

THE CAGE

An Original Screenplay
Written by

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Based on, the life of Fred Eller
Story provided by Steve Eller

Registered with the Writers Guild of America, West
Registration #2181044

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FADE FROM BLACK

EXT. FORT SHERIDAN - DUSK

A caravan of 1940's Army vehicles weaves its way towards the gate of Fort Sheridan. Once inside the gates, the mass of iron divides in every direction.

EXT. SHERIDAN OPERATIONS - DUSK

Several late model vehicles identify the era. All military operations reveal vigorous activity in preparation for a world conflict.

Entire flatbed trains carry jeeps, large personnel trucks, tanks and artillery.

EXT. DRILL TEAM FIELD - DUSK

From a distance the drill team lighting illuminates a single elevated boxing ring, surrounded by bleachers ten rows high.

Other than the vehicles rushing about, the entire Fort's officers and recruits are present, already engaged in the night's boxing competition.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Huddled on bleachers and standing with eyes peeled to the ring, are recruits from every state of the Union.

The sounds of cheers are deafening. The chill in the air creates thousand's of breath trails.

EXT. RINGSIDE - NIGHT

Two stretchers carry two recruits from the ring. Bloody and in agony both men are exhausted.

Cheering precedes FRED ELLER (22), a handsome, confident Private First Class. Fred walks slowly down the isle, enamored at the attention.

The Commander of the fort grabs the microphone and delivers the introduction.

COMMANDER

Ladies and gentlemen, in the one eighty five class, he's a golden glove champion and Sheridan's finest, give a warm round of applause for private first class, Fred "Fritz" Eller.

The stands erupt into pandemonium. Wads of money change hands in the stands. The celebration includes discrete gulps of moonshine.

On the opposing stands, the rival Fort Benning fans boo and root for their champion. A stout chiseled beast of a man, waves his gloves in the air.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

MABEL NELSON (21) an attractive, loyal Commander's Maid, yells from an isolated seat in the bleachers:

MABEL

Give em hell Fritz!

EXT. RINGSIDE - NIGHT

Ducking between the ropes, Fred enters the ring. Fred's manager checks his gloves and wipes petroleum jelly on his eyebrows and cheeks.

MANAGER

You'll have to duck and cover. This guy's a beast. Keep these gloves up.

The Commander hands-off the microphone. Fred warms up in the ring while his rival pounds his fists and grunts in the corner. Fred stretches and walks to his corner.

COMMANDER

Listen, Eller. I'm told this guy has a hell of a knock-out punch. So, don't get too close.

FRED

Yes, sir. I'll go easy on him.

Fred can't hide his sarcasm, the Commander unsure of Fred's confidence.

COMMANDER

Don't be too cocky!

The Commander grins briefly and exits the ring.

The two foes enter the center ring. The REFEREE, an Army Sergeant, checks their gloves, holds their shoulders and pulls them closer.

REFEREE

OK men. No kicking, no biting, and for Christ sake, when I say stop, I mean stop! Let's have a clean fight. Are we clear?

Both fighters nod in agreement. Although much shorter in stature, Fred's physic reveals a man in top shape. They both return to their corners.

The Bell sounds. The two fighters quickly circle each other in the center of the ring, sizing up each other.

Fred smiles at his opponent. He immediately covers up and allows several punches, but covers quickly behind his gloves.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

MABEL

At a boy, cover!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. RING - NIGHT

For the first two minutes each opponent tests the resolve of the other. The last minute punches score in the opponents favor. Fred's opponent is left to assume he has the upper hand.

MABEL

Come on Fritz. Look for it!

Fred's opponent looks at the clock with 10 clicks left. Fred sees an opening and lands a massive upper cut to his jaw. Back to the stands Mabel lets out a scream, blows a whistle with her two fingers.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Scream, whistle!

His opponent lands on his backside, sitting upright at waist level, dazed and unable to react. Fred inches closer. Instead of a final blow, Fred simply holds his left glove at his face. The bell sounds.

The crowd, along with Mabel cheers. Fred retreats to the corner, beat up but in good shape. His manager pats a bloody lip and drenches his face with a sponge.

MANAGER

So what the hell was that?

FRED

I was showing him what he'll see, right before the lights go out.

MANAGER

OK Eller, you know the object of this match is to land more punches than him, right?

FRED

Yeah, sure.

MANAGER

You can't take his jabs all night. And the judges favor Fort Benning.

FRED

Got it!

Fred looks over at the Commander who raises his fist and nods to Fred. Fred nods to acknowledge. He looks up at the bleachers. The bell sounds.

Fred meets his opponent in the center, raises his gloves and lets his opponent land punches to his gloves, but he is careful to cover. This lasts most of the second round. The Ref gives Fred a warning.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

MABEL

Ah ref, he's not stalling!

EXT. IN THE RING - NIGHT

Fred's opponent exhausted from the relentless pursuit, looks towards the crowd in defiance and raises his gloves, conceding his victory. His back is towards Fred.

MABEL

Show off. Give it to em Fritz!

He turns towards Fred's direction. Fred has pursued, and from close range Fred delivers a crushing right upper cut under his chin followed by a left hook to his temple.

Fred's opponent is out cold, his arms stiff, he falls like a hemlock to the canvas.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Mabel jumps up and down. She is gleaming.

MABEL
That's my Fritz!

The entire home crowd cheers.

EXT. RINGSIDE - NIGHT

Fred smiles, the Commander offers a salute. Fred searches for Mabel, the contrast prevents him from locating her.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Mabel is ecstatic. She pushes her way through the crowd towards the winners platform, while attempting to keep her eyes on Fred.

EXT. RINGSIDE - NIGHT

A Doctor and the boxer's staff attempt to revive Fred's opponent. Fred exits the ring and walks proudly down the isle scanning for Mabel. Recruits congratulate him by a pat on the shoulder.

EXT. WINNERS PLATFORM - NIGHT

Fred walks up the platform to cheers. The Commander places a metal over his head and onto his shoulders. He grabs Fred's boxing glove and raises his arm.

COMMANDER
Meet our Golden Gloves champion, Fred
Eller!

The entire crowd applauds. Mabel stands at the base of the stairs. Fred drenched in sweat and blood, walks to her side. Her furrowed brow signals a concern as she gets a closer look at Fred's condition.

MABEL

Oh Fritz, look at you. You're bleeding.

FRED

Oh, I'm OK.

MABEL

I'll be the judge of that.

FRED

It doesn't really hurt.

Mabel has pulled out a handkerchief, placed one hand on his temple, quickly pats the wound.

FRED (CONT'D)

Ouch!

Fred doesn't flinch. He smiles, allowing Mabel full reign to mend his wounds.

MABEL

Such a baby.

They step closer together, while more recruits congratulate Fred. A large group yells: ORAH!

FRED

Still wanna go to the movies?

MABEL

You're in no shape to go anywhere?

FRED

I can be ready in fifteen.

Mabel looks at his condition and leans in to smell his body.

MABEL

You'll need a shower, with soap.

Fred quickly puts his boxing gloves gently on her shoulders and attempts to kiss her. Mabel turns away and offers her blushed cheek instead.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Go clean up. I'll meet you there in an hour.

Fred seems disappointed at the rejection.

FRED

Not even a peck?

Fred turns and runs towards the barracks. Mabel watches, proud of her champion.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

On the movie theater marquee, Modern Times - with Charlie Chaplin is displayed.

INT. MOVIE THEATER SEATS - EVENING

The film illuminates Fred and Mabel's faces, enjoying an evening together.

The movie ends and a Movietone newsreel begins. The film reports on Hitler's invasion into Poland, as tanks enter the city.

NARRATOR

The Third Reich rolled into Poland with virtually no resistance. And in London, bombs rain down with no end in sight. Hitler's blitzkrieg seems unstoppable. Meanwhile, Congress seems unwilling to send US troops to Europe.

Both Mabel, Fred and others nearby wear troubled faces.

EXT. MABEL'S HOME - EVENING

Fred and Mabel walk together. Mabel shaken by the newsreel holds onto Fred and stops.

MABEL

The war is so real, and horrible.

FRED

There's no reason to be concerned, really.

Fred gently runs his fingers through Mabel's hair. She grabs Fred's hand.

MABEL

Aren't you the least bit worried?

FRED

Europe can take care of themselves.

They both pause, take a seat on a city bench.

FRED (CONT'D)
You look wonderful tonight.

MABEL
Fred Eller. Do you think you can change
the subject and I'll move on?

Fred is noticeably embarrassed.

FRED
Of course not. My apology.

Standing her ground Mabel shares her concerns.

MABEL
Then back to what I was saying. My
grandfather died on the western front. As
I see it, we have no business in Europe
then or now.

Fred kisses her on the cheek.

FRED
You're beautiful when you're right.

She blushes, welcomes the complement.

MABEL
What about the future? Will they send
you?

Fred grabs both of Mabel's hands. He struggles for the
words.

FRED
I can't predict the future.

MABEL
I mean us, Fritz.

Mabel attempts to disguise her emotions.

FRED
You're my girl, Mabel. No question.

MABEL
Yes...

FRED
So, military life is the life for you?

MABEL
Now Fritz, I'm not marrying the Army, I'm
marrying you.

Fred pauses as if to know from practice, he turns and kneels in front of Mabel. Mabel holds her hands as if to pray, then covers her lips, as tears begin to flow from her eyes.

FRED

If you'll have me Mabel Nelson, will you be my wife, forever?

MABEL

Yes Fritz, of course. I love you.

Mabel and Fred grasp each other, Fred's head swallowed by Mabel's embrace. They stand, grab each other with all their might and kiss.

A vicious wind whips leaves from their hold to join thousands of others blowing from side to side on the rural street.

PRE-LAP: A SINGLE VIOLIN PLAYS A GALLIC LOVE SONG

Act Two A

Sequence Seven

EXT. LUTHERAN CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Mabel is escorted down an aisle by her Father. Fred dressed in Army formal, waits patiently. Seated in the front row are Fred's entire family.

Fred lifts the veil from Mabel's eyes. He gently kisses her lips. Gleaming, the two of them turn and face their families and friends.

EXT. CITY PARK - AFTERNOON

Fred and Mabel sit on a blanket, below a large Pin Oak. Their picnic is arranged perfectly. Fred, dressed in jeans and a plaid shirt, gazes up at the sky, his head in Mabel's lap. BONNIE (2) sleeps in a stroller next to them.

FRED

It's getting harder to watch from the sidelines.

MABEL

You've done your time, Fritz. We're just starting our family.

FRED

My entire company is in Europe.

MABEL

Good for them. Bonnie needs you here. I need you.

Fred sits up and consoles a sobbing Mabel. He comforts her, hugs her. He pulls back places his hands on her shoulders.

FRED

The Commander told me, I'd re-enlist as an officer, and never see combat. Me, an officer.

Mabel wipes her eyes and lunges into Fred's arms. She looks into his eyes only inches away.

MABEL

So you've made up your mind?

FRED

I haven't said yes. But it's a huge leap. An officer with responsibilities and a command.

Mabel shows signs of agreement, a proud smile on her face.

MABEL

You've always been a fighter.

Mabel runs her hand through Fred's hair and holds his cheek.

MABEL (CONT'D)

You're certain you'll be far from the battles?

FRED

Positive.

INT. ELLER HOME - MORNING

Mabel places a folded pair of socks onto the top of other items in Fred's suitcase. Each item is ironed and folded with tissue paper between the layers.

While Fred is occupied, Mabel grabs a picture of both of them from the dresser, slips it into the side, latches the locks. Fred has seen this in the mirror.

FRED

You know I don't need a picture to remember you.

Fred grabs her hand, places it on his heart.

FRED (CONT'D)

You'll be right here, always.

Fred picks up the suitcase, throws his duffle over his shoulder, they both walk out.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

BONNIE, now 3 years old hides her face sitting on a bench. Fred leans in to kiss Mabel, avoiding the bulge from their second child. Bonnie retreats into her own crossed arms.

Fred waves at everyone, throws his duffle over his shoulder and walks down the stairs towards the street.

Bonnie bounds off the bench. Fred throws the duffle aside, leans down to catch Bonnie now sobbing.

BONNIE

You have to go daddy?

Fred hugs Bonnie, shaken by his own emotions.

FRED

I'll be home before you know it. I promise.

Fred looks up at Mabel who can't hide her fear. He stands and picks up his suitcase, his duffle draped over his shoulder.

MABEL

You come back here Fred Eller.

Fred smiles, turns to board the train and fades away into the smoke.

PRE-LAP SFX: A whistle blows

INT. PASSENGER CAR - AFTERNOON

From Fred's POV, he stares off through the window, the fields of corn flash by, he is distant recalling the moment he left home.

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAWN

The train weaves through rows of corn. It steams towards the horizon and the endless prairie.

EXT. GEORGIA TRAIN STATION - DAWN

Fred and fellow officer candidates stream off the train, down the landing and into buses.

EXT. FORT BENNING - DAY

SUPER OVER: JANUARY 1945

Fred, back in his Army uniform, walks into the General's office, steps up to the Secretary's desk.

FRED

I'm here to see General Park.

GENERAL'S SECRETARY

You're Corporal Eller?

FRED

Yes, I am.

GENERAL'S SECRETARY

He's expecting you. Go right in.

Fred walks into the office. The click of his boots and a salute does little to gain the attention of the General.

FRED

Corporal Eller reporting for duty sir.

Without looking up the General replies:

GENERAL PARK

Good Morning, Corporal. I trust you had a safe trip?

FRED

Yes, sir.

The General looks up into Fred's jovial face. He slowly smiles.

GENERAL PARK

At ease Eller. I remember you.

FRED

Where from, sir?

GENERAL PARK

Your upper cut decked our best fighter.

FRED

Permission to speak freely, sir.

GENERAL PARK

By all means, Eller

FRED

He thought he had me beat. But, I don't quit, sir.

GENERAL PARK

I'd say that's a fair statement.

The General stands and directs Fred to take a seat.

GENERAL PARK (CONT'D)

Please take a seat.

They get comfortable in chairs facing each other.

GENERAL PARK (CONT'D)

I'll be frank son. In considering your candidacy and the promotion, I've had to ignore your eighth grade diploma. In this position your life skills will be far more useful.

FRED

I'm honored to serve, General, and anxious to learn. Best way to say it sir, I make things right.

GENERAL PARK

Well there's a lot that's wrong where you're going, so that's a good thing. Your mission will be to Command a Prisoner of War Camp.

Fred is overwhelmed. He hopes the General doesn't detect his hesitancy.

FRED

Really? I mean, excellent, sir.

GENERAL PARK

Are you up for the task, Eller?

Still uncertain Fred repositions into his chair.

FRED

Why, yes sir.

GENERAL PARK

Prisoners' under your supervision will be the worst war criminals the world has ever known.

The General stops to compose himself. Fred leans forward and reveals his reluctance.

FRED

So there's no officers available?

GENERAL PARK

They're either stateside or on their way. The war is winding down. General Patton is staying. Soldiers just want to go home. I'm promoting you to 2nd Lieutenant.

FRED

I see. I mean, thank you sir.

Fred is noticeably pleased with his promotion, but unsure of his command.

GENERAL PARK

Eller, most of these soldiers have been on the battlefield for months, or even years. Your mission is to bring hope to disorder, despair and destruction.

FRED

I'm just the man for the job, sir.

GENERAL PARK

That suits us both, cause you're the only man for the job Lieutenant.

Fred realizes he is in no position to argue his fate.

FRED

So General, who are these prisoners?

EXT. BATTLEFIELD THEATER - DAY

A column of battered German Tanks, personnel carriers and officers in jeeps drive on a country road.

GENERAL PARK (O.S.)

Many of these scoundrels have already been captured. Others, are at large, attempting to flee Europe.

PRE-LAP: Sounds of fighter planes and explosions

EXT. PRAGUE - EVENING**Requiem in D Minor by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

From atop a ridge in the distance, a small village outside Prague is smoldering, as the war wages in every direction, the devastation includes the entire city.

US troops march down a country road in formation, at an aggressive pace with tanks and artillery.

On another field German soldiers lumber with each step looking backwards in misery, wearing tattered and worn uniforms, their weapons haphazardly on their shoulders.

Large vehicles carrying Nazi crates head the opposite direction under heavy guard.

EXT. PRAGUE STREET - EVENING

Refugee's walk through the streets with prized possessions on their backs. A division of Nazi soldiers and trucks rolls by. A Czechoslovakian Man checks his surroundings as he scurries away.

In the center square a group of Jews, with hands bound behind them are assembled in the street. Without ceremony or warning an officer, GENERAL ZACHEROVICH (40's) shouts:

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
(in Russian)

Tsel' ah-GOHN

Shots ring out. One by one, the women and men fall to the ground. The marksmen laugh and congratulate each other as if the lineup were criminals.

EXT. PRAGUE MANSION - EVENING

GENERAL VLASOV (50's) an American educated officer and leader of the Russian Federation Army, occupy this small village.

Their headquarters is a large stately mansion ransacked by the soldiers under his command. He walks up the stairs and into the mansion.

INT. PRAGUE MANSION - EVENING

Two women, hands bound with ropes behind their backs, are paraded by the officers and up the stairs. Their dresses torn, their faces full of desperation.

Soldiers remove artwork and carry boxes of jewels, while other valuables are carted out the front door. Jewelry lines their pockets.

The General walks behind his desk, searches for a map.

A Lieutenant arrives at General Vlasov's desk, clicks his heels and salutes.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT
(in Russian)

My General!

GENERAL VLASOV
(in Russian)

At ease comrade. I'm hopeful you bring good news. Please, sit!

The Lieutenant removes his hat and sits in the chair.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT
(in Russian)

Unfortunately, our tank division has been decimated. The battalion is unarmed and in full retreat.

The General finishes with documents and holds a letter. He sits facing the Lieutenant

GENERAL VLASOV
Please, in English. We need the practice. As you are aware, the Americans have the continent surrounded.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT
Stalin knows we have defected.

GENERAL VLASOV
The whole world will know soon enough.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT
You are not concerned, my General.

GENERAL VLASOV
I am not. General Zacherovich ordered these air strikes?

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT
The man is mad.

GENERAL VLASOV

All of them have lost their minds.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT

What do you expect? Rifles aimed at our backs and promises from the Fuhrer, all unanswered.

GENERAL VLASOV

I've come to the conclusion, the war will end before we get his support.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT

You have a plan, my General.

GENERAL VLASOV

I'm assembling a group of our comrades. We will take a select group of officers, and the spoils, south through the Czech Republic into Austria. Here is a list of the officers.

The Lieutenant scans the list and looks surprised.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT

This is the entire list?

GENERAL VLASOV

I'm afraid so.

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT

We numbered eight hundred thousand.

GENERAL VLASOV

That was yesterday. Today we cannot trust anyone. I have hand-picked a dozen soldiers for cover. Do I have your loyalty comrade?

RUSSIAN LIEUTENANT

Yes, sir.

He stands, salutes and stuffs the list into his pocket as he exits the office.

Out in the lobby, a furious group of soldiers carry large crates out the front door.

INT. FORT BENNING CLASSROOM - MORNING

Blackboards and charts surround a small group of officers. A map on the table includes troop movements along with artillery and tanks.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR

Good morning, gentlemen.

The instructor grabs a pointer and begins the morning intelligence report.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

You will be interviewing high ranking Russian and German officers. Most of these officers will be repatriated to their country. Most will face prosecution.

FRED

What about guilt or innocence?

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR

In February, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at the Yalta conference. We collectively decided post-war conditions in Europe, including how to treat war criminals.

FRED

Where do we send these prisoners?

The Instructor steps over to a second blackboard with an outline drawn in chalk.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR

If a prisoner in uniform is found to have been a citizen before 1939 he is returned to that country. If they're captured in a Russian uniform its back to Moscow. No exceptions!

An AID knocks on the opened door and enters. The instructor motions to him.

INSTRUCTOR AID

Sorry to interrupt sir. Its urgent.

The aid hands over the paper and whispers into his ear. The instructor scans the telegram.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR

Gentlemen, I need to attend to an urgent matter. Class dismissed.

The class funnels out of the room. The Instructor discreetly pulls Fred aside.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

Eller, a moment please.

The instructor hands the paper to Fred.

FT BENNING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
This is addressed to you. It's regarding
your wife.

Fred reads over the telegram. His brows furrow, he grips
the paper. He reads aloud.

FRED
Came early. Complications. Severe
distress. Urgent.

The Instructor sharpens his lip, he understands the
emergency.

FRED (CONT'D)
Sir, I'd like to request leave before I
ship out.

INSTRUCTOR AID
Granted, of course. Go on, get out of
here.

Fred bolts for the door. His face covered with concern.

Sequence Nine

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Fred bursts through the emergency room door, tattered and
beaten from his journey. Holding the folded telegram, he
approaches Mabel's Doctor.

FRED
How is she?

DOCTOR
Mabel's a trooper. Although it was time
to deliver, your new Son wasn't having
it.

FRED
Don't sugar coat it Doc.

DOCTOR
Of course. She lost a lot of blood. With
the war, blood is in short supply. That
was our main concern. But her signs are
encouraging.

FRED

I don't mind saying Doc, she's my
compass, my life. May I stay with her?

DOCTOR

Yes, absolutely. Her folks are looking
after your daughter.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Fred walks slowly into the room, the Doctor follows respectfully behind. Mabel is fast asleep, weathered and pale. Fred looks at Mabel's suitcase. Orderly and folded properly. Before leaving the room the doctor states:

DOCTOR

We're right down the hall.

FRED

Thanks, Doc.

Fred pulls a chair close to Mabel and leans on the bed as close as he can. He falls fast asleep.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN

Sunshine fills the room. Mabel is awake, watching Fred as he sleeps soundly, snoring. The nurse carefully enters. They whisper:

MABEL

He's always been a sound sleeper.

NURSE

I can see that.

MABEL

Should I wake him?

The Nurse places the blood pressure strap around Mabel's arm.

NURSE

Let him sleep.

She begins to pump and monitor the pressure. The sound awakens Fred. His eyes open. With a weathered voice Mabel whispers.

MABEL

Morning, sleepy head.

Fred sits up quickly, immediately concerned for her health.

FRED
Are you OK?

MABEL
Much better.

NURSE
She's a hardy woman, Mr. Eller.

Fred looks into Mabel's eyes, relieved she is beaming.

FRED
She is that.

MABEL
Did you see your new son?

FRED
Not yet, I wanted to make sure you were OK.

MABEL
Well now. You've got your son.

Fred looks to the Nurse for reassurance.

FRED
Is she going to be OK, Ma'me?

The Nurse places a thermometer under her tongue and places her hand on her forehead.

NURSE
She was out. Didn't see a thing. Probably the best thing for Mom and baby.

Fred is beaming but concerned by Mabel's condition.

MABEL
I think Steve is as stubborn as you.

FRED
That's a good thing, right?

They both smile, glad to be in each others care.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

A car waits for Fred, as he pushes a wheelchair carrying both Mabel and his new son Steve.

Fred stops at the end of the sidewalk. A nurse takes the newborn into her arms while Fred helps Mabel to her feet.

MABEL

I'm glad to be going home. I've never liked hospitals.

Fred carefully hugs Mabel, aware that her healing is on-going. Both needing a simple kiss.

MABEL (CONT'D)

I've missed that.

FRED

Me too.

Fred helps Mabel into the back of the car, rushes around to the other side.

The nurse hands Steve to Fred seated in the back.

NURSE

Handle with care, and relax.

FRED

Will do! He's so tiny.

The Nurse closes the door. The car slowly drives away.

INT. OFFICERS LIMO - MORNING

Mabel marvels at the car and Fred's new rank, she touches his shoulder and his Lieutenant stripes.

MABEL

So this is my Lieutenant?

Fred shows mixed emotions and sighs briefly.

FRED

Higher rank, means more responsibility.

Mabel straightens Fred's tie and fidgets with his metals.

MABEL

You'll do just fine Fritz. I'm certain of it.

FRED

You think so?

MABEL

I know so. Fred Eller, there is no task that bothers you. If you put your mind to it, it'll get done, that I am certain.

Fred grins at the complement, but wears a grim expression.

FRED

I still regret leaving school.

MABEL

You listen here Lieutenant Eller. The Army is lucky to have you.

Mabel runs her hand through Fred's thinning hair.

MABEL (CONT'D)

So when do you ship out?

FRED

Tomorrow.

Mabel smiles, they both marvel at their new son. The car drives into the driveway of their new home.

EXT. NAVY VESSEL - DAWN

From the deck of a Navy Vessel, Fred waves towards the dock where Mabel sheds a tear, with Steve in her arms and Bonnie waving a US Flag.

EXT. BAD HERSFELD STATION - AFTERNOON

SUPER: MAY 7, 1945

An aerial view of the train station reveals a town torn by the horrors of war. The train slowly comes to a halt among buildings piled in ruins. Nearby military vehicles lie smoldering, dozens of coffins drive by, transported on flatbed trucks.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - AFTERNOON

Fred steps from the train, stiff from the ride through Southern France and shocked at the signs of destruction. In every direction are the grim reminders of war.

For the first time in his life, Fred stands motionless, unable to process the moment. As he begins to rotate, each vantage point reveals misery and ruin.

Fred's Interpreter, KARL OLDENBURG (27) a thorough genuine man, stands with Fred's Aide, SERGEANT CARLSON (20's) a conscientious and dedicated young Sergeant.

The Sergeant and Karl scurry through townspeople to reach Fred. A small group of liberated Jews shuffle by with their entire possessions strapped on their backs.

KARL
Lieutenant Eller.

FRED
Mr. Oldenburg?

KARL
Yes. Please, call me Karl.

Sergeant Carlson salutes, Fred acknowledges.

SERGEANT CARLSON
(A deep southern accent)
Evening, sir. Welcome to Baker Company.

FRED
Good Evening, Sergeant. You're a southerner?

SERGEANT CARLSON
Yes, sir, I am. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

FRED
Ah, the Crimson Tide

SERGEANT CARLSON
Yes, sir! Class of 42.

FRED
Your degree?

SERGEANT CARLSON
I quit my Senior year to join the Army, sir.

FRED
Well, we have that in common.

Fred shows a sign of regret and empathy. He turns to Karl.

FRED (CONT'D)
(to his interpreter)
So Karl, what's the celebration about?

Carlson begins to load Fred's luggage into the car.

KARL
You've not heard.

Karl pauses for a moment, looks perplexed.

KARL (CONT'D)
Germany surrendered. Hitler is dead.

Fred is totally ill prepared for the news, embarrassed.

FRED
Wow, so the allies made it to Berlin.

KARL
Yes, they did. I'm surprised you weren't informed.

FRED
I'm just a Lieutenant. Pretty low on the totem pole.

Karl motions for Fred to join him.

KARL
Respectfully, rank means nothing to me.
Please, this way.

FRED
Thank you Karl.

The two men smile at each other and walk down the stairs to a waiting car with Carlson at the wheel. They speed away quickly.

EXT. CAMP COMMAND - EVENING

Fred and Karl arrive out front of the US Regional Command. They exit the car. While Carlson unloads Fred's luggage, Fred takes in his surroundings.

KARL
This is one of the few buildings that survived the shelling.

FRED
It's a gem all right. I'm shocked at how little is left standing.

Fred is focused on his surroundings. Karl waits, then pierces the silence.

KARL

You should get settled in your office. We can go to the Cage tomorrow.

FRED

The cage?

KARL

Yes, it's a despicable place.

Fred looks towards the outskirts of town, lights surround a fortress of barbed wire. Fog covers the ground.

FRED

It looks creepy, that's for sure.

KARL

The German's called it the Cage. Hundreds of Jews perished there. It was a place of torture and death.

A dozen Jewish prisoners, still in striped uniforms, walk slowly by Fred. Their bodies emaciated, their feet bare, their faces covered with empty stares.

One of the prisoners stops briefly. He struggles to step forward and awkwardly attempts to hug Fred. Fred is humbled, unable to process the gesture. He watches as the man wattles away.

FRED

My God, who would do such things?

KARL

Our own people did this, Fritz. It was the extermination of our neighbors. A frightening ordeal. The death squads would line them up, march em away, never to be seen again.

The two men stand for a moment. The sounds of celebration among the destruction.

FRED

If you ask me, hate and stupidity did this, Karl. Thankfully, there's always hope for something better.

A horn blasts, shots fill the air, airplanes stream by overhead.

KARL

Do you have time for a drink?

FRED

I don' see why not. Carlson, we'll be back shortly.

CARLSON

Yes, sir. Take your time. I'll take your things up to your room.

FRED

Thank you Sergeant.

INT. HOFFBRAU HAUS - EVENING

Fred and Karl sit at a table in the middle of a beer garden. The surroundings still show the scars of war.

KARL

You are troubled by what you have seen?

FRED

I'm shocked at the civilian toll. Entire towns destroyed in the blink of a eye.

KARL

Germany has lost its way. We were deceived by the Fuhrer. Madness, that's what it is. Madness.

They both sit speechless for a moment.

FRED

The camps. What happened at the camps?

ENTER FLASHBACK

EXT JEWISH GHETTO - DAY

A group of Jewish citizens walk by with large Stars of David sewn haphazardly on their clothes.

KARL (V.O.)

It started with restrictions. Then Jews were forbidden to leave the ghettos.

A large group of Jews exits a military personnel carrier and are led onto the train platform and into dozens of boxcars.

KARL (V.O.)

Then one day, they rounded up every Jew in town. No reason. The SS claimed they were needed in the factories.

Karl stands with his wife in town. They both notice ash falling from the sky and follow its origin, their gaze transfixed on the sky.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOFFBRAU HAUS - NIGHT

Karl is staring up into space, he returns to the moment.

KARL

No one came back, they never came back.

Karl realizes he has relived a horrendous memory. Fred tries to show his empathy.

FRED

I can't imagine.

KARL

Well, enough of the past. Have you seen combat?

FRED

Oddly enough, I've never fired a shot.

KARL

That may be for the best.

FRED

Are you familiar with the prisoners?

KARL

Yes, I am. These are evil men. The worst this world has ever known.

FRED

So I've heard.

KARL

They are not to be trusted. Drink up. We should get you settled in.

EXT. BAD HERSFELD STREET - EVENING

Fred and Karl walk slowly back to headquarters.

KARL

You and I have a job to do.

FRED

Yes, we do.

KARL

The German people want justice, at the end of a rope.

FRED

I can see why. Hopefully justice will see to it, that none of this ever happens again.

Fred looks around at his surroundings, still bothered by the utter destruction.

KARL

The human cost and suffering will be felt for decades.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Fred and Karl have made it back to Headquarters. Carlson waits patiently at the entrance.

FRED

Can you be here tomorrow morning at eight?

KARL

Sure. Your quarters are on the top floor.

Fred is distracted, watching the misery everywhere.

FRED

Hell, the depression was a disaster, but this is insanity.

KARL

The masterminds are up there in that Cage.

Karl points towards the cage. They both stare. POW's walk by, still in tattered blue and white stripes.

KARL (CONT'D)

These victims, remind us of our duty.

FRED

Yes, it does.

Carlson who was listening in, pulls out a list.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Karl pats Fred on the shoulder.

KARL

I will see you in the morning.

Karl walks away and into the street.

INT. FRED'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The door opens and Fred enters with Carlson handling the luggage.

FRED

Thank you Sergeant. Just drop em right there.

Carlson places the luggage carefully on the floor, hands Fred a stack of folders.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, these are the prisoners we'll evaluate tomorrow. It includes a few hand written letters that we'll need to translate.

Fred looks at them. Hand written in German he just shakes his head, scans for a simple phrase he knows. He lays them down, carefully drapes his coat around a chair.

FRED

Carlson.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

At ease.

Fred begins to place his items in their place as he speaks.

FRED (CONT'D)

You've been here a while.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir. I have.

FRED

Truth be told, I'm just a farm boy from Nebraska. I've never killed anyone. I can box a few rounds with almost any man, but I don't spell very good. Hell, I haven't commanded a platoon, let alone an entire Company.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, you're gonna do just fine. There ain't another officer within miles of this hell hole. Who will know?

Fred smiles at Carlson's quip and begins to feel at ease.

FRED

Well, I need someone I can depend on, for just about everything.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I'm your man, sir.

FRED

I believe you are Sergeant.

Carlson puts down his guard and his rank and changes his tone.

SERGEANT CARLSON

May I be candid, sir?

FRED

Yes, please.

SERGEANT CARLSON

There's one last thing sir. I was just as overwhelmed by what I've seen of this war. It affects all of us. Some worse than others. Being afraid of it all is a natural reaction. Keeps you alive.

Fred sighs, appreciates Carlson's candid assessment.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

Hell, when I played ball for the Tide, I was plenty scared before the game. Fear makes you focus.

Fred stops what he is doing to let that quip sink in.

FRED

Yes, it does. Thank you, Sergeant.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Have a good night sir.

Fred and Carlson salute, Carlson turns and carefully shuts the door behind him.

INT. FRED'S QUARTERS - EVENING

From the hallway Fred enters his room, shuts the door. He drops his duffle and briefcase and places his suitcase on his bed and opens it.

His clothes are immaculate, each item ironed and separated by tissue paper. He smiles, marveling at Mabel's attention to detail.

On the top of the clothes is the framed picture of him and Mabel. He places the picture on the night stand, glances back at the picture. He bends to his knees, lowers his head, clasps his hands and begins to pray.

FRED (V.O.)

Dear heavenly father, thank you for all my blessings. Lord, boy do I need your help this time. But you probably already know. Please be with me, as I complete your plan. We've got a lot of work to do. Oh, and don't forget Mabel, Bonnie and Steve. Amen.

EXT. PRAGUE MANSION - MORNING

General Zacherovich and General Vlasov stand at the base of the steps in front of a temporary outpost.

A squad of British Spitfire's scream by, one at a time muffling any sound below.

A flurry of activity is nearby. Behind the officers, soldiers load items into large trucks.

Zacherovich salutes Major General Vlasov. Vlasov lays a map onto the hood of the squad car.

GENERAL VLASOV

We must split-up. Head southwest toward Austria. Here. Ginzling is about 80 kilometers from Innsbruck. Make haste. The Americans are rounding up all officers.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

The Fuhrer is dead, now Stalin is singing with the Americans. All of our labors are meaningless.

GENERAL VLASOV

Not so comrade. We can make it to the Mediterranean and freedom, if we hurry.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

We would make better time if we had less luggage.

GENERAL VLASOV

We will need these items if we are to make it to the coast. Our freedom will not be without cost.

General Vlasov folds up the map, he salutes, Zacherovich follows.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

We will meet again, comrade.

Without further ceremony they both hop into open German vehicles. At the edge of town the caravan separates into two columns, led by each of the Generals.

INT. CAMP COMMAND - MORNING

Fred stands in the front of his superior's desk, GENERAL SULLY (50'S) at the Headquarters Office.

FRED

Fred Eller reporting for duty, sir.

GENERAL SULLY

At ease Lieutenant. I trust your trip was without incident.

FRED

Yes, sir. Just wasn't prepared for, the destruction.

General Sully looks up to study Fred and assess his experience.

GENERAL SULLY

A West Point grad? You look like you're straight from the Class of forty four.

FRED

No sir.

GENERAL SULLY

College? I'll guess the Midwest.

FRED

No College sir.

GENERAL SULLY

A High School Grad?

FRED

No sir.

GENERAL SULLY

Well Eller, you must have pissed someone off or you're just damn smart. Now which one is it?

FRED

My father used to tell me I could fix anything I put my mind to, sir.

GENERAL SULLY

Well. There's plenty of things that need fixin. This war destroyed just about everything.

Fred acknowledges the General's frankness, changes the path.

FRED

General, I believe in hard work and I never quit, period.

GENERAL SULLY

Lieutenant, you'll do just fine.

FRED

Thank you, sir.

GENERAL SULLY

I'll bring you up to speed. There are over 300 high ranking German and Russian officers already under your supervision.

General Sully hands Fred his official orders. His reaction is one of astonishment, as he glances at the heading - Company Commander.

GENERAL SULLY (CONT'D)

This is an official copy of your orders. Keep in mind, the Russian and German delegations will fight you, tooth and nail.

Fred is overwhelmed with anxiety. He wears it on his face.

FRED

Yes, sir. I'm used to a good fight.

GENERAL SULLY

This is different Eller.

FRED

How so?

GENERAL SULLY

When I take off this week, you're it.

FRED

I'm sorry sir, I don't follow.

GENERAL SULLY

Eller, you're gonna be the highest ranking officer for miles. Everyone else is already stateside or on their way.

FRED

So, I'm the Company Commander?

GENERAL SULLY

That's right Eller, congratulations.

Overwhelmed by the promotion, Fred allows it to sink in. General Sully senses the young man's unease.

GENERAL SULLY (CONT'D)

Are you OK son?

Fred quickly collects himself.

FRED

Yes, sir.

GENERAL SULLY

Son, you're due an explanation.

(beat)

This was one hell of a war. You're the cleanup committee. You need to make things right. You understand?

FRED

Yes, sir, I do. I'm thankful for the opportunity.

GENERAL SULLY

Great. So, don't screw it up!

The General smiles, picks up a copy of the camp list and hands it to Fred.

FRED

I'll do my best, sir.

The General pauses briefly, ponders for a moment and proposes a short trip.

GENERAL SULLY
Lieutenant, come with me.

The General grabs a set of keys, and throws his coat on. They walk out of the office.

EXT. CAMP COMMAND - MORNING

The General and Fred both leave the office and hop in a Jeep. Two soldiers stop to salute.

INT. ARMY JEEP - MORNING

The General speaks as he drives the Jeep through town.

GENERAL SULLY
We liberated another Nazi concentration camp nearby, just this morning. I think I'd be wise for you to see where these bastards come from.

The General references his copy of the list, hands it to Fred. Fred scans it as the General talks.

GENERAL SULLY (CONT'D)
Most of these sons of bitches will hang or face a firing squad. In my humble opinion, they deserve much worse. But you Eller, you will follow your orders, no exceptions. Is that clear?

FRED
Yes sir!

EXT. CONCENTRATION CAMP - MORNING

A steady line of emaciated prisoners shuffle along the road as the jeep drives by. Approaching the open gates, Fred watches a group of Army Soldiers assembling Nazi officers in a group.

ARMY SERGEANT
Mach, Shnell!

The Sergeant rams the butt end of his rifle into an officers back.

GENERAL SULLY
These animals are your next batch.

They drive into the camp. In the distance buildings with large smoke stacks line the back of the camp. A bulldozer is covering a mass grave of dead prisoners, barely recognizable as humans.

FRED

Was this some sort of factory?

GENERAL SULLY

Those are ovens Eller. This was genocide. Until you see it in person, you can't grasp the insanity.

The General fails to finish. Another group of German officers are escorted towards the trucks.

They pass a large pile of suit cases, thirty feet high and fifty feet wide. Next to that is a massive pile of shoes. The two men are speechless as they drive by.

FRED

How could this happen?

GENERAL SULLY

They're sick mother fuckers, every last one of them.

Fred is shocked but angry, as he trades glances with the Nazi Officers.

FRED

General, I'll be honest. It'll be hard to show any mercy, after seeing this.

GENERAL SULLY

Yep, that's expected! But this is one moment you must throw away your vengeance. Just follow the law and let the chips fall where they may.

The General turns the jeep around. They head back towards the entrance. Both men attempt to process what they see without words. They pass a few prisoners attempting to help a JEWISH WOMEN (40's) to her feet.

Fred jumps out of the Jeep. The men are frail, too weak to assist, so Fred grabs the WOMAN's arm, notices a number on her forearm. Fred gazes in the eyes of the woman, a face he will never forget.

Once on her feet, two other prisoners take each arm and lead her towards a series of stations. Water, food and clothes.

Fred pauses to watch them shuffle away. He hops back into the Jeep.

FRED

What will happen to these people?

GENERAL SULLY

We're a bit low on resources, but the US Army will get them back on their feet and send them home.

FRED

If there's a home to return to.

GENERAL SULLY

That may be the case.

They pass the Nazi soldiers loading into a large truck. They all turn to gaze at Fred and the General.

GENERAL SULLY (CONT'D)

One last item Lieutenant. Keep your guard up every second. These fuckers have nothing to loose.

FRED

Understood! Hell, I'm just a farm boy from Nebraska, but I know evil when I see it.

GENERAL SULLY

I was too, Lieutenant. On the farm, if cattle died of disease, you dig a ditch, throw them in, cover em up. This was an extermination. Evil men took every thing the Jews had, and every thing they could have been.

FRED

Yes, sir. They sure did.

Fred and the General exchange a glance eye to eye and drive away into the distance. Fred looks to the sky.

FRED (V.O.)

I would never forget what I saw that day. I hid it away in an envelope, and sent it up to God.

EXT. COMMANDERS OFFICE - MORNING

Fred exits the office and out the front door. Karl is waiting in the car. Carlson opens the door.

Both Karl and Carlson notice that Fred is a different man, hardened by his trip with General Sully. Yet Fred keeps his emotions to himself.

FRED
Good Morning, Sergeant.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Good morning, Commander.

Fred fails to reveal a mixture of excitement or anxiety over his promotion. Carlson circles to the other door and hops in.

FRED
How'd you know?

SERGEANT CARLSON
It's official. The article was in this issue of the Stars and Stripes.

Carlson hands Fred a copy of the magazine where he is featured in the article.

KARL
Where to Fritz?

FRED
To the Cage, Karl.

They drive away and travel straight through town to the outskirts of the village. The Cage looms in the distance.

Sequence Eleven

EXT. GINZLING FARM - DAWN

General Zacherovich steps from his car. Soldiers carry large crates up a steep hill along with shovels, a few soldiers hold the wife of a farmer on her knees.

An SS soldier pulls a Lugar from his belt and fires a bullet straight through her skull. Handcuffed, her husband screams in agony.

Without emotion the General issues his commands. Two SS salute.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
Follow them. No witnesses.

The SS soldiers follow up the hill and out of site. Several Spitfires stream by overhead. A US column is seen approaching from the North.

Several shots ring out from the woods. The General eyes the column through binoculars.

POV: From inside the barn, two unidentified children watch and sob.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH (CONT'D)

We have little time.

A young Russian officer approaches with intelligence.

RUSSIAN OFFICER

General, the road just ends around that ridge. We have nowhere to go.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Any sign of General Vlasov?

RUSSIAN OFFICER

No, sir,

The officer struggles to tell Zacherovich the obvious.

RUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

The US column, it will be here soon.

Zacherovich looks towards the ridge then quickly back towards his men.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Now!

Less than a second later, SS Officers shoot every soldier. Even the two SS coming down the hill are shot in a barrage of bullets.

The dozen handpicked officers remain. General Zacherovich surveys the surroundings, folds a map left on the hood of the car, places it into his coat.

FARMER

(in German)

You'll get yours.

The Farmer spits at Zacherovich. Zacherovich takes a Ruger from his holster, shoots the farmer in the temple, aims and shoots his Officer and throws the pistol into the ditch.

EXT. RIDGE OUTSIDE GINZLING - DAY

From the ridge above the farm the US Army column enters the valley. The entire column surrounds the vehicles. Soldiers jump from every truck and surround the Russians disguised as Germans.

A dozen German Officers stand with their hands up. A US Army General hops out from a Jeep.

US ARMY GENERAL
(in German)

Lass deine Waffen fallen!

Slowly each of the officers, bends down carefully (keeping eyes on the US soldiers) they lay down their weapons. The General surveys the carnage walks slowly around the group.

US ARMY GENERAL (CONT'D)

So these are the Russian deserters dressed as Nazi's. General, the war is over.

The Army General eyes Zacherovich and the officers. He takes a few steps closer to Zacherovich now handcuffed, looks at the carnage at his feet.

US ARMY GENERAL (CONT'D)

Killing your own soldiers? Lock em up.

CORPORAL

You heard the General. Get these bastards cuffed and chained and in the truck. Pronto!

All wearing German uniforms, they are loaded into large trucks.

Two children, the Farmers Son and Daughter, rush down the hill and hug their parents lying face first in the dirt. They sob uncontrollably.

US ARMY GENERAL

Corporal, I need statements from those kids, when they're ready.

CORPORAL

Understood!

EXT. THE CAGE - MORNING

From inside the car, Fred studies the garrison and security around the Cage. He scans the perimeter, several machine gun nests are at each corner.

Fred and Karl sit in the back, both of them digesting their surroundings. Carlson stops at the check-point. The GATE GUARD (21) an alert young Marine, salutes Fred.

CAGE GATE GUARD

Morning, Commander!

Fred looks over at Carlson who can't hide his grin.

FRED

At ease Sergeant. I'm Fred Eller the new Camp Commander.

CAGE GATE GUARD

Yes, sir. We've been expecting you.

FRED

Will I see you each morning Sergeant?

CAGE GATE GUARD

Yes, sir. You will.

FRED

This is my Interpreter, Karl Oldenburg. He may come and go as required.

CAGE GATE GUARD

Yes, sir.

The Sergeant salutes, Fred issues a very deliberate salute.

FRED

Onward!

The gate is opened and the car proceeds slowly through several perimeter fences. The gates are quickly closed behind them.

Machine gun nests are located in the center of each wall, one protecting the courtyard.

Two privates attempt to peel a German officer from the razor and barbed wire, shot and killed by machine gun fire during the night.

In segregated sections, German officers perform basic calisthenics, prostitutes all look at the car and smile.

A stretcher carried by two US soldiers contains a dead Russian officer, his arms dangling from the sides. His wrists and throat slit and bleeding.

INT. OFFICER CAR - MORNING

FRED

Carlson, the man on the stretcher. Is that normal?

CARLSON

Yes, sir.

KARL

A bit of divine justice Fritz.

FRED

But, suicide? Where's the honor in that?

CARLSON

Three every day, sir. Sometimes more.

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - MORNING

Carlson parks the car, they all exit.

Groups of similar German and Russian officers huddle together in the distance, the cool morning air reveals each breath. Several officers are still neatly dressed, while others show months of neglect.

The Russian and German prisoners, separated by an impenetrable series of barriers and armed guards.

Russian Lieutenant AZORDOFF (40's) a well-educated, defiant bureaucrat, stands together with his Russian civilian interpreter LISENKO (30's) a thorough and loyal servant.

Fred and Karl walk directly towards the Russian officers and stand at three paces. Fred stands in front of Azordoff. As Fred speaks Lisenko translates for Azordoff.

FRED

Good Morning, Lieutenant Azordoff

Lisenko keeps his eyes towards Fred and turns his head slightly to render a translation.

LISENKO

(in Russian)

Good Morning, Lieutenant

AZORDOFF
(in Russian)

Enough of the pleasantries. Where is your commanding officer?

Lisenko is bothered, his displeasure worn on his face.

LISENKO
The Lieutenant prefers to begin immediately. He asks to meet with your commanding officer.

Fred pauses, steps forward, tries desperately to conceal his anger from the insulting protocol.

FRED
You can tell Lieutenant Azordoff, I'm Lieutenant Commander Fred Eller. I am the Commander of Bad Hersfeld Prison.

Lisenko frowns, looks towards Azordoff. Lisenko motions with his head towards Fred. Azordoff understands the body language.

LISENKO
I see. We were expecting someone, older. After you.

Lisenko motions for Fred and Karl to precede them. Fred is angered by the disrespect and struggles to conceal it. Carlson joins the group.

Guards are posted on each side of the entrance. The entire group walks up the stairs and into the entrance.

INT. CAGE COURT LOBBY - MORNING

Fred and Carlson both remove their sidearm and hand it to the GUARDS. Fred recognizes the opportunity to diffuse the air.

FRED
Gentlemen, your sidearms please?

Fred motions for both of the Russians to comply.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF
(in Russian)
What is this custom?

Seizing the moment to establish his protocol and control, Fred responds:

FRED

No weapons in the courtroom. No exceptions.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

(in Russian)

I must enter without my weapon?

FRED

Trust is earned.

Lisenko holds his hands out. Lieutenant Azordoff takes his pistol out of its holster and hands it to the GUARDS

LISENKO

I thought we were allies.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

(in Russian)

Highly irregular!

Fred, uneasy yet firm, he waves his arm to usher them into the chamber.

FRED

Gentlemen, after you.

Karl and Carlson both acknowledge Fred's comment, place their hands on each of Fred's shoulders and walk into the court.

INT. CAGE COURTROOM - MORNING

The group walks into a large conference room resembling an English court. Fred looks at Karl, notes his displeasure.

A witness stand sits in the middle of the room, three equal tables sit across from the raised witness stand. A US, Russian and German flag designates the seating at each of the three large tables.

A large review area is against the wall, a bleacher erected for dignitaries, the military and off-duty guards.

Guards carry automatic weapons, a .45 sidearm, four strong at each exit. A US Military Judge enters and sits at his elevated chair.

CAGE JUDGE

Gentlemen, please be seated.

The group begins to sit at their seats, some removing coats, others placing documents on the table. The judge continues:

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

I know we have a large docket today. As you are aware, this is our first official sentencing.

Lieutenant Azordoff places his documents out in front of him and glances at the US table. The Judge looks at a document and continues.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

Here are the rules as I interpret them, outlined in the Yalta Agreement. We, that means all of us, determine origin, allegiance and military service of each prisoner. War crimes alleged, if any, and whether the prisoner will be returned to their country of origin. We will consider lawful objections from the German and Russian delegations.

The judge looks towards the German and Russian table, he pauses.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

However, the final decision will be made by the US board of officers. Commander Eller alone will make that call. Are we in agreement?

Fred, now keenly aware of his ultimate responsibility, rotates his right fist into his left palm and exhales slowly.

ALL BOARD MEMBERS

Yes, your honor.

The Judge motions to two guards who hold a German SS Officer. He shrugs defiantly against the US Guards.

CAGE JUDGE

OK, if there are no objections let's review the first case. Wilhelm Barth SS C-5 Barracks number 38, born December 4th 1915

The two guards place the prisoner into the seat. The Officer settles into the chair. The German Civilian stands.

GERMAN CIVILIAN

Your honor, the German government recommends transfer to Nuremburg for trial.

CAGE JUDGE

With no objections?

The Judge ponders to himself, looks to Fred.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Eller?

Fred looks at Karl to gauge his opinion. He nods in agreement.

FRED

Your honor, the US has no objections.

The Judge pauses, writes on a paper, pens a signature.

CAGE JUDGE

Very well. Moving on.

The two guards usher General Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb into the seat, guarded by two additional guards. General Leeb nods to recognize a fellow SS Officer. Leeb sits down without objection.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

General Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, born September 5th 1876? Is that date correct?

GERMAN OFFICER

Yes, that is correct. I hasten to add, General Leeb was relieved of his duty on January 13th 1942, your honor, before the war ended.

CAGE JUDGE

With all due respect counselor, it is the service *during* the war that interests this court.

The Judge purposely turns towards General Leeb

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

General, you have been found guilty of war crimes against the civilian population. It says here, your SS death squads murdered thousands of innocent Jewish citizens.

General Leeb sits motionless, his eyes forward.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

Gentlemen from the German delegation, is this correct?

GERMAN PROSECUTOR

That is correct, your honor. I will summarize.

As the German Prosecutor describes the atrocities committed, images reveal the evidence. An aide flips large pictures on and off an easel.

GERMAN PROSECUTOR (V.O.)

We discovered thousands of Jewish citizens starved to death in Leningrad, dozens of death camps in both Poland and Germany, men, women and children loaded onto box cars and subsequently exterminated. It was a holocaust.

Back in the courtroom the German Prosecutor looks to the Judge for a consensus.

GERMAN PROSECUTOR

It is our recommendation that General Leeb be sent to Nuremberg for sentencing.

CAGE JUDGE

Commander Eller, any objections?

Although Fred is caught off guard, he is armed with his own evidence. He quickly looks back and forth between Carlson and Karl for their reaction.

FRED

Your honor, I have seen the horror with my own eyes, it's a evil that must end if we are to survive. We have no objections.

CAGE JUDGE

Germany, is that to your liking?

GERMAN CIVILIAN

Yes, it is your honor.

CAGE JUDGE

Very well General Leeb, it is the decision of this court; that you will be sent to Nuremberg. Your country will determine your fate.

(beat)

And the next case?

INT. CAGE COURTROOM - DAY

An ominous theme proceeds a series of cases. Prisoners come before the court, one by one their circumstances are reviewed by Fred and the Russian and German delegations.

FRED (V.O.)

Paraded in front of us, were the masterminds of genocide. The Architects of the worst global extermination of Jews in modern times.

Several of the prisoners make brief by futile efforts to raise objection or issue a display of defiance.

FRED (V.O.)

Generals defiant, sure of their perceived innocence to the end. Remorse or sorrow, the most distant thoughts in their minds.

Karl adds his translations while Carlson places documents in front of Fred for review. The judge pounds his gavel and the next prisoner is escorted into the court.

The German delegation objects to most cases, as German officers are paraded in and out of the courtroom. Pictures and maps illustrate the war crimes alleged.

FRED (V.O.)

I looked evil straight in the eyes. For me, putting God in charge felt like the right thing to do. Secretly, I hoped a rope would soon take them straight to hell.

Aware of their fate, many of the German war criminals resist as they are escorted from the court.

Fred rests his hands on the edge of the table and grasps them together.

FRED (V.O.)

I pray the world will never forget.

The judge pounds his gavel one last time. The sound catapults Fred back to his surroundings.

CAGE JUDGE

I see we have one case regarding alleged civilians.

The Judge looks at the Russian delegation.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Yes, your honor.

FRED

(sotto to Karl)

So he speaks English.

KARL

Of course he does.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Your honor, as an American ally, we insist the US return citizens to our homeland. They have been wrongly imprisoned here at Hersfeld.

CAGE JUDGE

Lieutenant, Is that a question or simply just a statement? Lieutenant Eller, do we have any civilians here at the cage?

Fred is taken by surprise by the question. He scans the list quickly, looks back at the judge.

FRED

According to our information your honor, all prisoners under our custody are either German or Russian officers.

CAGE JUDGE

Lieutenant Azordoff?

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

This young officer is surely mistaken.

Azordoff raises a set of documents in the air.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF (CONT'D)

I have papers from at least a dozen citizens wrongly imprisoned.

Fred whispers to Fred and Carlson.

FRED

(sotto)

Gentlemen, I could use your input.

KARL

(sotto)

First, we must review the documents.

SERGEANT CARLSON

(sotto)

We'll consider them if they check out.

Fred is nervous as the room waits for his reply. He composes himself and replies:

FRED

Your honor, we'd be willing to review the documents. If they are in fact who they say they are, we will be glad to reconsider their case.

Lieutenant Azordoff and his delegation nod in agreement.

CAGE JUDGE

Very well. The Russian delegation will provide the proof. As the US delegation has stated, they will review and consider a remedy based on the evidence.

The judge pounds the gavel one last time. The delegations all collect their documents, spill out of the court in different directions.

EXT. CAGE COURTROOM - AFTERNOON

Azordoff and his delegation waits at the base of the stairs. Fred stops at the bottom of the stairs. Azordoff hands a set of documents to Fred.

AZORDOFF

We expect you will share your findings with the court.

FRED

We will consider your request.

Azordoff is enamored at a small golden gloves pin on Fred's lapel. He points to it.

AZORDOFF

What is this?

FRED

It is what it seems. Golden Gloves.

SERGEANT CARLSON

The Lieutenant Commander is a golden gloves champion.

AZORDOFF

Ah, boxing!

Azordoff crouches, puts his hands up and stands in a protective stance attempting to intimidate Fred.

FRED

So you want to go a few rounds?

AZORDOFF

Why would I want to challenge a golden glove champ?

FRED

Maybe another day.

Fred turns and leaves Azordoff wondering, Karl and Carlson follow. The Russians hop into their car, drive towards the gate and out of the compound.

Sequence Twelve

INT. FRED'S OFFICE CAGE - AFTERNOON

Fred is seated at his desk, with Carlson taking notes and Karl is seated next to Carlson. Carlson looks up to speak.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, may I speak freely?

FRED

Yes. Go on.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I think Lieutenant Azordoff is a loose canon. A horses ass, if you ask me.

FRED

I would agree, Sergeant.

Fred stands, looks out the window into the courtyard.

FRED (CONT'D)

Carlson. You know, my Dad taught me to respect our elders, but this guy's making it difficult.

KARL

Azordoff is certainly here to battle.

Fred turns back to face Karl.

FRED

I've learned to never reveal my strategy early in a match.

KARL

A sound strategy.

Fred looks around the room at the youth in his office.

FRED

So, we may be the youngest officers here.
We just need to be the smartest.

Fred gathers documents and letters from his desk. He sighs and then gains a welcome resolve.

FRED (CONT'D)

Karl, I'll need you to translate the letters from Leeb and List. And Carlson.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

I'll need a brief summary of all correspondence from Karl. Just an outline.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

KARL

Commander.

FRED

Fritz, please.

KARL

Of course. Fritz, just a word of advice. Don't let Azordoff run the show.

FRED

Noted. This is not my first rodeo.

KARL

What is a rodeo?

Both Fred and Carlson look at each other and smile.

SERGEANT CARLSON

It's an analogy Karl. A battle.

KARL

Ahhh.

FRED

This *is* the first battle for all of us.
The real fight will be in the courtroom.

Karl and Fred pause for a moment to connect. Carlson looks on with a guarded smile, stands with the prisoner list.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, this is a current list of the officers here at the cage.

Carlson spreads each page out neatly facing Fred.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

We have 100 German officers, just shy of 100 Russians and 40 prostitutes from all over Europe.

Fred looks surprised, Carlson hands a communication from Command to Fred, summarizing the details.

FRED

How the hell did we end up with prostitutes?

SERGEANT CARLSON

I think the city wanted them off the street. They were here when I got here.

FRED

I wonder if Azordoff is after the girls?

KARL

He can have them.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I found a few of them attractive.

Fred eyes Carlson, a bit surprised at Carlson's reply.

FRED

Carlson.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sorry, sir.

Carson smiles and refocuses on the telegram.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

Today, allied forces captured a dozen Russian officer's in German uniforms, the group includes two Generals. They'll be here first thing tomorrow.

FRED

Russians in German uniforms.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir. Russians impersonating German officers.

FRED

Karl, do you know any Russian?

KARL

If they were captured in German uniforms, they are probably fluent in German.

FRED

Good point.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Any other concerns, sir?

FRED

Yes. I'll be honest. It would take me days to review the Alta Agreement. Please see if there is any mention of deserters.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

FRED

Karl, you may want to brush-up on your Russian.

KARL

Da!

Without detection, Sergeant Carlson places a simple dictionary and an English book into Fred's briefcase.

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - EVENING

Fred walks down the steps and into the courtyard. Carlson closes the door and drops his satchel. He has his back to Fred.

EXT. MACHINE GUN NEST - EVENING

In the distance, a sniper sits next to a machine gun operator. He watches as a SS Officer walks towards Fred. The SS officer takes a sharp object from his belt, the blade shines from the spotlight.

MACHINE GUN OPERATOR

Do you have a shot?

SNIPER

The commander's in the way.

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - EVENING

Carlson picks up his satchel turns towards the courtyard, and immediately recognizes the danger. He looks towards the machine gun nest, sees the sniper aiming.

Fred now realizes that the SS Officer is out of the German area. He see's the knife and expects a suicide. Instead the SS Officer lunges at Fred.

Fred raises his fists and quickly dodges the Officer. The SS Officer stumbles, stands holding the knife out.

Fred has drawn his 45 pistol and is prepared to fire.

EXT. MACHINE GUN NEST - EVENING

MACHINE GUN OPERATOR

Take the shot!

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - EVENING

BANG! A single shot, bursts through the SS Officers chest. He falls to his knees just shy of Fred's feet, then with his last breath:

SS OFFICER

Heil Hitler!

Fred watches the SS Officer fall on his face. He looks to his side, Carlson stands next to him.

FRED

Still haven't fired a shot.

Fred places his pistol back in the holster.

CARLSON

I'd say you were mighty close.

FRED

How'd this guy get out?

CARLSON

I'll have the night shift lock it down and find out. Why don't you go home and get some sleep.

FRED
I won't sleep much.

Carlson looks at the Officer closely.

CARLSON
He was headed to Nuremberg tomorrow.

FRED
Guess he didn't want to go.

Two soldiers load the SS Officer on a stretcher.
Spotlights light up the area.

The sniper and the machine gun operator walk over to
speak with Fred. They salute, Fred shakes both their
hands.

FRED (CONT'D)
Good shot soldier.

EXT. COMMANDERS OFFICE - MORNING

Fred exits the office. Karl is waiting out front.

FRED
Morning Karl.

Fred is inundated with small children, filthy and
starving, all with their hands out. He looks shocked, a
bit overwhelmed.

KARL
(In German)
Shoo! All of you.

One young refugee has caught Fred's attention. He
carefully touches Fred's cuffs and holds two fingers. He
salutes.

HANS
Commandant!

He smiles at Fred. Without a pause, Fred releases the
boys grip of his hand, reaches into his pocket, it
includes coin, cash and a red handkerchief.

He takes the boy's hand and places the entire contents of
his pocket into the boys hand.

FRED
This is all I have.

Fred stares into the boys face covered with soot, his pants tied with a rope and boots stolen from a dead soldier.

The young boy runs away. Trying his best to keep the stash away from the other children, most of them older and larger.

KARL

There are hundreds, just like him.
Starving. No parents. No where to go.

Fred stops to look around him. The surroundings paint a bleak landscape decimated by war.

FRED

(whispers to himself)
No one at home would believe this.

Karl places his hand on Fred's shoulder.

KARL

War effects children in ways we can't
imagine.

FRED

We're all responsible for this.

Fred, Carlson and Karl hop into the car and drive away.

INT. FRED'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Fred opens his briefcase and finds the books from Carlson. He smiles, places them on the nightstand next to his bed.

He lights a small lantern, climbs into bed and opens the English book. He begins to read.

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - MORNING

Fred and Carlson walk through the courtyard. A group of women surround a German officer. Several guards attempt to enter, to retrieve the German officer but are unsuccessful.

FRED

Private, is this woman in your way?

GUARD ONE

Yes, sir. They all are.

FRED
What's the issue?

GUARD ONE
We suspect the German officer, inside the circle contracted VD from one of these women.

FRED
The officer in the middle?

GUARD ONE
Yes, sir.

Fred walks towards the group of women. He slowly circles as each woman steps aside to stand shoulder to shoulder, preventing Fred from entering.

FRED
Any of you speak English?
The woman in front of Fred smiles.

PROSTITUTE
I speak a little English.

FRED
What's your name?

PROSTITUTE
Ingrid.

FRED
Ingrid, all of you need to follow these soldiers to the Hospital.

PROSTITUTE
Why would we do that?

FRED
Well, one of you has Venereal Disease. You need medical attention. I'm here to help.

She gives Fred a stare, then begins to smile.

PROSTITUTE
No one, has ever offered to help. Why do you care?

She studies Fred and his boyish grin.

FRED
This is no place for ladies.

Carlson smiles, attracting attention. The prostitute is touched by Fred's concern. She looks back at the rest of the ladies.

PROSTITUTE
(In German)

Ladies, follow me.

She motions for all of the women to follow her. They all are escorted by the soldiers, they march in a row attempting to mimic the soldiers.

The officer is left alone on the ground, too sick to stand.

FRED
(to the Guard)

Now, escort the officer to sick bay and make sure he gets a shot of penicillin.

GUARD ONE

Yes, sir.

The courtyard full of German officers observe the entire incident.

From their expressions, Fred has gained proper respect from everyone and a noticeable vigor.

FRED

Carlson.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

I want the men to build another fence isolating the women away from the men. Pronto.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

FRED

And Carlson, while you're at it, have the men increase the fortifications between the Germans and Russians. We don't want another war inside our prison.

CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

Thank you Sergeant. And Carlson, we need to find a place in town for the women. This is no place for ladies of the night.

CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

Now, lets go have a look at their quarters.

CARLSON

Yes, sir. This way.

EXT. GERMAN CAGE - MORNING

They walk towards the first barrack nearby. A group of officers, well guarded scatter.

A single officer stands at attention, his wrist gushing with his own blood. He falls first on his knees, then collapses onto his face.

Fred immediately rushes to his aid. Carlson stands above Fred. Fred is trying to use his handkerchief to stop the bleeding.

GERMAN SUICIDE

Heil Hitler!

He smiles and dies in Fred's arms, his eyes stare into space.

FRED

Poor bastard.

Fred lowers the German to the ground. Closes his eyes.

FRED (CONT'D)

This happens every day?

SERGEANT CARLSON

It's been going on for a while, sir. I guess it beats hanging.

FRED

I've seen what they've done. God knows it's no secret why they want to leave.

(beat)

Their day is coming.

Fred stands. Carlson and Fred begin to walk, Fred stops in his tracks. He looks over at the open mess structure.

FRED (CONT'D)

Carlson.

CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

Do we provide silverware to the prisoners?

CARLSON

Yes sir, we do.

FRED

That needs to end.

CARLSON

How will they eat?

FRED

Go into town. Find a local merchant that will make wooden utensils.

Carlson smiles. He is pleased with Fred's logic.

CARLSON

Yes sir. What should we do with the silverware?

FRED

We can hand them out. God knows the citizens need them more than these bastards.

Carlson smiles. Enamored by the logic proposed by Fred.

Two guards arrive and place the German officer onto a stretcher and carry him away.

FRED (CONT'D)

Thank you men.

(to Carlson)

Come on, let's take a look at where these bastards live.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Private, please escort any prisoners out of those barracks.

PRIVATE 1ST CLASS

Yes, sir.

The guard along with other soldiers enter one side of the barracks and exit the back, escorting several prisoners.

PRIVATE 1ST CLASS (CONT'D)

All clear, sir.

Fred and Carlson enter the barrack. An open area includes a large table with lights hanging from the ceiling. Twenty individual beds line each side of the quarters.

FRED

This is a far cry better than the German POW camps.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Certainly not like home, but comfortable.

FRED

Most of the requests from the prisoners are to get their personal items back.

Fred rummages through some of the bunks and boxes.

FRED (CONT'D)

That's where we'll find the Cyanide and knives.

Fred makes a point to look right into Carlson's eyes.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I'll have a few men go through their stuff again. Just to be sure.

Fred is satisfied and begins to walk out of the barracks.

FRED

See that General Von Leeb is escorted to my office along with his personal items.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE CAGE - DAY

Welhelm von Leeb enters Fred's office handcuffed from the front, escorted by two guards. Karl sits to the side of the desk facing Von Leeb.

FRED

Remove the cuffs, gentlemen.

GUARD TWO

Yes, sir. We'll need to stay.

FRED

Very well.

The guards remove the handcuffs, Von Leeb rubs his wrists.

FRED (CONT'D)
(to Leeb)

Have a seat.

VON LEEB

Thank you, Lieutenant.

Von Leeb settles into his seat slowly, taking note of his surroundings.

FRED

Your English is quite good.

Fred raises his hand towards Karl.

FRED (CONT'D)

This is my interpreter, Karl Oldenburg.

Karl is uneasy, obviously intimidated by Von Leeb's reputation.

VON LEEB

My pleasure, Mr. Oldenburg.
(To Fred)

You will not be needing his services.

Fred takes out the letter from Von Leeb. Karl takes notes, Von Leeb continues to look at Fred.

FRED

General, I see your service spans two world wars. A devout Catholic. According to our intelligence, your last campaign was the siege of Leningrad. It says here, your orders led to the starvation of thousands of Russian citizens.

With no emotion Von Leeb replies:

VON LEEB

Haven't we heard that rumor before?

Fred notes Leeb's denial, looks over the letter and up at Von Leeb.

FRED

No regrets, General?

VON LEEB

Like you Lieutenant, I was following my orders.

Fred studies Von Leeb. He casually displays no remorse. Fred remains on guard.

FRED

Your orders did not include a consideration for innocent civilians?

VON LEEB

They were casualties of war, Lieutenant. We lost hundreds of men in that battle. Is there sacrifice no less a cost?

Fred looks to Karl who shows no sympathy, his pencil shatters from his thumb.

FRED

Your requests will be honored. But you will be escorted to Nuremburg and stand trial for your, orders.

Fred places a sack near Von Leeb, throws a pack of cigarettes to him. Von Leeb catches them in midair.

FRED (CONT'D)

Your items I am told.

Von Leeb takes a cigarette out of the pack, Fred reaches for his lighter and lights the cigarette.

FRED (CONT'D)

You know those will kill you.

Karl is surprised by Fred's humanity, Von Leeb draws in and puffs smoke towards Karl.

VON LEEB

Not before the hangman's noose.

Fred chuckles, let's Von Leeb enjoy his cigarette.

FRED

All of us pay for our mistakes. Even Generals.

Von Leeb notes Fred's frankness, takes another puff and exhales slowly.

VON LEEB

Do you have a family back home Lieutenant?

FRED

Yes, I do. A wife and two children, and you?

VON LEEB

I did. A very large family. They all perished in the allied invasion.

FRED

That is unfortunate. What I've seen of the war, it's a wonder anyone survived.

Another slow puff and exhale, he taps the cigarette in the ashtray.

VON LEEB

Perhaps the next generation will learn by our mistakes.

FRED

Let's hope so. So far, I can't see any good reason for war.

Von Leeb leans back in the chair, now at ease with Fred.

VON LEEB

Lieutenant, we must follow our orders.

FRED

On the contrary General. Learning to question our orders and show compassion to others would be a first step towards learning from our mistakes.

Von Leeb pauses to consider Fred's wise suggestion.

VON LEEB

Perhaps, Lieutenant.

A slow inhale from Von Leeb. He looks at Fred and senses an opening.

VON LEEB (CONT'D)

There is one request I'd like to make.

FRED

Go on.

VON LEEB

It was denied by your predecessor.

He pauses to enjoy the last puff of his cigarette.

VON LEEB (CONT'D)

My comrades and I would like to plant a garden.

They both stare at each other briefly. Fred stands, walks around and sits on the end of his desk.

FRED

I think that's a great idea. I'll get you what you need.

Karl senses that the tension between Von Leeb and Fred has lifted, as their body language is shown in full display.

VON LEEB

You know how to farm?

FRED

Born and bred, in Nebraska.

VON LEEB

I have heard of this place.

FRED

Corn as far as the eye can see.

VON LEEB

Be nice to see things grow again, even if it's only one season.

FRED

I'll see that you get the supplies you need. Spring is right around the corner.

VON LEEB

Thank you, Lieutenant. Just between you and I, Germans will never betray the Wehrmacht or my nobility.

Von Leeb smiles at Fred knowing his fate. He is cuffed and escorted out of the office by two guards. Fred and Karl watch them walk out, then look towards each other.

KARL

Fritz, you are a better man than me.

FRED

Karl, we've got to start somewhere.

EXT. MESS PAVILION - MORNING

At breakfast German and Russian officers walk through the line with their trays. Wooden utensils, along with bowls and metal cups are placed on the trays.

At a table, officers struggle with the wooden utensils. One officer holds up a spoon for the others, who's disappointment is on full view.

EXT. CAGE MAIN GATE - MORNING

Women and Children with happy faces graciously walk through the bread line.

Hot chocolate is steaming as children grasp a cup to warm their hands.

Women from town are encouraged by the prostitutes to take a handful of silverware, tied with a red bow. The generosity brings tears to their eyes.

Act Two B***Sequence Thirteen*****EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - MORNING**

A caravan of vehicles enters the courtyard. A large truck is escorted under heavy armed guards.

In the distance a group of US soldiers are busy constructing a fence that separates the women in the prison and another between Russian and German sections. They stand behind a double fence with space between them, made of razor wire circles.

While Fred, Karl and Carlson look on, the guards unload twelve high ranking officers all in what looks like German Uniforms, but they are all black.

They assemble. Two Generals stand in front of 10 officers of various ranks. Karl translates in German as Fred speaks:

FRED

Good Morning. I'm the prison Commander,
Lieutenant Fred Eller. Who is your
commanding officer?

The men are silent, General Zacherovich looks towards his comrade for a signal.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

(in Russian)

May I introduce General Andrey Vlasov,
commander of the Russian Liberation Army.

While Karl translates, General Vlasov takes a step forward and salutes as a Russian soldier. His handcuffs render his salute awkward.

GENERAL VLASOV

(in Russian)

General Andrey Vaslov, Major General of
the Russian Liberation Army.

Carlson adds the following, Karl translates for Fred:

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, these men are from the Russian 99th
Rifle Division. They were captured south
of here, in Ginsling.

While Sergeant Carlson speaks, Fred has walked past the soldiers and around the front of Vaslov.

Vlasov stares straight, with his thick glasses. Fred takes note of both Russian and Nazi pins and markings on his uniform, including a patch on Vlasov's shoulder.

FRED

General, do you speak English?

Karl translates with broken Russian,

KARL

(In Russian)

General, do you speak English?

Vaslov looks at Karl and responds to Fred:

GENERAL VLASOV

Yes, Lieutenant. I speak fairly good
English.

Fred is almost tickled by how well Vaslov commands English.

FRED

You speak better English than me.

GENERAL VLASOV

You are too kind, for such a young man. I
see you have a sense of humor.

FRED

That wasn't a joke. A Russian General in a German uniform, now that's a joke.

GENERAL VLASOV

It's not what it seems, Lieutenant.

FRED

From the surface General, I'd say you are a deserter, or you were headed to a costume party.

GENERAL VLASOV

There's that humor again.

Fred smiles but keeps a cautious distance from Vaslov.

FRED

General, I'm confused. I always thought Hitler was worse than Stalin.

General Vaslov pauses before answering, measuring his words.

GENERAL VLASOV

That is far from the truth Lieutenant. America will learn soon enough, Stalin is not your ally.

Fred's suspicions are raised but he is curious.

FRED

General, I'm not here to debate with our enemies. If you have committed war crimes, your own country will determine your guilt or innocence.

Carlson motions to the Guards for Vaslov and his comrades to exit, Vaslov offers a respectful nod to Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)

Carlson, bring General Vlasov to my office, once he is processed.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

FRED

Karl, come with me.

Karl and Fred walk towards Fred's office.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE CAGE - AFTERNOON

Karl and Fred surround his desk with copies of documents.

FRED

This unit avoided capture for weeks.

KARL

Yes, they're high ranking deserters. And the Allies had no prior knowledge?

FRED

I also find that hard to believe.

KARL

What would make Russian soldiers join the Nazis?

FRED

I don't know. But I aim to find out.

Karl picks up and scans a document from the desk.

KARL

According to German reports, these men were part of the Russian Liberation Army. Backed by Hitler, they intended to head back to Russia to overthrow Stalin.

Fred has been sifting through documents.

FRED

That explains the masquerade, but why? And how did Vaslov convince thousands of his troops to commit treason.

KARL

It was either desperation or deception.

FRED

Carlson!

Carlson walks into the office.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

FRED

I need you to send a telegram to US Command at the Pentagon. Someone there has to know about this unit.

Carlson has a pad of paper ready.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Ready.

Fred communicates slow and deliberate.

FRED

US Army Command, Pentagon. Need confirmation of a Russian unit eight hundred thousand strong. Russian 99th Rifle Division. Commanding officer now in custody at Bad Hersfeld POW camp. Reply asap. Signed. Lieutenant Commander Fred Eller.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Got it.

FRED

Get it sent as soon as you can.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

Carlson finishes last minute changes to his notes and rushes out the door.

INT. RUSSIAN BARRACKS - EVENING

General Vlasov and General Zacherovich are seated at a table with the rest of the officers smoking and playing cards at a large table behind the Generals.

GENERAL VLASOV

I had hoped our reunion would be a celebration.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Fortunately, the Soviets are not our captors.

GENERAL VLASOV

If the Americans send us to Minsk, we are doomed.

General Vlasov sighs, looks towards the other officers, enjoying their card game.

GENERAL VLASOV (CONT'D)

Have you told our comrades?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

No. They dream of the thousand ways they will spend the gold.

GENERAL VLASOV

Did you find a spot to bury the trunks?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Yes, it is a suitable location.

GENERAL VLASOV

Did anyone witness the location?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Yes, but they were eliminated.

GENERAL VLASOV

What are the chances of escape?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Very unlikely. The Germans built this camp, and the Americans continue to fortify the perimeter.

GENERAL VLASOV

To prevent going back to the Communists, we will need a miracle.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

I may have a way.

GENERAL VLASOV

How so?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

It's a simple swap. My cyanide capsule for the treasure. I'm counting on the young Commander, to take the bait.

GENERAL VLASOV

You may take that route. I must follow another path.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

If you must.

Vlasov stands to join his comrades, looks back to Zacherovich.

GENERAL VLASOV

I would suggest you refrain from telling our comrades about your plan.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Of course.

The officers at the table yell. Personal items litter the table of the card game. A winning officer pulls the pot towards himself. The rest argue.

Seeing the General approach they all stop, stand quickly at attention and salute.

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - MORNING

Carlson walks through the corridor and sees Azordoff and his assistant, he pauses for a moment.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Lieutenant Azordoff.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF
Sergeant.

Carlson begins to continue and decides to stop and continue the conversation.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Lieutenant, with all due respect you should see by now, Lieutenant Eller is an honorable man.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF
Sergeant, he is young and inexperienced.

SERGEANT CARLSON
You're wrong. Despite his education, he is a far better officer than most Generals.

Carlson realizes the implications. He reluctantly ends the conversation. Azordoff recognizes the slip of the tongue.

Carlson sprints away from Azordoff. Azordoff speaks loudly so Carlson will hear.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF
Inexperienced and uneducated.

INT. FRED'S CAGE OFFICE - MORNING

Sergeant Carlson interrupts the silence, knocks on the door jam before opening.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Sir, guards have General Vlasov outside.
Are you ready for him?

FRED
Yes, bring him in.

Sergeant Carlson steps out for a moment and arrives ahead of a cuffed General Vlasov escorted by armed guards.

FRED (CONT'D)
Please, have a seat General.

GENERAL VLASOV
Thank you, Lieutenant.

Fred holds an official letter from Congress. He paraphrase's its contents:

FRED
General, I've received this letter from several US Congressmen. Apparently you are a very special prisoner.

GENERAL VLASOV
Why would they care the least bit about me?

FRED
Sergeant Carlson, read our intelligence to the General.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Yes, sir. According to this report from Soviet High Command, your government is anxious for your return. Your allegiance to the Nazis and the Third Reich are concerning to your comrades in Moscow.

General Vlasov looks at Fred, composes himself with no emotion.

GENERAL VLASOV
You can't believe everything you read in times of war.

FRED
General, the war is over. I'm simply following my orders. The members of Congress will be here shortly.

GENERAL VLASOV
What could I possibly add to the history books in America?

FRED
Well, I guess we're going to find out.

GENERAL VLASOV

Will you be part of this discussion?

FRED

No, I will not.

GENERAL VLASOV

A pity. There is much to gain, by our discussions, Lieutenant.

FRED

How so?

GENERAL VLASOV

Why, we have the same enemy.

FRED

Frankly it's hard for me to know who exactly is your enemy General, since your allegiance appears to follow Adolf Hitler.

GENERAL VLASOV

America will find that appearance and reality are two very different traits.

Fred studies General Vaslov, his wisdom a mystery to Fred.

FRED

Sergeant Carlson, take General Vlasov back to the barracks. Inform General Zacherovich we will speak with him tomorrow.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

Vaslov nods to Fred, convinced he has reached Fred in some way.

Sequence Thirteen

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - MORNING

Sergeant Carlson leads General Vlasov back towards the barracks. Two guards accompany Sergeant Carlson.

In the distance behind a double fenced guarded partition, a group of Russian officers surround three men.

When they see Vaslov they scatter. Behind them a group of German officers tend to their garden.

The rows of vegetables are meticulous. Von Leeb, with his coat on a stake tends to a row.

EXT. GERMAN CAGE - MORNING

A Russian officer in a German uniform takes a spoon, crudely re-purposed as a knife. The officers stand at attention.

RUSSIAN OFFICERS
(In unison)

Tovarisch!

EXT. RUSSIAN CAGE - MORNING

As Carlson watches in dismay, one by one the officer slits the throat of each man.

All three collapse into the dirt and mud. With disrespect:

RUSSIAN OFFICER
(in Russians)

Die like the dogs you are!

The officer heaves the spoon over the fence. Picks up a hoe and heads towards the barracks.

EXT. RUSSIAN CAGE - MORNING

SERGEANT CARLSON

Medic!

A group of Medics rush to the scene from the main corridor to the Russian Cage. The three Russian officers bleed out quickly.

INT. FRED'S QUARTERS - DAWN

Fred gathers his briefcase and places one of his ivory handle forty five's into his holster.

He grabs the Cognac bottle pours a small glass, gulps it down and places the glass next to the bottle.

He exits the building and walks towards the train station.

EXT. BAD HERSFELD STATION - MORNING

Two cargo boxcars are loaded with forty German soldiers in each car, all handcuffed.

On the back side of one of the cars a un-identified civilian throws a burlap sack up into one of the cars. When it hits on the floor, metal objects clang. The man throws a milk crate on top and scurries away quickly.

Sergeant Carlson and Fred watch as the soldiers enter each boxcar.

FRED

The German Federation expects these men this afternoon?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir. We're on time, scheduled to depart shortly. When do the trials start?

FRED

Not for some time. Come on. We can ride in the first car.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

Fred and Carlson walk up the platform as a dozen homeless children begin to panhandle. Fred recognizes a familiar face. The young boy wears Fred's red scarf around his neck.

HANS

Commandant.

Fred smiles and bends down to the boys level.

FRED

Good morning young man.

Fred pulls out a paper bag which was to be his lunch for the ride to Nuremberg.

Without hesitation he hands it to the boy. The boy looks inside the bag and smiles.

HANS

Danke schoen!

FRED

What's your name?

Hans retreats a step, pauses before answering. The other children push to get a look.

HANS

Hans!

The train begins to move. Hans runs away, fights off a few children, Fred waves, looks towards Carlson.

FRED

Don't we have extra grub we could give to the orphans?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, we have a hard enough time feeding our troops *and* 200 prisoners.

FRED

We have to do something.

Fred watches with concern as Hans is overwhelmed by the others.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, is that a request?

FRED

Yes, it is. So Carlson, when we return, I want a table of grub at the front gate every morning, manned by the prostitutes. They need something constructive to do. It'll open every day at 0 seven hundred. Any questions?

SERGEANT CARLSON

No, sir. Consider it done.

Fred and Carlson smile at each other, turn and walk fast to catch the train already in motion.

INT. OFFICER TRAIN CAR - MORNING

Fred and Carlson walk down the aisle as the train pulls away from the station, only a few businessmen occupy seats, the rest are the German Board Members.

Fred nods to the Germans, sits across from Carlson, already leaning against the window.

Fred gets settled watches the countryside for a few moments and then closes his eyes.

INT. PRISONER TRAIN CAR - DAY

As the train speeds down the tracks, two men pull out wire cutters and a chain cutter from the burlap sack.

GERMAN OFFICER
(in German)

Hurry, we have less than 5 minutes

One by one the officers are set free. Meanwhile, one of the officers has cut through the lock and pulls back the door. He peers out, spots a bridge in the distance.

GERMAN OFFICER (CONT'D)
(in German)

Quickly!

EXT. RAILROAD BRIDGE - DAY

Anxious to leap to freedom, several officers jump too soon and fall to their death on the rocks.

In the middle of the bridge an open segment is revealed. A dozen officers jump, some splash in the water safely and begin to swim to shore.

Several of the officers slam into the I beams of the span. Still others jump after the bridge, the velocity of the fall killing them instantly.

The final group, look towards the approaching tunnel, judge their chances and leap. All of them smash into the mountain to the side of the tunnel and die instantly.

EXT. PRISONER TRAIN - AFTERNOON

The train slowly comes to a halt at the platform. Over 100 armed guards and police line the entire station.

Several large trucks are backed up to the platform. Armed guards with semi-automatic weapons guard each truck. Additional guards run to the position, notice the opened door and empty car.

INT. PRISONER TRAIN PLATFORM - AFTERNOON

Carlson and the German delegation are standing in the aisle of the train.

INT. PRISONER TRAIN CAR - AFTERNOON

From Fred's POV:

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir?

Fred awakens uneasy and embarrassed. He quickly stands and gathers his briefcase.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

We have a situation.

Fred peers outside the window. He is amazed at the number of German guards.

FRED

Regarding?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Apparently some of our prisoners jumped off the train on the way here.

Fred composed, walks towards the door and out onto the platform. A delegation awaits Fred and Carlson.

EXT. NUREMBERG STATION - AFTERNOON

FRED

How many are missing?

Sergeant Carlson whispers into Fred's ear.

SERGEANT CARLSON

(sotto)

A little over half.

Fred frowns, offers his hand to the man who steps forward. The German Delegation walks down the platform and into a car.

A group of civilians, dignitaries and the GERMAN PROSECUTOR (50's) a matter of fact German Federation bureaucrat waits till Fred and Carlson stop.

GERMAN PROSECUTOR

Prisoners are missing. How do you explain this?

In rare sarcasm and anger, Fred takes a step forward. The Prosecutor lurches backwards.

FRED

That's what we get for trusting German officers. Please accept my apologies. This won't happen again.

GERMAN PROSECUTOR

Next time, when we request 80 prisoners, we will expect 80.

Fred nods in agreement, his displeasure evident. He pulls Sergeant Carlson aside as the entire delegation leaves without ceremony.

FRED

Sergeant, next time we'll chain those bastards to the wall and lock the doors from the outside.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

FRED

To hell with protocol. This fucking war is over.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

EXT. RETURNING TRAIN TO HERSFELD - AFTERNOON

Carlson and Fred board the near empty train. A few passengers walk briskly as the train pulls away.

A burned out town in shambles lines both sides of the tracks as the train heads out of town.

PRE-LAP: THE TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS, THEN REVEILLE

EXT. CAGE MAIN GATE - MORNING

Fred is walking towards the gate. A very well organized table is manned by prostitutes from the cage and townspeople.

The prostitutes are handing out MRE's and water, a blanket and a toiletry set to the women in town. A private in charge salutes as Fred steps to the table.

FRED

Private, any issues this morning?

The group looks on as children are in a circle enjoying the grub.

PRIVATE 1ST CLASS

No sir. There's plenty for everyone.

FRED

Carry on, private.

Fred smiles and sees the homeless boy Hans in the line. He salutes.

HANS

(in German)

Good Morning, sir.

FRED

Good Morning, Hans

Fred waves and continues into the front gate, extra guards watch as the moral of the townspeople is noticeably improved.

EXT. - RUSSIAN CAGE - MORNING

Carlson and two guards escort General Zacherovich from the Russian section.

Along the way, girls walk towards a group of women sitting outside in the women's section.

Russian Officers perform morning calisthenics in unison, with reasonable form.

They continue through the main court yard and arrive at the office and enter.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE CAGE - MORNING

Carlson knocks on the door frame before announcing himself.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Good Morning, sir. I have General Zacherovich outside.

FRED

Thank you, Sergeant.

Fred looks up at Carlson.

FRED (CONT'D)

Did you see the table of supplies out front?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes sir. It's great to see smiling faces.

Carlson places a bag and a folder on Fred's desk. A small summary is attached to the front. Fred reviews the documents, looks up at Carlson.

FRED

Your contribution was significant.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Thank you sir.

FRED

By the way. Thanks for the summaries and the books.

SERGEANT CARLSON

You're welcome sir. In the bag are two items of concern.

Fred pulls out a picture and a vile containing a capsule. He holds the vile up into the light.

FRED

These were found on the prisoner at the first search?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes sir.

FRED

OK, send him in, handcuffed.

Carlson steps to the door and motions to the three guards to bring Zacherovich into the office. The group enters.

Two guards stop short of the desk, a third grabs the chair, the two guards place Zacherovich in the chair.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

(in Russian)

Good Morning, Lieutenant!

Karl begins to interpret, the General looks to Karl first then Fred.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH (CONT'D)

I will speak in English.

FRED

Very well General, if you are in fact a General.

Fred stands and walks around the front of his desk.

FRED (CONT'D)

You're wearing a German Uniform. Both you and I know you're Russian.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Stating the obvious Lieutenant.

FRED

So you are a deserter?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Lieutenant, My comrades and I were faced with a difficult decision. You wouldn't understand.

FRED

Perhaps. But, desertion is no option.
(beat)

I have two items here that are, troubling.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

How so?

Fred lifts the vile up between them so the General can see.

FRED

Our Doctor found this sewed into your back.

The General simply nods with no emotion or signal.

FRED (CONT'D)

Seems you didn't want to be captured.

Fred places the vile back into the bag and turns the picture towards Zacherovich. It is an emaciated Jew placed in an oven, with a German and a Russian posing on either side.

Fred holds it for Zacherovich to see.

FRED (CONT'D)

Did you take this picture?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Yes, I did.

FRED

So how did you happen to be inside a death camp?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Lieutenant, the war is over.

Fred has grown angry and his voice and demeanor are on display.

FRED

Here at Hersfeld we are only interested in two things. Where you were before the war and what you did during the war.

Fred holds the picture inches from his face.

FRED (CONT'D)

General, you can hang for war crimes.

He avoids the picture and continues his focus on Fred.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

We had nothing to do with the ovens. May I speak freely?

FRED

Yes, you may.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

For this, I will require only you Lieutenant.

Still incensed, Fred studies Zacherovich before he answers.

FRED

Very well. Sergeant. You and these men wait outside.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Are you sure, sir?

Fred looks straight at Carlson who looks concerned.

FRED

Just outside. He *is* cuffed.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Men, you heard the Lieutenant.

All of the men walk outside of the room and shut the door behind them. Fred sits lightly on the edge of the front side of his desk.

FRED
OK General, out with it!

Outside in the lobby, Carlson holds an ear to the door.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
Lieutenant, I'd like to propose a deal.

FRED
You are in no position to negotiate.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
You may change your mind. If you give me back my cyanide capsule, I will draw you a map that will lead you to a treasure of gold and jewels. Enough to last a lifetime.

Fred finds it difficult to hide his emotions, he smiles instead.

FRED
You expect me to believe that? Anyone can draw a map.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
OK, I'll draw the map. Then you go to the site and see for yourself. If it's not there, you don't have to give me the cyanide capsule.

Fred pauses for a moment to digest what he has learned.

FRED
I'll have to give this some thought.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
What's to consider? The war is over. You'll be rich and I will die honorably.

FRED
When did you say you entered Germany?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
Late 1942

FRED
According to my orders, I must send you back.

The General ignores Fred's comment.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

It is a reasonable offer. How do you say?
A win win.

Fred ponders the General's comment, he steps passed General Zacherovich instead, opens the office door. Carlson is startled.

FRED

Men, see that the prisoner is escorted back to his quarters.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

Before he leaves the room the General smiles and looks at Fred.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Enough to last a lifetime.

After the group leaves with the General, Fred looks at his humble surroundings. He pours a glass of Cognac and gulps it down.

INT. LOBBY OF FRED'S CAGE OFFICE - DAY

On the way out Zacherovich looks straight at Boris Yuseff the Prague civilian. They recognize each other but say nothing.

INT. FRED'S CAGE OFFICE - DAY

Sergeant Carlson knocks on the door.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, one more thing. We have a Russian who was captured in street clothes. He'd like a moment with you.

FRED

Send him in.

Carlson brings BORIS YUSEFF (30's) a Czechoslovakian citizen who was captured by the Allies with no papers.

BORIS YUSEFF

Thank you Lieutenant Commander for seeing me.

Sergeant Carlson hands Fred a few papers, he quickly scans them.

FRED

So how did you happen to be captured by our troops?

BORIS YUSEFF

How you say? Wrong place, wrong time.

FRED

What do you mean?

BORIS YUSEFF

At the end of the war, I was in Prague. I was searching for my family. In the confusion we were all captured. These men murdered our own troops. The German that just walked out was one of them.

FRED

Are you sure?

BORIS YUSEFF

I am positive.

Fred reviews the report on Yuseff.

FRED

I see. So you are Czechoslovakian?

BORIS YUSEFF

Yes Commander, I am civilian. I just want to find my wife and my children.

Boris fights to shelter his tears. Fred stands, looks at Boris carefully.

Fred circles around to the front of his desk in front of Boris. He rests against the desk.

FRED

I'll recommend that you be released today.

Boris stands, shakes both of Fred's hands together, repeatedly.

BORIS YUSEFF

Thank you, Commander, Thank you so much.

Boris pulls a blood stone ring from his finger. He looks at it and then up at Fred.

BORIS YUSEFF (CONT'D)

I want you to have this gift. It is all I have, but you must have it.

FRED

I can't take this.

BORIS YUSEFF

Oh but, Commander, you must have it. My family is worth much more than a ring.

FRED

Thank you, Boris.

Carlson has been looking on and offers Fred a smile and a nod.

FRED (CONT'D)

Carlson, see that Boris is released as soon as possible.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir!

Boris thanks Fred several more times on the way out the door. Fred smiles, looks down at the memento and places it on his finger.

Sequence Sixteen

INT. COMMAND HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Fred enters the Captain's office, removes his hat and stands at attention.

FRED

Good Day, Sir. Thank you for seeing me. I was told every US officer was gone.

The Captain is busy packing and continues during the conversation.

CAPTAIN

I'm just passing through. At ease, Lieutenant. Take a seat. What's on your mind.

Fred sits down and gets comfortable.

FRED

I know this is unrelated to your mission. But, during an interrogation with a prisoner, I listened to a rather odd proposal from one of the Russians. It's one of the officers we captured in German uniforms.

CAPTAIN

Go on.

FRED

General Zacherovich is his name. At least that's what he has told us. Anyway, he offered to draw me a treasure map, if I'd give him his cyanide capsule.

CAPTAIN

He did, did he?

FRED

Yes sir, he did. According to protocol, he'll be escorted back to Minsk for his court marshal.

The Captain has been busy with other duties, but is keenly aware of the conversation. He looks into Fred's eyes.

CAPTAIN

Have him draw the map. He's gonna swing anyway. What's the harm in playing him Lieutenant? You and I both know he's lying.

Fred is amazed at the Captain's suggestion. He smiles.

FRED

My initial thought, sir.

CAPTAIN

One more thing before you go.

He pulls a wire off of his desk and hands it to Fred.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

This was addressed to you. It's marked urgent, direct from the Pentagon.

Fred studies it completely scanning the entire document.

FRED

I see.

CAPTAIN

Come to find out your General Vlasov is a high value prisoner. You got him under armed guard?

FRED

Yes sir, he's in the officers barracks.

CAPTAIN

He needs to be in a private cell. No sharp objects. Transfer him to the jail in Hersfeld. Make sure he's locked down.

Fred stands, salutes, folds the Memo and tucks it into his Breast pocket.

FRED

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN

And Eller, I ship out tomorrow. Anything else?

FRED

No, sir!

The Commanders phone rings.

CAPTAIN

Good luck, Lieutenant.

Fred turns to leave, the Captain is already engaged on the phone.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Congressman, for Christ's sake, this is the US Army, not a God Damn Travel Agency!

Fred walks out of the Captain's office and out the front door.

EXT. BAD HERSFELD STREET - AFTERNOON

Fred walks slowly down the street. He watches as neighbors help each other move furniture and damaged possessions into burn piles already ablaze.

FRED (V.O.)

Among the destruction, the human spirit will rise from the ashes or perish from hate and greed.

A group of townspeople crowd around yet another body on the ground. Fred peeks into the circle and recognizes Hans lifeless beat-up body, his hand still grasping the bag Fred had given him.

Fred fights back tears. Sergeant Carlson looks on from a distance. Carlson rounds up several soldiers with a stretcher.

While Fred looks on with deep sorrow, Carlson directs the soldiers to load and carry the corpse. Carlson walks over to Fred. Fred responds to Carlson while watching little Hans.

FRED

It was probably the bigger kids, he
didn't stand a chance.

Carlson places his arm around Fred's shoulder and guides him.

SERGEANT CARLSON

We'll take care of him sir.

Fred increases his gait to keep up with the four soldiers as they carry the small boy amid the rubble.

After a drenching rain the autumn sky is crisp, pink, orange and deep blue as the sun sets in Bad Hersfeld.

EXT. SMALL GRAVEYARD - DAWN

Fred sits alone on a stone bench near Hans simple grave. He straightens a white cross into the earth.

A small puppy walks gingerly towards Fred and sits at his feet.

FRED

(to himself)

Well now, what do we have here?

Fred lowers to his knees, reaches to pet the dog while he licks Fred's face. Fred looks to the sky smiling. He squints in the bright sunlight. He speaks to God.

FRED (CONT'D)

A broken heart, then a gift.

He picks up the dog and hugs him, then walks towards the Cage. His new friend tags along behind him.

FRED (CONT'D)

Come on Hans, we've got a busy day today.

INT. CAGE COURTROOM - MORNING

The entire Board and three Congressmen are seated at each table. The Judge enters. General Vlasov is seated in the witness stand.

CAGE JUDGE

Good morning, gentlemen. I understand we have guests from Washington.

The three congressmen nod acknowledging the mention from the Judge. The Judge eyes Vlasov in the witness seat.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

And I'm told a very important prisoner is here with us.

Fred stands to be recognized. The Judge raises his hand for Fred to begin.

FRED

Yes, your honor. Let me give the court background. Seated in front of us is General Vlasov. He led an entire division of Russian deserters, over eight hundred thousand traitors in all. Like General Vlasov here, these soldiers deserted the Russian Army to join the Nazis.

Carlson hands the Judge the US recommendations. The judge looks over the document contents.

CAGE JUDGE

I see it's the recommendation of this court, that you and your comrades be sent back to Russia. Do you have anything to add that may enlighten the court to change course?

GENERAL VLASOV

The Lieutenant's intelligence is correct. Hitler offered us a chance to crush Stalin. Hitler was the best of two evils. We had no other choice.

CAGE JUDGE

I find that hard to comprehend, given what the allies have endured.

Azordoff waves his flag. The Judge recognizes him.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

The bench recognizes the Russian delegation.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

You honor. The Russian Federation agrees, the General must be sent back to Minsk immediately. Every day General Vlasov is in American custody it is a threat to our national security and the Alta Accord.

CAGE JUDGE

Lieutenant Eller, what is the position of the United States?

Fred glances over at Azordoff, still standing.

FRED

The US believes this is a perfect opportunity to work together as allies.

CAGE JUDGE

Go on.

FRED

Lieutenant Azordoff and I may not agree on many things, but we both agree General Vlasov violated a military code of honor and the Geneva convention. Somehow, he convinced eight hundred thousand of his comrades to participate. In one ill-conceived action this Army of deserters, with the backing of the Nazi's, became enemies of the US and their own country.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Your honor, may I interject?

CAGE JUDGE

Yes, you may.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

The US delegation is correct. General Vlasov is an enemy of the Russia and must be returned to Minsk immediately.

Azordoff finishes and sits down as if satisfied.

FRED

Your honor, even if we both agree that the General must be returned to the Soviet Union, there is one condition before he is returned.

CAGE JUDGE

And that is?

FRED

Our Congressmen would like to de-brief General Vlasov before he is sent back to the Soviet Union.

Fred finishes and looks towards Azordoff who had been seated. He stands abruptly, knocks over his chair and responds:

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Absolutely not! We object to any interview or interrogation with the General. This man is a traitor!

The Judge allows the Officer to speak, then pounds the gavel several times.

CAGE JUDGE

We will certainly consider your objection.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

This is a violation of the Alta Accord!

CAGE JUDGE

Lieutenant Eller?

FRED

The United States is within our rights, your honor. We need to determine General Vlasov's potential threat to US national security.

The entire Russian delegation is livid. One of the officers picks up his chair and bursts out the door.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Please accept my apology for the outburst. We are simply attempting to protect our national interests.

The Judge looks at both Delegations and reviews a few documents while Fred and Azordoff trade glances.

CAGE JUDGE

Lieutenant Eller, the key date. Did General Vlasov meet this criteria?

FRED

Yes, your honor. Vaslov claims he had no choice. But the facts are quite clear.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

He is a deserter. An enemy of the Russia
and the US. He must be repatriated.

Azordoff looks towards Fred and nods in agreement and
breaks a slight smile. Fred nods and smiles back. He has
finally earned Azordoff's respect.

CAGE JUDGE

I will allow the interview with the US
Congressmen. And it is the ruling of this
court that General Vlasov be repatriated
to Russia immediately following the
interview.

The judge slams the Gavel.

CAGE JUDGE (CONT'D)

This court is adjourned.

General Vlasov ignores the US and Russian officers as he
is led out of court in hand cuffs.

Fred and Karl collect their documents. Fred shakes hands
with Karl.

FRED

Thank you for everything Karl.

KARL

You are quite welcome. Will we be
involved in the interview with the
Congressmen?

FRED

Fortunately, that session is far beyond
our security clearance.

KARL

I see. Then our work together is done?

FRED

Yes it is, my friend.

They walk out of the courtroom for the last time. Fred's
steps are more confident exiting than they were entering.

Sequence Seventeen

EXT. CAGE COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Karl places his hand on Fred's shoulder. They continue to
walk towards the main gate.

KARL

These monsters will be out of our lives soon enough.

FRED

I'm looking forward to my life as it was.

KARL

First, we have to learn to live together.

They pause, the gates close behind them. Outside the gate to the Cage, Fred wrestles with Karl's grim implication.

FRED

The world can't let this happen ever again.

KARL

You're right my friend. Hitler planned to exterminate an entire race. The Russian's silenced anyone who dared to speak out.

FRED

I still have to take 'em back to Minsk.

KARL

Can't say I envy you. Will I see you before you leave?

FRED

Yes, of course. Good night, Karl.

KARL

Good night, Fritz.

They smile with fraternity before exiting in different directions.

INT. BAD HERSFELD JAIL - MORNING

General Vlasov walks out of a single cell, is handcuffed and escorted down a hallway to a room with a single table and three chairs. One chair on one side and two chairs on the other side.

Vaslov is directed to the single chair. Two Congressmen walk in the room and sit in the empty chairs. Four guards stay in the room. A two-way mirror is on the wall facing Vaslov.

CONGRESSMAN ONE

Good Morning, General Vlasov.

GENERAL VLASOV
Good Morning, gentlemen.

CONGRESSMAN TWO
We all know you are headed back to Minsk to stand trial. Your fate may be quite evident to you.

GENERAL VLASOV
Gentlemen, you are sending me back to barbarians. There won't be any trial.

CONGRESSMAN ONE
So why did you desert the Russian Army and join the Nazis? It doesn't make sense to us. We were on the same side.

GENERAL VLASOV
Stalin killed millions of our own people. Although you may not agree, he was much worse than Hitler. Stalin is the real monster.

CONGRESSMAN ONE
So what was the Russian Liberation Army?

GENERAL VLASOV
My comrades and I knew even if we won the war, Stalin would enslave our people. We had an opportunity to crush him until our capture. Frankly, I would advise you to change your strategy with the Soviets.

The two Congressmen look at each other and then straight at the double window.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM - MORNING

GENERAL GEORGE PATTON (60) stands with other ranking officers.

GENERAL PATTON
I told you those sons of bitches can't be trusted. Stalin is the barbarian not Vlasov. Congress needs to wake up!

General Patton and the large contingent of Generals and officers storm out of the room.

GENERAL PATTON (CONT'D)
We need to keep pushing west right into that bastards front yard.

INT. BAD HERSFELD JAIL - MORNING

The interview ends. Vlasov stands and holds his cuffed hands in front of him and walks out of the room.

INT. FRED'S CAGE OFFICE - MORNING

Fred is busy making preparations for another interview with Zacherovich. Carlson walks into his office. Hans Fred's dog, sits comfortably beside his desk.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, I have General Zacherovich outside, if you are ready.

FRED

Thank you, Sergeant. Please bring him in. I need to discuss an issue in private.

Carlson exits and comes back in with Zacherovich, hand-cuffed. Two guards hold his arms, One guard pulls a chair in front of Fred's desk.

Carlson watches. Hans growls. Fred peers over at Hans and looks back at Zacherovich.

FRED (CONT'D)

You may un-cuff the General and wait outside my office.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir.

The guards take the handcuffs off General Zacherovich and everyone walks outside. Carlson walks out slowly and then shuts the door.

FRED

General, I have considered your proposal.

Fred stands, takes an empty piece of paper and a pen and lays it on the desk in front of General Zacherovich.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

I am curious. What made you grant my request?

The General begins to draw and make notations on a crude map.

FRED

If you are telling me the truth, perhaps that may influence the United States decision.

The General stops for a moment to read Fred's face.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Am I detecting reservations on your part?

FRED

General, you should know that like you, I am bound by my duty.

The General continues to draw the map. Fred looks on.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Commander, have you ever killed a soldier in combat?

FRED

No, I have not.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

The war forces us to do things we regret. I will admit, I am sorry for some of my actions. But, if you send me back to Russia, all of my victories will be forgotten.

The General shoves the Map towards Fred. Fred looks at it briefly.

FRED

It is not my duty to judge you General. My duty is to send you back to your own country. They will decide your fate, not me. Sergeant!

Fred places the map in his top desk drawer. Carlson and the guards walk in, begin to hand-cuff General Zacherovich.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

You will go to see for yourself?

FRED

I will give it my consideration.

The General looks over at Hans. He growls. The General is led out the door. He looks back at Fred and smiles. Carlson glares at Fred, but with respect.

EXT. GINZLING FARM - MORNING

Fred drives alone in an Army Jeep along the Zeem River in Austria. From high above a nearby ridge, the road ends at a farm outside Ginzling.

Fred stops, sits for a moment to compare the surroundings to the map drawn by General Zacherovich. Fred steps out of the jeep and places the map on the front hood.

SISTER CATHERINE (60's) an elderly Catholic Nun is walking with a basket of fresh vegetables and stops to offer assistance.

SISTER CATHERINE

Good afternoon. May I help you find something?

FRED

I'm just trying to see if I'm in the right place.

SISTER CATHERINE

I'm Sister Catherine.

FRED

Lieutenant Fred Eller, it's a pleasure to meet you.

SISTER CATHERINE

Well Lieutenant, I guess you have found, you are at the end of the road.

FRED

I'm just following this map.

SISTER CATHERINE

Are you looking for someone in particular? I know just about everyone in Ginzling.

FRED

It's related to the war.

SISTER CATHERINE

Well, thanks to the Lord, the war is over. Many of my parishioners lost their lives here.

FRED

I'm sorry to hear that. I've seen the worst of the War, without firing a single shot.

SISTER CATHERINE

Then you are blessed my son.

FRED

What makes you say that?

SISTER CATHERINE

Many Americans died here, saving us from the Nazis. God has spared you, from the agony of killing another man.

FRED

On the contrary Sister. I'm sending Russians and Germans to the gallows.

Sister Catherine senses the burden by Fred masking his tears. She places her hand gently on Fred's cheek.

SISTER CATHERINE

God punishes the wicked. It is their own decisions that led to their demise. You are simply doing your duty.

FRED

Thank you Sister. I've seen a lot of suffering in my life.

The Sister detects Fred is troubled, she steps closer. Fred looks into her eyes.

SISTER CATHERINE

What troubles you my son. You are burdened by something?

FRED

Sister, when you collect gifts from the alter, do you care where they come from?

SISTER CATHERINE

They are a gift to God my son, he alone knows where they are from.

FRED

What if the gift was stolen?

SISTER CATHERINE

Well now, if that be the case, it has made its way back to God, has it not?

FRED

I guess it has Sister.

Two young children walk down the path and greet Sister Catherine, stand behind her.

SISTER CATHERINE

These two are victims of war. Both of their parents were murdered by the Germans.

Fred looks at both of the children and beyond them he catches a glimpse of something in the ditch. He walks over and picks up a rusted Rugar. He walks back, the children still scared of Fred.

FRED

(to the children)

Did you see who killed your parents?

Still afraid, they cower behind the Sister.

SISTER CATHERINE

You can trust this man. Tell him.

DAUGHTER

It was Russian officers in German uniforms.

SON

We told the US Soldiers.

FRED

Are you sure?

DAUGHTER

Positive.

Fred holds out the gun, shows it to both of the children.

FRED

Was this the weapon?

SON

Yes, it was.

The Sister has detected a resolve from Fred, closing a chapter.

SISTER CATHERINE

Lieutenant, GOD will heal every one of us. I hope you have found what you're looking for.

Fred's eyes go from the map to the gun. A decision is made. He stuffs the map back into his coat pocket.

FRED

I think I have Sister, thank you.

Fred hops into the Jeep and drives away, not looking back. Sister Catherine waves with the children and begins to walk down the road.

INT. FRED'S CAGE OFFICE - MORNING

Carlson enters the office with Zacherovich. Two guards hold him with his hands cuffed. Carlson knocks on the door before entering.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I have Zacherovich outside.

FRED

Bring him in. And keep him cuffed.

Carlson enters first, noting Fred's displeasure. The guards sit Zacherovich in a chair in front of Fred's desk.

Once he is settled Fred pulls the Rugar from his drawer and throws it on his desk for Zacherovich to see.

FRED (CONT'D)

General, do you recognize this weapon?

Zacherovich looks at the gun and back up at Fred. Carlson shakes his head, is relieved.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Looks like a German made 9mm Rugar.

FRED

Come to find out, it's not just any weapon. It's your gun General.

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH

Lieutenant, you know that can't be proven.

Fred picks up the signed statements dictated to the US Army when Zacherovich was captured.

FRED

I have two witnesses that saw you murder two defenseless farmers with their hands tied behind their backs.

General Zacherovich sits silently with no remorse.

FRED (CONT'D)

You expect me to believe you had nothing to do with their murders?

GENERAL ZACHEROVICH
It seems you have made up your mind.

FRED
Yes, I have. Get him out of my sight.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Soldiers, you heard the Commander.

The two guards pull Zacherovich from the chair. He glares at Fred one last time. Fred throws the gun on his desk.

EXT. COMMANDERS OFFICE - MORNING

Fred exits, Carlson throws his cigarette, helps with the bags. Karl is standing with a leash tied to Fred's dog Hans.

KARL
I'll take care of him while you're gone.

FRED
It's only one night.

KARL
My wife and I could use the company.

FRED
Thanks Karl!

Fred hops in the driver seat. They quickly pull away.

INT. ARMY JEEP - MORNING

While driving Fred and Carlson discuss the trip to Minsk.

FRED
Did you install the new chains and rope?

SERGEANT CARLSON
Yes, sir. The only way someone gets away is, if they all jump.

Carlson laughs, Fred raises his eyebrows.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)
Just kidding. No one can get away.
Period.

FRED
That's all I wanted to know.

SERGEANT CARLSON

We've got one car full of officers and one car for everyone else. All Russians.

FRED

Carlson, before this assignment, I'd never left the US. Now we're headed to Russia.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Yes, sir, nothing like this in Bama, that's for sure.

He looks over at Fred who is smiling, Carlson looks to Fred.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

By the way, sir. I was wrong about something.

FRED

About what?

SERGEANT CARLSON

Let's just say, I misjudged you, sir.

FRED

Carlson, we barely know each other, that's to be expected. No apology needed.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Thank you, sir.

Rather than prying to determine the reason, they both let it go. Carlson references their schedule.

SERGEANT CARLSON (CONT'D)

We'll meet the Russian Delegation this evening. A dinner and celebration.

FRED

Jezz, I've never liked political events.

They have reached the train station. Fred parks, they both gather their things and head for the train.

EXT. BAD HERSFELD STATION - MORNING

Fred and Carlson walk towards the platform, the Russian officers all smoking cigarettes.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, it looks like the prisoners are already loaded.

FRED

Great! This exchange can't happen soon enough.

Lieutenant Azordoff has his hand ready to shake and the other hand for Fred's shoulder.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Lieutenant Eller, you will join us tonight for food and vodka?

FRED

I'm not one for parties. But I'll make an exception this time.

Fred and Azordorff look towards the entire Russian delegation.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Never mind them. My comrades always look angry. We are happy, this will end soon.

FRED

That makes two of us.

In the distance three dead Russians in German Uniforms are thrown into one of the cars.

FRED (CONT'D)

Who are they?

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Three more suicides. They must go back with the others.

RUSSIAN OFFICER

They will be eaten by rats for their dishonor.

The train whistle blows. The last group of American and Russian officers board the train.

The train lurches forward and pulls away from the platform.

INT. OFFICER TRAIN CAR - MORNING

Fred and Carlson walk down the isle into a private car. They place their luggage above and find their seats. They sit facing each other.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, I've got a question.

FRED

Fire away.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Where did you find that Rugar?

FRED

Exactly where Zacherovich threw it a few weeks ago.

SERGEANT CARLSON

But how did you know where to look?

FRED

I had no idea, really. A conversation with him lead me to that spot.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Or fate, sir.

FRED

Carlson, sometimes you need to listen to that still small voice inside. Some call it a compass. Others, think it's your conscience. I'd like to think it's God sending you down the right path.

Fred gets settled in his seat. Looks out the window. Carlson looks like he wants to ask more but doesn't push it.

The two men continue to ride in silence, taking in the scenery. The landscape changes from a fall setting at Gerstungen Station to a snowy landscape in Minsk.

EXT. MINSK TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

The air is crisp, steam and soldiers breath covers the platform as the train slows to a stop.

Fred exits the train as the car containing the Generals and Officers is led single file.

Vlasov and Zacherovich lead the group passed the American and Russian leadership. Both men acknowledge Fred with a respectful nod. Carlson witnesses the gesture of good faith.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, they were left with the worst choices of anyone I will ever know.

FRED

That may be true Carlson. But it was their choices that will lead to their deaths.

Lieutenant Azordoff steps from the train. He sees Fred and Carlson and stands to wait for them.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

We have two rooms at the Hotel Minsk. I have ordered a car to take you there.

FRED

Thank you, Lieutenant.

Azordorff recognizes a woman, waiting for him. Turns back to Fred and Carlson.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

I have a car waiting. I will see you both tonight.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Thank you.

Azordoff pulls away. Another car stops pulls up to the curb beside Fred. The driver exits the car and grabs Fred and Carlson's luggage.

Fred walks around to the other side, Carlson hops in. The driver quickly pulls away.

INT. MINSK CAB - AFTERNOON

Inside the cab Fred and Carlson take in the sights.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Well Azordorff is a changed man.

FRED

He was either under pressure from his superiors or just a horses ass.

SERGEANT CARLSON
May I be candid with you sir.

FRED
By all means Carlson.

SERGEANT CARLSON
Azordorff saw two young GI's and thought
he could walk all over us.

FRED
Well, he was a good sparring partner, I
reckon.

Fred and Carlson exchange a smile.

FRED (CONT'D)
Azordoff should be happy. He accomplished
what he was sent to do.

CARLSON
And we did too. You especially, sir.

FRED
How so?

CARLSON
You changed everything, sir. Many others
would have caved given your mission sir.
Now, we can all get back to our lives.

Fred grows anxious. Stares out the window.

FRED
If that's even possible.

INT. MINSK THEATER - EVENING

A Soviet band plays music. Large tables are full with
drunk officers and prostitutes.

The head table is a mix of Government officials and high
ranking Officers of the new Russian Federation.

Fred and Carlson sit at the table with the Soviet
Delegation. Both men have a tense and guarded demeanor.
Lieutenant Azordoff is drunk and heads around the table
to confront Fred. He puts his arm around Carlson first.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF
This man stood up for you Fritz when I
thought you were just a school boy.

FRED

Lieutenant, I think you've had too much
Vodka.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Nonsense. So Fritz. You and I, how do you
say? We never saw eye to eye. Yes?

FRED

I believe we agreed to disagree.

He pauses to process what Fred said. He quickly pulls out
his pistol and holds it to Fred's temple.

RUSSIAN OFFICER

Yes, I disagree. Here we have our
weapons. I see you have yours. See, we
both agree, Yes?

The music stops, the entire room watches Fred and the
Soviet officer. Fred locks eyes with Azordoff.

There's a glint in the young man's eye: the fighter in
him stirred. He grins and quickly pulls out his 45 and
pushes it into the Officers chest.

FRED

Yes, we agree to disagree.

From beside Azordoff, a Russian General has crept up
behind, puts his hand on Azordoff shoulder and slowly
takes the pistol.

The General frowns at Azordoff. He turns his attention to
Fred, still holding the 45.

RUSSIAN GENERAL

(To Fred)

You'll have to excuse my Lieutenant. This
is big misunderstanding. Yes?

FRED

Yes it is, General.

The General looks at Azordoff and back to Fred.

RUSSIAN GENERAL

Are we done here?

Fred slowly lowers his 45, places it back into the
holster.

FRED

Yes General, we're done.

RUSSIAN GENERAL

The traitors you brought to us. Best gift ever!

The General smiles and delivers a stiff smack to Fred's back.

RUSSIAN GENERAL (CONT'D)
(in Russian)

Let the celebration continue.

Once Azordoff and the General are occupied, Fred and Carlson nod to each other and walk out of the hall.

The Russian officer watches as Fred and Carlson leave, smiles and returns to a toast.

EXT. MINSK TRAIN STATION - DAWN

Fred and Carlson stand on the platform as the last few people board the train. On each telephone pole hangs many of the officers the Americans brought from the Cage.

Fred is disturbed by the officers hanging from telephone poles around them. Azordoff appears and gestures to the hanging Russians.

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

Look at them swing. They will hang by piano wire until their heads roll to the ground.

FRED

Are Vaslov and Zacherovich among them?

LIEUTENANT AZORDOFF

They are on the first two poles coming into town. You will see them last.

FRED

Goodbye, Lieutenant.

Without a response, the Russian Lieutenant turns and walks away.

SERGEANT CARLSON

I really hate that man.

FRED

Come on Carlson, lets go home.

Fred and Carlson board the train, it begins to pull away from the station.

Both Fred and Carlson find a seat on each side of the car and get settled. On the way out of the station, Fred and Carlson watch out each window. They both stand, look in the direction of the train's movement.

From each telephone pole a Russian soldier hangs by his neck, some with rope others with a piano wire.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Sir, you see this?

Fred watches out the window without looking at Carlson.

FRED

If we ever end up in a war with the Russians, they'll never take me alive.

EXT. MINSK TRAIN STATION - DAWN

On several of the poles the piano wire hangs by itself, the corpse and the head severed and lying at the base of the pole.

FRED (V.O.)

God, we can't ever let this happen again. Either we learn from our mistakes or we will perish from the earth.

Hanging Russian soldiers line each side of the railroad track. The train rolls out of town slowly, as if the ride was orchestrated for their benefit.

FRED (V.O.)

From my humble beginnings to this moment, I've learned that given the right conditions to embrace evil, men with weak morals, often make the wrong choice.

As Azordoff had predicted, Zacherovich and Vaslov are pulled up the pole from a standing position. A group of soldiers hoists them as they struggle, hanging by a noose, their hands tied behind them.

FRED (V.O.)

If evil should prevail, we will cease to exist.

Each of their entire families, shot by a firing squad, lay at the base of the pole. Both Generals forced to watch as their entire family were shot moments before they were raised.

INT. MINSK TRAIN PRIVATE CAR - DAWN

Fred and Carlson watch as the train slowly passes the Generals, all of this madness choreographed purposely for their viewing. Without a word they both find their seat and gaze out the window at the winter scene.

INT. FRED'S QUARTERS - EVENING

Fred opens his door, drops his baggage onto the floor and walks over to the table. He raises the glass, gulps down the contents, lowers his head and slowly rubs his forehead.

He finds Hans at his feet. He picks him up, walks to his bed and sits down on the mattress. Hans jumps on the bed and gets comfortable.

FRED

Don't get any ideas.

He lays back onto his pillow, closes his eyes and falls fast asleep. A pile of books and documents, litter the table beside the bed.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE CAGE - MORNING

Fred is standing behind his desk, assembling records and pictures of the camp. Several of the pictures show suicides and death. He looks at a few, tosses them one by one into a folder. Carlson enters.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Shipping out today?

FRED

Yes, I am. I heard you'll be in charge of the new women's facility. Couldn't happen to a better man.

Hans lays comfortably in the corner, wags his tail.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Thank you, sir. Your taking Hans with you?

FRED

Kinda got attached to him.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Well, have a safe journey home Lieutenant.

He salutes and keeps his hand to his forehead, slowly removes it. Fred salutes. Fred ends the formalities.

FRED

Carlson, it has been my pleasure to serve with you. I quit school in the eighth grade. Your summaries helped me focus. I would have failed without them!

SERGEANT CARLSON

I was honored to serve you sir.

Carlson breaks a smile, almost a laugh.

FRED

Out with it. You have something to say?

SERGEANT CARLSON

The prisoners coined a nickname for you.

FRED

And.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Take no prisoners, Eller.

FRED

I'll take that as a complement.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Thought you would, sir. Karl is waiting for you outside.

Fred grabs his things and with one arm, pats Carlson on the shoulder on the way out.

FRED

Don't be a stranger.

SERGEANT CARLSON

One last thing Sir. Do you think Azordoff would have pulled that trigger?

FRED

I'm glad he didn't.

SERGEANT CARLSON

Me too, sir.

EXT. CAGE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Fred walks out of the office, looks at the building one last time. Karl is smoking a cigarette waiting patiently. Hans jumps into the Jeep.

FRED

You know those things are bad for you.

KARL

We will all die some day. It's how you live that matters.

FRED

Thank you for everything Karl. I am a long way from home. Your counsel and friendship made all the difference.

KARL

The pleasure was mine, Fritz. We will see each other again?

FRED

I hope so. Goodbye Karl.

KARL

So long Fritz.

Karl stands at the base of the stairs. He pulls out a cigarette as Fred drives away, down the main road littered with rubble.

Fred's Jeep passes the Cage and Bad Hersfeld and into a sunlit sky.

Sequence Nineteen**EXT. NEBRASKA TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON**

Mabel, Bonnie and Steve wait patiently for the train to come to a stop.

INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - AFTERNOON

Fred spots Mabel and his children. He hops to his feet and hustles down the aisle.

EXT. NEBRASKA TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

Fred runs into Mabel's arms, Bonnie hugs one leg, Steve stands with his Bear, silent. Fred kisses Mabel and bends down on one knee to Steve's level. Hans wags his tail.

FRED
Hello young man.

BONNIE
He's only two dad.

Fred kisses Bonnie on the cheek.

FRED
Hello sweetheart.

Hans begins to lick Bonnie's face.

BONNIE
Where'd you get the dog?

FRED
(to Bonnie)
This is Hans. It's a long story.

Hans takes to Bonnie immediately.

MABEL
I'm sure it is.

Fred picks up Steve, and Bonnie takes the leash as Hans leads the way.

MABEL (CONT'D)
I'm sure your father is anxious to get home.

Fred carries Steve while Bonnie holds onto Fred's coat tail. Mabel stares into the eyes of her husband, proud and thankful. Mabel gives Fred a small peck on the cheek. Fred's eyes full of tears and joy.

MABEL (V.O.)
The Fritz I knew, never returned from Germany.

Mabel hugs his arm, tears filling her eyes and her face.

MABEL (V.O.)
He carried a weight too heavy to bear. A scar that would never heal completely.

The entire family all disappear into the fog.

EXT. MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA - DAY

Teargas and riots characterize the tumultuous year of 1956. Jim Crow speaks at a white supremacist event, while southern segregation is prevalent everywhere - displaying "No Coloreds" and "Whites Only" signs.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA - DAY

Autherine Lucy attempts to enter a building flanked by heavily armored US Troops, holding protestors back from confrontations, Autherine is pelted by rocks and eggs.

EXT. CLINTON, TENNESSEE - DAY

Tennessee Governor Clement issues orders to deploy Jeeps, Tanks, Armored Personnel Carriers and 600 troops.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - MORNING

A civil rights demonstration includes a wide demographic of people with picket signs, together with a loud chant in unison. They walk slowly down the street in front of a Grocery Store.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MORNING

Fred and his son Steve walk into the store, Fred puts his arm around Steve, as he pushes a full cart of Kellogg's products.

INT. CENTER AISLE OF STORE - MORNING

Fred looks towards his normal shelf where a POST SALESMAN (35) is placing his product. On a lower shelf the Post Salesman had shifted Kellogg's products to a lower level.

FRED
(to Steve)

Wait here, son.

Fred walks determined, stops at the Post Salesman's back. He raises up turns and faces eye to eye with Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)
Did you move my products?

The Post salesman casually answers in a disrespectful tone.

POST SALESMAN

I didn't think you owned the shelf.

Fred hasn't delivered a punch in quite sometime, but he takes a stance towards the Post Salesman. Fred grabs the Post salesman's collar and lowers his fist.

FRED

I'm gonna give to the count of three, and if you're not switching every box, I'm gonna give you a knuckle sandwich.

A small crowd has gathered at the top of the isle along with the President of Kellogg's who happened to visit the store today.

POST SALESMAN

OK, OK. You don't have to get all worked up.

Fred straightens the Post Salesman's tie and let's him begin switching the products. Steve is enjoying the show.

FRED

I've earned this placement over years of service. You think you can waltz in here and steal it? Well do you?

POST SALESMAN

No, I guess you're right.

FRED

You bet I'm right!

The President of Kellogg's MR. VANDERPLOEG walks closer to the confrontation with Fred and the Post Salesman. He is enamored with Fred's loyalty and determination.

Fred recognizes the President of the company, Mr. Vanderploeg. The Post salesman continues to switch products.

FRED (CONT'D)

Good morning sir. I'm Fred Eller.

MR. VANDERPLOEG

I've heard about you for some time now. It's a pleasure to witness first hand a loyal employee, willing to fight for what he believes in. And who might this young lad be?

FRED

This is my son Steve. My trusty assistant today.

Mr. Vanderploeg pats Steve on the shoulder and offers a brisk handshake with Fred.

MR. VANDERPLOEG

Fred, I could use your talents in Battlecreek. We offer a competitive management salary with a growing industry.

He hands Fred his card. Fred studies it and then looks up.

MR. VANDERPLOEG (CONT'D)

Call my direct number, ask for Nancy. She will make all of the arrangements. That is, if you accept my offer.

FRED

Yes, sir. Thank you.

Fred and Steve watch as Mr. Vanderploeg walks slowly down the isle.

STEVE

Battlecreek, in Michigan?

FRED

That's the place.

STEVE

Dad. Would you have punched him?

Fred smiles, his demeanor different with Steve.

FRED

Only if he didn't obey my command.

Fred puts his arm around Steve as they continue to finish placing boxes on the shelves.

FRED (V.O.)

I accepted the offer and remained at Kellogg's until my retirement, decades later. Loyalty proved to be worth its weight in gold.

INT. ELLER HOME DINING ROOM - EVENING

Congratulations and Retirement decorations along with drinks, highlight a party hosted by Fred and Mabel. The sounds of a celebration in the next room.

Fred and Karl are seated at the dining room table. Mabel sits next to Karl's wife across the table as small children run by. Fred has the Cage documents scattered on the table.

KARL

It's so wonderful to finally see you, and your lovely family, after all these years. Now, you are retired.

FRED

Yes, my friend. The years have flown by.

Fred pulls the hand drawn map carefully from a plastic folder.

FRED (CONT'D)

I've always wanted to show you this.

He sets it in front of Karl. Karl immediately spots a familiar place. He points to it.

KARL

This is Ginsling.

FRED

You're certain?

KARL

Absolutely. It looks different today, but yes, I am certain.

FRED

Zacherovich drew this map. He offered me a deal.

Karl's smile and familiarity quickly turns to disdain.

KARL

A deal you refused, no doubt.

FRED

Actually, it's a map leading to Nazi gold.

KARL

There are stories of this, most of them for fools.

FRED

I told my superior officer about the offer. He told me to have Zacherovich draw it. So here it is.

Karl ignores the map as if he fears its secret.

KARL

What did he ask for in return?

FRED

A hero's death by cyanide. If there is such a thing.

Fred looks at the documents on the table. Places the map back in it's folder.

FRED (CONT'D)

What ever happened to Von Leeb?

KARL

You know he was right after all.

FRED

What do you mean? Did he hang?

Karl looks towards the women, he sighs and turns back towards Fred.

KARL

Three years, they gave him three years for his role in the Holocaust.

Fred is just about speechless, but angered by the news.

FRED

Three years. For what I witnessed?

KARL

Surely, you must remember what he said.

FRED

As if it was yesterday.

Fred looks to the other side of the table at Mabel who has been silent thus far, she senses a cue to change the tone.

MABEL

I'm sure all of that is in the history books. Now Fritz dear, you've talked about the treasure for years. You've heard of divine justice?

Fred ponders the suggestion and remains silent considering the prospect.

MABEL (CONT'D)

We can visit Karl and his lovely wife.

Fred smiles at Karl, a fond glance towards Mabel.

FRED

Of course, some day soon.

The doorbell rings. One by one, Mabel, Karl's wife and Karl turn and leave the room.

FRED (CONT'D)

I'll be right there.

Fred stands in front of the map, the entire room vacant now, the sounds of greeting's resonate in the distance. He holds a picture of a Nazi.

FRED (V.O.)

Not a day goes by, that I don't recall looking into the soul of men who created such evil, and wondering how I remained civil.

Fred folds the materials neatly along with the map, pausing to look at the volumes of records he has acquired.

FRED (V.O.)

If I return and find what was stolen, returning it to God is the only choice. He alone, will make it right.

He glances at the ring from Boris. He rotates the ring around his finger revealing the mark from years gone by, a reminder of his journey. He relives the images of the cage, and then carefully places the documents back into the dining room hutch.

FRED (V.O.)

Among the destruction and despair, God taught me compassion, but I would remember the madness of war the rest of my days.

Fred wipes a tear running down his weathered cheek. A wonderful memory that proves, family is far more important than gold.

He walks out of the room, turns out the light.

FADE TO BLACK