

FULL MOON MORNING

by

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based on a True Story

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER:

"During World War II 20,000 European refugees fled to Shanghai. This busy port did not require papers for entry, and offered safe haven, but the boggy metropolis was not prepared for the deluge of people and the hardship that followed. This is the story of the Ludwig family who fled one enemy, straight into the arms of another..."

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - ST. FRANCIS HOTEL - SEPT 22, 1975 - DAY

A CROWD swarm outside the hotel. Someone of importance is due to emerge any moment.

SECRET SERVICE are everywhere and paying particular attention to the small CROWD of protesters across the street.

JOHN (DIETER) LUDWIG, a solid built man in his 50s, waits eagerly with a pad and pen. A much younger MAN moves in next to him.

MAN

Have you been waiting long?

JOHN

(laughs)

Long enough.

MAN

What's so funny?

JOHN

It's nothing.

MAN

I'm just here to give this guy the finger he deserves -- you?

JOHN

I want his autography.

John flashes his pad and pen.

MAN

What? Why?

JOHN

It's for my family. I promised them.

PRESIDENT FORD emerges from the hotel.

John and his fellow bystander move in closer.

The CROWD bustles and heaves, some yell profanity.

Secret Service muscles here and there.

A MAN rushes towards a WOMAN in a blue raincoat.

BANG... a single gunshot.

President Ford is pushed to the ground. Secret service cover him.

John losses his breath for a moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Uh!

He reaches down to his groin... blood seeps through his trousers.

His new friend notices.

John starts to collapse. The man tries to support him.

MAN

He's been shot! Somebody help!

A COP comes rushing over.

John is on the ground barely conscious as the cop checks his vitals.

COP

You're gonna be all right, man.

John struggles to stay focused.

JOHN

I've been... shot...

COP

Just hang on.

JOHN

...again.

COP

What?

John loses consciousness...

EXT. SHANGHAI - DAY - FLASHBACK

The deep blue sky threatens morning.

The golden head of a YOUNG BOY looks up to the sky.

The FULL MOON shines brightly in the early light.

BANG -- BANG -- BANG

A series of shots ring out.

BIRDS flee the tree tops.

The BOY falls.

All goes quiet.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY - GERMANY, 1939

The street bustles with people doing their daily shopping.

Two young boys with golden hair, DIETER (JOHN) and FREDERICK, weave and dodge through the crowd as if being chased.

Frederick, slightly in front of his friend, looks briefly back.

FREDERICK

Hurry, Dieter!

DIETER

Are you sure they didn't see us?

FREDERICK

No. And I don't want to stick around to find out.

Frederick turns sharply into an alley, Dieter hot on his heels.

The alley is a cascade of laundry high above their heads.

The boys slow to a brisk walk as they approach the street ahead and take a right turn.

Around a half wall, and then down a set of stairs, which leads them into a basement.

Both peer up. Has anyone followed?

DIETER

All clear!

Frederick opens the handkerchief that cradles the baked goods.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Why did you take those cakes,
Frederick? My mother could have
made us --

FREDERICK

It was your idea.

DIETER

Yes, but I didn't think you would...
I mean... I shouldn't even mention
some things to you.

Dieter nudges his friend.

DIETER (CONT'D)

But it was fine wasn't it? That
nutty smell? Almost like pipe tobacco --
so sweet.

FREDERICK

I didn't do it just because you said,
Dieter. You're leaving -- I have to
practice my routine.

DIETER

What? I thought... you and your
mother... aren't you coming with us?

Frederick shakes his head.

FREDERICK

Mother won't go without Father!

Dieter looks down disappointed.

DIETER

Oh...

Frederick breaks off a piece of the raspberry tart and just as he is about to hand it to his friend, Dieter playfully pushes the cake into Frederick's mouth.

FREDERICK
That was not funny.

DIETER
(laughing)
Oh, yes it was!

Frederick brushes the crumbs from his hands and face as he finishes the last bit.

FREDERICK
Don't forget to write me.

DIETER
I have to, or else you won't know
where to follow.

Dieter finishes his tart and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Think it's time we go. I need milk!

FREDERICK
Okay... you first.

Dieter peers through a crack in the door.

DIETER
No you.

FREDERICK
Coward.

DIETER
It's not that. Not ever. I will
pounce like a lion from my den if
they lay a hand on you.

He imitates a lion prowling, pouncing on prey, as he raises his hands up and curls his fingers and growls.

Frederick laughs at his friend's antics as he heads for the door.

Dieter follows.

DIETER (CONT'D)
I think it's worth a try.

FREDERICK

But we can't see the street from here.

Dieter turns Frederick to face him.

DIETER

At one time, when I saw the soldiers... I used to think they were special. Now, I'm not so sure.

(beat)

It's not like running from the teacher when we used to steal the apples from his desk, remember?

Frederick just nods.

DIETER (CONT'D)

This is different, Freddie. And it's dangerous.

FREDERICK

Don't say that.

DIETER

(serious tone)

It is dangerous!

FREDERICK

No... I mean don't call me Freddie.

DIETER

(snickering)

Why not? The girls call you that.

Frederick moves towards the door.

FREDERICK

Just don't!

(opening door)

Okay, here I go.

He steps out and heads up the stairs.

Once at the top, he eyes left and right, and waves for Dieter to come up, then casually walks away as though going to the store.

Dieter wipes any sugar remains from his mouth with both hands, he heads up the stairs and out into the alley.

He reaches the mouth to the street and checks the activity left and right before crossing over the street.

Frederick is just turning down another street up ahead.

Dieter walks with confidence as he turns into the next street.

As he passes a row of trees a NAZI OFFICER steps out from behind a tall hedge, puffing on a cigarette.

Dieter freezes. He stares at the black knee length boots. The gun and belt. The mangled cross on the arm band. The face. The eyes.

The Officer stares back. Neither move.

Dieter steps around the giant man, composed, and continues to walk. His chest heaves with heavy breaths.

He turns to his right and walks up the apartment path, where Frederick waits.

FREDERICK (CONT'D)

What took you so long?

DIETER

Nothing.

They enter the apartment block.

The Officer watches for a moment.

OFFICER #1

Just like his father.

He puts out his cigarette and continues on his way.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

ELLA, a woman of slim build, dark long wavy hair and in her late twenties, packs clothes into cases. Her friend, HANNAH, of similar age, sits on the bed watching.

HANNAH

You don't think Wilhelm will really stay do you?

ELLA

We argue about it. But he has considered it.

HANNAH
Pride goeth...

ELLA
Hannah please. I know.

She shoves clothes into her suitcase, she is angry.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Believe me, I know. Now, you've
packed?

HANNAH
I will go, and I will follow. I
can't leave with you.

Ella stops mid packing.

ELLA
But you said.

HANNAH
I can't leave Richard. Wilhelm got
out. There may be hope for Richard,
too. And Frederick...

ELLA
But Hannah --

HANNAH
Frederick won't let me go without
his father.

Hannah picks up some clothing to encourage Ella to continue
packing.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
It seems our fates have been written.

ELLA
Not yet, my friend. And not here.

Dieter and Frederick come bursting through the door, startling
the two women.

ELLA (CONT'D)
And what have you boys been up too?

FREDERICK
Nothing.

DIETER

Just playing tag... I won.

Dieter nudges his friend.

ELLA

How about some milk then?

FREDERICK

Yes please.

Ella goes to leave. Hannah touches her friends arm.

HANNAH

I'll get it... you carry on packing.

Hannah and the boys head out to the kitchen.

Ella pulls back the lining of the top of the case. It's lined with money. She makes sure it's secure and then carefully puts the lining back.

Ella picks up a needle and thread and begins to sew the lining into place.

INT. THEATER - DAY

The theater is empty but for a LONE FIGURE standing in the middle of the stage looking out at an empty audience.

WILHELM, a man in his late twenties, recently survived the most terrible of ordeals. Head shaved, face drawn and pale, yet remnants of the former athlete, still show.

STEPS of a military tone, approach.

Wilhelm turns to the approaching sound.

The Officer, from earlier, strolls over as he lights a cigarettes.

OFFICER #1

Have you decided, Plebejer?

WILHELM

You only let me out three days ago.

OFFICER #1

Three days is more then generous.

WILHELM

But my family...

OFFICER #1
Your money and home belong to the
Reich.

Wilhelm looks out to the stage.

WILHELM
I was offered a role here.

The Officer throws his cigarette on the floor.

OFFICER #1
You either leave Germany in two days
or you go back to Buchenwald. And
this time, your family will be with
you.

Wilhelm is snapped back to reality.

WILHELM
I understand.

The Officer steps on the smoldering cigarette as he exits.

The STEPS of a weighty MAN approach.

Wilhelm turns to the shadow.

ERIC, a heavy set well rounded figure, strolls over.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
Eric.

ERIC
Wilhelm.
(beat)
So, the plan changes, yes?

WILHELM
Looks like I will have to take your
offer.

ERIC
Wise man.

Eric pulls an envelope from his chest pocket.

ERIC (CONT'D)
This is everything you will need.

Wilhelm takes the envelope.

Eric looks out at the audience arena, as Wilhelm checks through the papers.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Nice theater.

Wilhelm ignores the comment.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You would have been a star here.

Wilhelm stuffs the documents in his pocket, still no response.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Wilhelm... who knows...maybe in
Shanghai.

Wilhelm pulls out a handkerchief and continues to ignore Eric's comments, as he opens the cloth revealing an assortment of jewelry.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You have talent, and they have
theaters's there. Anything's
possible.

Wilhelm hands Eric the hanky of jewelry.

Eric takes it, briefly pokes through the pieces, then puts it in his pocket.

WILHELM
Eric, promise me that once Richard's
home you will get them to follow us.

Eric nods.

ERIC
I will do all that I can.

Eric holds out his hand.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Good luck my friend and God speed.

Wilhelm shakes his hand.

WILHELM
Thank you.

With that Eric turns and leaves.

Wilhelm briefly looks out once more to the empty audience before leaving.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The SS POTSDAM is moored securely. Her single funnel blows smoke. Once a luxury liner, now a merchant ship accommodating passengers.

A crowd swarms the pier next to the ship.

INT. HARBOR - CHECK-IN AREA - CONTINUOUS

A LARGE GROUP forms rows in front of a line of desks. Smartly dressed SOLDIERS man the desks. The Swastika arm band dominates. They check papers and search suitcases.

Wilhelm leads his family through the crowd. As with everyone else, they are weighed down with suitcases and heavy coats.

They join one of the lines.

A MAN's suitcase is searched. Money is found. The SOLDIER removes the money and hands it to an OFFICER standing behind him.

The Officer looks about the crowd and waves the money.

OFFICER #2
Only twenty Reich Mark! Anymore and
it will be confiscated.

Wilhelm looks to his wife, concerned eyes. She reassures him with a smile.

Dieter is first, bags checked, papers stamped and pushed on.

Wilhelm next, bags checked, papers stamped and pushed on.

Finally Ella.

A SOLDIER, no more than sixteen, pauses to take in her sweet face, kind eyes and shapely figure. He rummages through her clothes without taking his eyes off her.

Ella takes advantage. She changes her stance.

Wilhelm struggles to see as him and Dieter are pushed by the crowd.

Ella lifts her hand to her head and pats her hair, then slides her silky fingertips around her ear, leisurely down her throat, all the while blinking sweetly at the young guard.

The young Soldier is completely captivated.

An ARM reaches between them and SLAMS the case shut.

The Officer who glares at the stunned pair.

OFFICER #2 (CONT'D)

Next!

The Officer pushes the suitcase towards Ella.

The young Soldier quickly stamps her papers and Ella hastens on her way.

EXT. SS POTSDAM - DECK - MOMENTS LATER

The Ludwigs are all together, and move with the crowd.

WILHEM

You have always amazed me, Flower.
And I suspect you always will.

Wilhelm plants a gentle kiss on her cheek.

ELLA

Sometimes I surprise even me.

EXT. SHANGHAI - THE BUND - DAY

She is the caricature of a real sea port - a breastplate that holds together the ribs of China and the Whangpoo River. Not much more than a muddy water mistress, with her boardwalk legs open and ready for business day and night.

Welcome to Shanghai -- the whore of the east!

The SS Potsdam pulls into the busy harbor. SAMPANs approach both sides of the liner, like remoras to a shark.

Food is hoisted up and down ropes, to and from boats.

The Ludwig family wait in line to disembark, once again burdened with suitcases. Everyone on board is dressed in their Sunday best.

INT. HARBOR - WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The new arrivals are herded into a large space with high walls, cracked concrete and misapplied paint. Tables are scattered around without order, no lines, just clusters.

Passengers are checked in against a manifest, assigned a number, given a sheet of paper. The Ludwigs join one of the many lines.

DIETER

What does Shanghai mean, Father?

WILHELM

I think it means piracy, of a sort.
I don't know exactly.

Wilhelm looks to Ella for support.

ELLA

This is a famous port. Everyone
wants to invest here.

DIETER

From the looks of things, this place
can't be that good.

ELLA

We don't want to judge right away
now do we?

WILHELM

Let's just stick together, okay?

DIETER

That won't be too hard, everything
seems to stick to everything around
here.

(pulling up sleeve)

Even my wrists are sweating, see?
It's better than glue.

They laugh together, the mood instantly lighter. Some of the others around them join in the laughter.

EXT./INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The immigrants pile on buses. The Ludwigs board one.

Passengers find seats, some remove coats while others place suitcases under seats or on their laps.

The Ludwigs shuffle along and find a place to settle down.

A middle aged, CHINESE BUS DRIVER, is last on and studies the foreigners. He seems somewhat cranky.

DRIVER

Okay... we go now.

The door shuts, and the bus is on its way.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Okay... few basic rules. No drinking of water or milk. Must boil first!

The streets are a flurry of activity. People walk along as rickshaws rush pass, coolies dodge pedestrians, trams rustle along, and cars negotiate the mayhem.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

There are many shops to buy food -- all types.

The Drivers voice fades into the background.

Dieter stares out at the passing sights in awe, pointing as he watches.

DIETER

Slanted eyes... they all have slanted eyes?

WILHELM

They are Asian.

DIETER

What is that?

WILHELM

It's a person of this continent. Those persons of Japanese and Chinese heritage.

DIETER

But why are their eyes like that?

WILHELM

Because God made many different people in his image.

Wilhelm pats the curious boy's head.

DIETER

They seem little too, father. Some
of the men... look!

Wilhelm amuses his son and gazes out at the passing sights.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Why, I am as tall as they are, maybe
taller.

Ella's eyes dart this way and that, as she tries to get her
bearings.

The bus moves into narrow streets. The traffic now mostly
pedestrians and rickshaws with the occasional coolie.

Dieter's nose twitches.

DIETER (CONT'D)

And that smell? It's... something
burning.

Wilhelm takes a deep breath. Ella just frowns.

WILHELM

I'm not sure, son. I think it might
be opium.

DIETER

What's that?

WILHELM

It's a drug. It's made from the
juice from a flower. It can make
people feel different.

Dieter turns to his father.

DIETER

Different?

WILHELM

Much in the way a drunk might behave
when he has far too much to drink.
But it's much more dangerous.

Dieter places his index finger knuckle to his lip, much like
a pensive professor.

DIETER

It smells like something died here.

The bus enters HONGKEW GHETTO.

The street is littered with Chinese. Some starving, some begging, some dying, some going about the daily grind.

CHILDREN run after the bus yelling for money or food.

INT. HONGKEW - COMMUNE - LATER

Once again, weighed down with suitcases, the Ludwigs and the rest of their group shuffle in cue as they enter their temporary accommodations.

Rows and rows of bunks. Beds stacked three high. The room looks like an army barracks but not as neat. Families find beds together and leave suitcases on beds and floor to mark territory.

Ella takes control and moves throughout the crowd and finds a set of bunks for all of them.

DIETER

I get the top.

Enthusiastically Dieter climbs to the top and flops down.

Wilhelm takes the cases and places them on the other two empty bunks.

Ella removes her coat and surveys her new surrounds.

ELLA

Right, Wilhelm you and Dieter unpack
and I will go and find the kitchen.

Dieter sits up and swings his legs over the side as his mother heads off.

WILHELM

You heard your mother.

Dieter watches his mother.

She stops to chat to some of the WOMEN.

The women follow Ella as she leads them through the rows of bunks.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Dieter!

DIETER

Yes, Father.

Dieter jumps down off the bed.

MONTAGE - COMMUNE LIFE

- Ella gets the ladies organized in the kitchen area. She directs the other woman as she stirs a large pot of soup.
- Wilhelm moves a table with some other men and places it in an open space outside near where the ladies are cooking.
- Dieter plays with bugs with the other children outside in the alleyway. Somehow they have tied twine around dragon flies and glide them like kites.

INT. COMMUNE - DAY

Dieter, dressed in his Sunday best, sits alone on the bottom bunk, tying his laces.

He hops off the bed and studies his shoes.

He rubs each one in turn along the back of his calves so his long socks give them extra shine.

He studies them once more.

Satisfied he rushes through the maze of bunks.

KITCHEN

Ella stands washing dishes with another WOMAN.

Dieter comes bounding in.

DIETER

Big day, big day... big day, it's
the first day of school!

WOMAN

Full of life your son... such joy.

ELLA

Every day.

Dieter rushes to his mother's side.

DIETER

Where's Father?

ELLA
He had to go to work early.

DIETER
But, he was going to walk me to
school.

ELLA
I'll walk you?

DIETER
No. You can't.

ELLA
Excuse me?

DIETER
Sorry, Mamma. It's just... I can't...
you know... arrive with you... the
others will think I'm a baby.

ELLA
And your Father?

DIETER
That's different.

ELLA
So why do you need him to walk with
you?

DIETER
Uh... it's okay. I'll be fine.

Dieter rushes off.

ELLA
Dieter!

The boy stops and turns to his mother.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Your... backpack.

Ella slips an apple in the backpack, which is made out of a
potato sack, and helps him put it on.

Ella kisses her son on the head. He rushes off.

EXT. HONGKEW - STREETS - DAY

Dieter walks along the street.

He sees the CHINESE BOY, not much older than himself, begging.

CHINESE BOY
No Mommy. No Poppy. No Money.

Dieter looks around for an escape route.

The busy street his only option.

He looks left, right and starts to cross.

A RICKSHAW comes shooting past.

Dieter steps back.

He looks at the street. Too busy.

CHINESE BOY (CONT'D)
No Mommy, No Poppy. No Money.

Dieter cautiously starts walking past the boy.

CHINESE BOY (CONT'D)
Money!

Dieter stops and turns to the boy. He slowly crouches down until they are eye level.

DIETER
Food?

Dieter pulls an apple from his backpack and offers it.

The boy takes the apple.

CHI
I Chi.

DIETER
Gesundheit.

Chi is unsure of Dieters comment. He tries again.

CHI
Me... Chi. My name. Chi.

DIETER
Chi. Oh! You're called Chi.
(pointing to himself)
Dieter. Deee-ter.

CHI mouths the name but no sound.

He sniffs the apple then rubs it like a magic lamp.

DIETER (CONT'D)
I have to go -- school.

Chi looks up briefly then back at his apple.

Dieter walks away. He turns back. Chi is gone.

EXT. KADOORIE SCHOOL - DAY

Chi stands at the gates to the school, waiting.

Children walk, skip and run passed as they exit school.

Dieter is one of the last to emerge, alone.

He wonders down the steps to Chi.

DIETER
Hello Chi...

CHI
This your school?

DIETER
Yes. My first day.

Chi studies the building for a moment, as if envious.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Where is your school?

CHI
Don't have one.

DIETER
Why?

CHI
No home, no family, no school.

A storm brews in the sky, rain is imminent.

Chi looks to the heavens briefly.

DIETER
Where is your family?

CHI

(back to Dieter)

One night the Japanese come and shoot everyone. My Mother shot in the back. My brother run one way, I run other way. Now I look for my brother.

DIETER

How long?

CHI

Many months. But I not give up... I will find Won and then we will find my Father.

DIETER

I can ask my Mother and Father if you can stay with us, until you find your brother.

CHI

No. I must stay on the streets. Only way to find Won.

Dieter ponders for a moment.

DIETER

Food then. You will eat with us?

CHI

Okay.

DIETER

Good.

The heavens open. The boys are soaked within moments as if thrown with buckets of water.

Chi looks to the sky and turns in circles. Dieter joins in. They burst into laughter.

The streets are not much more than dirt in places. Lanes become mud slick quickly.

The boys run off down the street.

MONTAGE - DIETER AND CHI HAVE FUN IN THE RAIN

-- The boys run in and out of muddy lanes kicking puddles.

-- They shuffle across wet gravel chasing each other.

- They splash each other with mud pies and laugh with glee.
- Adults watch the boys, shaking their heads in disgust, and hurry for shelter.
- The boys slip and slide like novice skiers, getting covered in mud.

INT. COMMUNE - DAY

Ella is in the kitchen area as usual. She is trying to capture the drips coming through the leaking roof with buckets and pots. Anything she can find.

Dieter wanders in with Chi. They are soaked to the skin, covered in mud.

Ella is dumbstruck by the sight before her.

ELLA
(authoritative tone)
Dieter! Where have you been?!

DIETER
Mamma, I would like you to meet my
new friend, Chi.
(beat)
Chi... this is my Mother, Mrs. Ludwig.

Chi bows.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Can he stay for dinner?

Ella sighs, how can she stay mad at her boy.

ELLA
Yes. But first we must get you dry...
and clean.

She puts her arms around the two boys and leads them into the main area.

EXT. SHANGHAI - STREET - DAY - 1941

Crowds line the main street of Shanghai. A military parade is on the way. Rows and rows of Japanese SOLDIERS march down.

A NAZI FLAG hangs from one of the buildings.

Dieter and Chi push through the crowd to the front to watch the parade.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Wilhelm digs through drawers. He locates a JEWELRY BOX.

He sifts through the items and selects a BROOCH and slips it into his pocket.

The front door opens.

Wilhelm quickly puts the box back, covers it and shuts the drawer.

LIVING AREA

Ella walks into the apartment laden with bags of shopping.

Wilhelm wanders out of the bedroom.

WILHELM

Hello Flower.

He kisses his wife on the cheek and takes the bags.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

This is a lot of goods. You amaze me how far you can stretch our money.

Wilhelm looks through the contents. Ella shoos him away.

ELLA

Good that you earn a better wage than most.

She wipes her brow, then starts to unpack the bags.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I was thinking about Halle, today. Almost all day -- it's the funniest thing.

Wilhelm grabs one of the apples Ella's just unpacked and begins to eat it.

ELLA (CONT'D)

The streets, the smells. Remember how we used to go to the zoo? And the coffee? Oh, what I wouldn't give for some of that fresh coffee...

WILHELM

I can't believe it's been three years
since we arrived.

ELLA

Three years... and we have had to
move four times!

Ella pauses her activity and looks to her husband.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I do get tired of this place, husband -
so very tired of moving all the time.

Wilhelm studies her face.

WILHELM

What else is on your mind today?

Ella takes some jars to the pantry.

ELLA

I'm... weary, that's all.

WILHELM

Of what?

She pauses, jars in hands, eyeing the shelf before her.

ELLA

I think if we were to remain in
Shanghai much longer, I might go
mad.

She turns to him.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Satisfied?

Wilhelm sits down on the long bench, puts his feet up, hands
behind his head.

WILHELM

Insanity? This is new.

Ella places the jars on the shelf.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Hmmm... I think you, my dear Ella,
need to tell me more about this...
insanity of yours.

Ella wanders back.

ELLA

It's not funny, Wilhelm, not to me.

Wilhelm leaves the bench and takes his wife in his arms. Her face is calm, resolute, still beautiful. He pulls her close.

WILHELM

These demons of yours... I may be able to help you with that struggle. I remember all too well. I too, can listen.

Ella gently pulls away and pats his broad chest.

ELLA

I will be alright.

She returns to the shopping bags.

ELLA (CONT'D)

And with every pound, every slap, and every press of my dough, I will chase my craziness away.

Wilhelm rests his arm on her shoulder and squeezes gently.

Dieter and Chi rush in and home in on the bags of groceries.

WILHELM

Whoa, boys?

DIETER

Hello father -- we just wanted some apples.

Ella digs around, finds two and hands them to Dieter.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Yummy.

Dieter throws one to Chi.

ELLA

Now go and play, I have a lot to do for tonight.

Dieter reaches up and kisses his mother. Chi bows.

The boys dash out, passing IVAN, a tower of a man in his twenties.

DIETER
Hello, Giant. Good-bye, Giant.

Ivan nearly spins in a full circle.

WILHELM
Ivan... come in, come in. How are you?

IVAN
Good. Thank you.

ELLA
(to Wilhelm)
Ivan's helping me prepare the dinner for tonight.

WILHELM
Excellent. You are such a maestro in the kitchen, a Russian maestro.

The three laugh a little.

Wilhelm gets ready to leave.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
I would love to stay and watch you cook. It's like watching two musicians. But, to work I must go.

Wilhelm kisses his wife on the cheek and promptly leaves.

Ella starts to sort out ingredients.

ELLA
Suzette and Amie, the sisters from next door, will be coming tonight.

IVAN
Good.

ELLA
Yes, it is good.

IVAN
Then there is much to do for such a large group.

Ivan rolls up his sleeves.

ELLA

Yes. And you must make your pudding.
Amie loves it.

Ella smiles to herself.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Wilhelm huddles in the shadows with a short, yet plump JAPANESE MAN, dressed in a suit that is far too small for his size. They study something in the palm of Wilhelm's hand.

JAPANESE MAN

You tell me one dolla! One! And
now you say two?

WILHELM

It's worth more.

JAPANESE MAN

You cheat! That right, that right...
I call you cheat!

WILHELM

It's one of the finest you'll see.
And you should be happy I don't charge
you three. Now, two... or nothing.

The man puffs on his cigarette. Years of smoking have turned his teeth a deep yellow.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Well?

JAPANESE MAN

Okay, Okay... two dolla!

The man pulls TWO DOLLARS from his pocket.

WILHELM

A fine purchase, sir.

Wilhelm gently closes the handkerchief over the BROOCH.

The man snatches his purchase as Wilhelm takes the money.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Empty plates clutter the table and a few makeshift candles add ambiance to the festivities. Wilhelm, Dieter, Chi, and AMIE, one of the sisters, sit on long benches. Ivan is busy in the kitchen area. .

ELLA

Amie, why not give Ivan a hand with
dessert?

Ella glances at Wilhelm as Amie heads for the kitchen.

As Dieter and Chi thumb wrestle, Ella is clears away dishes
with the help of SUZETTE, the older of the two sisters.

Wilhelm winks knowingly.

Amie brings dessert out; a Russian pudding of creamy vanilla,
raisins and sugar glaze on top.

Ivan follows with a bottle of Cognac.

WILHELM

Holding out on us, Ivan?

Ivan is puzzled by Wilhelm's question.

ELLA

He means surprise, Ivan. This is a
nice surprise.

Ivan tips his head.

He spoons dessert for everyone with Amie's assistance, and
pours the spirit.

WILHELM

I have heard it's been terrible in
Germany. Worse than when we left.

SUZETTE

There are so many more refugees here
now than when we arrived.

Amie nods in agreement with her sister.

ELLA

Poor too, poorer than us... if that
is even possible.

WILHELM

At least we got to leave with
something. These souls have nothing
and the missions are full again.

IVAN

I too... had God with me.

AMIE

What happened to you, Ivan?

IVAN

I worked in Poland, a long time. I worked with cooks there, and my family... all cooks. But we were all Jews, too. We go... or they kill us. First, we hide.

DIETER

I would have liked to see you hide!

The group laughs in agreement.

ELLA

At least you are here. With us.

WILHELM

Family. We are all family now.

Ivan raises his glass.

IVAN

Yes. Family.

SUZETTE

Have you heard anything from your friend Hannah?

ELLA

No. And I am a little worried. She had been writing regularly, but this year, nothing.

Wilhelm looks to his wife and rest a reassuring hand on her arm.

WILHELM

Maybe she is just too busy to write.

The room grows silent.

Dieter looks to his parent's faces of sadness.

DIETER

Um... can Chi and me be excused?

Ella a little startled by her son's sudden interjection.

ELLA

Yes. Yes, of course. Just take
your plates to the kitchen.

Dieter and Chi do as they are told.

WILHELM

Enough of this sadness. How about a
song, Ella?

ELLA

Yes. A song.

IVAN

I don't know German.

AMIE

It's okay, I will teach you.

She gently takes his hand.

Dieter and Chi slip out as the adults burst into song. Ivan
tries to keep up. Amie helps with the words.

EXT. ROOF TOP - NIGHT

Chi and Dieter sit on the roof. There are SHOTS far in the
distance.

DIETER

I don't want to hear about Frederick.

CHI

Who?

DIETER

Friend. From home. Good friend.

CHI

Like me and you.

DIETER

Like me and you.

The boys look out over the Ghetto. More SHOTS.

DIETER (CONT'D)

It's coming again.

CHI

Yes. Maybe tonight I find him.

Chi looks to the sky.

CHI (CONT'D)
See those stars, how bright?

Dieter glances to the heavens.

CHI (CONT'D)
Tonight, I could find him, I just
know it.

DIETER
You think so?

CHI
When there are many, like tonight,
and it's clear, I can see like a
bird. So I look. And I look.

Chi puts his hands to his forehead and turns left and right
as if looking through binoculars.

CHI (CONT'D)
And maybe tonight, I find him
hiding... somewhere.

DIETER
And I will help you?

CHI
No, it's too hard.

DIETER
But you should let me at least walk...
a little ways with you.

Chi shakes his head.

CHI
Remember the church bell you heard,
and how you thought that I should go
to church and pray.

DIETER
But you never did.

CHI
When you went to bed, I go inside
the church. I kneeled down and I
prayed to the man hanging on the
cross.

DIETER
(loud enthusiasm)
You prayed to Jesus?

CHI
Shhhh.
(looking around)
My people do not understand the
killing of this man. They do not
understand.

Dieter looks around, then back to Chi.

CHI (CONT'D)
I don't understand. But I prayed.
I asked him to show me where Won is.
And tonight, you see these stars?

Dieter follows Chi gestures.

CHI (CONT'D)
And those over there? I think tonight
I find him.

More GUNSHOTS echo in the distance.

Chi stands up, brushes the seat of his pants.

CHI (CONT'D)
I see you tomorrow.

Dieter remains seated.

DIETER
God speed.

Chi looks to his friend uncertain of the statement.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Good luck.

Chi nods then disappears into the darkness leaving Dieter
staring out over the roof tops of Hongkew. More GUNSHOTS.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The apartment is dark. The Ludwigs all asleep.

A sharp series of GUNSHOTS fire off very close by.

Dieter sits up in bed.

DIETER
 Father...?

WILHELM
 (whisper)
 Quiet.

ELLA
 Wilhelm?

WILHELM
 Please. Ella, be still.

Dieter moves from his bed to be closer to his parents.

Wilhelm gets up and peers out the open window.

Dieter hurries behind him.

SHOTS hard and fast followed by the sounds of BOOTS as they shuffle on stone.

ELLA
 Wilhelm?

WILHELM
 I'm looking, Flower. I'm looking.

The sounds of SOLDIERS loading, firing, and calling orders echo in the alleyways.

ELLA
 (slight panic)
 They are here in the rear alleys,
 Wilhelm.

DIETER
 What is it? Father?

Wilhelm pulls his son close.

Dieter sneaks a peek.

Japanese SOLDIERS run down the alley. Rapid SHOTS.

The sound of BOOTS again. The CRUNCH of leather heels against patches of gravel.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The MORGUE WAGON moves slowly down the street. The wheels make a high-pitch SQUEAL, like a donkey's cry, as they turn

IVAN
Okay. I go now. Off to work.

ELLA
Yes... I'll read this later.

Ella shoves the envelope in her apron pocket.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Yes. Have a good day.

IVAN
Thank you.

As he's leaving.

IVAN (CONT'D)
Eat all you breakfast, and one day
you be a giant like me.

Dieter starts eating with more gusto, as Ivan his leave.

ELLA
Dieter. I want you to take the other
way to school today. Cut through to
the back alley and across.

DIETER
Why?

Ella stops stacking the dishes and turns to her son.

ELLA
Just do as I ask, please.

DIETER
Yes, Mother.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

Dieter enters the alley, munching on his apple. He heads
left as told then stops. He looks to the opposite direction.

He pauses for a moment then continues on his way.

He stops again. Thinks. Heads right. The forbidden way.

ELLA

At the window doing the dishes looks out and sees Dieter.

ELLA

Dieter!

He does not respond.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Dieter. The other way!

Dieter continues, ignoring or not hearing his mother.

ALLEY

High-pitched SQUEALS. The MORGUE CART.

Dieter stops at the end of the alley.

The MORGUE CART slowly passes.

The apple slips from his hand.

ELLA

Sees her son fall to the ground.

She drops the cup and rushes from the window.

ALLEY

Dieter lays still. No movement.

The apple rolls away.

Ella rushes to her unconscious boy and frantically checks for wounds of any kind. Nothing.

She looks around, and sees...

MORGUE CART

A mountain of bodies. Chi's body lying along one of the sides.

ALLEY

She rocks Dieter back in and forth. He does not stir.

APPLE

A grubby HAND appears from behind some rubbish and grabs the fruit.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Dieter is lying in bed. Ella sits next to him stroking his forehead. He sleeps.

KITCHEN

The area is mid clean. Some dishes washed others lie in the sink. Remnants of breakfast still clutter the table.

Ella pulls the letter from her apron as she moves to the kitchen area.

She takes a place on the bench and reads.

This is not good news. Hand to her mouth a tear rolls from her cheek.

She stuffs the letter into her apron and goes back to the dishes in the sink.

Wash and stack. Wash and stack.

Stop. No more. Ella weeps.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is no where near as tidy as usual. The kitchen is still mid cleaning.

Wilhelm strolls in.

Ella sits looking out at nothing.

WILHELM

Ella, you sit like stone.

She doesn't respond.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

I have something to tell you.

Still no response. He looks around at the messy kitchen.

Wilhelm crouches down next to her.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Flower, what is it?

She pulls the letter from her apron and stares at it.

Wilhelm gently tugs it from her grasp.

He begins to read as walks to the window.

He clenches his fist and slams it on the windowsill.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

I did not... Hannah and Frederick!
I did not in any way see this coming.

ELLA

How could any of us possibly know?

He stuffs the letter into his side vest pocket, and turns to face her.

WILHELM

Seems it's been a day of letters.

He hands her another letter.

She takes it yet her eyes stay focused on her husband.

ELLA

I don't want to read any more letters
today. Tell me what it says.

WILHELM

I will tell you... I have it
memorized.

Wilhelm paces.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

It says, I am talented, did you know
that Ella! Yes, they think so. And
they mention that maybe... yes
maybe... management would recommend
me for employment when a more suitable
environment would permit such.

Ella finally opens the letter and studies it.

ELLA

(almost a whisper)
It's... very fine stationery.

WILHELM

The best they could do was hand me
money to hold us over during the
interim.

(laughing)

The... interim!

ELLA

Please be quiet. Dieter is sleeping.

Wilhelm looks to the bedroom.

WILHELM

Sleeping? But it's early. Why is he sleeping?

Ella takes a deep breath to gather her thoughts.

ELLA

Wilhelm, it's...

WILHELM

What? What is it?

ELLA

The wagon came to do its rounds and...

WILHELM

Ella...?

ELLA

Chi's dead, Wilhelm.

WILHELM

That can't be, he was just here...

ELLA

Our son saw his friend's body -- his corpse dangled off the wagon's edge like a rag doll.

WILHELM

Are you sure? I mean... is he sure... it was Chi?

ELLA

He saw him. And I saw him... it was Chi.

WILHELM

I have to talk to him... I must...

ELLA

I know... but wait. Please. He's asleep. Just leave him... for now, please.

WILHELM

But...

ELLA

He's alright, at least, I think he
will be -- but it shook him terribly.

Wilhelm paces.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I hate this place because he can't
be a young man, not truly.

He comes to his wife and crouches in front of her.

ELLA (CONT'D)

A change will have to come, Wilhelm.
It must.

Wilhelm gently rest his hands on his wife's knees.

WILHELM

I have one idea for us. I had been
thinking on this for some time. And
that is... America. I want to get
us there.

Outside the sounds of men MARCHING and GUNFIRE echo.

Ella points to the window.

ELLA

You hear that my husband? One of
these days, it could be one of us.
I am sick of this.

She touches her temples. Then hugs her body.

ELLA (CONT'D)

It's in my hair, under my nails.
And I pray. My love... I pray hard
for all of us.

Wilhelm opens her arms, unlocking one wrist at a time, the
way one might remove fine ribbon from a beautiful gift box.

He pulls her up and close.

Gently he begins to rock her back and forth, dancing to a
silent melody. Ella surrenders.

They move around the apartment.

WILHELM

I will get us to America. I have a plan.

Wilhelm twirls his wife, then back into his arms.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

I can sell your jewelry.

He sways her back and forth.

ELLA

The Japanese hate that kind of thing.

WILHELM

Ella, I know but...

ELLA

They can spear infants in half but they can't allow us selling a few things.

WILHELM

But I can do it, Ella... and I would be careful.

He kisses her neck. She falls for his charm.

ELLA

If you do, you must be cautious. Discreet.

WILHELM

I understand.

He continues dancing. Leading them in a brief circle.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

America... America.

He kisses her again on the neck.

ELLA

Do you think... we could?

WILHELM

We will. Trust me... I will... think of a way.

They continue to dance. He turns and twirls her and Ella starts to enjoy herself. Wilhelm dips his wife with ease.

Hard POUNDING on the door.

ELLA
Shanghai is a jealous harlot.

Wilhelm pulls his wife up.

WILHELM
Ella, do not let this place ever be
a siren in the room.

Ella straightens her apron, as Wilhelm palms back his hair
and goes to the door.

Opening the door he is presented with a Japanese official --
COLONEL JOJI. Skin saddle brown, frame slight, shorter than
even Ella.

Wilhelm is instantly on guard.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
Um... evening.

JOJI
May I come in?

Joji does not wait for a response and enters the house.

WILHELM
Yes... of course...

His uniform, a drab khaki, hangs on him like an oversized
suit on a teenager. His hip bares a long SWORD that mildly
SCRAPES the floor as he walks.

JOJI
I am Colonel Joji. You may call me
Colonel.

As Joji removes his cap, Ella steps closer and bows.

ELLA
We are the Ludwigs, Colonel.

JOJI
Yes. I know.

Joji studies his surroundings.

WILHELM
Please, take a seat.

Wilhelm offers the only chair in the room.

Joji removes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes the seat before taking to it.

Wilhelm looks to his wife helplessly.

ELLA

May I get you some tea, Colonel?

JOJI

That would be welcome.

Joji adjusts his sword to a more comfortable position.

WILHELM

Tell me, sir. What can we do for you?

JOJI

Colonel.

WILHELM

Yes, of course. Your English is good, Colonel.

JOJI

As is yours. You're not American spies, are you?

Ella knocks one of the tea cups.

ELLA

Heavens no!

WILHELM

We have been taught... by our boy.

JOJI

Good to have a boy. Fine to have a son to pass on your name.

Ella brings the tea.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Ella bows slightly, then takes a seat on the bench.

WILHELM

So, Colonel. What can we do for you?

Joji takes a sip of his tea, before continuing.

JOJI

Your family shares this place with two other women and a Russian. I would like to take these girls. Date them. Maybe marry one of them.

Another sip of tea.

WILHELM

Pardon me, Colonel --

Joji cuts him off.

JOJI

I find them lovely. I have not been here too long, but they are among the nicest I have seen.

Wilhelm and Ella just look at each other. Ella shakes her head slightly.

WILHELM

Well, we would like to help you but we are only acquainted. We couldn't possibly, that is to say... I wouldn't know what to... tell them.

The Colonel clears his throat.

JOJI

You can tell them anything, but get them.

WILHELM

But Colonel. You don't understand...

JOJI

(interrupting)

No, Mr. Ludwig, you don't understand.

Ella's eyes widen as he speaks.

JOJI (CONT'D)

This will keep you from going to jail for selling your personal belongings and giving information to the underground.

Unable to contain herself, Ella interjects.

ELLA
Wilhelm! What is the Colonel taking
about?

WILHELM
I will explain later...

JOJI
I will do that for you.

Another sip of tea, holding the suspense.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Your husband, Madame, has a good
deal of business with pawn dealers.
Local criminals.
(looks to Wilhelm)
A prosperous enterprise one could
call it...
(looking around)
How else could you end up here? And
on a cinema technician's salary?
(back to Wilhelm)
Yes. You don't have that job anymore.

Ella scolds her husband with hers eyes. Wilhelm turns and
glares at the Colonel.

WILHELM
Is there anything else, Colonel?

JOJI
Careful, Mr. Ludwig. We want to
help each other, do we not? I can
turn a blind eye if it suits me.

WILHELM
I... will see what I can do.

JOJI
Let me know. Sooner than later of
course.

Dieter wanders in from the bedroom, half asleep, shuffling
his feet.

Ella goes to her boy.

WILHELM
This is my son, Dieter. Colonel.

As Ella gets Dieter some water, the Colonel stares at the boy unnaturally, transfixed.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Colonel?

The Colonel puts down his tea and stands.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

Joji straightens his uniform, positions his sword, and puts his cap on securely.

He heads for the door, then briefly stops and turns.

Ella is gently leads Dieter back to the bedroom.

JOJI

Oh, and Mrs. Ludwig, I shall be here for the dinner tomorrow. I will bring flowers.

Looking around the apartment.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Yes, I think they will do well here. Too dark. I think that should please you, Mrs. Ludwig.

ELLA

Good night, Colonel.

Ella and Dieter continue to the bedroom.

The Colonel turns to Wilhelm.

JOJI

Come to the station on Ward Road. And bring the girls.

WILHELM

I will do what I can.

JOJI

Yes. You will.

WILHELM

Good night, Colonel.

Joji exits with authority.

BEDROOM

Ella tucks Dieter back into bed.

DIETER
Who is that?

ELLA
Just a Colonel.

DIETER
A Japanese Colonel.

ELLA
Yes.

Dieter's eyes fill with water.

DIETER
Who kills Chinese people. Children,
babies, mothers. Chi.

Dieter starts to sob. Ella holds him close.

ELLA
Oh, son. I am so sorry about Chi.

Ella gently rocks her son as he weeps.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You should not see such things, not
so young, not ever!

DIETER
I think when I meet God, I will ask
him why!

Ella pushes back the tears welling in her eyes.

KITCHEN

Wilhelm sits on a bench, staring at the bedroom.

Ella gently shuts the door as she walks through.

Without looking at her husband, she goes to the sink and
begins to wash-up the dishes of the day.

WILHELM
I think this may be slow going for
me, Flower. For both of us.

Ella does not respond. Continues with her chore.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

If I had got caught by someone other than this Colonel, I would be imprisoned for sure.

Ella continues her chores. Silent.

Wilhelm leaves the bench to be closer to her.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

They would take me and lock me up. Just as they did in Germany.

Ella does not turn to him.

ELLA

But in Germany you had done nothing wrong!

WILHELM

Flower, listen. He wants something from me, and this will help us, don't you see that?

Ella cannot contain her anger anymore, she turns to face her husband.

ELLA

I hear you tell me one thing, when you are doing another. So then, how free are we?

Wilhelm stands straight and glares at his wife.

WILHELM

My logic is not for examination, my wife. Not by you. Not by anyone.

Ella just raises her eyebrows, not flinching at his bold words. Wilhelm yields and gently places a hand on each of Ella's arms.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Ella, it is not as crafty as it all seems. People need things... information! Trinkets... and I help them get what they want. For a price.

Ella doesn't back away from her husband's touch, but remains frozen.

ELLA

The actor is on stage. This secret life of yours -- it is dangerous. Don't you realize that you have succeeded in bringing the enemy right to our door?

WILHELM

You know me, Ella. This was meant as something only temporary... but it's become profitable. Give me time, I can find out about this Joji, and then we'll have --

ELLA

Nothing. We have nothing. We may have been better off staying where we were!

WILHELM

If we had stayed, Ella, we'd be right along side Hannah and Frederick.

Wilhelm pulls her in close. Ella does not resist.

BEDROOM DOORWAY

Through the crack in the door, Dieter watches his parents.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is haze of smoke. Wilhelm sits on a bench as the Colonel sits on the chair. Ella and Dieter are nowhere to be seen. Joji sips on a glass of amber delight, which has already taken its effect. Wilhelm drinks coffee.

JOJI

Now to answer your previous question, Wilhelm, my thoughts about Jesus are like this; the story of Christ, up to the crucifixion -- is the story of a soldier. But rising from the dead? That is a work of fiction.

WILHELM

What makes you think this?

JOJI

The man probably did exist but once he died the body had been stolen.

WILHELM

That still doesn't explain the why of it. And what of Thomas, the apostle who touched the wounds of Christ's hands?

Joji shrugs as he takes another sip.

JOJI

Why think on the Son of God, when you have one of the finest boys I have seen in the ghetto, right here?

WILHELM

Dieter is a good boy. Thank you.

Wilhelm looks subtly at his watch.

JOJI

Yes, a fine boy.

The Colonel seems to drift off as he stares towards the bedroom door.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Think it is time I took my leave of you. Inspection tomorrow.

Wilhelm quietly sighs in relief.

The Colonel downs the remainder of his drink before standing.

He wobbles a little to one side.

Wilhelm collects the Colonel's sword and cap.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Next time you can explain to me why Jews pray on Saturday, and Christians on Sunday.

The Colonel takes his belongings from Wilhelm.

WILHELM

Yes. That will be a good discussion.

Joji staggers to the door as he attempts to holster his sword.

He gives up and decides to hold it.

JOJI

Well good night.

WILHELM
Good night, Colonel.

The Colonel leaves.

Wilhelm shuts the door and as he turns he sees his wife standing in the bedroom doorway. Arms folded.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
Soon he will leave us alone. Just
give me more time.

Ella does not respond. She turns on her heels back into the bedroom.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY (1942)

Wilhelm and Joji sit at the table.

JOJI
And she came to me quite willingly.
That was the first time I was with a
woman.

Ella serves a dessert of sweet rolls and coffee.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Can you imagine my father's surprise
when he learned his own mistress
seduced me? I must have been no
more than your son's age... perhaps
I was twelve, I don't remember.

WILHELM
What did he say to you?

Ella looks disapprovingly at her husband.

JOJI
He beat me. She told him before I
could say anything. They had been
arguing, I think. I still have a
scar.

The Colonel rolls up his sleeve.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Here. Cut me with his own blade. I
laughed at him.

WILHELM
What do you want from life, Colonel?

Joji leans back and shakes his head.

JOJI
A bit more than I have.

For a moment he looks sincere.

DIETER (O.S.)
Stop!

Wilhelm looks to Ella. She puts the plates down and heads for the door.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Dieter stands one side of the alley, while JONATHAN, a boy of similar age and European descent, is at the other end. He has a ROCK in his hand.

DIETER
Don't!

Jonathan throws it hard.

Dieter arches his back. It just misses.

Jonathan looks for another as Dieter retaliates.

The ROCK catches Jonathan on the meaty part of his calf - he winces.

Jonathan throws two, one after the other.

Dieter is caught on the arm.

Dieter grabs a chunk of a ROCK lying in the curb. He ducks Jonathan's firing. Then throws with all his might.

A ROCK hits Jonathan on the right temple. He falls.

Ella rushes out followed by Wilhelm.

Dieter just stands there panting.

ELLA
Dieter... what have you done?

She rushes to Jonathan.

DIETER
He started it.

Wilhelm goes to help his wife.

Ella strokes Jonathan's head.

ELLA

We better get him inside.

Wilhelm picks up the boy and heads towards the entrance as the Colonel stands just outside the doorway, puffing on his cigarette.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Dieter. Inside now!

Joji flicks his cigarette into the alley, and smiles to himself as he enters the doorway.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wilhelm places Jonathan on the bed.

Ella comes in with a damp cloth and takes over for Wilhelm.

She wipes the wound as Jonathan starts to come around.

Dieter watches from the doorway.

Wilhelm leads him away.

LIVING AREA

The Colonel stands in the center of the room as if on parade.

WILHELM

Go and sit down.

JOJI

Dieter. Come here.

WILHELM

We will take care of this, Colonel.

(to Dieter)

Go and sit down, son.

JOJI

I don't think so. Dieter, come here.

Dieter goes to the Colonel.

JOJI (CONT'D)

You are going to have to be arrested.

Ella is coming out of the bedroom.

ELLA

What?

WILHELM

I am sure you can't mean that.

Dieter's head drops.

JOJI

Oh, but I do. You see this is quite the problem we have here. Your boy is dangerous. A problem for the street.

Joji tilts Dieter head up so there eyes meet.

JOJI (CONT'D)

And we can't have trouble makers.

Ella comes rushing to her son's side.

ELLA

You can't.

She gently holds Dieter, and takes a step back looking at her husband helplessly.

WILHELM

Please. Colonel. It was just boys playing and it got out of hand.

Joji looks at each member of the family and settles his gaze on Dieter.

JOJI

You are sorry for what you have done?

DIETER

Yes. I didn't mean it.

JOJI

Good. Then tomorrow morning you will come with your parents to the station and explain your actions. I will personally attest to your decency.

Joji looks to Ella and Wilhelm.

JOJI (CONT'D)

This is the best I can do.

WILHELM

We will be there tomorrow, without fail.

With that the Colonel places his hat firmly on his head and leaves.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Dieter wears his Sunday best. Ella brushes his hair.

WILHELM

We don't want to give the impression that we are in any way of privilege -- not even heritage, Ella.

ELLA

His appearance must be completely respectable. This is not a play, my husband.

Ella straightens Dieter's collar.

DIETER

Can you put some of your powder here, Mommy, and hide this mark. I don't want them to think I was fighting because I wanted to.

Ella goes to get her powder.

WILHELM

I will do the talking once we are there. You just listen.

DIETER

I don't think that's a good idea, Father.

Ella returns and pats powder on the mark on Dieter's neck.

WILHELM

What? I am your Father?

DIETER

I don't want them to think... I am a baby. I can explain what happened better anyway, because I was there.

ELLA

Let's just see what happens.

Ella checks the bruise. It's almost hidden.

ELLA (CONT'D)

There. Better?

Dieter smiles - reassured.

INT. HONGKEW - STATION - DAY

The Ludwigs are lead through the station into an office, by a young JAPANESE SOLDIER.

A middle age JAPANESE OFFICER sits behind a large desk. To his left a young studious looking SOLDIER stands, and to the right Colonel Joji sits, occupying the only other chair in the room.

The Japanese Soldier indicates for them to stand in front of the desk.

The Soldier bows to the Officer and Joji, and takes his position in front of the door.

Unsure of what to do, the Ludwigs bow to the Officer before them.

The Officer looks to a form on his desk.

OFFICER

(in Japanese)

Dieter Ludwig step forward.

The Soldier to his left translates.

SOLDIER

Dieter Ludwig step forward.

Dieter does as he is told.

OFFICER

(in Japanese)

You are charged with attacking a boy. You put a hole in his head. What do you have to say about the matter.

The Soldier translates.

SOLDIER

You are charged with attacking a boy. You put a hole in his head. What do you have to say about the matter.

Dieter stands straight, hands by his side.

DIETER

I only defended myself. I am truly sorry I hurt Jonathan. He is my friend. It was an accident.

The Soldier translates to the Officer.

SOLDIER

(in Japanese)

The boy says he was defending himself and that he is truly sorry for hurting his friend. It was an accident.

Joji leans into the Officer and speaks to him quietly, almost a whisper. The Officer nods his understanding.

Joji finishes. The Officer looks at Dieter.

OFFICER

(in Japanese)

Your parents are criminals here.

Wilhelm and Ella are transfixed on the man behind the desk. On every word. Trying to understand.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

(in Japanese)

They traffic in black market goods. We know this and we have been watching them. The Colonel has made a case against all three of you.

(beat)

You, Dieter Ludwig, are to be punished for your scene in the street and your violent attack on the boy.

(beat)

Your parents will be arrested, put in prison, and you will leave today under the care of the Colonel.

The Soldier translates.

SOLDIER

Your parents traffic in black market goods. We know this and we have been watching them. The Colonel has made a case against all three of you. Dieter Ludwig, you are to be punished for your scene in the street and your violent attack on the boy. Your parents will be arrested, put in prison, and you will leave today under the care of the Colonel.

There is a moment of confusion as the words sink. Wilhelm reacts first and rushes for Joji.

WILHELM

My son stays with me!

He is blocked by the Soldier behind him.

Ella explodes.

ELLA

(in German)

You are the lowest of that which walks upon this earth. Drunkards and fools -- seduced by power and alcohol. You hear me.

She grabs Dieter.

ELLA (CONT'D)

(in German)

You will be punished because there is a God and He is watching!

Just then two more SOLDIERS rush into the room.

OFFICER

(in Japanese)

Take them away!

He waves his hand.

Two soldiers grab Wilhelm and push him towards the door.

Another soldier peels Ella off her son.

ELLA

(in German)

Two boys on the street.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

Nothing more!

(in English)

You are all cowards of the lowest order.

Ella looks to Dieter, he stands frozen as they're dragged away.

Joji comes to the boy's side and places a firm hand on his shoulder.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - DAY

The compound is completely encircled with steely mesh and barbed wire atop an eight-foot high fence line.

A CAR, housing Colonel Joji and Dieter, drives through the gates.

Rows of custom built quarters form a square around a central courtyard.

SOLDIERS march, practice and participate in the daily sight and sounds of army life.

INT. COLONEL'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The room is of typical minimalist Japanese decor and surroundings.

Dieter stands in the middle of the room.

The Colonel paces up and down and around Dieter as he lays down the law. His long SWORD, that hangs from his hip, mildly SCRAPES the floor as he walks.

JOJI

You will clean my uniform, boots and sword to perfection.

(beat)

You will clean my quarters daily. Any mess and you will be punished.

(beat)

You are not allowed outside this compound at night -- but during the day you may walk around when you are running errands for me. At no other time.

Dieter does not flinch or move. He barely breathes.

Joji stops in front of him.

JOJI (CONT'D)
Do you understand?

DIETER
Yes.

JOJI
Yes, Colonel!

DIETER
Yes, Colonel.

JOJI
Good.

DIETER
What about my parents?

Joji strikes the boy in the head.

Dieter stumbles but remains standing.

JOJI
You will not speak of your parents.

Dieter straightens himself again.

JOJI (CONT'D)
But I will tell you this. Once you
have served your punishment, you
will be returned to your parents.
Understand?

DIETER
Yes, Colonel.

JOJI
And until then, you will not ask or
speak of them again.

DIETER
Yes, Colonel.

JOJI
Good.

Dieter remains standing as if to attention.

EXT. INTERMENT CAMP - DAY

Wilhelm and Ella are marched across a sandy court yard towards a row of wooden makeshift HUTS.

Other inmates, MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN of European appearance, look on in wonder.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - DAY

Soldiers on parade. They march and salute the Colonel.

MONTAGE - DIETER'S NEW LIFE

-- Dieter sits and polishes a pair of boots.

-- Dieter serves the Colonel food.

-- Joji watches Dieter sleep.

-- Dieter cleans the quarters.

-- Dieter cleans and scrapes windows.

-- Joji watches Dieter as he sleeps.

-- Dieter cleans the sword. Joji watches from a chair with A glass of amber nectar in hand.

-- Joji sits next to Dieter as he sleeps. He moves the light sheet from the boy's legs. He touches Dieter's thigh.

-- Dieter paints the windows. Soldiers glare at the by as as they pass.

INT. INTERNMENT CAMP - HUT - DAY

Ella sits, arms crossed, in the corner of a makeshift wooden hut, while her husband paces. They look a little worse for wear. Clothes not as clean, somewhat skinnier. Wilhelm is unshaven and Ella's hair is a mess.

WILHELM

They aren't taking me at my word.

ELLA

Why would they.

WILHELM

They always did.

ELLA
You've got nothing to bargain with
now.

Wilhelm stops pacing and looks to his wife for support - but that support is long gone.

WILHELM
I can...

ELLA
We have nothing!

He looks away -- her contemptuous stare is too much to bare.

WILHELM
I can fix things. I can fix engines.
Maybe that will work...

Ella stands and slowly makes her way to the window, not once looking at her husband.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
Ella? Ella? I will think of
something.

Ella watches two Japanese soldiers smoking nearby.

ELLA
Can you get some of those?

Wilhelm comes to her side and looks out the window.

WILHELM
What?

ELLA
You are the actor... think of
something.

WILHELM
But what?

ELLA
Fix their machines. Fix their damned
machines. Get them to talk. Just
be sure to get me some cigarettes.

Wilhelm looks at her as if they'd never met, but Ella remains focused on the soldiers.

WILHELM

When did you start to smoke?

ELLA

I can't believe it's taken me this long to start.

Ella reaches into her pocket and pulls out a photo of Dieter.

She studies it a moment as she strokes the face of the picture with her thumb.

She looks to her husband.

ELLA (CONT'D)

See what you can do.

WILHELM

Dieter is smart - he will be alright.

Ella stares at the photo once more before returning it to her pocket.

INT. COLONEL QUARTERS - NIGHT (1943)

Dieter is curled up asleep on the floor off to one side.

The Colonel stumbles into his quarters. Drunk.

He staggers over to Dieter and kicks him in the back.

JOJI

Wake up. Wake up boy!

Dieter turns over to see the Colonel leaning over him.

Joji shoves his sword at the boy.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Clean this.

Dieter sits up and takes the sword.

DIETER

Now?

Joji kicks the boy again. Dieter flinches.

JOJI

Don't question me. My sword needs to be cleaned.

DIETER

Yes, Colonel.

Dieter goes to collect the items he will need.

Joji stumbles over to a RADIOGRAM.

He starts the player. Big band music BLARES out.

JOJI

The only good thing about America is
their music.

He drunkenly mimics the playing of a trumpet.

Dieter removes the sword from it's sheath.

Joji pours himself a drink.

Dieter admires the long sharp blade edge... he looks up at
the staggering Colonel.

Joji studies the boy's glare noting his intent. He
confidently flashes a grin.

JOJI (CONT'D)

You don't have the blood of a warrior,
boy.

Dieter focus back on his duties, grabs a cloth and starts to
clean the weapon.

Joji downs his drink a tosses the cup aside.

Joji circles Dieter, watching as he polishes.

He strokes the boys golden hair.

Dieter rubs the cloth across the steel.

Joji crouches down next to him.

Dieter stays focused on his task.

Joji places his hand on the back of the boys head. Massaging.
He moves his hand down the boys back to his bottom and pats
it, then reaches round for the groin area.

Dieter shuffles back, dropping the sword.

The Colonel pulls Dieter towards him. His glass drops.

Dieter struggles loose and hurriedly backs away as Joji, now on all fours, reaches out groping air. Dieter continues to inch back.

Joji stands, shuffles and trips falling on top of Dieter.

Dieter squirms and pushes. Using the full force of his arms and legs, he manages to push the Colonel off.

He races behind a chair.

Joji stands. Rage increasing by the second. He turns to Dieter.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Come here!

The Colonel rubs his groin.

JOJI (CONT'D)

(in Japanese)

Enough torment. It's time you pleased me!

A NOISE outside.

Dieter eyes the window, as does the Colonel.

The boy seizes the moment. Picks the chair up and throws it at Joji.

The Colonels reflexes are sharp. He grabs Dieter's left leg as he makes a break for it.

They fall to the floor. Dieter punches with fists.

The Colonel pins him down, his knees on the boy's arm, then feebly unbuttons his shirt.

Dieter squirms under the man, and manages to slide between his legs and come up behind him.

Dieter grabs the sword. The sword is heavy and he needs two hands to hold it straight out in front of him. He backs against the wall.

The Colonel is once again up on his feet facing Dieter.

Dieter looks to the door, to the window, unsure of his escape.

Joji comes towards him.

Dieter waves the weapon awkwardly out in front of him.

The Colonel snickers.

JOJI (CONT'D)

Think you are a man, huh?

DIETER

Stay back.

The Colonel bobs at the point of the blade. He sees an opening and lunges, grabbing Dieter's waist.

Dieter raises his arms high. The sword's straight up in the air. He manages to break free and heads for the door.

Joji pulls the mat as Dieter runs.

Dieter loses his footing and falls.

Joji charges towards him.

As Dieter turns onto his back the sword comes up.

Joji slides through the blade as it pierces his paunch.

Dieter tightens his grip on the handle.

Joji clutches at the boy, disbelief on his face. GASPING.

He falls to the floor. DEAD.

Dieter lets go of the handle and scurries back to the wall, PANTING, eyes fixated on the blood soaked body.

No time to waste.

EXT. COLONEL QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Dieter climbs out the window and drops down.

He checks his surroundings and moves along the outside of the wall. Staying low.

He peers around the side. All clear. He rushes to the next building.

He can see the yard clearly. There is one GUARD on duty inside the guard booth and one GUARD at the front gate, smoking a cigarette.

Dieter crawls along the side of each unit.

He makes it to the fence, squirms underneath, then sneaks off to a batch of wood along the roadside.

He walks down the road, not looking back.

SNAP. Dieter turns.

Two SOLDIERS point their rifles at him.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Dieter is pushed by the SOLDIERS rifle as he is escorted down a dark dusty corridor.

Another SOLDIER opens a cell door.

Dieter is shoved into the cramped space.

The Soldier spits on him as he shuts the door.

Dieter looks around at the watching faces. MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN all Chinese: dirty, beaten, distressed.

He finds a place next to the wall. Leans back and slides down. The blood on his clothes and arms still visible.

EXT. OPEN GROUND - DAY

The sky threatens morning.

The MEN, young and old, and Dieter march in rows out into open space, flanked by SOLDIERS.

They are given shovels.

SOLDIER
(in Japanese)
Dig.

A MAN stares at one of the Soldiers. He is hit to the ground with the back of a rifle.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
(in Japanese)
Dig.

They dig.

SKY

A FULL MOON glows.

TRENCH

They dig and dig. Men young and old shovel the soil creating mounds of earth on either side of a huge trench.

Sweat pours off Dieter's forehead.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
(in Japanese)
Stop digging!

Dieter notices the other men stop digging climbing out of the trench. He follows, as the WOMEN and CHILDREN are marched towards the trench.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
(in Japanese)
Line up. Line up.

They are all lined up.

Pushed and shoved.

Some of the soldiers collect the shovels.

Children CRY as mothers try to comfort them.

Soldiers continue to shout abuse as they take their positions opposite the prisoners.

Dieter looks at his arms. The drying blood still visible.

WILHELM (V.O.)
When you want to feel time move,
watch the moon.

Dieter looks up to the sky.

DIETER
Forgive me Father...

SKY

The FULL MOON continues to shine brightly in the early morning light.

OFFICER (O.S.)
(in Japanese)
Arm your rifles and take aim!

Rifles CLICK and CLUNK as bullets are loaded into chambers then the SLAP as aim is taken.

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

Fire!

BANG -- BANG -- BANG. SHOTS ECHO!

Birds flee the tree tops.

DIETER

Falls into the trench.

All goes quiet.

INT. INTERNMENT CAMP - HUT - DAY

Ella watches from the window as Wilhelm is given something by a JAPANESE SOLDIER.

He bows respectfully and then rushes towards the hut like a child with gift for a parent.

Ella turns to Wilhelm as he enters and approaches with open hands -- presenting his wife a single cigarette.

Ella is a little amused and takes the cigarette in silence.

She studies it with interest as Wilhelm awaits to be praised.

But the moment is interrupted as two JAPANESE SOLDIERS burst into the hut.

INT. INTERNMENT CAMP - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ella and Wilhelm are marched into the office.

A well rounded JAPANESE OFFICER sits behind the desk.

COMMANDER

(in broken English)

I have news for you... of your son.

Ella's eyes light up. Wilhelm takes her hand and squeezes.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

(in broken English)

It seems your son bad boy after all.
He killed Colonel Joji.

Ella and Wilhelm glance at each other then back to the Commander.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Yes. But he not get far. We catch him. And he was shot this morning for his crimes.

Ella is motionless for a moment, then breaks down. She collapses to the floor crying.

Wilhelm glares at the Commander.

WILHELM

I don't believe you.

The Commander SLAMS his fist on the desk.

COMMANDER

Believe me. Your son was shot this morning for his crimes.

The Commander waves his hand.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

(in Japanese)

Get them out of here!

Wilhelm pulls his wife gently to her feet and half carries her as she sobs.

EXT. TRENCH - DAY

BODIES lie soaked with blood on top of each other in the long deep trench. Dirt is being thrown on them.

SOLDIER

(in Japanese)

Stop what you are doing and fall in!

SOLDIERS, throw down their shovels, pick up their rifles and rush to form an orderly group.

TREE LINE

Not to far from the trench a Chinese Man, JUN, and Chinese woman, BIK watches the soldiers march off.

JUN

(in Chinese)

Bik, something wrong - they're leaving.

BIK
(in Chinese)
Good. It will be easier to look for
your brother.

They creep towards the trench.

TRENCH

Jun searches one side, while Bik searches the other.

BIK (CONT'D)
(in Chinese)
Sun in hole. Jun. Sun in hole.

Bik scrambles down the trench as Jun rushes to her.

The woman carefully walks through the carnage, towards the
body of a BOY with golden hair.

She crouches down and touches the boys face, then leans in
and listens.

Jun comes to her side.

WOMAN
(in Chinese)
He breathes!

INT. SAMPAN - DAY

Image blurred. Shadows of brown. Faces. Sounds of water
SPLASH against the side. Chinese chatter.

A blurred face comes into view.

BIK
(in Chinese)
He's awake.

The face comes into focus.

Dieter looks around. Three Chinese faces stare at him.
Jun, his wife Bik and their son LI, about Dieter's age.

His eyes close again.

The woman attends to his head.

BIK (CONT'D)
What your name, boy?

Dieter's eyes open, but his head tips slightly. He tries to answer.

JUN
(in Chinese)
He doesn't understand!

BIK
The kid know what I say.

Dieter tries to speak again. No words.

JUN
(in Chinese)
I am telling you - he doesn't understand, woman!

Bik pecks at her husband.

BIK
He no answer, but he know.

Jun backs away.

Li comes to Dieter's side.

LI
We speak some English. You speak English?

Bik shoos her son away.

BIK
Move away. I check the kid.

Li backs off, but stays close.

Bik helps Dieter into an upright position.

She continues to clean the back of his head where the bullet entered, traveled across his skull, but passed through.

LI
My house, kid. We live on water.

The length of the sampan is larger than most, maybe twenty-five feet long. To the right is a cluster of kitchen utensils, pots, food stuff, and what appear to be rags stacked in a neat pile.

LI (CONT'D)
 We cook for tourists. We make money
 for our pork.

Dieter grins a little.

LI (CONT'D)
 You feel okay you eat it... you like
 it, I know.

Dieter flinches as Bik touches a tender part of the wound.

LI (CONT'D)
 Okay... maybe later.

Bik starts to bind his head with sheeting.

LI (CONT'D)
 My name Li, and...
 (pointing)
 This my Mommy - Bik.
 (pointing)
 And there my Poppi, name Jun.

Bik satisfied with her work, helps Dieter lay against the
 back of the bunk.

LI (CONT'D)
 You a big kid.

Li pulls a hard basket towards the bunk and sits close.

DIETER
 My name is Dieter.

Li's face scrunched.

LI
 What?

DIETER
 My name. It's Dieter. Dee-ter.

LI
 Deee-terrr. Nah. I call you Kid.
 Okay?

DIETER
 Okay.

Dieter tries to look around.

DIETER (CONT'D)
How long have I been here?

Li glanced left and right as if the side of the boat had ears.

LI
One, two... seven day I think. At first we put you up there.

He points to the latch over head.

LI (CONT'D)
We smuggle dynamite up there. That where you sleep when cops come.

Li points sharply to the outside.

LI (CONT'D)
But you my friend now, Kid. You stay with me. I hide you.

Dieter looks back to the latch overhead.

DIETER
Did I... fit up there?

LI
Sure. But you heavy.

Dieter attempts to laugh, but the pain wins.

LI (CONT'D)
Okay. You rest, now.

Dieter eyes close.

DREAM SEQUENCE

Japanese soldiers chase him over roof tops.

He hides behind some barrels and peers over to see if anyone is one his tail.

He scans the wet alleyways dotted with red lamps, the sound of MARCHING.

Masked men with swords -- all like the Colonels -- as they search for him -- they are closing in.

He ducks down his heart pounding a steady gallop, palms as damp as the air itself.

BACK TO SCENE

Dieter awakens to the sounds of groaning creaks from the boat, as his adopted family sleep peacefully.

INT. SAMPAN - DAY

Bik is talking to her son.

BIK
(in Chinese)
The Kid should be getting better but
he's not because his spirit is not
right.

Dieter opens his eyes... three pairs of eyes stare at him.

JUN
You weak, huh, Kid? But you look
better. Want some food?

Bik pushes past her husband.

BIK
Leave him. I want to clean his head
again. I feed him.

Bik chases Jun out.

BIK (CONT'D)
Go. Go work.

Li winks at Dieter as he folds sheets. Bik fusses about Dieter's wound.

DIETER
(sitting up)
I dreamed they were coming.

Bik goes to get some food.

LI
No dream, Kid.

Dieter stretches his back and shoulders, turns to the right and sets his feet down on the floor with the intention of standing up. He tries but falls to one side.

Li catches him.

LI (CONT'D)
Slow, Kid.

DIETER
Yeah, I think you're right. But I
need to walk and stretch.

LI
What that?

DIETER
What?

LI
Stet-cch.

DIETER
It means like this...

Dieter flexes his arms out as wide as he can.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Stretch. See.

Li mimics him.

LI
Stretch. Okay.

DIETER
You say okay a lot.

LI
That bad?

DIETER
No, not bad. Good.

LI
Okay.

DIETER
(smiling)
Okay.

LI
No more stretch. We eat now.

Dieter steadily sits down.

Bik dishes up pork and rice.

DIETER
When we finish eating, can we go for
a walk?

LI

Not okay.

Li joins Dieter at the make shift table.

DIETER

Li, look. I have to try and find my parents.

LI

What?

DIETER

My mother and father.

LI

Oh, parr-ots.

Dieter bursts into laughter.

DIETER

The way you said, parents. It sounded like parrots.

LI

Yeah, that what I say -- parrots. They not with you when you shot?

The mood turns serious.

DIETER

No... so I must go and look for them.

LI

You look too much like sun. You no go out.

DIETER

Can you fix me up, cover me... with those.

Dieter points to a jacket and hat hung at the end of the boat.

LI

I don't know.

DIETER

And this...

Dieter reaches into the greasy pot that holds the ashes of coals, and smears some residue on his hair.

DIETER (CONT'D)
I can change my hair.

LI
You a spy, huh, Kid?

Dieter leans in nose to nose with Li.

DIETER
No. Just careful.

The boys grin at each other, a silent understanding is reached.

LI
Okay, Kid. Three days, cops go to
big party. We can go outside.

DIETER
Deal.

LI
Deal?

Dieter sticks out his hand to shake.

LI (CONT'D)
Deal.

They shake hands.

INT. SAMPAN - DAY

Dieter is covered up pretty well with some local clothing; pants and light weight jacket, thin and paper like, no shirt. The cap's a good and solid fit and his golden hair is now a darkened black.

Li stands back and admires there work. He gives his friend a thumbs up.

EXT. HONGKEW - STREETS - DAY

The boys take in the sights as they walk through the frantic and crowded streets. MEN huddle in shops and outside eateries, smoking and talking. WOMEN rush past holding boxes, food, carrying laundry and textiles, their feet tightly bound.

LI
You ever get scared, Kid?

Dieter says nothing.

LI (CONT'D)

Kid, you not tell me what happen to you inside the camp.

DIETER

It was hard work. All the time. And one man, a... mean and horrible Japanese Colonel... he punished me for nothing.

LI

Make you mad?

DIETER

I guess. More like... I could not understand why. Like hard work, really hard. Finally, I had to...

Dieter stops mid sentence and looks down at his feet.

LI

What?

DIETER

I... ran... away. I think that made them all angry with me.

LI

But you not scared, huh Kid?

Dieter looks out over the crowd.

DIETER

I'm scared all the time.

Li bumps Dieter's shoulder with his own.

LI

Me too.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

The boys are settled on a cluster of empty CRATES near a kitchen at the mouth of the alley where Dieter used to live.

Li slaps his arm, kills the bug, and flicks it with his finger.

LI

Who we looking for?

Dieter swats at a bug.

DIETER
He's uh... really tall -- a giant.

LI
Huh?

DIETER
You'll know when you see him.

Li shrugs and continues to slap the pesky bugs landing on his arms.

Dieter signs deeply and gets more comfortable.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Now... we wait.

Vendors YELL, the wheels of rickshaws CREAK, the hustle and bustle continues.

Li reaches into his pocket and takes out some HONEY WAFERS and offers to Dieter.

Dieter takes one willingly.

They sit. Munch. Watch the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

The sun is heading toward late afternoon, yet the noise of activity continues. Dieter sleeps. Li continues to watch.

A tall figure of a MAN enters the opposite side of the alley and heads towards the apartment entrance.

Li studies him for a moment. Then nudges Dieter.

LI
I think this your man.

Dieter, somewhat groggy, looks up. It's Ivan!

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

Dieter and Li sneak up the stairs and KNOCK on the apartment door.

The door opens. Ivan stares at Dieter in disbelief.

IVAN
Dieter!

DIETER
Hello, Giant.

Ivan looks quickly to the left and right.

IVAN
Quickly, inside.

The boys are hurried in.

Ivan looks left and right before shutting the door.

INT. IVAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ivan crouches down and gently holds each of Dieter's arms.

IVAN
Let me look at you.

Dieter removes his hat.

IVAN (CONT'D)
Very good disguise.

Li pokes around in the background.

DIETER
My friend Li helped.

LI
He look okay like Chinese.

IVAN
Yes. Yes, he does.
(to Dieter)
And you look healthy.

DIETER
Ivan. Do you know where my parents
are?

Ivan stands and looks to the two boys. He rubs his chin.

IVAN
They took them to one of the camps.

DIETER
Where? Which one?

IVAN
I don't know. No one knows.

Dieter's head drops.

IVAN (CONT'D)
But I have your things.

Ivan goes to a storage area.

IVAN (CONT'D)
I hide these before the soldiers
came.

Ivan takes out a suitcase and places it on the table.

Dieter and Li peer in as the case opens.

It contains clothing, pictures and Ella's jewelry box.

Dieter stares at the possessions for a moment. He slowly
runs his fingers over the garments and box.

He picks up one of the photographs.

It is a picture of when he was a baby. His father holding
him proudly and his mother smiling with all the joy of life.

DIETER
Giant... Ivan, do you think they
are... do you think they are alive?

Ivan kneels down and gently takes hold of Dieter's arms with
his big hands.

IVAN
As God has kept you safe, I know in
my heart He keeps your parents safe.

Ivan looks to the picture Dieter securely holds in his hands.

IVAN (CONT'D)
You will see them again.

Dieter stares at the photograph as he pushes back a tear.

INT. INTERNMENT CAMP - DAY

Ella sits on a bed staring out at nothing.

Wilhelm comes to her with a bowl of rice.

WILHELM
Some food.

Ella, looks to the food briefly, then back to the emptiness of space.

WILHELM (CONT'D)
Flower, please. You must eat something.

Ella ignores her husband and takes to lying down on the bed. She turns away from him.

INT. SAMPAN - NIGHT

Jun and Bik are eating, while Li and Dieter sit in the back playing cards.

The noise of a boat BANGING the side of the boat.

Everyone freezes and looks to the noise.

Jun leans over and pushes the curtain aside slightly.

JUN
(in Chinese)
It's just, Ming.

Li turns to Dieter.

LI
My sister, Ming!

MING, early twenties, climbs into the Sampan. Her long braid hangs between her breasts. Not the prettiest of girls, but fresh looking despite her rugged life style.

Dieter watches, mesmerized, a smile chiseled on his face.

Li looks to Dieter then to Ming.

LI (CONT'D)
Hey Ming. This is Dieter.

Ming smiles warmly at Dieter.

DIETER
Hello.

He blushes, and quickly drops his head and attempts to shuffle the cards.

LI
(playfully)
You like her. You like my sister.

DIETER
Li... it's your turn to deal.

As the boys continue to play cards. Ming discusses a plan with her parents. There are arm gestures, pointing at the hatchway, and studying of a map.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Li, what are they talking about?

Li casually looks across, then back to the cards.

LI
Underground stuff. Ming has a new plan. My parents will help.

Dieter watches the adults.

DIETER
What's the plan?

LI
To stop a train carrying lots of guns. Help the underground fight the Japanese.

Dieter continues to watch the adults talk.

DIETER
How are they planning to stop the train?

LI
(matter of fact)
Dynamite.

DIETER
Dynamite?!

Li shrugs, remains focused on card game.

LI
Ming worried that Mommy and Poppi, not fast enough, but that is where I will help them.

DIETER
Can I help?

Li looks to his friend.

LI
No. To dangerous for you.

Dieter continues to stare at the adults.

DIETER
Li, please.

LI
No, Kid. Not your fight.

Dieter puts down the playing cards and moves to the adults.

DIETER
I want to help!

The collective group stops chattering and stare at Dieter.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Please. I want to help.

Bik looks to her son.

BIK
(in Chinese)
What you been saying to him?

Li shakes his head. Bik looks to Dieter.

BIK (CONT'D)
No Kid. You look like a box with
hair like the sun. People see you,
they think... hummm, and say who is
this kid?

DIETER
You've seen my disguise. I look
good, just like a Chinese.

BIK
I don't know, Kid.

DIETER
You have to let me help. I would
not be here if it weren't for you.
You have been so good to me. So
kind and... I owe you. I owe... all
of you... everything.

Ming looks to her mother, then her father, then to Dieter.

MING

He helps.

Bik and Jun look to each other then their daughter and shrug.

Li and Dieter join them around the table. The plan is hatched.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Dieter and Li scurry through rocks and tall grass. They duck down out of sight.

LI

We hide here. It like she say.

DIETER

They'll never see us move the stuff from the train to the tunnel. No patrols out here. She's smart, your sister.

LI

Yeah... right, Kid. She smart. And she a little...

He makes circles next to his ear with his index finger.

Dieter chuckles.

LI (CONT'D)

Okay, I go out. Take a look.

Dieter grabs Li's arm, stopping him.

DIETER

Wait. Let's pray.

LI

What?

DIETER

Ask God to keep us safe.

LI

Who God?

DIETER

He watches us.

(pointing)

From up there.

Li looks up.

LI

He look.

DIETER

Yes. He watches.

LI

Why he watch?

DIETER

To make sure we do good things.

LI

Uh-oh.

DIETER

It's not like that, Li.

LI

Whew!

DIETER

Sometimes I just thank Him while I'm eating. But I pray, and God hears. He hears everybody. Sometimes it just makes things go better. Sometimes... it doesn't.

LI

You play, I play, too, Kid. Watch.

Li closes his eye. Then opens one.

LI (CONT'D)

I don't know what to say.

DIETER

Just say thank you.

The boys close there eyes, lashes flutter.

LI

I done.

Dieter's eyes open.

DIETER

That was quick. What did you say?

LI

I thank him for you. That good enough
for me.

Dieter shakes his head as Li scampers off.

Li crouches low and crawls across the gravel, dirt and litter
like a snake seeking a hole.

He reaches the rail and pulls a stick of dynamite from the
inside of his trouser leg.

He moves along and plants another, then another.

He splits the twine with a small blade and weaves the
explosives together along the rail line.

He scurries low, back into the bushes, the fuse dangling
behind him partly hidden in the gravel and sand.

Li settles back next to his friend.

They both stare out and the tracks. Waiting.

A RAUCOUS BANGING pounds in the distance.

A whistle BLOWS, long and loud, the train approaches.

DIETER

Are you ready?

LI

Kid, I always ready.

Dieter reaches into his pocket and pulls out a box of matches.

LI (CONT'D)

Light it now!

Dieter strikes the match. Nothing.

He tries again. Nothing.

The whistle BLOWS.

Dieter strikes again. Nothing.

DIETER

Damn matches.

LI
Oh, you say a bad word. Ming say
that a lot!

Dieter tries match after match.

DIETER
Damn... damn... damn!

LI
Try these, Kid.

Dieter takes the new pack.

He tries and tries, still no luck.

DIETER
How do people smoke so much around
here?

LI
Quiet.

A group of JAPANESE SOLDIERS turn in their direction. They
stroll leisurely, not as if on patrol.

They stop. One SOLDIER takes out three cigarettes.

Li and Dieter watch him as he lights all three with one match.

LI (CONT'D)
How they do that?

DIETER
I hate those guys.

Dieter's foot slips on the gravel, rustling the tall grass.

The soldiers turn in the direction of where the boys hide.

The LEAD SOLDIER puts his cigarette in the corner of his
mouth, raises his bayonet to his waist and nods his head in
the direction of the brushes.

The others pull their rifles from behind, bayonets poised
forward.

The soldiers edge towards the boys, yet still some distance
away.

The train moves closer.

Li pulls out another box of matches and tries to light the fuse.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Hurry.

LI

I hurry... I almost got it...

DIETER

Li...

LI

I know...

DIETER

They're coming...

LI

I know...

DIETER

The train...

LI

I hear it...

Finally a match sparks to life. Li ignites the fuse.

LI (CONT'D)

Let's go.

The boys crawl to a dried out water pipe, pull a mock thatch board from behind a clump of rocks and hunker down. The mouth of the opening is wide enough to conceal them.

The soldiers approach, walking alongside the tracks on the opposite side of bushes and the fuse. Still a considerable distance from the oncoming train.

Dieter and Li cover their ears.

The train lurches forward. The whistle BLOWS sporadically, then a long cry.

The sparkling fire along the fuse, reaches the dynamite.

POOF. Nothing!

The train continues.

The boys stare at each other.

DIETER
The fuse must have died.

LI
(sarcastically)
Gee. You one smart kid, you know
that?

Li scurries out of the hiding.

DIETER
Wait. The soldiers...

Li pushes the shrubbery to one side and crawls back along
the tracks. Dieter hot on his heels.

Li examines their work. The train CLUNKS past. Still a few
cars left.

The dynamite sticks are intact; they simply didn't ignite.

LI
Damn.

DIETER
Bad word, Li.

The last carriage passes.

LI
We run, go now.

DIETER
Right.

Li cuts back around the water pipe and Dieter follows.

They scurry across the tracks to the same side as the
soldiers.

The boys are spotted.

The soldiers rush towards them. Closing fast.

BANG! The dynamite goes off.

The soldiers hit the ground and cover their heads.

There is smoke everywhere.

The boys are just as surprised.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Did it work.

LI

Don't know. No time to check.

Li helps Dieter up.

LI (CONT'D)

Time to run.

The soldiers are quick to their feet and chase after them.

The boys run down the street, and turn into an alley.

The soldiers split up.

EXT. LAUNDRY - LATER

Ming leans against the store front, MEN eyeing her as they walk past. She wears a long, tight golden skirt, slit to mid-thigh, and rose-colored shirt cut above her navel.

The boys speed towards her.

Ming pushes them into the laundry.

INT. LAUNDRY - CONTINUOUS

The boys trip and smack into a cluster of empty laundry bins and baskets of dirty clothes.

Sister lays into her brother, as Dieter stands taller trying to look cool.

MING

(in Chinese)

You failed. You missed the train.
What where you doing?!

LI

(in Chinese)

Soldiers saw us.

Ming continues to rant in Chinese and brother remains silent.

Dieter peers out of the window.

Two of the soldiers are close.

One looks in Dieter's direction.

He ducks.

DIETER
Soldiers. Outside.

Ming stops ranting.

She hurries them out to the back.

They pass stacked clothes and sheets. Dozens of shirts hang overhead.

She pushes open a door leading to a narrow lane.

MING
You go now.

She nudges the boys outside, and quickly shuts the door.

The boys dash off.

LI
Kid, we cut through here.

DIETER
What did she say?

LI
I tell you later.

Dieter stops.

DIETER
Tell me now.

Li presses his hair against his head and slaps his arms to his side in pure frustration.

LI
She say... we missed.

DIETER
Missed? How does she know that we...?

LI
She got eyes everywhere.

They start to walk again.

DIETER
That's all she said?

Li waves his hands in the air.

LI
That... all? That all? I don't
like to miss, Kid.

Dieter follows in silence for a moment.

DIETER
Where are we going?

LI
She say we have to hide. We go to
Wayward Road. Good place to hide.

DIETER
I thought all she said was we missed.

Li stops and turns to Dieter.

LI
Kid... you got sister?

Dieter shakes his head.

LI (CONT'D)
Then you know nothing.

Dieter starts to laugh. This time he takes the lead and
walks as Li catches up.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
(in Japanese)
Stop! You boys... stop.

The boys turn and see one of the Soldiers at the mouth of
the lane.

LI
We in big trouble.

He points his rifle.

DIETER
Run!

The boys turn back and run in the opposite direction.

A few SHOTS whiz past their heads.

Li ducks through an opening in the wall, Dieter follows.

INT. OPIUM DEN - CONTINUOUS

The boys move through the short entry and walk along one side, then start a descent down creaky stairs.

Strips of wood of long benches covered with pillows, silk throws and in some corners, bodies—party goes languish lazily, some animate, some passed out, but all cling to their long pipes.

DIETER

(nervous)

It stinks in here.

A youngster not much older than Dieter holds the pipe to his mouth. Draws hard, taking a long drag into his lungs. Holds it, and then exhales through his nose.

A commotion. The soldiers!

LI

Come on.

Li grabs Dieter's arm, dragging him through the maze.

Dieter hastens his pace as Li moves swiftly through the room.

A large MAN wearing a huge garment sits swaying on a bench.

Li lifts the hem of the man's garment and slides underneath pulling Dieter with him. The man in his stoned state, is oblivious to the guests under his clothing.

Dieter sits tight, his body smacks against the man's thigh. He curls his feet under his own hips. He sees the feet of the soldiers as they shift along the ground.

Their host FARTS.

Dieter and Li pinch their noses tight. They look to each other trying hard not to laugh.

The SOLDIER argues with the waitress. Knocking her tray from her hand, and shouting.

He grabs her by the hair and holds his bayonet to her throat.

SOLDIER

(in Japanese)

Tell me where they are?

Li pushes aside the man's skirt and darts out.

LI
(in Chinese)
You pig!

He spits in the soldier face, then runs to the nearest exit.

Dieter clammers out from the skirt.

The Soldier grabs him. Dieter's hat falls off revealing the crown of his golden head.

He kicks the soldier in the back of the knee. The Soldier releases his hold.

Dieter chases after Li.

The waitress climbs on the Soldiers back, hitting him, while the fat man puffs away.

The Soldier shakes the woman loose and runs after the boys.

ALLEY

The Soldier comes out looks one way then the other and slams into a giant of a man. Ivan.

Ivan glares down.

SOLDIER
(in Japanese)
Get out of the way.

He steps to his right; Ivan steps to his left. He steps left; Ivan steps right.

The Soldier spits on the big man's shoes.

Ivan glances at his shoe.

He calmly grabs the soldier's rifle and tosses it garbage.

Then Ivan grabs the soldier by the back of his shirt and seat of his pants and throws him into a pile of trash.

The waitress appears just as the Soldier fumbles and clammers out of the pile. She starts to laugh.

WAITRESS
Don't worry, don't worry, I takee
inside.

She looks to Ivan and winks as she lures the Soldier back to the den.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

You likeee. Come on. Come with me.
Come inside. I make you happy.

They enter through the flapping curtain.

Ivan removes pieces of wood revealing a hideaway.

IVAN

It's safe now.

Dieter and Li heads pop up.

INT. SAMPAN - NIGHT

The boys clamber into the boat. Dripping wet.

DIETER

I need to change. This stink...
it's bad.

Dieter starts to peel off his clothes.

LI

Yeah, Kid... it bad.

Dieter dries his hair with a cloth, removing the black coloring.

DIETER

Like those eggs you put in the ground
and want to eat after they come out.

Li slips on dry clothes.

LI

Those eggs... a delicacy, Kid.

DIETER

Uh... listen Li. Those eggs...
garbage.

LI

Yeah, that too!

The boys laugh.

The sound of a BOAT powered by and engine approaches.

The boys freeze.

Li peers outside. Then quickly pulls back the curtain.

LI (CONT'D)
They're coming here.
(pointing)
Up.

Dieter quickly pulls down the hatch and scrambles in.

Li climbs into dry trousers then tosses the rest of the clothes in the corner.

The curtain is pulled back by a JAPANESE SOLDIER just as Dieter closes the hatch.

HIDE AWAY

Dieter lies still, barely breathing. He can hear the muffled sound of the conversation. Trickles of water drip from his brow. He closes his eyes.

SAMPAN

The Japanese Soldier looks around the boat. Poking things with his bayonet.

LI (CONT'D)
Me now see no... body! No one here
just me.

JAPANESE SOLDIER
You lying to me?

LI
No!

The Soldier continues to search.

HIDE AWAY

Dieter opens his eyes.

A SPIDER climbs through a hole in the ceiling.

It scarpers towards Dieter.

Panic takes hold. Dieter starts to breath more heavily, sweat pours from his brow.

The spider moves closer. Dieter shuts his eyes tightly.

The spider is large and hairy.

Dieter opens his eyes. Where is it?

The spider makes its way along his hand.

A MOUSE appears at the hole. It spots the prey, drops down and heads towards Dieter.

Dieter breaths heavily.

The spider makes his way along his arm.

The mouse is in hot pursuit.

The spider moves up over Dieter's head and then down the front of his face until its thready legs cling to his nose.

Dieter closes his mouth and eyes tightly, and holds his breath.

The mouse follows the same route and pauses as he reaches the bridge of Dieter's nose. Whiskers twitch.

The spider drops to the floor.

The mouse pounces, catching its prey.

And consumes the kill.

Dieter gasps for air.

The mouse scampers off.

SAMPAN

Li opens the hatch to the roof area. Dieter scrambles out sputtering and panting.

LI (CONT'D)

What happened to you?

Dieter just waves his hand as he tries to catch his breath.

LI (CONT'D)

You okay, Kid?

DIETER

Yeah.

LI

You white... very white!

DIETER

I'm fine.

LI

Okay. You hungry... we eat now.

DIETER

Um... maybe later. I am not hungry anymore.

Li shrugs and goes to get himself some food, as Dieter sits on one of the baskets taking some much needed deep breaths.

EXT. HONGKEW - DAY - 1945

It's another hot and humid day in the Ghetto. People go about their business as usual.

In the distance a squadron of AIRCRAFT approach.

The siren BLARES out.

People rush for shelter.

The squadron flies above the Ghetto. US AIRFORCE markings just visible.

BOMBS released.

WHISTLE as they fall.

The bombs hit the ground, buildings crumble, people run, bodies fly, cars crash.

EXT. SAMPAN - CONTINUOUS

Dieter and Li stand on the boat watching the bombing.

LI

That right where you used to live!

Dieter jumps into the little boat tied to the side.

LI (CONT'D)

Kid, wait.

Li jumps in the boat.

LI (CONT'D)

Faster together.

The boys get the oars and start to row.

EXT. HONGKEW - DAY

Dieter rushes through the mayhem, Li hot on his heels.

There is rubble everywhere. Dust and smoke. People screaming, crying. Bodies. An ambulance rushes past.

The boys make their way to the alley.

The one side of the apartment is missing. Rubble everywhere.

Dieter moves rocks and climbs over debris as he hastens to reach the apartment.

Ivan walks out of the apartment, carrying a woman in his arms. She looks so small against his large frame.

He sits on the step and cradles her like a new born child.

Dieter rushes to his side. Li is a little way behind.

DIETER

Ivan?

Ivan looks at the boy, water wells in his eyes.

The woman he cradles is Amie.

EXT. SAMPAN - NIGHT

The sun is setting in the distance. Dieter sits alone on the bow of the boat throwing bits of twig in the water.

Li appears from behind the curtain.

LI

Time to eat, Kid.

Dieter doesn't respond. Li moves closer.

LI (CONT'D)

What you thinking, Kid?

DIETER

I'm thinking I will never see my parents again.

Li settles down next to Dieter.

LI

No. You will see them. I've been playing, Kid.

Dieter looks to Li in surprise.

DIETER
Playing?

LI
Yes. God Play.

DIETER
Oh... Praying... pray.

LI
Yes. You pray. I pray. Your God
he help you find your parrots again.

Dieter puts his arm around his friend.

DIETER
And I pray God hears us.

EXT. SHANGHAI - STREET - DAY

Crowds line the main street of Shanghai.

A military parade. A convoy of AMERICAN TANKS and JEEPS.

The Allies have arrived - Shanghai is free!

EXT. INTERNMENT CAMP - DAY

Inmates wander out into the camp parade ground. There is
not a Japanese soldier in sight.

Wilhelm is one of the crowd.

An AMERICAN CONVOY arrives.

A SOLDIER cuts the chains that hold the gate.

Wilhelm rushes to the huts.

INT. HUT - CONTINUOUS

Ella lies curled up on her bunk, eyes fixated on nothing.

Wilhelm rushes to her side.

WILHELM
The Americans are here. They are
here. Such joy. We are free, Flower.
Free.

Ella turns to face her husband.

ELLA
There is no joy. Not without Dieter.

Ella turns away leaving Wilhelm standing there, helpless.

EXT. THE BUND - DOCK - DAY

Dieter, Bik, Jun, Ming and Li form a circle on the grass.

DIETER
Come on, let's hold hands.

At first they are a little hesitant, but eventually they take each others hands.

DIETER (CONT'D)
God, I... I am your child.

LI
Kid...

DIETER
What?

LI
You are His... Kid!

Dieter smiles at his friend.

DIETER
Yeah, that too.

The group chuckles.

Dieter clears his throat. Silence. He starts again.

DIETER (CONT'D)
God, I am your... kid. Please take
care of my... Aunt Bik and Uncle
Jun, and my cousins, Li and Ming.

Dieter opens his eyes and looks at each of his adopted parents. Bik wipes a tear from her face.

IVAN
Are you ready, Dieter?

Dieter takes a deep breath.

DIETER

Yes.

Jun bows to Dieter.

Dieter returns the bow.

Bik gives him a big hug.

Ming kisses him on the cheek—Dieter blushes.

Dieter turns to his friend.

DIETER (CONT'D)

You take care, Li.

LI

You not forget us, Kid.

He holds out his hand.

Li studies him for a moment. Then shakes it.

DIETER

Li, you are the best friend I have
ever had. I will not forget you.

A tear rolls down Li's cheek.

LI

You write me, Kid. Send letter to
the laundry. I come visit you, right,
Kid. Okay?

Dieter wipes his eyes.

DIETER

Yes. I will write to you.

Dieter turns and walks towards Ivan.

Ivan puts his big arm around the boy as they head off.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Trucks arrive with loads of people from the surrounding camps.

Ella and Wilhelm are one of the many.

Wilhelm helps his wife down off the truck.

They slowly follow the crowd into the large warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Uniforms are everywhere but these are friendly.

Many of the crowd line up in front of desks, while others get the much needed attention from the medical staff.

Ella and Wilhelm are helped by a NURSE.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Ivan and Dieter are drawn into the ever swarming crowd. The tight group moves forward entering the huge warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ivan keeps his arm around Dieter's shoulder as they move along the line.

They reach the check-in desk where a American sergeant shuffles papers. SERGEANT HEWITT, a pole thin man, has a smile that seems broader than his face.

HEWITT

And what's your name son?

DIETER

Dieter Ludwig.

HEWITT

And where were you born?

DIETER

Germany.

HEWITT

Okay. Any living relatives?

DIETER

I hope so.

IVAN

His parents have been missing for some years.

Hewitt looks to Ivan.

HEWITT

And you are, sir?

IVAN

A friend of the family.

Ivan puts out his hand.

IVAN (CONT'D)
My name is Ivan. Ivan Rinkoff.

HEWITT
I'm Sergeant Hewitt.

Hewitt's shakes the man's hand.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
So Mr. Rinkoff, are you Russian?

IVAN
Yes. I am a Russian Jew, sir.

HEWITT
Well, it's good of you to help this boy, Mr. Rinkoff, but I need you to join another line.

Hewitt points further down the row.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
The processing is divided up into nationality... for efficiency.

Ivan looks along the lines, then to Dieter.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
It's okay. I will take care of young Dieter here. He'll be fine.

Dieter looks up to Ivan.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
Don't you worry, Mr. Rinkoff.

Ivan scratches his chin and nods.

DIETER
I'll be fine, Giant.

IVAN
I will find you again.

Dieter attempts a reassuring smile as he looks up Ivan.

DIETER
Okay.

Ivan gives Dieter's shoulder a gentle squeeze, before heading off to join the Russian que.

Dieter watches.

HEWITT

Well, young man, you seem to be a sharp one.

Dieter turns his attention back to the Sergeant.

HEWITT (CONT'D)

Let's cut through this group together and see if we can find your family.

Dieter pulls the photo from his pocket.

DIETER

Will this help?

Hewitt takes the photo and studies it.

HEWITT

Good. Very good.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Trucks and buses continue to arrive with loads of people from the surrounding camps.

People form lines as they enter the large warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

The area is set up much in the same way their first home had been. Beds stacked two high in dozens of rows, but pushed against the walls to make room for the masses.

There is a large area in the center. Desks placed at either end.

Dieter follows the Sergeant as they weave in and out of the bunks.

HEWITT

If they aren't here tonight, we can try again tomorrow.

Dieter frowns.

DIETER

Sergeant Hewitt, I don't want to seem ungrateful sir, really I don't. But you see, it's been a year, more I think.

HEWITT

A very long time, then?

DIETER

Yes. I don't even know if they would remember what I look like.

Dieter pats his sides.

DIETER (CONT'D)

I'm a lot skinnier and taller now.

Hewitt stops and faces the boy.

HEWITT

Well, Dieter, I can send another clerk over to the other barracks right now; see if they got anything on the name Ludwig. Will that make you feel better about all this?

DIETER

I guess so.

Dieter drops his head, staring at his shoes.

HEWITT

And how about, you help me here. Perhaps translate if I need it?

Dieter looks at that Sergeant and then something to the right catches his eye.

DIETER

If I do something a little... different, so long as I don't hurt anybody, would you be mad at me?

Hewitt studies the boy for a moment.

HEWITT

What is it you have in mind?

DIETER

Follow me, Sir.

Dieter zigzags through the bunks. Hewitt follows.

They reach an entrance where buckets, paint rags, brushes and a few ladders have been left.

Dieter walks to the back wall and stops in front of one of the ladders lying down.

He takes hold, but it is too heavy.

Hewitt lends a hand.

They raise it up against the wall.

Hewitt holds the bottom firm as Dieter starts to climb.

Dieter reaches the top. From here he has a good view.

He takes a deep breath and in a loud voice, calls.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Faaaa-ther!

Everyone turns around and looks.

Dieter glances down at Hewitt.

Hewitt gives a thumbs up.

HEWITT
Keep going, son!

Dieter scans the room, and again calls.

DIETER
Faaaaa-theerrr! Ma-mmaaaaa!

Some of the people giggle and point.

He continues.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Ma-mmaaa! It's Dieter!

At the far corner of the room, a group of NURSES stand almost gleaming in their clean white uniforms.

A NURSE, with her back to Dieter, stands in the doorway.

She steps to one side. A lone WOMAN stands there.

Dieter stares hard and holds his breath.

HEWITT
Call out again, son.

Dieter looks down to the Sergeant.

DIETER
I don't have too... I think... I
think... I see her!

HEWITT
You do?

He stares at the lone woman again and points.

DIETER
Yes. I see here... I see her.

He hurries down the ladder.

It waddles and taps left and right.

HEWITT
Easy son, easy.

Dieter reaches the bottom.

DIETER
She's over there...

He heads off into the crowd.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Mamma.

The WOMAN moves her head from side to side.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Mamma.

He rushes towards the woman waving his hands.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Mamma!

Her hair is gray along the temples, but it is Ella.

She stares in disbelief at the boy bolting towards her.

ELLA
Dieter?

DIETER

Mamma it's me! It's me! It's me!

ELLA

Dieter?! Oh my God in Heaven! My son! My Dieter!

Dieter rushes into her open arms.

Ella smothers him with kisses and holds him tight.

She runs her hands all over him as she weeps.

ELLA (CONT'D)

We thought you... they told us...
Oh, but it's really you. Oh, thank
God, it's really you.

DIETER

Of course it's me!

He steps back, raises and curls his arm.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Feel this. Muscles. I have muscles,
see?

Ella squeezes his arms and laughs through her tears.

ELLA

Wonderful, Dieter. Oh, it's all too
wonderful.

DIETER

I have so much to tell you, Mamma --
so much.

Just then, Hewitt joins them.

HEWITT

Well, I see you two found each other.

DIETER

Sergeant Hewitt, this is my Mamma.
(clearing throat)
I mean, my Mother... Ella Ludwig.

HEWITT

It's an honor to meet you Ma'am.

Hewitt tips his head.

ELLA

Oh, Sergeant, I can't believe it.
They told us he was dead.

She embraces her son once more.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Oh, but he's here. And we are
together! Thank you.

She strokes Dieter's cheek.

HEWITT

It was his idea -- he found you.

DIETER

Where is Father?

Ella takes Dieter by the hand.

ELLA

(to Hewitt)

My husband will want to thank you,
too. Please, please come with us.

She leads them through the crowd.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Dieter, go easy now... it's going to
be a shock to him that you --

Dieter sees his father and lets go of his mother's hand.

DIETER

Faa-ther!

Wilhelm sits with a few other men. He looks up and squints,
as if doing so might help him hear well.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Faa-ther!

WILHELM

Dieter?!

Dieter runs fast and hard. Wilhelm reaches out.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

Dieter!

Dieter's embrace knocks Wilhelm off the bench and they both
end up on the ground.

WILHELM (CONT'D)

My son... my son... my son! Oh my
God... my boy!

Wilhelm hugs his son tightly and kisses his head all over.

They roll on the floor, laughing, crying and sobbing.

Ella looks on joyfully, tears stream fast from her eyes.

Those around them start to cheer and applaud.

Dieter helps his father up.

They take a bow to the audience before them.

HEWITT

Now is this everyone?

Ella wipes her tears from her face.

ELLA

Yes. We are the Ludwigs. The Ludwig
family.

Ella moves to be close to her husband and son.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Wilhelm, this is Sergeant Hewitt.
He helped Dieter find us.

HEWITT

A honor to meet you, sir. But your
boy here, he did all the work. He's
a bright young man.

Wilhelm and the Sergeant shake hands.

WILHELM

Well thank you, sir.
(looks to Dieter)
Yes, my son is a young man.

Wilhelm ruffles the hair on Dieter's head.

Hewitt turns his attention to Dieter.

HEWITT

See, your faith got you through,
son. You knew you'd find them. And
hope is a mighty good thing to have.

DIETER

Yes, sir... I will remember that.
Honestly, I will.

HEWITT

Good. Well if you will excuse me
Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig, I will leave
you to your reunion. I have some
duties to get back to.

ELLA

Thank you again, Sergeant.

WILHELM

Yes, thank you very much.

HEWITT

You're welcome... And Dieter, you
take care of your folks now.

Hewitt wanders off into the crowd, as the Ludwigs enjoy
another long overdue hug.

A few people close by come over to enjoy the reunion and to
give the family their best wishes.

Dieter is distracted and looks to the direction the Sergeant
went.

DIETER

Mamma... I need to speak to the
Sergeant.

Dieter lets go of his mother's hand and dashes off before
Ella can say a word.

SERGEANT HEWITT

Weaves between the many people and bunks. He smiles at the
grateful faces as he walks.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Sergeant, wait!

Hewitt stops and turns.

DIETER (CONT'D)

I wanted to thank you again and...

Dieter leans to the Sergeant and whispers.

DIETER (CONT'D)

And I don't want my parents to see...
in case... you have to arrest me or
something.

Hewitt looks to the boy puzzled.

HEWITT

Arrest you? Dieter, what are you
talking about? That stunt on the
ladder?

DIETER

No sir. Not that.

Dieter looks to his parents then back to the Sergeant.

DIETER (CONT'D)

Sir, it's... I...

HEWITT

What is it, son?

DIETER

I... killed... a Japanese Colonel.
Colonel Joji.

He drops his head in shame.

DIETER (CONT'D)

He was horrible to us, sir. Horrible.
He put my parents in jail... and...
I killed him. But it was an accident,
you have to believe me! He was...
hitting me... all the time, and forced
me to work while everyone was asleep
and... he touched me... tried too...

HEWITT

Dieter, listen to me.

Hewitt crouches down to the boy.

HEWITT (CONT'D)

War is not your fault. This man's
coming into your life -- the things
he did -- had nothing to do with
you.

Dieter studies his feet.

DIETER
Yes... but I killed him.

HEWITT
This Colonel, he committed what we
would call a war crime. So you
understand.

Dieter eyes are fixated on his shoes, he just nods.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
You tell me you killed him and it
was self-defense, I believe you. It
doesn't have to go any further than
right here.

Dieter looks into the man's kind face.

DIETER
What do I tell my parents?

HEWITT
Go back to your folks, and when you
are ready, ask God to take care of
all this. You understand? He knows
you're sorry, son. And you can tell
them when... and if you want to.

Dieter looks to his shoes again.

DIETER
How will I know that... God isn't...
mad at me?

Hewitt places a finger under the boys chin, lifting it. He
looks into Dieters eyes.

HEWITT
You will sleep, son. You will sleep
well.

Dieter starts to smile.

HEWITT (CONT'D)
Now go and be with your parents.
They've missed you.

Dieter all of a sudden hugs the Sergeant who is somewhat
taken aback, but gives the boy an affectionate grip all the
same.

Hewitt gently releases himself from the boy.

HEWITT (CONT'D)

Now go.

DIETER

Okay.

Dieter hurries off.

A small tear forms in Hewitt's eye as he watches Dieter rush into the welcome arms of his parents.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO - HOSPITAL - DAY - 1975

John lies in a hospital bed eyes closed. A young female NURSE checks the drip running into his arm.

John opens his eyes and looks around the room, unsure of his surroundings until his eyes meet the friendly smile from the Nurse by his side.

NURSE

Morning, Mr. Ludwig and how we feeling today.

John ponders a reply and then finally...

JOHN

Pretty Lucky and very blessed.

NURSE

I'm sure President Ford feels the same.

John attempts a little laugh before the pain takes hold.

EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY - FLASHBACK - 1948

Dieter, smartly dressed, standing boldly, looks out at the ocean.

The bridge of SAN FRANCISCO comes into view.

He is joined by his parents.

Wilhelm holds his wife close and leans to her ear.

WILHELM

(whispering)

Welcome to America, Flower.

Ella kisses him gently on the cheek and smiles. She then places an arm around her beloved son, and holds him close.

FADE OUT:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER:

"The Ludwigs came to America; Wilhelm worked in the mission district of San Francisco and his wife was now free to raise their son. John (Dieter) Ludwig served in the Armed Forces. When Gerald Ford passed away, John stood at full attention, and gave a military salute."

THE END