You don't know this but Mac came and left last night and he's about 6 hours ahead of you. Japs suspect something and patrols are everywhere. You boys need to be clever out there. Lot of lives depend on you.

EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - DAY

Opal sits at her dining room circling the want ads in the newspaper. The sink is full of dishes and Doodle plays on the floor. The phone rings.

INERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION OPAL/JENNY

OPAL

Hello.

JENNY

I expected to hear from you by now. I just wanted to know when you're coming out?

OPAL

What makes you think I'm coming out?

JENNY

Oh, honey, please. You know you can't make it out there alone.

-- You there?

OPAL

I'm here.

JENNY

Those Japanese are sneaky. Next thing you know -- Well, the coast just isn't safe. It would be different if you had a man around. Well, I guess that's just the point.

OPAL

Mama, what are you trying to say? No, really? Just say it.

Her sudden animation attracts the attention of Teen Duke who eaves drops from another room.

JENNY

Well, I don't want to be the one to say so, but, when a man can't take care of his family, it's time to come home.

OPAL

This isn't about Sport is it? Sport never left me, Mama. As much as you would like me to believe. -- It's about daddy running off.

Opal stops abruptly and covers her mouth

JENNY

(long pause)

I have to go now, Opal Vernice. You keep this in mind. I have always been there to pick up the pieces in this family when the men have tried to dream us into the dirt. Shame on you.

OPAL

Mama? Mama? Ugh

Opal hangs up the phone she holds her waist trying to settle her rapid breathing. She bolts out of the house donning a sweater. Duke begins washing the dishes.

EXT. CEBU CITY PIER - DAY

Three Filipinos load supplies on a small steam ship labeled "KATIPUNAN." EDUARDO (22), is a curious Filipino who loves everything American. Sport and Eduardo hover over a map.

SPORT

You've taken this route before?

EDUARDO

Yes, sir. Many times.

SPORT

We're headed... What is this?

EDUARDO

Cagayan. It is where lives my family.

SPORT

You think your men will stick it out if there's trouble?

EDUARDO

I think so, sir. But, they are young.

SPORT

Let's get this thing loaded as fast as we can. When you're finished, hide the ship under those trees over there. We'll leave at sunset.

Sport points to a cove with overhanging trees as Harry walks up the small pier.

HARRY

You heard the Jap broadcast?

SPORT

Yeah, they ain't taking too kindly to us bootleggers, are they?

HARRY

I hear it isn't too pretty when they catch you. Listen, if anything happens, save yourself a bullet.

SPORT

We're going home, Harry.
Remember that.

EXT. CEBU CITY PIER - SUNSET

Harry's ship pulls away from the pier as the Katipunan docks. Sport and Harry wave goodbye to each other. Sport steps aboard.

SPORT

Head out that way. I want to hug the coast as long as possible.

EDUARDO

We can't.

SPORT

Why not?

EDUARDO

We have to go by coral reef.
Very dangerous for boats.
There is a channel to follow.

EXT. KATIPUNAN - NIGHT

The Ship sails into the rose-colored sunset passing a lighthouse with one burned-out lamp and buoys that define a sea-lane. The crew scans the sea and sky. Sport looks down into the shallow water at the colorful reef and whistles a tune.

EDUARDO

Sir, why the Americans don't send big army?

SPORT

I wish it were that easy.

EDUARDO
Filipinos wonder when MacArtoor
start secret plan.

SPORT
I don't see why folks back home
would leave us hung.

EDUARDO
Sir?

SPORT
You have kids, Edwardo?

EDUARDO
I have baby son. -- You are cowboy?

Edwardo points to Sport's rodeo belt buckle.

SPORT
Oh, I ride a little. Where's your boy?

EDUARDO
You live in Texas?

SPORT
Nope, California, near Los Angeles.

EDUARDO
You know John Wayne?

SPORT
I've seen him, but I wouldn't say...

EDUARDO
...Domingo, Mr. Lieutenant is
Hollywood movie star.

SPORT
Now, hold on.

EDUARDO
Look, he is big cowboy actor with
John Wayne.

The men huddle around Sport as if he were a movie star.
Sport studies their admiring faces and sees an opportunity.

SPORT

That's right. Been in a dozen films.
I was here to search for Filipinos to
be in a big movie on how we licked
the Japs.

CREWMAN DOMINGO

Why to lick them and not kill them?

SPORT

(Laughs)

See, that's Hollywood talk for
killing them. You boys want a part?

CREWMAN DOMINGO

Yes.

SPORT

Well, we need to show brave men in
our movie, so you boys gotta act smart.

CREWMAN DOMINGO

Yes, sir. We act real smart.

EXT. OPEN PHILIPPINE SEA - NIGHT

FAINT SINGING drifts with the Katipunan as it sails in open
sea. A Japanese destroyer sails in same direction, as if
following.

EXT. KATIPUNAN - CONTINUOUS

From the KATIPUNAN at a distance a faint song. Sport leads a
song and the Filipinos fill in the chorus as they sail into the
night.

SPORT

I got a gal in Baltimore...

CREW

Little Liza Jane...

(Continues and fades)

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - MORNING

The Katipunan is docked at a small pier in a busy village at the center of a small horseshoe bay flanked by a hilly countryside. Orson arrives to greet Sport. BIG DUMB SOLDIER oversees the final unloading of the Katipunan by the Filipino crew.

OLIVER ORSON
Any trouble?

SPORT
Not a bit.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER
Get your asses moving.
You shit heads are worthless.

SPORT
Easy, pal.

OLIVER ORSON
The men are edgy. Bataan is about lost. MacArthur left out of here last night. The last ship didn't make it. How much did you get?

SPORT
All we could hold. About half.

OLIVER ORSON
You up for another run?

EXT. LOOKOUT HILL - SAME

On a strategic hilltop, LOOKOUTS brew coffee over an open fire.

EXT. CAGAYAN BAY - SAME

The Japanese destroyer approaches from the blind side of the bay. The Japanese captain peers through binoculars.

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - SAME

The Filipino crew unloads the last of the cargo.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

You're finished. Now, get this thing out of here, ya dumbass Flips.

SPORT

Listen friend, this is my boat, and these are my men. You've got anything to say, you say it to me.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

Who are you?

Big Dumb steps nose-to-nose with Sport. Sport is relaxed in a non-threatening posture. He's well aware his Filipino crew is watching.

SPORT

Someone asking real nice for you to shut your feed bag, friend. These are people. They're my people.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

Hell, you're not even army. How 'bout, I stuff you in the dirt?

Sport looks Big Dumb in the eye. It's high noon on a movie set. Suddenly, Sport slips the gun out of Big Dumb's holster. Sport steps back, twirls, unloads, and hands the gun back with lightening speed. He winks at Eduardo.

SPORT

Maybe later, I gotta giddy-up. Mount up boys, we're headed out.

EDUARDO

You heard Lieutenant. Saddle up.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

Lieutenant? I'm sorry, sir.

Sport jumps aboard the Katipunan as it leaves the pier.

EXT. LOOKOUT HILL - SAME

A Lookout, looks up from the campfire and spots the destroyer. He scrambles to a bell that he rings twice, then uses hand gestures to relay a message to the pier.

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - SAME

A Runner receives the message and runs to a short feisty ROY GRAY (34), who speaks with a thick Irish accent.

RUNNER

Captain, lookouts on the south hill
spot a Jap destroyer, about two
miles, coming around the point.

ROY

Get everybody out of sight.

OLIVER ORSON

What about the boat?

ROY

Nothing we can do for them. If they
come back, they're done. He knows it.

(To radioman)

Get some planes in the air. Maybe
we can distract them. They'll need
to get lucky.

EXT. KATIPUNAN - SAME

The Filipino crew points to the destroyer. The Katipunan is 2,000 yards off the pier. Sport waves for the crew to jump overboard. Edwardo pauses.

SPORT

We're boxed. Go on, get off.

EDUARDO

I stay.

SPORT

Go! I'll be right behind you.

Edwardo reluctantly jumps overboard. Sport goes below to the engine room.

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - SAME

ROY

What the bloody hell is this? They going to serve it up on a silver platter? How many machine guns do we have?

RADIOMAN

Two, sir.

ROY

Get them down here, now!
They're not taking that boat.

EXT. CAGAYAN BAY - SAME

The Japanese Destroyer bears down on the seemingly vacant Katipunan as it drifts. The Japanese destroyer scans for a crew, while Japanese sailors prepare a towing rope. They look up at a lone plane, a P40 in the sky with two bombs.

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - SAME

The soldiers watch anxiously.

ROY

What the hell is that?

RADIOMAN

It's all they would spare, sir.

ROY

Where are my fucking guns?

RADIOMAN

Colonel says no machine guns.

ROY

Get me the Colonel.

Radioman hands the radio to ROY.

INTERCUT RADIO CONVERSATION - ROY/COLONEL HANCOCK

ROY

Colonel?

COLONEL HANCOCK

You out of your mind? The first
shot out, and that destroyer is
going to open up on this beach.

ROY

But Sir, we can't just...

ROY drops radio with an irate Colonel Hancock still speaking.

ROY

We're fucking fucked.

EXT. CAGAYAN BAY - SAME

The lone plane, met by anti-aircraft fire harasses the
destroyer like an angry fly trying to stay out of reach. The
plane cautiously maneuvers to drop its two bombs from high
altitude.

INT. KATIPUNAN - SAME

Sport removes an ignition wire and removes rocker arms from the
engine. He comes up on deck to peek. He watches as the
plane's bombs fall harmlessly into the sea. The plane flies
away.

EXT. CAGAYAN BAY - SAME

On shore, everyone watches sullenly including Filipino
villagers from nipa huts and hilltops. The Japs are
stealing an important last asset. Roy throws a tantrum.

INT. KATIPUNAN - SAME

Sport collects the rocker arms and places one in plain sight.
He hides in the engine room. The Japanese board the ship and
fail to get it started. They go down to the engine room and
search around. Just as one Japanese sailor is about to
discover Sport, another sailor sees the rocker arm and gives it
to an officer who throws it to the floor and diverts the
searcher's attention at just the right moment.

EXT. CAGAYAN BAY - SAME

Another American plane arrives and drops a bomb about fifty yards from the destroyer into the sea, and circles the destroyer at very high altitude.

INT./EXT. KATIPUNAN - SAME

Two Japanese sailors wedge dynamite in the engine room with a long fuse that they light. The Japanese sailors run from the engine room and board the destroyer that pulls away quickly.

Sport quickly cuts the fuse. He re-rigs the dynamite, tying it to life preservers. He sneaks it to the blind side of the ship, and peeks at the destroyer speeding away at 200 yards. He lights the shortened fuse, and throws it out into the sea. Sport pours kerosene on a tire and burns it in a metal drum. He dives for cover. The dynamite explodes harmlessly, but impressively in the sea, and the tire cocktail billows black smoke. The destroyer departs for good.

EXT. CAGAYAN PIER - SAME

EDUARDO and the crew swim up onto the pier. Orson runs to them. The destroyer fades in the distance around a bend.

ROY

God damned, bloody hell!

OLIVER ORSON

Where is he?

EDUARDO

He say he be right behind me.

The men on shore sadly watch as the Katipunan appears to burn away all hope. After a long while, the Katipunan slowly begins to move forward.

RADIOMAN

Look, it's moving?

ROY

Well, I'll be God damned.

THE KATIPUNAN makes a full wake and heads for the pier SMOKING like crazy. The men on shore look confused. Sport is singing, WHOOPING, and HOLLERING. Sport places a lid over the fire in the metal drum as he nears the pier. The men on shore cheer.

INT. CALIFORNIA OFFICE - DAY

Opal walks into a glass office. Duke waits outside and sits paying close attention to his mother. The glass door reads: "KERN COUNTY OIL". She sits in front of BOSSMAN.

BOSSMAN

Hello, Mrs. Jordan

OPAL

Where is my husband?

BOSSMAN

We still don't know for sure.

OPAL

Well, why don't you know?

BOSSMAN

We think he's still in the P.I.

OPAL

You sent him there, now I want him back. You can't just tell me you don't know, and you think. It's been months for God's sake.

BOSSMAN

We had thirteen men over there. A couple came home just before Pearl, and a few made it to Australia afterwards. Orville, Harry and Sport are still unaccounted for.

OPAL

Well, are they alright?

BOSSMAN

There's no reason to think they're not alright. Emily's been calling the army every week.

OPAL

What am I supposed to tell my children?

BOSSMAN

Emily, get in here please. Emily, get me Sport Jordan's check. I'm sorry. -- Your husband is due \$345.

OPAL

Don't you dare think you can write him off. He's coming back!

(Cries)

He's coming back!

(Screams)

You tell me he's coming back.

BOSSMAN

(Forcefully, commanding her attention)

Look at me -- here. No one is writing off your husband. You and I both know there isn't a man on earth that would bet against Sport. Mrs. Jordan, look at me. Here. He WILL be back.

Several workers outside stop working as Opal staggers out of the glass office where Duke takes her hand. Office clerk, EMILY, hands her a check.

EMILY

He'll be back, Mrs. Jordan.

OPAL

Thank you, Emily.

OTHER OFFICE WORKERS

(Standing one-by-one)

He'll be back.

EXT. CAGAYAN SHORE - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Japanese aircraft fly towards the coast at twilight.

--Japanese troop transports steam towards the coast.

--Allies ashore wait in trenches. It is very dark.

--Japanese bombers and navy ships strike the beach.

--The colonel watches from the lookout hill. Japanese airplanes depart, and it is eerily quiet and dark. Colonel Hancock checks his watch and nods to Sport in the stillness.

--Orson nervously holds a rifle as Japanese winches SQUEAK.

--Filipino soldiers make the sign of the cross.

--Sport sneaks out to the pier and onto the Katipunan. It is rigged with explosives and drums of gasoline. He sets the charge, runs back to the dock, and pushes the plunger.

--The burning Katipunan illuminates an intimidating swarm of Japanese attackers approaching the shore in landing boats. All hell breaks loose and the fighting begins.

--A fierce battle ensues with the Allies fighting bravely. They fight undersupplied, outgunned and mostly withdraw, systematically retreating to more defensible positions.

EXT. CAGAYAN BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A major route is underway with heavy fighting. A Filipino wrestles with a spirited horse. Colonel Hancock huddles with Orson and four other officers over a map. He turns to look at the horse.

COLONEL HANCOCK

I need a courier who can ride
this damned thing.

OLIVER ORSON

Hold on. I got one.

Orson leaves the huddle and retrieves Sport who is nearby firing a rifle.

OLIVER ORSON

Come on, Colonel needs a horseman.

Sport and Orson crouch as they run back to the huddle.

COLONEL HANCOCK

(To Sport)

Good, you get word in the rear that we're coming through this pass. I don't want our own boys firing down on us. Tell General Sharp, we'll muster up, about a mile east of HQ, in these hills.

Orson hands his pistol to Sport. Sport mounts the spirited horse that rises on its back legs and charges down a dirt path towards an open meadow.

EXT. CAGAYAN BATTLEFIELD MEADOW - SAME

He stops at a line of trees bordering the meadow and looks for danger. He kicks his horse and bolts through the open meadow when a sniper shot rings out from behind a fence.

Sport spots the sniper whose gun has jammed. Sport heads straight for the fence. The sniper frantically tries to fix his rifle. Sport and his horse jump the fence and Sport shoots the sniper just in time. He races through the meadow consumed by his freedom.

EXT. CAGAYAN PASS - SAME

Sport rides on a dirt road that passes through a shallow gorge and stops looking around for signs of life. MCNAIR (29), a tall skinny arrogant elitist snot emerges.

SPORT

Our boys are coming through here within the hour. You got help?

Twenty men appear from their hiding places.

SPORT

Good. You cover the retreat. Japs might be on their tail. Be ready to close the pass.

MCNAIR

Don't worry. We'll be ready.

Sport gives a "not-so-sure" look and rides on.

EXT. CAGAYAN BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Filipinos and Americans retreat in a footrace of 800 men down a dirt path and through the meadow towards the pass where McNair waits in ambush. The slow runners are picked off by pursuing Japanese. Some men drop their belongings to run faster.

It is footrace where the loser dies. Three Americans stop, turn, and kneel to fire volleys into the pursuing Japanese delaying the turkey shoot. One by one the kneeling defenders are shot. As they near the pass, McNair's men fire from above slowing the Japanese to cover the retreat.

EXT. CAGAYAN ROAD - DAY

Sport charges down a dirt road approaching a small village.

EXT. CAGAYAN PASS - LATER

Retreating men have just made it through the pass. Two Japanese tanks race towards the pass. The soldiers on top of the pass ambush the two Japanese tanks by dynamiting the pass and dropping several flaming barrels of fuel that explode onto the tanks.

EXT./INT. HEADQUARTERS, CAGAYAN - EVENING

Sport stops his racing horse at a nipa hut where a sentry guards.

SPORT

I have a message for General Sharp.

As Sport enters to find men huddled around a radio.

SOLDIER

Shhh. It's General Wainwright.

RADIO

Enemy forces have surrounded our positions aiming artillery point blank at our northern garrisons. General Homma declined to accept my surrender unless it included the forces under your command. I have accepted his proposal and have tendered the surrender of all American and Philippine Army troops. You will, therefore be guided accordingly, and will surrender all troops under your command to proper Japanese officers.

SUPER: "MAY 1942"

EXT. - DAPECOL POW CAMP - DAY

1,200 men sit and wait in an open field of a training facility. Sport, at 39, is relatively old. The Japanese cautiously approach the camp with General Sharp. The two opposing armies eye each other curiously. A Japanese General says something in Japanese.

General Sharp stands steely faced staring at a burning pile of rifles. LT. KIKUCHI (35), is remarkably handsome and walks with a noticeable limp. He bows to a army Japanese general and addresses the POWs.

LT. KIKUCHI

He asks if this is all.

GENERAL SHARP

Yes.

LT. KIKUCHI

You are prisoners of the Imperial Army of the great Empire of Japan. You shall be treated according to your behavior.

Kikuchi speaks in Japanese and his guards separate the POWs in groups of fifty and search them. A YOUNG JAPANESE CONSCRIPT rips a wristwatch from Big Dumb Soldier.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

What's the big idea? Give it back.

Kikuchi investigates the commotion. When he discovers the watch, he throws it to the ground and sternly slaps Young Japanese Conscript.

BIG DUMB SOLDIER

You tell him, Yoshi.

YOUNG JAPANESE CONSCRIPT

(Bowing formally)

Arigato Kikuchisan.

Kikuchi speaks softly in Japanese. A Japanese soldier places a crate in front of Kikuchi and hands him a wooden club. Kikuchi stands on the crate looking up at Big Dumb who glares defiantly.

LT. KIKUCHI

You will give most politeness and
humility to all Japanese soldiers!

Big Dumb spits on the ground. Kikuchi immediately breaks the stick over Big Dumb's head with little effect. Big Dumb smiles with a cocky expression. A trickle of blood drips down his forehead. Kikuchi screams to nearby guards.

The guards repeatedly strike Big Dumb with rifle butts behind the knees and in the torso. Big Dumb reaches for the watch as he succumbs. Kikuchi steps off the crate onto Big Dumb's hand. The watch CRUNCHES in Big Dumb's grip.

INT. - DAPECOL POW CAMP BARRACKS - DAY - WEEKS LATER

Four men, Sport, Oliver Orson, ROY and Nick McNair, share a shack and play cribbage.

SPORT

I can't figure out these Japs.

OLIVER ORSON

I think they're having a hard time
figuring us out.

SPORT

What was it that Jap guard said
after he got slapped, Arigari?

OLIVER ORSON

Arigato, it means thank you.

MCNAIR

It's a little scary when they're willing to beat their own.

ROY

Thank you, for slapping him like a kid? That doesn't make any sense. I remember once me father took it to me. He said I'd thank him later. I bet it's something like that.

SPORT

Did you thank him?

ROY

Better put it on my "to do" list.

A voice from outside calls out, "MESS CALL BARRACKS FIVE."

ROY

Good, I could eat a bloody horse.

The men leave the barracks. Sport lags behind and buries his rodeo belt buckle. He exits the barracks.

EXT. CHOW LINE AT PRISON CAMP - CONTINUOUS

One hundred prisoners are queued as Americans serve rice and a sliver of fatty meat to POWs. Orson places his hand on his forehead in prayer. Nick McNair scoffs at Orson.

In a nearby field, 800 prisoners sit surrounded by guards. Three trucks loaded with senior American officers depart as the tiny Japanese drivers GRIND gears and lurch with terrible clutch work.

SPORT

Say goodbye to the brass.

ROY

Don't they have cars in Japan?

OLIVER ORSON

(Points to the field)

What are they doing over there?

--Looks like they have something to say to us.

MCNAIR

What the hell is this?

OLIVER ORSON

Caribou.

SPORT

I'm so hungry, I'd eat a snake.

ROY

Look at these Japs. Short sons of bitches.

MCNAIR

Yeah Roy, maybe you should stand on a box.

ROY

Anytime, anywhere, McNair.

LT. KIKUCHI

Eat, eat, speedo, speedo.

One POW is slow. A guard kicks the mess kit out of his hand.

LT. KIKUCHI

You stand.

The men line up as Kikuchi motions them to empty their pockets. The guards collect valuables in a basket and beat POWs that try to hide their belongings. A guard reaches into Orson's breast pocket. Guards motion the prisoners to the field, and the four men walk to join the larger group.

OLIVER ORSON

Now, what in the hell do they need a picture of my family for?

MCNAIR

Oliver, did you say what the hell?

OLIVER ORSON

Shut up, McNair. It's not funny.
That's about as low as a man can
get. -- Say Sport, isn't that your
Filipino friend?

SPORT

Yeah, that's him.

Edwardo and SECOND FILIPINO carry shovels led by two guards. Sport flashes Edwardo a nod and a smile. Edwardo smiles, terrified. The guards motion the two to dig holes. The seated POWs murmur but slowly quiet. Edwardo's lips quiver as he bravely wipes tears. Sport's fidgets suspiciously!

LT. KIKUCHI

These men sneak out from Filipino
camp at night.

COLONEL HANCOCK

(Pleading)

Yes, but they returned for roll
call in the morning.

LT. KIKUCHI

Such escape will not be tolerated.

COLONEL HANCOCK

But, that's how you found them,
returning, not escaping.

LT. KIKUCHI

No excuses.

COLONEL HANCOCK

I protest. Under the Geneva
Convention it states...

LT. KIKUCHI

...We don't sign Geneva Convention.
Sit down.

The only sound comes from DIGGING SHOVELS. The men are ordered to stop, but Second Filipino continues. A Japanese guard tries to take the shovel, but Second Filipino wrestles for it. He and everyone else know that to give up the shovel, means it's time to die.

A pitiful keystone cop routine ensues over the shovel as Second Filipino tries to keep digging until he is tackled. The guards hammer stakes into the ground. Edwardo stares limply into Sport's eyes as they are tied to the stakes. Sport edges his way forward in the crowd.

A firing squad assembles. Sport smiles encouragingly and sings the song he and Edwardo sang on the boat. Others look on curiously. Edwardo smiles as the shots ring. The men slump.

FILIPINO OFFICER

Stand at attention men. You are soldiers in the American army.

Sport sings a bit louder. Edwardo struggles to stand upright. Kikuchi motions to a guard, and Edwardo is bayoneted. Kikuchi paces in front of the men, stops at the Filipino Officer, and glares. Suddenly, Kikuchi rants in Japanese. Guards pull Sport out of line and then pull him down to his knees.

Kikuchi draws his sword and holds it waist high in a Samurai pose. The prisoners rally their riotous voices and stand. A SHADOW (angel Patrick) passes between Sport and Kikuchi. Kikuchi hesitates, then whacks Sport across the face with his sword handle.

LT. KIKUCHI

Arigato! --Arigato!

All are silent. Lt Kikuchi hits him again as the guards cock and aims their rifles at the restless POWs. Sport looks up at Kikuchi's gleaming sword as it rises again.

SPORT

Arigato.

The Japanese hustle the prisoners back to the barracks. Sport is detained by Kikuchi to bury the dead. They stand with three Japanese guards in the background.

LT. KIKUCHI

You knew him. He died bravely. It is good to see a man to die with honor.

Kikuchi looks to Sport for a response, but Sport covers the bodies with dirt with a clenched jaw. Kikuchi lights a cigarette.

LT. KIKUCHI

You Americans fight well, but you think only of your own glory. You disgrace yourselves to become prisoner. You do not know honor. -- Your eyes show so much hate. They should look down in shame.

SPORT

It took a lot of honor to tie that boy to a stick and gun him down.

LT. KIKUCHI

You people have black and white logic that fits neatly in a suitcase. Life to us is a contradiction. The cherry blossom is fed by the shit of cows. I gave a simple man an opportunity for higher purpose. You sing silliness and disgrace his moment.

SPORT

Maybe someday, you'll have your moment.

LT. KIKUCHI

Perhaps I will have the honor. Unlike you, I would welcome such a moment. But, it does not seem likely.

Kikuchi looks down at his lame leg then, at the three guards in the background that appear to be the last pick of the litter.

LT. KIKUCHI

I must stay here with stupid misfits guarding shameful cowards.

Kikuchi gives an order to the guards in Japanese. The guards bow in acknowledgement and tie Sport's hands behind his back. A guard throws a rope over a tree and the guards hoist Sport a foot off the ground suspending him from his bound hands.

LT. KIKUCHI

You are honorless man.

INT. JORDAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Opal dresses to go out. The kids eat dinner.

OPAL

You kids get your things packed
up for tomorrow.

DODIE

Why can't we stay here?

OPAL

Because there's a war going on,
and Gram wants... Because I want
you away from the coast.

TEEN DUKE

But, I can take care of everybody.

OPAL

Please, don't make this harder
than it already is. And besides,
I've got to see about a job.
Where are my shoes?

Doodle hands Opal a pair of shoes. Opal discovers a hole.

OPAL

They'll have to do.

TEEN DUKE

I'm not going back to Grams and we're
not splitting up. I promised Dad
I would take care of every one, and
that's what I'm doing.

Opal strokes Duke's hair.

OPAL

I need you Duke. -- I have to go.
You kids write another letter to
Dad while I'm gone.

TEEN DUKE

I'm forgetting what he looks like, Mom.

OPAL

Oh honey, do you remember when he
used to come home with that great
big smile spread across his face?

TEEN DUKE

Yeah.

OPAL

Well, you remember that for now.
You'll see the picture at Gram's.
I've got to go. Give me a kiss.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM ZEKE'S STOREFRONT - DAY

Opal parks the truck. Teen Duke and Dodie sit in front seat.

OPAL

Okay, I'll meet up with you at Grams.
I need a decent dress for a job.

DODIE

Mama, why do I need to stay with Gram?

OPAL

Don't give me a hard time. You're
Better off here for now. Now, You two
stay together. At Grams by four.

INT. / EXT. ZEKE'S - DAY

A poster is taped to the store's glass door and reads.

"5th ANNUAL SOAP BOX DERBY"
"NEW FATHER AND SON EVENT"
"\$25 PRIZE TO THE WINNER"
"BUY WAR BONDS"

ARTHUR is a larger-than-Duke bully and Bitchy Joanne's son. He is stuffing candy in his bulldog face. He barrels out of the store and the door knocks Dodie to the ground. Her skirt flies up showing her underwear. Duke steps between the boys and Dodie to help her to her feet. Arthur grabs Duke's shoulder.

ARTHUR

Don't stand in the way of the
girly show, ass wipe.

Dodie tries to stand, steps on her skirt and falls backwards again repeating the performance. The bullies laugh hysterically.

ARTHUR

I think she likes me.

Duke shoves Arthur aggressively in the chest.

ARTHUR

Now you pay.

Arthur beats Duke. Duke's attempts to punch back are futile. Duke no longer punches back, but each time Arthur strikes him, he stands for another beating in defiance. It gets so bad that even the other boys wince. Dodie Jumps on Arthur's back. He twirls and she flies.

DODIE

Stay away from him, Arthur.

FROM ACROSS THE STREET Bitchy Joanne turns as she hears Arthur's name. She looks for cars to clear and crosses.

BACK AT THE FIGHT, Duke can no longer stand. Arthur tears off a piece of the poster that says: "NEW FATHER & SON EVENT"

ARTHUR

There's no point in entering
because I always win.

Arthur stuffs the paper in Duke's shirt pocket.

ARTHUR

And I think you need a father
for this one, little bastard.

BITCHY JOANNE (O.S.)

Aurthur? Arthur?

ARTHUR

(Whispers in Duke's ear)
Dad sold the watch to a Pollock.
You know what the Japs do to prisoners?
Did you hear what they did in China?

With Duke on his hands and knees, Arthur makes a sawing gesture across the back of Duke's neck. Bitchy Joanne arrives on the scene and lifts Arthur by the arm. She recognizes Duke and then Dodie.

BITCHY JOANNE

Hmm. Arthur, I told you not
to mess up these clothes. We
have a dinner with the mayor,
tonight. Look at you. Come on.

Dodie helps Duke to his feet and they walk home. Duke's face is a mess.

SMASH CUT - EXT. DAVAO PRISON CAMP - NIGHT

Guards cut Sport down and he flops to the ground.

GUARD

(They kick him.)

Arigato. -- Arigato

SPORT

Arigato.

INT. DAPECOL POW CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT

Sport stares into the night with a swollen lump on his forehead. Orson stops at his bunk and inspects Sport's wound.

OLIVER ORSON

That's quite a lump you got there.

You were mighty lucky today.

Scared the heck out of me.

SPORT

I'll be alright.

(Pause)

Thanking these twisted shits

Is the worst of it.

OLIVER ORSON

(Chuckles, then seriously)

I'm real sorry about your friend.

SPORT

Yeah, me too.

OLIVER ORSON

Sport, are you a Christian?

SPORT

A What?

OLIVER ORSON

If you're a Christian, you know that your friend is with God.

SPORT

Well, I reckon not, Oliver.
God went fishing today and I
left that boy in a hole. His
family will never be the same.

OLIVER ORSON

Don't you believe that he's gone
on someplace?

SPORT

I don't know. God don't talk to me
like he does other folks. All I
know is that a boy snuck out at
night just to see his family.
--His God damned family, Orson.
He came back and they stuck him.

OLIVER ORSON

I wish there was something I could..

SPORT

...Doc, I ain't gonna
think about it right now.

INT. AIRPLANE FACTORY - DAY

A FOREMAN leads Opal to a wing assembly line where CO-WORKER
LAURA 30, an attractive and nosey man-lover mills a wing.

FOREMAN

You stick with Laura. She'll show you
the ropes, and remember one thing...

WORKERS

(In corny unison)

...The lives of our men depend on
the productivity of their women.

FOREMAN

That's right. Laura, can you show
Opal around?

CO-WORKER LAURA

Sure. -- You ever work in a
factory, honey?

OPAL

No.

Co-Worker Laura looks down at Opal's brass wedding ring.

CO-WORKER LAURA

You better take that off. Don't want to lose a finger. What's your husband do?

OPAL

I don't know.

A long pause as Opal removes her ring.

CO-WORKER LAURA

You're married, right?

OPAL

I don't know.

CO-WORKER LAURA

Honey, you're not telling me a thing.

OPAL

(Building emotion)

He's missing --overseas. I don't know if he's alive or dead. My children ask me every night, and I've run out of things to tell them. Nobody has one scrap of information. I haven't seen him in almost a year. I don't know if I have a husband, but I can't tell them that. Now my mother is on me about the Japanese invading and my kids are out in Riverside.

CO-WORKER LAURA

Whoa, hold on, sweetie.

OPAL

I'm sorry.

CO-WORKER LAURA

Don't be sorry, honey. I shouldn't be so nosy. -- My husband is missing too.

OPAL

He is? Oh, I'm so sorry.

CO-WORKER LAURA

Oh, don't be. He's a rounder.
Caught him with some floozy. If I
had a gun, I could have a shot him
in his how-do-you-dos and blown her
head right off her shoulders all in the
same shot. -- Haven't seen him since.
-- Hell it was worth it just to watch
them scramble out of the apartment
like two naked monkeys. He didn't
even have the sense to take his keys.

They burst out laughing hysterically.

OPAL

You locked them out naked?

CO-WORKER LAURA

You betcha. Neighbors thought he
was crazy, shut their blinds, and
called the cops. He stood out
there begging. -- And the look on
her face? Priceless.

Their laughter subsides to wistful smiles.

CO-WORKER LAURA

See there? Honey, you light up a
room with that smile of yours.
You keep your chin up. Ain't no
man stronger than a woman.

EXT. DAPECOL POW CAMP BARRACKS - DAY

The men sit outside of the barracks and play cribbage. They
imagine a meal. They are noticeably thinner and have beards.

ROY

Okay, the main course is spit
roasted beef.

SPORT

My wife makes green beans with
little slabs of bacon that are
out of this world.

ROY
Mashed potatoes with butter and
thick gravy.

SPORT
Oh yeah, pass the mashed potatoes.

OLIVER ORSON
Custard pie.

ROY
(Admonishing)
Not with the mashed potatoes.

OLIVER ORSON
For dessert.

ROY
(Scolding)
Then wait for dessert.

MCNAIR
Poached salmon with lemon
and capers.

SPORT
-- What are capers?

MCNAIR
Little green balls soaked in
vinegar, you eat with caviar
and tartar.

ROY
God Damn it, McNair. Stick to
something we can all eat.

MCNAIR
Irish wouldn't know decent food.

ROY
That's it. I'm setting the menu.
McNair, you're out. It's roast
beef, green beans, mashed potatoes,
stuffing, and we'll let Orson have
his custard pie. That's it.

MCNAIR
Who says you get to make the menu?

ROY

It's already made. Somebody
else can make one up tomorrow.
I'm eating out.

Roy reaches for a nail and makes the 153rd notch on the barracks wall. A convoy of trucks pulls in and unloads a new group of 800 blindfolded POWs bound together with rope. Guards untie them and they trudge barefoot with their shoes hanging from laces around their necks.

OLIVER ORSON

My God, are those ours?

SPORT

Sure looks that way.

ROY

Those are men from a northern camp.

SPORT

What?

ROY

They were captured around Manila.

Sport quickly rises and scans the faces of the new men. Others do the same. Sport, periodically, bows to the passing guards.

SPORT

Any one know Harry Dixon? Orville
Stanford? Harry Dixon? Red Wallace?
Harry Dixon? Harry Dixon?...

POW1

We got a Crazy Harry.

SPORT

Where?

POW1

He's here somewhere.

SPORT

Harry? Harry? Harry?
Anyone know a Crazy Harry?

POW2

Hey, Harry. Someone looking for you.

Harry is barely recognizable with a beard and looks haggard.

SPORT

Harry?

Harry looks up in disbelief and touches Sport's face. The two embrace like a slow dance and Harry weeps.

EXT. CHOW LINE AT PRISON CAMP - NIGHT

Harry and Sport receive their food and sit alone eating disgusting watery rice. Only Sport picks out the weevils.

SPORT

What happened to Orville?

HARRY

They shipped him off to Japan.
Haven't heard about the other boys.
We lost a lot of men up there. Japs really cut us down. We marched some eighty miles, no food, no water. Japs bayoneted men that couldn't keep up. They'd ride by in trucks and whack men with swords and clubs. I had a guy next to me wander out of rank and got plowed flat into the dirt by a Jap tank.

SPORT

Sure great to see you, Harry.

HARRY

Good to see you, too.

SPORT

Well, let me give you the low down. Try to get a job in the kitchen. You'll eat better. If you get rice detail, you gotta get a good caribou, or they'll beat the hell out of you. We got a new crew of guards. A lot of Koreans and a couple of crazy Japs you've got to stay away from. The worse is Kikuchi. -- Say, did you get mail?

HARRY

Nah, nothing.

SPORT

Same here, nothing in, nothing out.

HARRY

I bet April don't know where I am.
She's probably...

SPORT

...Nah, not that one.

EXT. DAPECOL POW CAMP - MORNING.

Fifty G-String clad POWs ride on flatbed cars of a miniature train from the prison camp to rice paddies.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - CONTINUOUS

As the train stops, Sport and Harry lead a footrace to the rice fields. Sport stands next to a caribou and Harry looks back and forth at the different caribou.

SPORT

Not that one. Take Irene over there.

Harry puts his hand on the back of a caribou.

SPORT

They give us a plot to work, and
when we're done, we're done.
Goodnight Irene's one of the
best. So is Gypsy Rose here.

Some men plow while others plant and move rocks.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - LATER THAT DAY

The POWs sit and take a break. Four POWs continue working.

JAP GUARD

Speedo, speedo. You lazy.

A POW, OHIO (18), is handsome, apple pie, boyish, everybody's kid brother and stutters terribly when nervous. Ohio struggles with his caribou that defiantly lies down in the mud. Kikuchi stands on a raised bank and orders Ohio to the side where he slaps him repeatedly. Ohio falls to his knees stunned and confused.

LT. KIKUCHI
Arigato dumey. ARIGATO!

OHIO
(Stutters)
A...rig...ato.

LT. KIKUCHI
Arigato Kikuchisan.

Ohio tries to get the words out, but he cannot.

LT. KIKUCHI
No arigato! Kneel.

Ohio repeatedly bows with hands folded in prayer, repeating.

OHIO
Ar...igato Ki...kuchi...san.

Kikuchi squats and looks curiously at Ohio's stuttering. He squeezes Ohio's cheeks to quiet him. Kikuchi removes a strip of cloth from his pocket and blindfolds Ohio. Ohio continues bowing.

Kikuchi sits and smokes a cigarette. Ohio, still blindfolded, tries to use his other senses. Just as the POW's begin to relax, Kikuchi throws his cigarette and stands in front of Ohio. He draws his sword. Ohio flinches blindly at the sound of metal sliding against metal.

OHIO
(Stuttering)
D...d...d...dear God, please.
Ar...r...r...igato Kikuchisan

Kikuchi pauses to relish his sense of power. He kicks Ohio in the face back into the mud. Sport restrains Harry.

LT. KIKUCHI
I don't kill women.

Kikuchi speaks in Japanese and the other guards laugh. Sport runs to Kikuchi and bows.

SPORT
(Bowing)
Arigato, Kikuchisan.

Sport and Harry help Ohio to the plow propping him up on to it. The three men plow.

EXT. DAPECOL POW CAMP - EVENING

Sport, Harry and Roy shave with scissors and a straight razor. McNair waits impatiently over Roy for his turn.

HARRY
I can't stand looking at all those fruit trees?

SPORT
Don't seem to make sense. All that food just rotting on the ground.

HARRY
I don't like the idea of feeding the Jap army. Least they could do is feed us decently.

Sport motions to a fencepost growing green branches.

SPORT
Well, it's really aggravating. This damned place will grow anything.

Ohio walks up to Sport and Harry. He has a black eye.

OHIO
Hello, Harry. I sure want to thank you both for what you did today.

HARRY
Sure, kid.

OHIO
(To Sport)
The name's William. The fellas call me Ohio because I can't stop talking about home.

MCNAIR

(To Roy)

That's long enough. Give me the
God damned razor.

HARRY

...Hey, no swearing in front
of the kid.

Roy tosses the razor into a bucket. McNair fishes it out.

SPORT

You about eighteen?

OHIO

Yes, Sir. Almost.

An awkward silence as Ohio looks around nervously.

SPORT

You play sports?

OHIO

Why yes, sir. Football,
mostly second string though.
Was a little late in my growth.

SPORT

Yeah, I know how that is.

OHIO

You do?

SPORT

My boy plays. He's on the early
side of growing up.

A violin plays faintly in the distance as Sport shaves.

SPORT

Who is that?

HARRY

Serelli. Japs must have let him
keep the violin.

Sport sings a verse and chorus of the song.

OHIO

You have a real nice voice, Sir.

SPORT

It's one of my wife's favorites.

OHIO

We sing all the time back home in Ohio. Mostly church songs and all. You know any Gospel?

SPORT

Some. I ain't much of a church singer though. Hey Oliver, got someone to talk shop with you.

OHIO

I'd expect a good man like you would know the Lord, that's all.

OLIVER ORSON

I'm working on him, son.

OHIO

I like to think my grand dad is my angel, sort of looking out for me.

SPORT

I think old Harry here is your angel, Son.

OHIO

That's the second time Harry's looked after me. I sure appreciate that, Harry. You too, Sir. Well, that's all I wanted to say. So long.

SPORT

Good kid. He don't belong here.

HARRY

His old man put him up to joining. He tried to beat the boy into being the man he could never be.

SPORT

Sounds like your dad.

HARRY

A father isn't always a dad.

SPORT

Yeah, I know.

HARRY

I thought you and your dad were pretty close?

SPORT

We were. -- I can't stop thinking about Duke. He was pretty pissed off when I left. Hell, I wonder sometimes if I came here for them or me.

HARRY

It ain't the same thing.

Not by a long shot.

(Long pause)

You ever think about what happens after we pass?

SPORT

Not much. --I like to think if things are fair, we all get lined up according to our character. If there is a hereafter, you live with the people beside you, your family and maybe a favorite dog or two.

HARRY

Good. Ohio's old man can bunk with mine.

SERIES OF SCENES DAY RIVERSIDE

--At Jenny's, Duke writes a letter to his Dad. He places it in a box where there are more letters and a picture of Sport.

--Duke studies his go-cart in much need of repair

--Duke walks through town. Fathers and sons are working together on fancy sleek go-carts of different designs. He avoids eye contact with a father who gapes at Duke's black eye.

--Arthur watches as a black man paints his cart while he eats an ice cream.

--Back at JENNY's, Duke sits next to his go-cart with head in hands. He removes the scrap of paper from his pocket that reads "NEW FATHER AND SON EVENT" and throws it to the ground.

--Duke walks through town. Fathers are practicing pushing their son's in go-carts using push brooms.

--Back at JENNY's, Duke sits on a tree swing and looks at the go-cart. The afternoon wind is blowing. He turns to see the laundry on a clothes line blowing. He scans the laundry and focuses on a sheet that is blowing.

--Duke stands in the middle of DERBY HILL, the site of tomorrow's big race. He removes his father's picture from his pocket and returns it gently. Behind Duke is a steep hill. In front of him is a flat stretch that measures 600 yards. A stiff breeze begins to blow from behind him. Duke pulls a weed growing through the asphalt. He shreds it and tosses it into the air. The grass blows in the direction the cars will race.

--He sprints in the flat section of road 600 yards.

--At Jenny's, Duke works on his go-cart sawing and nailing.

--Duke places a piece of pipe vertically into support slot that he has built on the front of his go-cart. He tests the sturdiness of the support.

--Duke paints his go-cart with the letter 77 (the same number Sport wore in the rodeo contest) inside a large circle.

--Duke wraps a long narrow bundle in material that vaguely resembles a flowered sheet.

EXT. SOAP BOX DERBY HILL - DAY

--Duke stands at the top of Derby Hill as a spectator with a race in progress. He looks below him down the medium grade hill towards the 600 yard flat stretch of road that leads to a softer grade hill. He stands next to his clunky go-cart.

--Sleek aerodynamic cars race down the hill in front of Duke and he sees Arthur cross the finish line to a checkered flag.

--The contestants push their cars up the hill to where Duke waits. Fathers begin to congregate along the flat stretch of road holding push brooms. Some fathers stretch for the upcoming athletic event.

--The black man pushes Arthur's cart to the top of the hill. Arthur passes Duke and scoffs at his clunky go-cart.

--The racers take their marks. An announcer addresses the crowd of spectators over a public address system.

ANNOUNCER

We have a new father and son
race this year. Racers will
race to the flat zone where
fathers will provide the power
until the last leg of the race.

Duke sits upon the bundle situated awkwardly atop of his go-cart. A OLD MAN SKIBA is the judge. He wears a button that says, "Free Poland". He passes Duke's car and stops.

OLD MAN SKIBA

What's this, son?

Duke stoops nervously as the judge studies a rule book, and scowls. He looks at Duke and his black eye.

OLD MAN SKIBA

Ain't you Sport's boy?

Duke nods.

OLD MAN SKIBA

A little unusual, don't
you think?

Duke awaits the verdict with nervous anticipation. Skiba removes Sport's Gold pocket watch. He shakes the watch, perturbed. Duke's eyes perk up. He's got to get that watch!

JUDGE

Good luck, son.
(winks)

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS - RACE COURSE - DAY

--The racers take their marks and with the discharge of a gun, they're off. Old Man Skiba holds Sport's watch in one hand.

--Duke lags significantly as the racers head down the medium grade hill. He has the aerodynamics of a refrigerator in comparison yet hunches low.

--As the racers near the bottom of the medium grade hill, fathers begin pushing with their brooms. Arthur is in second place. The father of the boy currently in first place tosses a cigarette before pushing. Arthur's father ZEKE begins pushing. He's not athletic but determined.

--Duke reaches the flat road and jumps out of his go-cart losing ground to the other racers.

--Duke unravels the bundle. He inserts a pipe into the support slot.

--Over a small rise in the road we see Duke's go-cart appearing slowly over the rise. First, we see a spire that appears to rise from the asphalt, then we see a flowered sheet that once hung on a laundry line at Jenny's house. Duke's bundle is a seven foot sail and it is full of wind.

--Duke passes other racers who look at him in disbelief.

--Arthur's car passes the leader whose father is hacking. Poor Zeke is running out of steam pushing his ox of a son.

--Duke passes more cars even more quickly.

--Arthur's car finishes the flat stretch and begins the final leg down the steep hill. Duke is right behind him but at a much faster speed. Arthur's father jumps onto the back of Arthur's back axle to add weight for speed.

--It's a dead heat and a freak gust makes all the difference. Duke wins by a nose as the sail rips away.

--The crowd cheers as Duke, with a fat shiner, gleams in triumph.

--Skiba presents Duke with the \$25 prize money.

DUKE

Mr. Skiba, that's my dad's watch.
He sold it to Mr. Zeke a few years
back. If I buy it back, maybe he'll
--maybe he'll --Mr. Skiba, Here.

Duke hands Skiba back the money and like a slow motion thief,
takes the watch from Skiba's pocket with pleading eyes that
yearn, "Please God, make this be okay."

OLD MAN SKIBA

Okay, son. But, I only paid fifteen.

Duke could give a shit how much Skiba paid. He's got the
watch! He steps on a crate and holds the watch over his head
to the applause of the crowd. He is triumphant. He has earned
his father's safe return!!!

EXT. DAPECOL PRISON CAMP - DAY

The men line up in front of a make shift table where Japanese
distribute one gallon cans with a RED CROSS insignia and a
blank piece of paper. The POWs BUZZ with excitement.

LT. KIKUCHI

Through the generosity of Imperial
Japanese, you have been allowed to
write post card. Keep very brief.
No tricks.

The men share a pencil. Sport writes on a "fill-in-the-blank"
card. He counts his words.

SPORT

My health is - good.
Make sure to - receive check from
army. Show this. I am second Lt.
QM, 1/42. Family matters - Don't
worry. I'm okay. I smell your hair.
Luv to You, Dodie, Doodle, and Dukey.

Sport walks to a table of American typists who are shadowed by
Japanese proof-readers. He sets the postcard down wistfully
and walks away while shuffling through his Red Cross can. He
takes piece of hard candy and relishes it. In the background,
The American typist tries to squeeze "DUKE" on another line.
The Japanese proofreader disallows his attempt. He snatches
the postcard and tosses it in a box.

TITLE OVER: "March 1944"

EXT./INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

A postman delivers the mail to Duke who works in the garden. He stares at a post card stamped "IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY." His face brightens. He turns it over and scans it repeatedly. His face turns to frustration that shows on his furrowed brow.

Duke sneaks to the screen door where he can see Jenny sleeping on an armchair in the living room. He reaches through the screen door and slips a key off a wall hook. He pauses to see a family picture with Sport on the wall. He sneaks to Jenny's car.

INT. AIRPLANE FACTORY - DAY

Opal and Laura chat as they clock out and gather their things. Opal's back is to the entrance of the break room.

CO-WORKER LAURA

So, I'm at this diner with my sister. This fella at the counter makes some comment about my caboose. Well, he's kind of cute, so I figure I'll slap him and get him to ask me out.

OPAL

Slap him?

CO-WORKER LAURA

Sure, if you do it right, it works every time. I call it the wink and slap. Anyways, just as I'm about to smack him, this skinny school teacher decides he's gonna defend my honor and gets called outside.

OPAL

What happened?

CO-WORKER LAURA

He pounded the little twerp into the sidewalk.

OPAL

You're kidding?

CO-WORKER LAURA

Nope. -- I got my date though.

OPAL

Why do you pick fellas like that?

CO-WORKER LAURA

With the teacher. Never had anybody stand up for me like that. Made me feel real special. He had to know he was gonna take a beating. -- And for me. -- He's a brave twerp. Say honey, how are you making out?

OPAL

Okay, I guess. It's hard keeping up with the bills, but we're...

Duke is led into the break room by the foreman.

CO-WORKER LAURA

...Opal sweetie, there's a handsome young man here to see you.

OPAL

Duke, How did you get here?

Duke shows Opal the car key. He sighs deeply.

OPAL

Gram is gonna skin you.

Duke hands the postcard to Opal who covers her mouth and sits to read. She bursts into tears.

OPAL

He's alive. He's okay. He's okay.

Opal hugs Duke then re-reads the postcard pulling her hair to her nose. Co-worker Laura reaches for Duke and hugs him.

CO-WORKER LAURA

You're daddy will be home before you know it, honey.

Duke walks out to the parking lot with OPAL. Duke stares at the postcard. The print runs to the very end of the card where his name has been cut off. A large stack of letters lay on a dresser.

INSERT POST CARD
"GIVE A KISS TO DODIE, DOODLE,"

TEEN DUKE
Why didn't he mention me?

OPAL
Honey, look, there's a comma after
Doodle's name. They've got censors.

TEEN DUKE
Why would they censor that? He's
Still mad at me, Mom.

OPAL
There wouldn't be a comma if there
wasn't more. -- Give me the letters.
I'm going down to the Army office
first thing tomorrow. -- Ah, honey.
Your father loves you. Every bit as
much as you love him. You better get
the car back to Grams. Tell her
--tell her something. --Kiss me.

Duke stares at the postcard as Opal kisses the top of his head.

MONTAGE: LETTERS SENT TO PHILIPPINES

- Opal wraps a big stack of unsent letters in a parcel.
- She walks into an army office and delivers it.
- The parcel is placed into a large bag in a sorting room.
- The large bag is loaded on a steamer.
- SWISS OFFICIALS exchange mailbags with the Japanese.
- A truck drives through the Jungle. In the back of the truck,
Japanese soldiers rifle through the parcels picking out any
goods.
- They tear open Opal's Parcel. They steal the few pieces of
hard candy and throw the letters out the back of the truck
and into the wind.
- The truck drives into camp.

--The POWs stand near the truck while Colonel Hancock reads names. As the men receive letters, they leave one by one.

--When it is over, Sport looks at the handful of other men who received no mail. He stares hopelessly at the barbed-wire. He looks up at a Japanese guard in a tower. The guard draws a bead on him and pretends to fire his weapon. Sport looks back at him as if it doesn't matter and walks off.

INT. DAPECOL POW CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT

The men read letters. Sport lies in his bunk staring up, sweating profusely. Harry bounds into the barracks sniffing an envelope. He gives a fat grin to Sport. He hands a letter to Sport who sits up in his bunk a bit delirious.

HARRY

Smell this.

Sport smells the envelope, smiles, and opens it slowly. Harry looks from side to side. Sport reads silently tilting it towards the light of a full moon peering through the window.

HARRY

Well, what's it say?

SPORT

Oh, sorry. My Darling, I am waiting for your safe return. Every one at church is praying for you. You wouldn't believe it. I am welding at the ship yard.

(a bit later)

Every day, I think of you and pray the ships we build will bring you home to me. I love you darling and pray that you are receiving my letters. All my love, April.

HARRY

Wow. -- Read me yours.

SPORT

(Awkwardly)

Nothing came.

Sport wipes the sweat from his grief stricken face. A VOICE from outside calls out, "DOWN IN FIVE."

HARRY

You all right? You don't look
so good.

SPORT

I'm okay.

HARRY

Here you keep this. Opal would have
written the same. You know that.

Sport is too worn from fever and emotional pain to respond.
Sport is too worn from fever and emotional pain to respond.
Harry places the letter in Sport's shirt pocket.

HARRY

Really, Take it. It's from
our girls.

Sport stares into the night as others re-read their letters.
He removes the envelope, smells it, and presses it against
his mouth to suppress his deep sobs.

LATER THAT NIGHT - SAME

Sport sleeps restlessly as he shivers in his bunk. Orson
gets out of bed to tend to him. Roy also investigates.

OLIVER ORSON

He's burning up. Get my canteen.

ORSON rubs water from his canteen on Sport as he shivers.

MCNAIR

Keep it down.

ROY

Shut up, McNair, or I'll beat you
senseless.

OLIVER ORSON

He's got malaria.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

Harry and Orson finish work and they walk briskly to camp.

INT. DAPECOL SICKBAY - SAME

Sickbay is full of haggard diseased men. Sport deliriously ties a knot in his bed speaking to an imaginary boy.

SPORT

Here son, rabbit comes out of
the hole, around the tree and
back down the hole.

DOCTOR

Come on, Sport. Get back in bed.

Harry and Orson enter.

HARRY

How is he?

DOCTOR

Not good. I can't keep him in bed.
He's hallucinating.

SPORT

Tell him to stay put, Harry.

HARRY

Easy pal.

SPORT

Hide him, Harry. He's scared...

HARRY

I'll hide him, Sport. You take it
easy. Come on, get back in bed.

Harry hands the doctor a lemon and a cup of rice.

HARRY

Here, doc. Take these.
They're for him, you hear?

INT. DUTCH'S BAR - NIGHT

Opal removes her sweater as BAR OWNER angrily looks for her.

BAR OWNER

Where've you been. You're late?

OPAL

I'm sorry. My car is...

BAR OWNER

...I don't care. Get out there and play, they've been waiting.

OPAL

Yes, sir.

BAR OWNER

She better be good.

Opal walks out as a band plays. She sits at a piano and plays along subtly and nervously. The crowd is restless. ANGRYMAN is at a large table. Slowly, Opal's piano affectionately comforts her like a good friend. She is in a world of her own.

ANGRYMAN

Let's go to the Raven. I can't believe we sat here this long. Waitress, we need a tab. You tell Dutch, he better write off a round and get some talent.

Opal winces at Angyman's cruel words. She closes her eyes and blocks out the world around her while she slowly turns up the heat on her piano licks. The waitress brings the tab to the angry table. The band ends the song. Opal is oblivious and keeps playing.

She shifts in her seat and breaks into an incredible boogie-woogie piano lick. After a moment, the band joins in. The departing table sits back down. The dance floor fills. Opal becomes entranced in her music.

She plays violently releasing the raging tempest inside her heart as patrons laugh and dance. Tears roll down her cheeks.

EXT. DUTCH'S BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Duke pulls the truck into the parking lot and steps out. He approaches the door blocked by a BOUNCER.

BOUNCER

Bar's closing up.

TEEN DUKE

I'm here to pick up my mother.

INT. DUTCH'S BAR - SAME

A worker sweeps. Duke slowly walks up to the piano. Opal tinkers out a slow melody. She sees Duke's shoes and looks up at his face with a punch drunk expression.

OPAL

Sing it with me.

Duke looks around the empty bar. Two lovers kiss in a corner.

OPAL

Sing his part. -- For me.

They sing a tender duet.

OPAL

Your father is very proud of you.
How were you to know, Duke. He knows
that. When he gets home--

DUKE

What if he doesn't know?

CUT TO: DAPECOL SICKBAY - DAY

Sport lies in bed and hums as Opal and Duke's song continues. Sport smiles and looks at an empty chair.

SPORT

You know this one, Sonny?

BACK TO: INT. DUTCH'S BAR - NIGHT

Duke helps Opal with her coat. He gently pulls a lock of Opal's hair towards her nose. She smiles at him with teary eyes.

OPAL

Thank you, sweetheart. -- Thank you.

INT. DAPECOL POW CAMP BARRACKS - DAY

Roy massages McNair's swollen legs as Sport's enters.

OLIVER ORSON
Well, look who's here.

SPORT
(To Roy)
Hey, fellas, -- You jaw breakers
make up?

ROY
Not hardly.

MCNAIR
Beriberi.

SPORT
I heard. Here, two a day.
Thank your wife over there.

Sport hands Nick McNair some pills.

MCNAIR
You do that, for me?

ROY
Shut up. You owe me half a
box of cigarettes.

OLIVER ORSON
You okay?

SPORT
Yeah, I'll be fine.

OLIVER ORSON
They're moving us.

SPORT
When?

OLIVER ORSON
Couple of days. Rumor has it that
our boys are making progress.

ROY
Somebody's put a radio together.

MCNAIR
Who is it?

ROY
Will you stop asking me that?

MCNAIR
Well, how do we know it's true?

ROY
I'm done. Rub your own damned legs.

SPORT
What do you hear?

ROY
Americans are pushing through
New Guinea. Six hours by air.

SPORT
Harry says they've moved men to Japan.

ROY
They're getting nervous.

MCNAIR
That's when they get dangerous.

SPORT
Just the same, I can't think about
another God damned day here. Sorry,
Doc. What's the tally, Roy?

ROY
June First, Nineteen-forty-four.
Seven hundred and fifty-three days.

EXT. RICE PADDIES - DAY

The weak men pick fruit in the orchards. In the distance, Kikuchi gives a decapitation lesson to the young conscript using a melon on a stick. They speak in Japanese and are amazingly matter-of-fact as if it is a golf lesson.

Kikuchi instructs the correct positioning of the victim, the correct location of the strike, and the posture for swinging the sword. The young conscript decapitates the melon, bows, and the lesson is over.

COLONEL HANCOCK

Give it all you got boys. The food
we pick will be ours... for once.

The young conscript trying to impress Kikuchi screams at the colonel. Kikuchi speaks to Young Japanese Conscript in Japanese.

LT. KIKUCHI

He says five minutes of slappy slap.

The men pair off and take turns slapping each other in a group slap off. Roy makes a point to pair off with McNair. Orson gets Big Dumb and humbly smiles. Sport and Harry pair off. Japanese soldiers laugh at the spectacle.

HARRY

You wanna give them a show?

SPORT

Sure, what the hell.

Sport and Harry break into a dramatic stuntman's fistfight. All eyes are on them. The show is so dramatic that the other POWs stop to watch. Ohio uses the opportunity to steal some fruit.

Kikuchi spots Ohio in mid-bite issues an order in Japanese. The Young Conscript runs obediently to Kikuchi who hands him a club. The young conscript ferociously beats Ohio. One-by-one, the POWs shift attention to OHIO. Kikuchi proudly watches his protégé. Sport finally notices the beating and stops. Harry wheels around desperately panting for air. He tries in vain to speak. Sport wraps his arms around Harry like a referee giving a TKO to a beaten boxer. The two drop to their knees panting.

EXT. TRANSPORT SHIP - DAY

A large transport ship is tied to a pier. POWs, holding Red Cross cans, are herded into the cargo hold of the ship. Sport and Harry carry Ohio who is barely alive. With the holds full, they sit on deck near the bow with 100 other POWs.

OLIVER ORSON

Let me have a look at him.

HARRY

He's still out.

OLIVER ORSON

He's beat up pretty good. Try
to keep him warm. His heart
is racing like a jack rabbit.

Harry and Sport move close to Ohio to keep him warm.

HARRY

Hang in there, kid.

EXT. TRANSPORT SHIP - NIGHT

A sailor calls to the bridge, and the ship slows considerably, waking Sport. A sailor shines a spotlight on the sea. Sport watches the activity then feels Ohio's face. Harry sleeps.

SPORT

Oliver, come here, he's cold as ice.

Oliver Orson feels Ohio's wrist, then neck, then listens to Ohio's heart. Harry wakes. Orson shakes his head. Harry slaps Ohio gently to wake him with no response. Harry shakes Ohio violently.

HARRY

No. No. Wake up, kid. Wake up!

SPORT

He's gone, Harry.

HARRY

I'm gonna kill that shit of a man.

SPORT

Take it easy.

HARRY

Stick it up you ass.
I'm not taking it easy.

SPORT

It's over. There's nothing you can do, so just pipe down.

HARRY

Is that what you're gonna do when they punch my number? Is that what I'm supposed to do when it's you?

SPORT

Yes. That's what we're going to do. We owe it to each other to live. You don't do this boy one favor by running into a bayonet.

Harry shakes with fury. The ship's hull SCRAPES.

OLIVER ORSON

What was that?

SPORT

Harry, look over there at that lighthouse. It's missing a lamp on one side. We're at the south tip of Cebu. There's a big coral reef we must be passing through the channel. You see buoys off the side?

HARRY

Yeah.

SPORT

Harry, you remember that stunt you pulled off the gorge?

HARRY

Yeah, what about it?

SPORT

How far you reckon it is to shore?

HARRY

About two miles.

SPORT

Good, you're going home. If you wait till we're at full speed, you'll get sucked into the prop. Oliver, Help me push the kid over the side.

HARRY

Stop, what are you doing?

SPORT

Listen pal, you ain't gonna make it here. I know you, Harry. You're too spirited for this. Some horses can't be broke, and when you try they die. It ain't gonna happen. Give me your can. -- Six foot deep, Harry. I've seen it.

HARRY

I still want a piece of that asshole.

Sport ties Harry's and Ohio's Red Cross can to Ohio's body.

SPORT

There's better ass at home.
She sprays perfume on her letters.

HARRY

It was my fault. If I hadn't tried to be cute with that stunt show...

SPORT

...Japs did this, not you. -- This boy's gonna to do his best to save your life like you did for him. You're gonna do it, Harry. You're gonna do it for him. ---You're gonna do it for me.

--And all these boys
are gonna light up knowing Crazy Harry is on his way home. And I'm gonna love telling the story over and over again.

OLIVER ORSON

It's got to be more than twenty feet to the water.

HARRY

I wish it were forty.
-- He'd have a better story.

SPORT

Here, give me those.
Cigarettes aren't much good wet.

Harry, looks towards the water, then looks encouragingly at Sport.

SPORT

You know I can't do it. If I thought I had half a chance, I would. I've got to get home too. It's just gonna have to be another way. You say hello to everybody for me. Good luck, Harry. You've got to make it home. All right, Doc, on three. One, two, three.

Sport and Orson heave Ohio's body over the side as Harry dives. They quickly sit down to be unnoticed. The guards hear the splash and run to the side of the ship. They fire at Ohio's body as it drifts. Sport looks at Oliver Orson.

SPORT

I didn't realize he'd be gone.

OLIVER ORSON

Do you think he made it?

SPORT

We made it.

EXT. CEBU SEA - SAME

Harry stays underwater as the propellers pass. He surfaces and unties the Red Cross cans from Ohio's body. He swims away.

EXT. MANILA PIER - DAY

The ship docks at a pier with a large sign reading, "PIER 7." The squinting POWs are led out of the cargo holds.

EXT. CEBU JUNGLE - DAY

Harry hides in the jungle. He spots a band of Filipino guerilla fighters and emerges from his hiding place with his arms raised. The Filipinos initially point rifles at him, but they lower their rifles upon further inspection.

HARRY
American.

EXT. TRAIN - AFTERNOON

The POWs are loaded aboard a train's cattle cars. The guards padlock the doors. The train rolls through the Philippine countryside. The train comes to stop and guards open the doors and the POW's exit squinting.

EXT. CABANATUAN PRISON CAMP - EVENING

Sport, Oliver Orson, Roy, and McNair parade past a sign that reads "CABANATUAN." They look nervously at men with various nutritional diseases. There is a long line at a water spigot.

MCNAIR
I feel like a wandering Jew.

Roy removes his canteen and hands it to McNair.

ROY
Here, wander over there and get us some water. Your turn to stand in line.

MCNAIR
Later.

ROY
No, now. It's your turn, and I'm thirsty. I've got an appointment with that ditch over there.

(To Sport)
Stake me a claim on a top bunk.

McNair takes the four canteens and stands in line.

EXT./INT. CABANATUAN BARRACKS - DAY

Sport hides his belt buckle, while Orson hides a torn-in-half Bible. They work silently unaware of the other's identical task, then look at each other, and smile.

CABANATUAN RICE PADDIES - DAY

POWs plant rice. They look up at an intensifying BUZZ. Gradually, one hundred Allied aircraft appear high in formation over the camp. The men cheer and splash the water while looking up. The Japanese guards nervously stand close to trees.

LT. KIKUCHI

Sit! Sit!

The POWs sing, "GOD BLESS AMERICA," sheepishly containing their glee. A Japanese Zero flies beneath the Allied planes that cover the sky. Two American fighters drop out of the formation and give chase shooting down the Zero near the camp in a ball of fire

MCNAIR

Ichiban, ichiban, American.

The unnerved guards quickly escort the prisoners back to camp with Kikuchi taking up the rear scolding another guard. Suddenly, the American victor of the dogfight appears just over the trees flies low over the rice paddy and dips a wing. Only the Japanese dive for cover.

EXT. CABANATUAN PRISON CAMP - SAME

As they near camp, McNair falls out of line and stops at the latrine ditch.

OLIVER ORSON

Man, I'd like to thank that pilot
for giving us the day off.

SPORT

That was the most beautiful sight,
I've ever seen.

ROY

I think we've got a chance lads.

ROY looks around for McNair. At the LATRINE DITCH, McNair squats with his head down humming "GOD BLESS AMERICA". The parade of POWs pass him. McNair looks at the dirt in front of him when Kikuchi's boots appear. McNair looks up to see the swing of a sword at his neck. Among the marching POWs, Sport and Roy are sole witnesses.

SPORT

Turn around, Roy.

Roy's head sinks low. The other POWs march happily.

EXT. CABANATUAN PRISON CAMP - DAY

Colonel Hancock stands on a crate and addresses a general assembly of rowdy POWs in open area.

COLONEL HANCOCK

Keep it down, listen, the healthiest of the lot will go. We have a list prepared by our doctors. If there are any of you who think you shouldn't be on the list, you may be inspected by the Jap doctors. Don't get too excited.

If you cast a shadow, you're probably going. Sixteen hundred go. If it isn't one man, it will be another. I'm at the top of the list. Some POWs erupt, while others walk off.

OLIVER ORSON

Healthiest of the lot?
That's a relative term.
If we could just hold out a couple of weeks, -- They've gotta be coming for us.

SPORT

They know we're here. Japs are scared. Look at 'em. Pray for lead rain, Doc.

EXT. - TRAIN - DAY

A Train stops. POWs exit boxcars roped together in front of a large prison where a sign reads, "BILIBID". The guards untie the ragged POWs and march them through the prison gates.

EXT. - BILIBID PRISON - NIGHT

Sport sits in a cell with unfamiliar faces. He gazes out through the bars at a full moon, his loneliness is etched on his haggard face.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - DAY (SPORT'S FLASHBACK)

(NOTE TO READER: This is continuation of scene p.17) Duke, (7), bolts out of the back door, with the bundle, and runs to the road. The dog eagerly follows. Duke turns to wave to his mother while Jenny's back is turned. Opal stands upright, takes a deep breath and continues washing. Jenny looks suspiciously at Duke.

EXT. ROAD - SAME

Young Duke and his dog ramble down a long hot road. Duke carries a lunch bundle. In the distance, eight rugged men work building roads.

Sport, wearing overalls, stops to watch Duke who now runs. Duke and Sport sit alone together and open the lunch bundle.

YOUNG DUKE

Mom says next week, I can't bring your lunch. -- She says the road is getting too long.

SPORT

Well, I appreciate you bringin it out when you did, Dukey.

YOUNG DUKE

I'll still pack it up for you in the morning.

SPORT

I'm sure gonna miss you comin' out here.

YOUNG DUKE
Yeah, me too.

SPORT
Sure is a good lunch.

YOUNG DUKE
Yeah.

SPORT
Gram make it?

YOUNG DUKE
Yeah.

SPORT
I think ol' Gram is softening up
some. We got mustard spread to all
the corners. Even some tomato on it.

YOUNG DUKE
I been fixin it after she makes
it for you.

SPORT
You're a good boy, son.

YOUNG DUKE
Yeah.

Sport tousles Duke's hair. Duke beams with pride.

EXT. - BILIBID PRISON - NIGHT

Sport walks from the window and sits against the stone wall.

EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - DAY (NEW FLASHBACK)

Opal, Dodie and Doodle sit in the truck as Sport throws a duffle bag into the back as he leaves for the Philippines. Sport looks with disappointment out to a field where Teen Duke, (12), plays a game of football while trying not to look at his father. Opal opens her car door to fix this grudge, but Sport motions to her.

SPORT

Let him be.

Duke stops his game and watches the trail of dust from the truck as it drives out of sight. His teammates get his attention and he reluctantly resumes play.

INT./EXT. BILIBID PRISON - DAY

Sport is awakened by the BUZZ of American Airplanes. The POWs move from one window to another to watch. The plane's shadows pass over the prison roof. Bombs THUMP in the distance.

INT. BILIBID PRISON - NIGHT

Sport writes a letter on cell wall with an imaginary pen. The words materialize as he writes.

SPORT (V.O.)

My Dearest, Last night, I dreamed of
your smell. It whispered into my ear,
"Come with me into the night and
dance beneath the stars." It swept
all around me like a warm bath.

He stops and picks a tiny scrap of a wrapping paper off the floor. It's too small to use and he drops it.

INT. CHURCH

Duke walks into empty church and sits down in a pew. Tears roll down his cheeks. He breaks into a full cry.

BACK TO SCENE: BILIBID PRISON - NIGHT

SPORT

(Talks to God)

Here's your chance. I'm
listening. -- Not much of a
talker are you? -- Just bring
me home. I'll hear that.

EXT. BILIBID PRISON - DAY

The Japanese take roll call in the prison courtyard. As the men are meted out a ration of food, more planes fly overhead. Sport sits with Orson and Roy. They are weak. Sport pulls the pack of "Lucky Strikes" from his shirt and smells it.

Sport looks over at some POW TRADERS who secretly trade goods. He hesitates, looking at the cigarettes. Sport flashes them the box. The traders wave Sport over.

POW TRADER

Where did you get those?

SPORT

How much for the can of sardines?

POW TRADER

Twenty.

SPORT

Throw in the can of hash, -- for
seventeen.

The trader scratches his chin and stares at the cigarettes.

POW TRADER

Deal.

Sport removes three cigarettes and walks to where Roy and Orson sit. He lights one cigarette that the men share. He opens the can of sardines.

ROY

They're taking a pounding.

OLIVER ORSON

The Japs are going to have a hard
time getting a ship in here.

ROY

Good. I don't feel like getting
torpedoed by our own subs.

SPORT

Well, I'll be damned. We got an
extra sardine.

The men share two sardines each. A POW holds a few pieces of mail and calls out names as it begins to rain.

MAIL POW

Carl Nordin, Heisinger, Jordan.

SPORT

That's me!

Sport takes the letter and walks to a quiet place, alone. He savors the envelope and carefully opens it. Sport's POV.

TEEN DUKE (V.O.)

June 1942

Dear Dad,

We are all okay. I hope you are okay too. I really miss you. It's tough being the man of the house, but I'm holding a strain on everything. I found your watch. Old Man Skiba had it, and I won a race and bought it back.

Uncle Lloyd took me to a rodeo and I sure missed you. I just want you to know I love you very much and can't wait to for us to go out hunting when you get back. Please write if it isn't too much trouble.

Your son, Duke.

Sport rubs his hand over the words, as tears well in his eyes. Bombs THUMP in the distance. Sport looks up and squints.

SPORT

Give 'em hell, boys. I'm going home.

INT./EXT. BILIBID PRISON - NIGHT/DAY

Sport searches for anything to write on to no avail. A violent typhoon rages outside over two days.

EXT./INT. BILIBID PRISON - DAY

The rain has stopped. Japanese guards roust prisoners.

GUARDS

Tenko, tenko, speedo, tenko.

Kikuchi stands in the courtyard as the POWs assemble.

LT. KIKUCHI

All prisoners will report here in one hour for tenko. Bring all of belongings. No shoes on feet.

SPORT

What happened to our planes?

COLONEL HANCOCK

They must be grounded.

TITLE OVER: "December 15, 1944"

EXT. MARCH FROM BILIBID PRISON TO MANILA PIER - DAY

The men prepare to march four abreast.

COLONEL HANCOCK

One thousand, six hundred, nineteen.

The POWs march barefoot through the deserted streets of Manila. Their shoes hang by laces around their necks.

Radios BLARE loudly then are SILENCED as the prisoners pass. Some Filipinos secretly flash the "V" sign to the passing POWs from the cover of buildings. The POWs arrive at a pier in Manila Harbor. The "PIER 7" sign now riddled with bullets, swings from one bolt.

EXT. MANILA PIER - DAY

Forty bombed-out ships litter the harbor. The weather is muggy. At the end of the pier, sailors fit a Japanese passenger-cargo ship with anti-aircraft guns. The ship reads: "ORYOKU MARU." Japanese civilians, with luggage, board the upper decks.

A well-dressed Japanese woman stands by a rail near the POWs with a young boy as she fans herself. Her beautiful, china doll face sadly watches the spectacle. The woman averts her eyes as Sport wearily looks up at her.

JAPANESE WOMAN

(whispers to her son)

Hello, American.

JAPANESE BOY

Hello, American.

Sport waves inconspicuously. The boy waves back as the woman wipes a tear. Japanese guards count prisoners. The woman boards the ship, holding the hand of her son. She turns and looks again at Sport with an expression of sadness and shame.

EXT./INT. ORYOKU - CONTINUOUS

The POWs board and are led to three open hatches, then herded down ladders into the holds where Kikuchi holds a sword. Beside Kikuchi, Japanese soldiers hold brooms.

As the POWs are log jammed, the guards prod them with broomsticks. The main cargo hold is 40 feet by 80 feet with 13 double-decked bays on either side of an open center. The three holds are stuffed with about four square feet per POW.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - CONTINUOUS

Inside, POWs sweat profusely and struggle to breathe. They jostle for space. It is over 125 degrees in the hold.

ROY

How far to Japan?

COLONEL HANCOCK

It isn't how far, it's how long.
Could be a couple of weeks.

ROY

Weeks, I can't bear another
ten minutes.

OLIVER ORSON

Easy with your water.

Unconscious men are passed overhead to the hatch to be revived as rotating men return to their places.

EXT. PHILIPPINE COAST - NIGHT

Two Japanese destroyers join the Oryoku, and the small convoy sails parallel to the coast.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

Civilians, including the Japanese woman, stand on the decks of the upper cabins nervously listening to the screams coming from the cargo hold. The ship's captain speaks to Kikuchi in Japanese.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

The POWs yell for air and water in a chorus of screams. Kikuchi stands at the open hatch.

LT. KIKUCHI

You are disturbing the women and children. Unless you are quiet, We will give the guards the order to fire down into the hold.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - DAY

Colonel Hancock climbs half way up the ladder to the hatch and pleads.

COLONEL HANCOCK

Quiet men. Everyone fan some air to the men in the back.

The POWs quiet and wave their shirts in the air. The morning light passes over the hatch. A few POWs lie dead. Some POWs have gone crazy and babble to themselves.

EXT. AIRPLANES NEAR SHIP - SAME

A Squadron of fighters fly from the coast towards the sea. They spot the convoy.

SQUADRON LEADER

Turkeys, ten o'clock. On my lead. Anyone got a biscuit?

OTHER FLYER

No more biscuits. Rockets and
rain drops.

The planes strafe and rocket the ORYOKU killing many on deck.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

The men in the hold cheer. They are protected from harm by the
ship's deck that CHATTERS with ordinance. A POW on a ladder
near the hatch gives a play-by-play of the action to the POWs
below.

EXT. AIRPLANES ABOVE SHIP - SAME

High above the convoy, the planes group together, in formation.

SQUADRON LEADER

B.D.A. take your picture. Navigator
mark their coordinates and give 'em
a course of eighteen knots due
north. Biscuits tomorrow.

EXT. PHILIPPINE SHORELINE - NIGHT

The Oryoku sails along the coast. In the distance, the escort
ships depart leaving the Oryoku alone.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

On deck, guards open the cargo hatch and four POW doctors,
Orson and Sport, emerge from the hold. Sport looks around
cautiously as he follows Orson closely. Kikuchi grabs Sport's
shirt.

LT. KIKUCHI

You are not doctor.

OLIVER ORSON

Medic. He is my medic.
Where are your supplies?

Sport shrugs and walks back towards the hatch.

LT. KIKUCHI

Stop, you help.

EXT. UPPER DECKS OF THE ORYOKU - SAME

Orson examines an old man with bleeding from the head.

OLIVER ORSON

He's okay, just bandage him up.

Sport wraps a bandage around the man's head. Sport looks to Orson but, instead, sees the Japanese boy, from earlier, stoically weeping. The boy's mother lies on the deck bleeding from the chest.

SPORT

Doc?

Orson tends to the woman as Sport stares at the boy. Sport places his hand on the boy's shoulder watching Orson work over the woman.

Sport glances at the boy and sees PATRICK. He gives a double take and sees the Japanese boy again. The boy reaches for Sport's canteen and weighs it in his hand. Sport hands the precious, though empty, canteen to the boy.

SPORT

Give me your canteen, Doc.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

Kikuchi angrily marches to the hatch where guards tie a bucket of water. Kikuchi upends the bucket and water spills over the deck.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

The water spills through cracks of the deck and rains down on POWs who try to capture it with open mouths and outstretched arms.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

Kikuchi throws open the hatch, raises his rifle, and fires into the hold emptying his rifle. He slams the hatch closed. The men erupt in desperate screams.

EXT. UPPER DECKS OF THE ORYOKU - SAME

Orson hovers over the woman. The Japanese boy returns with the canteens weighing heavy on his shoulders. Orson stands. A towel covers the face of the Japanese woman.

The boy hands Sport the canteens, sees his mother, and lowers his head. Sport looks around cautiously before reaching for the boy's hand in consolation.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - NIGHT

A few faint lights illuminate the cargo hold as Sport and Orson descend the ladder returning to their places. It sounds like an insane asylum as men cut themselves to drink blood. A man choking of thirst attacks another.

VARIOUS POW VOICES

He's crazy he's trying to cut me.
Ahh. Beat him over the head. Get
this bloodsucker off me. Ahhhhhh.

Sport looks to a MAN with blood on his face hovered over another. Sport looks at Roy who has a wild look in his shifting eyes.

SPORT

(Whispers)

Roy? Roy? ROY! --We got water.

Roy snaps out of his daze and takes Sport's canteen. He cries while he drinks. Sport divides the remaining sardines.

SPORT

Take a good long drink, Roy.
We'll have to give it up.

Other POWs see Roy and grasp at the canteen. Sport pushes them back. Roy holds the canteen tightly to his chest.

SPORT

Roy, we have to give it up.
(To grasping POWs)
Give me your empty and you can have it.

Sport takes the canteen from Roy and swaps it with a grasping POW.

SPORT

(To Roy and Oliver)

Stand back to back boys. If any of
these nutcases come near us, brain
'em with your canteen.

INT./EXT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - DAY

Colonel Hancock, Sport and Orson climb the ladder and open the hatch to see Kikuchi flanked by Japanese guards.

COLONEL HANCOCK

Kudasai Kikuchisan. May we put
the dead to sea?

Kikuchi nods his permission. Sport props open the hatch. As dead men are brought on deck, Sport surreptitiously hands the end of a water hose to a POW peeping through the hatch who feeds it below. Sport turns on the spigot. Colonel Hancock recites a brief prayer as they dump the bodies overboard.

INT. CHURCH IN REDONDO BEACH, CA - DAY - 2002

A priest incenses a casket at a funeral service. Patrick and Kurt stand in a male choir shuffling music. Patrick looks over at his classmate who stands in the front row. The choir begins to sing a delicate requiem in Latin lead by Patrick and the boy sopranos. The song plays over the following scenes building in intensity. (SONG BEGIN)

EXT. ORYOKU (REPEAT FROM OPENING SCENE) - DAY - 1944

The sky is ominous. Several hundred yards off shore, a thin sunbeam breaks through the dark clouds and broadens into a huge column of sunlight.

The Oryoku Maru sails towards the sunbeam alone. Japanese civilians and Japanese military bustle on the decks. Nasty Japanese Soldier opens the cargo hatch and lowers a bucket of rice. He looks curiously to the sky.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

POWs squint as they receive the bucket of rice. Sport spots a nail on the ground. He removes his belt buck buckle tied to a string hanging inside his pants. He uses the nail to carve on the buckle.

EXT. PHILIPPINE SHORELINE - SAME

In the distance, a squadron of four American Hellcats, fly low in formation over the sea towards the ship like prowling wolves. Two planes peel out of formation and ascend high into the sky. The other two fighters peel left and line up for a low-level strafing run.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

A sailor looks through binoculars and urgently sounds an air raid siren. Everyone on deck scrambles as Nasty Japanese Soldier drops the cargo hatch shut.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

Big Dumb Soldier races up the ladder and peers through the cracks.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

A fighter plane roars from stern to bow with machine guns blazing taking out sailors racing to an antiaircraft gun.

Another fighter plane comes in low towards the stern of the ship. At the bow of the ship, Kikuchi removes a grenade and marches to the cargo hatch. He pulls the grenade pin and turns suddenly as the fighter plane passes over the bridge firing machine guns.

Kikuchi runs and falls to the deck next to the cargo hold hatch, the grenade rolls along the deck and explodes killing Young Japanese Conscript. Suddenly, the hatch opens and the large hand of Big Dumb reaches out and snatches Kikuchi pulling him through the hatch in one fluid motion like a toy penny snatcher.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

Kikuchi tumbles down the ladder and lands with a THUD in front of Sport who stops carving on his belt buckle. Kikuchi back peddles and trips over his sword. The POW's surround him and study him with expressionless faces.

Big Dumb uses a canteen strap to make a slip knot around Kikuchi's neck, then, ties Kikuchi's hands behind him with the other end of the strap. Kikuchi's panicked PANTING rakes the eerie silence.

SPORT

Congratulations, Kikuchisan. I believe this is your moment.

A POW picks up a canteen by the strap. Others do the same. Sport steps back and the circle closes. Canteens swing from their straps from the weak arms of incompetent executioners.

Kikuchi is terrified and pleads. Sport turns and continues carving on his belt buckle. Over his shoulder, Roy raises his hand.

ROY

Stop! Stop! Enough!

The men stop, and then, the UNSHEATHING sound of a sword.

ROY

-- I see a melon.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE THE ORYOKU - SAME

The dive-bombers ascend through the clouds where they join another squadron of fighter bombers above the low layer of clouds. They dive for the hole in the clouds emitting the sunbeam.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

The POWs look up at the SCREAMING SOUNDS of the dive-bombers. Some panic, some pray, some ravish bits of food. Sport, with urgency and focus, carves on his rodeo belt buckle. The bombers score a hit on the hold.

The bomb rips through the deck and explodes ripping a hole in the side of the ship exposing daylight. Timber beams fall and pin Sport who is still alive. There is pandemonium, dust, and smoke. POWs, with blood dripping from their ears, scramble up the ladder. Others jump out of the gaping hole and into the sea.

EXT. ORYOKU - SAME

POWs emerge from the cargo hatches and wave to the bombers.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE THE ORYOKU - SAME

Another diving bomber looks down at the POWs, emerging like angry ants, over the decks. He pulls out of his dive.

SQUADRON LEADER
Abort bombing. Repeat Abort!
Friendlies aboard.

A plane passes the side of the ship and barrel rolls.

INT. SHIP'S CARGO HOLD - SAME

Orson and Roy try desperately to unpin Sport.

ROY
You're pinned. We can't...

SPORT
Not now. Please not now.
-- Find my buckle.

The men search the floor and find the buckle.

OLIVER ORSON
I got it.

SPORT
Take it for me. Letter's in my
shirt. My family.

OLIVER ORSON
I promise.

SPORT

Where I come from -- a promise
means it's gonna happen.

OLIVER ORSON

Me too.

SPORT

You'll make it, Oliver. I know...

The beam creaks and presses hard against Sport's chest. With every exhale, the beam presses against Sport's chest methodically suffocating him. Roy feebly tries to brace the beam with his back as Orson helplessly watches the last heave of Sport's chest.

Silhouetted in the sunlight, a BOY, vaguely resembling Patrick Jordan, holds a bundle that he gives to Sport. Sport slips out from beneath the beam. Inside the bundle is a white shirt, overalls, socks and boots. Sport stands and puts them on. He is normal weight, clean-shaven, with his hair combed nicely.

Sport's face shows peace yet curiosity with the boy. Sport's spirit turns to Orson who holds the hand of Sport's dead body. As Sport reaches for his dead body, the boy takes his hand and pulls him encouragingly away into the light of the gaping hole.
(CHURCH SONG ENDS)

ROY

Come on, Oliver.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY - 2002

Kurt's Camaro pulls away from the curb.

INT. CAR - SAME

Patrick sits in the front seat. He plays with a rope and ties a knot and hums Opal and Duke's duet from earlier, at Dutch's bar.

KURT

I'm proud of you, Patrick.

PATRICK

Rabbit comes out of the hole,
around the tree, and back down
the hole.

KURT

Where did you learn that?

Patrick looks at his father then out the open passenger window. Kurt tousles Patrick's hair like Sport did to Duke on road lunch.

EXT./APRIL'S HOUSE - DAY - 1945

APRIL tends a flower garden. A black car pulls to the curb. She stands and looks nervously holding a hand shovel.

APRIL

Oh, God.

HARRY, exits from the passenger side dressed in uniform. April drops the shovel. She runs to Harry and the two embrace kissing each other repeatedly.

INT./EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - DAY

Opal opens an empty refrigerator and removes the apple. She looks out a window as Lloyd and Harry drive up in a truck. She is ecstatic and runs outside. But as she sees Harry's sullen face and slumped shoulders, she crumples to the ground and wails in deepest sorrow. The two men comfort her.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - SAME

Opal dials a telephone. She wipes tears from her face as the neighbor waits sympathetically.

OPAL

Don't say anything to the kids.
I'm on my way. No, Mom! I'm
bringing my children home.
Don't say a word! You hear?

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - SAME

Jenny hangs up the telephone and pauses in thought.

JENNY

It's his own damned fault.
Stupid dreamer.

She looks outside the screen door and sees Duke.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - DAY

Jenny walks out the back door. Duke tends to rabbits in cages. A football lies on the ground. It's her duty to make a man of Duke. His innocent face almost changes her mind, but she can't stand it. She's compelled.

JENNY

Your dad's dead. Your mom's on
her way. Where are the girls?

He fidgets and vainly tries to be stoic as tears well in his eyes. She is touched, but she can't take it back and she isn't used to apologizing. She cannot seem to face him. She turns and walks briskly to the house. Duke stabs his football with a pitch fork.

TEEN DUKE

--Who are you?
--What are you?

Jenny stops with her back to Duke and turns her head to the side.

TEEN DUKE

I thought everyone was supposed
to have a Gram.

Jenny is stuck like a deer in the headlights. Her voice cracks which surprises even her. She can't let Duke see her face. She tries to speak but cannot. She walks briskly to the backdoor of the house.

INT. JENNY'S KITCHEN - SAME

Jenny looks out the window at Duke who cries while leaning against the rabbit cage. Duke runs off through a neighbor's wheat field. She refocuses on her reflection in the window. She notices a stain on her collar, and wets a towel.

EXT. WHEATFIELD - DAY

Duke walks through the wheat field, lies on his back and stares up at the sky with his arms at his side, palms down.

EXT. REDONDO BEACH SHORE - DAY - 2002

Older Duke lies on a beach towel looking up at the sky with his arms at his side, palms down.

ABOVE THE BEACH, Kurt's Camaro pulls up to the curb. Kurt and Patrick emerge dressed in church suits. They look down an embankment to the beach below. Patrick spots Duke 200 yards away and points.

INT. OLIVER ORSON'S HOUSE - DAY - 1946

Oliver Orson sits at a table and finishes a letter. On the table is the rodeo belt buckle. His wife strokes his hair. He solemnly inserts the letter into an envelope and seals it. He looks up at his wife who kisses his forehead.

EXT. PREVIOUSLY THE JORDAN HOUSE - DAY - 1946

A slob of a man opens the mail box. He examines a letter addressed to "OPAL." His wife opens the front door and hands him a bag of trash. He stuffs the letter in the trash, walks around the corner and puts the bag in a garbage can.

INT. OLIVER ORSON'S HOUSE - DAY - 2002

Oliver Orson's wife, now an old woman, is on the telephone in the living room. Reading glasses hang from a chain around her neck. She writes on a piece of paper as she holds the phone.

She hangs up the phone and walks to the mantle where the rodeo belt buckle lies near a framed wedding picture of her and Oliver.

She picks up the buckle, a brown folded paper, and a paper scrap. She turns the buckle over while donning her reading glasses.

EXT. REDONDO BEACH SHORE - DAY - 2002

Kurt pulls the rodeo belt buckle from his pocket. He passes his hand over it.

PATRICK

What is that, Dad?

KURT

Something that belongs to your Papa.

PATRICK

Can I give it to him?

KURT

Sure.

Patrick runs down to the shoreline as Kurt waits on the embankment. Kurt opens a zip-lock bag and removes one of two faded pieces of paper. He opens the paper. It is the letter Sport received from Duke in prison camp.

INSERT: DUKE'S LETTER

Kurt carefully folds the letter and returns it to the zip-lock. Kurt watches Patrick run to Duke who sits up. Patrick hands Duke the Rodeo Buckle. Duke studies the belt buckle. He turns it over where words are scratched on the back.

INSERT RODEO BELT BUCKLE:

"LUV YU TO DUKY" The "Y" is incomplete.

Older Duke is absolutely stunned. Tears roll down his face as he stares at the buckle then out at the waves rolling into the sand. -- With a broad sweep of his hand he wipes tears from his face. Duke turns to look up at Kurt who stands on the street above the beach. Kurt smiles broadly wiping a tear from his face then suddenly throws his arms into the air and whoops as Sport did on the Katipunan.

Duke struggles to stand as Patrick pushes him from behind. Kurt still whoops in celebration as Duke looks up and waves. Behind Duke, Patrick spots a treasure on Duke's towel. It's a gold colored pocket watch. He picks it up and studies it.

INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2002

Patrick is tossing in bed having a nightmare. He CALLS out. Boots walk down a hallway. Silhouetted in the doorway is a man with a white shirt and overalls. He enters, sits and pets the boy's sweaty hair. Patrick settles.

SPORT

It's okay to be afraid son. --There's no such thing as courage without it. We can always count on family and a promise. --I sure do appreciate you seeing me, through. And Dukey? Man I love that kid. More important, He knows I heard him. --Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I had an angel, or that he would come behind me. -- Well, it's all over now, son. You don't need to think about it no more. Go to sleep. Let tomorrow worry 'bout itself.

FADE OUT: