

RITCHIE BOY

Written by

Alan J. Field

Inspired by the World War II experiences of George Robert Field

Contact@alanjfieldbooks.com

OVER BLACK.

FADE UP TO:

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

A lantern illuminates a small square wooden table between two folding chairs.

Bespectacled U.S. Army private, GEORGE FIELD (23), diminutive stature, yet world-weary for such a young man, sits on one side of the table. A scruffy GERMAN POW stumbles inside, having been pushed by a MILITARY POLICEMAN who sits him in the chair facing George.

MILITARY POLICEMAN

Another one for you.

The MP steps back and stands guard by the entrance.

***** All italicized dialogue will be spoken in German with English subtitles.**

GEORGE

*Name, rank and serial number,
please.*

POW

*Gunther Steisen-Leid. Upper Guard.
39344823.*

George hurriedly jots down the information in a moleskin booklet with a pencil.

GEORGE

*Very good. I see that you are a
sniper.*

The POW does not answer.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Correct?

POW

Yes.

GEORGE

You want some chocolate?

POW

No.

GEORGE

What I want to know is, what was your division's munitions supply situation when you decided to run?

The POW says nothing, standing his ground.

George clears his throat and scans his notebook to buy time. This isn't how it was supposed to go.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It would be good of you to tell me unless you want things to end badly for you... We already know that Helmut Steinmetz was your commanding officer because we captured him last night.

POW

No, he is not.

GEORGE

According to my information--

POW

An Austrian!

GEORGE

Yes.

POW

So when was it when you decided to betray the Reich?

GEORGE

If you continue to evade my questions, you will not be treated well.

POW

An Austrian is not a true German. We had to fight all your battles for you. Nothing but useless bureaucrats and bad artists.

GEORGE

You--Your Führer was born there and was a bad artist.

POW

You didn't answer my question. Why did you leave?... You a Jew, aren't you? That's it, isn't it? I won't bow to a Jew.

GEORGE
*Your munitions situation, private
 Steinmetz!*

POW
Steisen-Leid, you dirty Jew.

George drops his pencil to the floor. His jaw tightens as he stares down into his notebook again, a lost puppy.

The POW glances sideways to an UNSEEN OBSERVER.

POW (CONT'D)
 (Southern accent)
 Y'all want me to keep goin'?

We PULL BACK to see other U.S. Army CLASSMATES watching.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (O.S.)
 That's enough.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (50) stands in a corner and starts toward the table. He leans his hands on the table, peering down into George's soul.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (CONT'D)
 Congratulations, private. You've just demonstrated everything that we're not supposed to do in an interrogation.

GEORGE
 Sir, I--

CAPTAIN HARDIN
 I never said you could speak, private, did I... DID I?

GEORGE
 No, sir.

CAPTAIN HARDIN
 (to the other classmates)
 Never let the prisoner control the interrogation by letting him get under your skin. And you know the best way do that? Be tough with 'em from the get-go and keep turning their screws, damn-it! A good punch in the face'll let 'em know who's in charge.

GEORGE
 But, sir, the Convention--

CAPTAIN HARDIN

Private! If you want to succeed in This Man's Army, you better learn when to SHUT UP in the presence of a superior officer. Damn to Hell the *Geneva Convention*. An aggressive talkin' to and a good amount of slappin' 'em around's what'll get 'em all riled up and primed to talk. That's it. End of story. But right now, private, you're not gonna' pass my course.

EXT. MUDDY PATH -- DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH EARLIER -- JULY 1943 FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

George stumbles behind other RECRUITS.

He wipes the sweat off his forehead with the back o his grubby palm in the searing heat as his blurred vision of the platoon sharpens.

George tries to catch up as one Recruit pushes him in the back, hurling George into a mud puddle.

RECRUIT

Stinkin' Kraut!

The Recruit laughs along with a few others as they leave behind a mud-soaked George, encircled by hovering mosquitos.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

George on knees, he cleans a toilet using a toothbrush.

His DRILL SERGEANT enters.

DRILL SERGEANT

Private! Base Commander wants you in his office, pronto.

GEORGE

Yes, sir. Why?

DRILL SERGEANT

Don't ask, private. Step on it.

INT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE - LATER

George enters and salutes the BASE COMMANDER sitting behind his desk, who returns a perfunctory salute, not even looking at George, who walks toward a chair.

BASE COMMANDER
Do not sit, private.

George stands at attention.

The Base Commander tosses George a sealed manila envelope STAMPED TOP-SECRET, which George catches clumsily.

BASE COMMANDER (CONT'D)
You're being transferred.

GEORGE
To where, sir?

BASE COMMANDER
I can't tell you that, private,
because I do not know. What I just
gave you is a classified order for
your eyes only. Understood?

GEORGE
Yes, sir.

BASE COMMANDER
Whatever it is they want you for, I
pray whatever crime you committed
over there won't get you hanged...
Pack your duffle bag. Your train'll
leave at sixteen-hundred.

George just stands there unsure of what to do next.

BASE COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Go.

EXT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

George opens the envelope. He pulls out a train ticket and a sealed letter which he opens. His jaw drops.

EXT. CAMP RITCHIE, MARYLAND - ENTRANCE - DUSK

George sits in a military car at an imposing wrought-iron FRONT GATE buttressed by a high stone wall. Two SENTRIES emerge from a guard station.

GEORGE
Private George Feldman, reporting.

SENTRY 1
Good day, Private Feldman.

George raises an eyebrow: *Why German?*

GEORGE
Good day.

SENTRY 1
We've been expecting you.

SENTRY 2
Welcome to Camp Ritchie.

The large wrought iron gates open as the car crawls in.

INT./EXT. MILITARY CAR - CONTINUOUS

George gazes out the window to see the vast green meadow that is the PARADE GROUNDS LAWN where GERMAN TANKS CRAWL unchecked and packs of GERMAN ARMY SOLDIERS GOOSESTEP in drill formation.

INT. CAMP THEATER - EVENING

George enters the open space to the reverberant din of almost over one hundred soldiers of who are about to become his Classmates.

A posh cocktail party ambience signifies the gathering. A cacophony of German, Russian, and French fills the room.

A few, like George, gawk at the scene like wallflowers at a school dance.

He walks over to one KURT JACOBS (33) gentle soul with the thoughtful expression.

GEORGE
Have you been told why we are here?

KURT
No, but it sounds like one of my college professor's faculty wine and cheese gatherings. I'm Kurt, from the Bronx.

George smiles.

GEORGE
George, from Saint Louis.

They watch the others chatter on.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Whatever it is we've been called
here to do, we'll be doing it with
a lot of talkers.

George notices MURRAY ZAPPLER (20), an impeccably dressed
loud talker speaking to three other Classmates. Three other
CLASSMATES listen.

MURRAY
So if I said the answer is 9-W,
what's the question?

DIM-WITTED CLASSMATE
9-W? Ya' got me.

MURRAY
Do you spell your name with a "V",
Mr. Vagner?

DIM-WITTED CLASSMATE
Aw, c'mon.

MURRAY
You call yourself a German speaker,
big boy?

DIM-WITTED CLASSMATE
This guy a friend of Dorothy Gale,
or what?

The others guffaw.

MURRAY
Now boys, you're just jealous.

Murray steps away and approaches another group.

George also notices the one soldier speaking in Russian whose
boyish wit impresses the others around him. This is VIKTOR
BELMONT (25).

VIKTOR
(in Russian)
...Russian is my first language,
German, French and English fall
right behind.

The rest of the conversation is spoken in English.

INQUISITIVE CLASSMATE

That's very good. Too bad you won't get to use it.

VIKTOR

Don't be so sure. If the German Army crumbles, Our two armies might be fighting each other.

INQUISITIVE CLASSMATE

Oh, in that case, have fun speaking it in the gulag.

More laughter.

A PIERCING DOUBLE-WHISTLE REVERBERATES through the hall.

Conversation stops.

George and Kurt stand at attention for no one in particular.

SENTRIES appear on the STAGE at one end of the room. Base Commander COLONEL CHARLES BANFILL (60) enters and walks up to a wooden podium.

COLONEL BANFILL

Gentlemen, welcome to Camp Ritchie. I'm Colonel Banfill, your base commander. You are all part of the tenth Military Intelligence Training Course.

George and Kurt quickly exchange confused looks.

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

Before I begin, you must understand this one principle: What goes on here, stays here, for the rest of your lives.

Colonel Banfill surveys the audience. No pins have dropped.

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

To start with, most of you probably think you were all selected for this eight-week intensive training course because of your exceptional language skills.

Viktor quickly squelches a slight grin.

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

But that's not all. What you bring here is your on-the-ground experience of years living in the enemy's lair. Ultimately it's your unique knowledge of the enemy's culture and psyche that will bring the Nazi Regime to its knees.

George nods slightly with dropped jaw.

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

I don't care if you've never fired a weapon or thrown a punch in the school yard. Your intellect will be crucial in gathering the necessary intelligence we need to defeat the enemy. Now, I know that many of you won't make it through my course.

Murray stifles a chuckle.

George frowns with determination: *wanna bet?*

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

You will be tested like you never have been before in your life. But I promise you, those of you who do survive, will get your chance to return home and kick some Nazi ass!

George, Kurt, Murray and Viktor all grin unabashedly.

The room ERUPTS IN CHEERS `as we

BEGIN CLASSROOM MONTAGE:

INT. CLASSROOM (GERMAN ARMY ORGANIZATION) - DAY

George and his classmates huddle around a plywood platform filled with miniature wooden German armored tanks, vehicles and soldiers. An INSTRUCTOR holds up one tank as he points to a blackboard filled with GERMAN ARMY INSIGNIAS. George writes down copious notes in his tiny RED NOTE BOOK.

INT. CLASSROOM (GERMAN DOCUMENT INTERPRETATION) - DAY

George and the classmates sit at their small desks looking at a handout of a German letter written in GOTHIC PRINT as another Instructor points to Gothic letters on the blackboard.

INT. CLASSROOM (TERRAIN/AERIAL INTELLIGENCE) - DAY

George and the students sit at their desks each draw their own TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPS indicating distances and elevation notations while another Instructor speaks with aerial photos posted on an easel beside him and MORSE CODE notations on the blackboard behind him.

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM (INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES) - DAY

George and his Classmates listen to DR. SANFORD GRIFFITH speak and he holds up a BRIGHT RED BOOK, which cover reads "ORDER OF BATTLE of the GERMAN ARMY," printed in black ink.

DR. GRIFFITH

The first rule of interrogating POWs: never strike a prisoner. We have learned that physical aggression does not begat the most valuable intelligence. Rather to attack the German mind, which can be exploited in one of five enumerated ways. One. Nazi Vanity.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kurt sits across from a "fake" GERMAN POW.

DR. GRIFFITH (V.O.)

The enlisted men are reduced to nothing but little thugs who like to see themselves as Nazi Party big-shots.

KURT

I see from our pay book that you have fought in several Victorious battles...

The German POW nods and smiles as he starts talking about them.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Murray sits across from another "fake" German POW.

DR. GRIFFITH (V.O.)

Two. Nazi venality. The most brazen affront to Nazi idealism and is a weakness we must exploit to the limit.

MURRAY

So tell about how your commanding officer pulled strings for you to get that special commendation...

The German POW PROUDLY leans back mouthing off about it.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Viktor sits across from another "fake" German POW.

DR. GRIFFITH (V.O.)

Three. Lack of meaningful education privileges cut short by their war effort which effectively "dumbed down" their limited and censored world view. The Nazi Party catches their children young and holds onto them until the Army takes over.

VIKTOR

You didn't know that your Army lost that battle? Let me show you...

Viktor hands the German POW a news article, who starts reading it and instantly appears befuddled, head in hands.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

George sits across from another "fake" German POW.

DR. GRIFFITH (V.O.)

Four. Their 'Teacher Knows Best' mentality. The German POW loves to answer questions if you make them feel like an authority on a specific subject.

GEORGE

*I don't understand how your
Battalion was able to set up that
mine field. Could you explain it to
me?*

The German POW sits up like he owns the place and starts pontificating.

INT. INTERROGATION CLASSROOM - DAY

Dr. Griffith finishes his pacing, standing at the front of the class.

DR. GRIFFITH

And five. Never underestimate the German soldier's ability to overestimate the validity of bureaucratic documentation. This extends to rank insignias. So when you are in the field, make sure your rank insignia appears equal to or greater than the subject you will interrogate. Of course, I wouldn't try this with your own C-O.

The Classmates guffaw as they share a light moment.

INT. MESS HALL - EVENING

The murmur of conversations in various languages echoes throughout.

African American Ritchie Boy WILLIAM WARFIELD (23) sings a German Lied by Schubert.

WILLIAM WARFIELD

*"What does the huntsman seek here
by the millstream" Stay in your own
territory, defiant hunter! Here is
no game for you to hunt; here
dwells only a tame fawn for me. And
should you wish to see that gentle
fawn, leave your guns in the
forest, leave your baying hounds at
home, stop that pealing din on your
horn and shave that unkempt beard
from your chin, or the fawn will
take fright in the garden."*

George joins Viktor, Murray and Kurt at the table.

MURRAY

These eight-straight days of class
is wearing me thin.

VIKTOR

Quit complaining. Where else in the
army could even dream of eating
food like this? What did you get,
George.

GEORGE

Tough choice between the Beef
Wellington and chicken Francese,
but I went with the beef.

KURT

I heard the chef ran the Waldorf-
Astoria.

MURRAY

I'd say we've earned it, right
boys?

GEORGE

It's not so bad. In high school,
there was no shallow part of the
class, and when we learned a
language like French, we were
penalized for speaking German.

MURRAY

Well look who's all high and
mighty, now?

VIKTOR

Classroom work is only part of the
training. So let's see who's
bragging after close combat
fighting and interrogation.

MURRAY

(to George)

You saying because we didn't finish
school in Germany we're not as
smart as you?

KURT

Speak for yourself. I studied law
before my family left. That has
applications everywhere.

MURRAY

But didn't you work in your
family's clothing business?

GEORGE
Math and science is the universal
language.

VIKTOR
Wrong. Love is the universal
language, my friends.

MURRAY
Oh, please! What a Frog you are.

VIKTOR
But I was born in Moscow and grew
up in Berlin, until, like you, I
had to leave.

MURRAY
But aren't you Catholic?

VIKTOR
Not according to the Reich. A
Jewish paternal grandfather was all
it took to make me an enemy of the
state.

MURRAY
Lucky bastard.

GEORGE
So Belmont isn't--

VIKTOR
It was Goldberg. My father changed
it when he fled to France in '36.
And you all should do the same.

EXT. SEASIDE BOARDWALK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

On a cloudless day, an 18-year-old Viktor kisses a young
woman whose face we do not see as her flowing dark hair blows
in the sea breeze.

VIKTOR (V.O.)
I met a French girl, Desire', who I
met at Normandy where my family
vacationed in '38.

INT. MESS HALL - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

MURRAY
So what happened?

VIKTOR

When the Germans came, my father's business was shut down. They could only send one person to America. I lost contact with them once I left.

GEORGE

And Desire'?

VIKTOR

The same. I'm afraid the French did nothing to stop the Nazi wave.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

George and the Classmates are paired up and practice "kill" moves.

LIEUTENANT REX APPLGATE (30), paces the floor.

APPLGATE

When it comes to hand-to-hand combat on the battlefield, there are only two options: kill, or get killed. The element of surprise is your best friend. A simple throat grab from behind and a quick twist of the neck should eliminate your opponent. But what if he's coming at you and grapples you?

George struggles to break free of a BURLEY CLASSMATE's bear hug and is BODY-SLAMMED to the mat.

SERGEANT BECKWITH (PRE-LAP)

Grab a gun and fall in!

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

SERGEANT BECKWITH,(45), arms folded, stands next of a RIFLE RACK.

Twenty of George's Classmates each grab a RIFLE from the rack. George merely stares at the lone rifle in the rack: a mathematical equation he just cannot solve.

SERGEANT BECKWITH

You afraid of one bitin' you, soldier?

GEORGE

N-no. I can't... shoot, sir.

SERGEANT BECKWITH

I don't care. Why do you think you're here, private? To learn how to do it right.

(to the group)

All you country boys shootin' buckshot since you was four, think you got it all figured out. Well, I'm here to tell ya' that all don't mean shit startin' now.

(back to George)

Go on and grab the rifle, son.

George appreciates the encouragement and grabs the last one, albeit tentatively.

LATER

The Classmates in prone position, shoot their M-1 rifle at bullseye targets. George's aim is way off, but keeps at it.

ANNOYING SOLDIER

You city boys couldn't hit a barn door if it was in your face.

George does his best to ignore the jibe and continue shooting, his aim improving just a bit.

INT. CAMP THEATER - DAY

George and the other Classmates sit and watch MAJOR HARWOOD (50) speak at the podium.

MAJOR HARWOOD

Some of you may be called upon as operatives to act as insurgents in daily German life. For those of you uninitiated to it, we've brought a slice of Germany right here in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

On opposite sides of the stage, "Brown Shirted Nazis" wearing Nazi armbands march up behind Harwood.

Flags with Swastikas unfurl in the background.

MAJOR HARWOOD (CONT'D)

The Nazi regime relies on well rehearsed, timed and choreographed rallies to rile up the people.

The Brown Shirt give a coordinated Nazi salute.

BROWNSHIRTS
SIEG HEIL!

Major Harwood steps off the stage.

Then a soldier dressed as HITLER enters the room, steps up to the podium and speaks. NAZI SOLDIERS follow and flank Hitler on both sides of him.

George breaks out into a sweat as his eyes locate the nearest exit and then...

He bolts out of the room. Kurt clocks him and wonders.

ANGLE ON Hitler as we

MATCH CUT TO:

A LIFE-SIZED PORTRAIT OF HITLER ON A FLAG.

SUPER: VIENNA - SPRING 1938

EXT. VIENNA STREET - DAY (EXTENDED FLASHBACK)

A 19-year-old George, book bag over his shoulder, walks past the flag as he weaves through the crowded sidewalk.

Horns blare as he sees old men and women on their knees to scrub off sidewalk anti-Nazi graffiti. A crowd of people surround them as they mock and jeer them.

GEORGE'S APARTMENT SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

A George cuts through the empty space, TWO YOUNG THUGS (23) appear and block his path.

George turns back and is immediately punched in the face by a THIRD YOUNG THUG (23). George falls to the ground, books sprawling out of his bag onto the pavement.

GEORGE

*My father is a loyal countryman who
fought in the Great War. He still
has his sword.*

The Young Thugs laugh at him. *What is he talking about?*

YOUNG THUG 1

*Idiot! We're not Nazis. We want our
money.*

GEORGE

What?

YOUNG THUG 2

He must've hit his head.

More laughs.

YOUNG THUG 1

The money, Paul. The money we lent you and promised to pay back two months ago.

George slowly gets up.

GEORGE

He's my older brother.

YOUNG THUG 3

You know what? He's much scrawnier than Paul.

YOUNG THUG 2

And stupider.

More guffaws.

YOUNG THUG 1

So where is he, huh?

GEORGE

He left Austria last month.

YOUNG THUG 3

And took our money.

Young Thug 1 pummels George to the ground.

YOUNG THUG 3 (CONT'D)

You tell him he'd better pay up or we'll keep beating up his "little" brother until he does.

The three Young Thugs take off laughing.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

George, sporting a shiner, tutors his sister, ILSE (16), a girlish flower, sitting at a wooden coffee table.

GEORGE

So if all vertical angles are equal, then what would the answer be?

ILSE

One-hundred-and-fifty degrees?

GEORGE

That's correct. See, you are getting it.

ILSE

I still hate geometry.

Ilse eyes George's shiner.

GEORGE

Don't worry about it. Mama took care of it.

ILSE

But I do worry. About you and about us.

GEORGE

When I finish school, I'll be able to go anywhere in the world, and I will bring you all with me.

ILSE

I don't know...

George notices Ilse's dog-eared GOETHE PRIMER on the table.

GEORGE

Enough geometry for today. You shouldn't bend the pages like that. What are they making you read?

Ilse opens up the primer to a page.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

"On The Devine." I remember this one. "Noble be Man."

ILSE/GEORGE

"Merciful and Good."

GEORGE

If only that were true.

ILSE

Well, I think so. Hope and goodness
in mankind is the only thing that
can gets us through these days.

GEORGE

(chuckling)

*Knowing how to solve problems--that
is how we will survive all this.*

The front door BURSTS OPEN as their father RUDI (58) enters,
a gray-haired maelstrom of regret in a tattered vest.

Rudi walks up to them and eyes George ominously.

RUDI

Who gave you that?

George averts his gaze down to the school books.

ILSE

No one, Papa.

GEORGE

*They thought I was Paul. They said
he owes them money.*

RUDI

*At least he wouldn't have let them
give him a BLACK EYE.*

GEORGE

*If he was still here. But he's off
playing body builder with his
stupid weights, drinking away his
money.*

RUDI

*It is those stupid weights that
will make him big and strong for
the Olympics.*

GEORGE

*I know big and strong won't pay the
bills, Papa.*

RUDI

*He's following a trade as a
plumber, a solid profession, unlike
you, whose head's in the clouds
with this teaching nonsense.*

GEORGE

I've saved up enough to buy my own bed. That's not nonsense.

RUDI

You don't buy the furniture in this family.

GEORGE

I'm the only one in this family who can.

Rudi grabs George's collar.

RUDI

Whenever it comes, I'll smash it to pieces!

ILSE

Papa, please!

LENA (O.S.)

Dinner is ready.

LENA (53), the eye of the maelstrom around them, wears a flowered apron. She stands in the kitchen doorway, observing with her penetrating eyes.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

Lena, Rudi, George and Ilse sit at the table as they help themselves to Lena's creamy noodle and meat entree.

LENA

(to Rudi)

So, what happened at the union hall?

RUDI

Nothing, that's what happened. There are no jobs available for old tanners like me.

George and Ilse hold their tongues as an uncomfortable pause fills the air.

ILSE

So Mama, have you heard from Uncle Sig?

RUDI
(glances over at George)
Another one with his head in the
clouds.

George doesn't take the bait as Rudi stuffs in a mouthful of noodles.

LENA
He is still working on the papers.

GEORGE
Mama, what is taking him so long?
In six months, his sabbatical will
end and he'll have to come back. He
doesn't care about us.

LENA
Oh, yes he does, sweetie. He will
help us.

GEORGE
I can't believe I could've been
studying in Palestine by now, but
instead Paul's the one who goes.

RUDI
You know how we feel about that. We
don't have the money.

GEORGE
But it was a full scholarship. Do I
have to show you again?

George gets up and pulls the scholarship letter from a pile of papers on the counter.

Rudi glares at George.

RUDI
Paul is older, so he can do what he
chooses.

George sits, fuming.

LENA
And we need one son around when...
when our lottery number comes up,
at least we'll be able to leave
together. Then Paul will join us
later.

Rudi grabs the letter from George's hand.

RUDI

*This scholarship... is useless.
Those so-called Jews of Palestine
don't respect our kind.*

GEORGE

*I already told you they teach in
German. So if Palestine is good
enough for Paul, then why isn't it
good enough for me?*

Rudi crumples up the letter and tosses it in the garbage can.

RUDI

*ENOUGH! No more talk of study in
Palestine.*

George throws down his silverware and skulks away.

RUDI (CONT'D)

(to Lena)

*This is your fault. Making him too
soft for real men's work.*

Rudi gets up and storms out. The front door SLAMS SHUT.

Lena clears the table without a word.

Ilse brings her plate to the sink and eyes the CRUMPLED LETTER in the trash can and furtively reaches for it...

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

George sits at his desk. A desk lamp illuminates a page from a mathematics book.

Lena enters.

LENA

*I left some strudel for you in the
oven.*

GEORGE

Thanks, but I'm not so hungry.

LENA

*That does not sound like the boy
who, when he found my casserole in
the oven, ate it all before the
rest of us got home.*

GEORGE

Mama, please stop.

LENA

He's a hard man, I know. Things are very bad right now. He can't find work that he's been doing his whole life. His friends are getting arrested, their shops shutting down.

GEORGE

If he would only consider other things. This is no longer the place for us. I've come to realize that it never really was.

LENA

He cannot change his ways. Someday you will understand. You are my Georg-ie. You will always find a way to get what you want.

George melts every so slightly, cracking smile.

Lena touches his hand.

GEORGE

I remember when you gave birth to Ilse upstairs and Papa left me a box of chocolates to keep me occupied until it was over--

LENA

--and when he came back you had eaten the whole box.

GEORGE

I think I'm getting hungry for some of that strudel.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

Mobs of people roam the streets. The sound of SHATTERED GLASS in the distance.

INT. TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

George sews buttons on a jacket when the TAILOR (50) enters from the back room.

TAILOR

I need more linings. If you take my bike, you can get there before it closes.

George puts on a jacket, hesitates.

TAILOR (CONT'D)
I really need it. You can go
straight home and bring it to me
tomorrow.

George nods, then leaves.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP ALLEY - NIGHT

George hops on his bicycle.

EXT. SUPPLY SHOP - NIGHT

George arrives on the bike to see the shop ABLAZE, it's show
window SMASHED.

George freezes when a BROWNSHIRT calls out to him.

BROWNSHIRT 1
You, on the bike. Stop.

George grips the handlebars.

BROWNSHIRT 2
*I saw him smash the window and set
it on fire, didn't you?*

George pedals away.

A wooden baton hurls through the front wheel.

George catapults over the handlebars and hits the pavement.

George, groggy with pain, turns his head to see a blurred
BOOT STOMP ON HIS CRACKED GLASSEES.

The Brownshirts surround him.

BROWNSHIRT 1
Find his papers.

A Brownshirt 2 reaches inside his jacket to pull out George's
identification booklet, then opens it to see a fat RED "J".

BROWNSHIRT 1 (CONT'D)
*Place him under arrest with the
others.*

George tries to look up at them as we

FADE TO BLACK.

END EXTENDED FLASHBACK

EXT. CAMP THEATER - NIGHT

George leans against a wall steadying himself with one arm, shutting his eyes.

Kurt appears from behind.

George hears the footfalls, but does not turn to look.

GEORGE
I'm fine.

KURT
Okay.

George turns to face him.

GEORGE
I just needed some air. I'll come
back in a moment.

Kurt regards him, not taking the hint.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I said I'll be right in. Go.

KURT
I was only eleven when we left
Germany, but I could see it coming.

GEORGE
It happened overnight in Austria.
You missed the worst of it.

KURT
And so did you, from what I'm
hearing what's happening now.
Relocations, deportations...

George laughs and shakes his head.

GEORGE
To defeat the Nazis, we will have
to outsmart them.

Kurt shakes his head.

KURT

I think that to defeat a monster,
you must be able to look him
straight in the eye and stare him
down. Logic plays no part in
warfare.

GEORGE

So that's it, then? It takes one
monster to defeat another?

Kurt cracks a smile, and then George does the same.

KURT

What do you say we go back inside
and stare one down together?

They both walk back inside.

INT. HAGARSTOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

George, Kurt, Murray and Viktor and other Classmates stand at
attention in the courtroom as a JUDGE (60), recites:

JUDGE

I hereby declare under oath...

GEORGE AND CLASSMATES

I hereby declare under oath...

JUDGE

That I absolutely and entirely
renounce all allegiance and
fidelity to any foreign state or
sovereignty of which I have
heretofore been a citizen...

GEORGE AND CLASSMATES

That I absolutely and entirely
renounce all allegiance and
fidelity to any foreign state or
sovereignty of which I have
heretofore been a citizen...

JUDGE

That I will support and defend the
Constitution and laws of the United
States of America against all
enemies, foreign and domestic...

GEORGE AND CLASSMATES

That I will support and defend the
Constitution and laws of the United
States of America against all
enemies, foreign and domestic...

JUDGE

That I will bear true faith and
allegiance to the same. That I will
bear arms on behalf of the United
States...

GEORGE AND CLASSMATES

That I will bear true faith and
allegiance to the same. That I will
bear arms on behalf of the United
States.

JUDGE

Are you prepared to take up arms in
the defense of your country?

SOLDIER IN BACK OF ROOM

Hell, no!

JUDGE

Shut up, you wise guy!
(banging gavel)
Congratulations. You are now all
citizens of the United States.

INT. CLERK'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Classmates wait in line behind George.

INDIFFERENT CLERK (O.S.)

Name?

GEORGE

George Robert Field

Without looking up, the Clerk stamps an official paper and
hands it to George.

Standing behind George, Kurt clocks his response.

INT. ARMY BUS - DAY

George and Kurt sit across from Viktor and Murray.

Murray notices George fidget.

MURRAY
What's eatin' you?

GEORGE
We'll be late for the overnight.

MURRAY
Oh, don't worry so much.

GEORGE
I want to pass. I don't know what
you want.

MURRAY
Hey, buddy--

KURT
(to George)
So you changed your name.

GEORGE
Yes. It's "Field" now.

VIKTOR
That's good.

MURRAY
Well, I'm keeping mine. I had the
name before I left, ten years ago.

VIKTOR
(to George)
You'll also change your dog tag
designation then?

GEORGE
(nodding)
Why make it easy for them to ID my
religion?

MURRAY
Not me. And besides we'll be
working behind the front lines, so
it's unlikely we'll ever get
captured.

VIKTOR
(to Kurt)
What do you think?

KURT
I think we should not make baseless
assumptions.

MURRAY
With us, or the Germans?

KURT
I'll leave here way I came in.

Murray nods. Viktor turns to George.

VIKTOR
Something else on your mind?

GEORGE
It's just... you don't know how
cruel Germany has become since you
all left. I saw terrible things
happen to people.

MURRAY
What kind of things?

GEORGE
Things that led me to believe they
won't let us live if we ever give
them the chance.

EXT. PARADE GROUNDS - DAY

A LIEUTENANT (25) and six other Classmates wait impatiently
as George and friends run up.

LIEUTENANT
You dead weights better get moving.
The other teams left three hours
ago.

MURRAY
Shit.

GEORGE
I told you.

VIKTOR
(to the group)
You heard the Lieutenant, We need
to get going if we want to pass
this exercise.

George balks at Viktor's take-charge talk, but complies as
the group quickly loads their gear into the back of a waiting
truck.

Once they climb in, a thick cover is draped over the rear,
blocking out all sunlight.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Viktor leads the way as George, Murray, Kurt and the other Classmates follow along a dirt road.

VIKTOR
(to George)
How far to our next checkpoint?

GEORGE
I need to take another look at the map.

The LOW ROAR of an armored caravan draws near.

VIKTOR
Take cover! We fail if they see us.

MURRAY
Could be a local.

KURT
At night?

GEORGE
He's right. We need to hide.

Viktor motions the group toward a clump of bushes. They all take cover behind it and lay prone.

George peeks through the bush as the "German Convoy" drives by, and to his horror, STOPS!

KURT
I don't want to fail this test.

MURRAY
They'll just make us re-do it. No big deal.

VIKTOR
Shut-up!

Two GERMAN SOLDIERS get out. One brandishes an M-1 and the other sweeps a blaring flashlight around. The beam reaches across the bush as the group holds its collective breath.

GERMAN SOLDIER 1
They should be around here somewhere.

GERMAN SOLDIER 2
I don't see them. Maybe they got farther up the road.

The German soldiers get back in and drive away.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - NIGHT

The group sees a farmhouse in the distance with one light shining through a window. A full moon provides the only other light.

MURRAY

We could ask for directions. Easy.

VIKTOR

No! You know the rules. No asking the locals for help. Kurt's right we can't risk failing this.

GEORGE

Or getting shot by one well before then.

KURT

I'm for not cheating.

MURRAY

I think I'm for not getting shot.

EXT. ROCKY TERRAIN - NIGHT

The Classmates appear winded and frustrated.

They find that they've walked right up the edge of a steep canyon drop.

MURRAY

This can't be right.

VIKTOR

(to George)

What does the map say?

GEORGE

It's... written in a text I can't identify.

MURRAY

What? But you're supposed to be our map expert.

VIKTOR

Let's set up camp here to catch our breath.

(MORE)

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

We'll have to back track to make our next checkpoint. Two hours rest, tops. Okay, everyone?

LATER

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt sit by themselves, separated by the other six Classmates.

MURRAY

We should've gone to that house.
(to Kurt)
Thanks a lot for backing me up.

VIKTOR

Leave him alone. That's not the game. I thought George would be able to read a damned German terrain map.

GEORGE

I *can* read a map. You try it in the dark.

MURRAY

Your interrogation skills could use a boost, too.

VIKTOR

Easy. The colonel said only half of us will probably pass the course. Not everyone's cut out to fight and shoot a gun.

GEORGE

So if you're so perfect, you take over.

VIKTOR

I was defending you, George.

GEORGE

If that is defending me, then I'd rather have Murray do that.

KURT

We're all struggling, guys. It's all an endurance test. *This* is an endurance test.

GEORGE

I thought I could do this. That I could learn anything I had to learn to beat Hitler.

MURRAY

Huh, your math problem solving didn't help you, did it?

VIKTOR

Murray--

MURRAY

Geez, what happened to you over there?

GEORGE

What do you think? I was asked to leave.

MURRAY

I know, but Kurt and I left after the Reichstag fire. When it was easy to leave.

GEORGE

They arrested me on Kristallnacht, and haven't seen my family since.

VIKTOR

And how did you...

GEORGE

Escape? The more I think about it, the more I believe it was divine intervention.

MURRAY

So says the true man of science.

EXT. DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP -DAY (EXTENDED FLASHBACK)

A steady rain falls on George and JEWISH INMATES in street clothes as SS GUARDS "escort" them with bayonet rifles from a train.

SUPER: DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP - AUTUMN 1938

The Guards herd them all across a MOAT through a wrought iron gate with the inscription, "ARBEITE MACHT FREI." An ELECTRIFIED BARBED-WIRE FENCE encircles the camp in a metaphorical "choke" hold.

GEORGE (V.O.)

They took us to Dachau. Hell would be too kind a description for what I experienced there. To me, it's 'the Dark Place'.

An OLD INMATE walking beside George clutches a PRAYER SHAWL.

GEORGE

Don't let them see that.

OLD INMATE

But, this is all I have left to show my faith.

GEORGE

Best for you if it's kept a secret in this place. Can't you see that?

The Old Inmate hesitates.

THE MUDDY GROUND

As they walk through the gate, MUDDY SHOES trample over the discarded prayer shawl.

THE GUARD TOWER

Prison Command-ante CURT BRUNS (27), a callous soul wrapped in a greasy exterior, watches the new group as they pass below.

INT. HOLDING AREA - DAY

A FLASH BULB BURSTS as George's photo is taken.

George surrenders his personal possessions that are then neatly packed away in a wooden box marked with his name.

The number 24,652, stamped on white ribbon is sewn on blue-striped pajamas below George's collar. Below it, the telling YELLOW STAR OF DAVID.

INT. GROUP SHOWER STALL - DAY

George winces as his hair is cut to the scalp with very blunt scissors.

INT./EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

The group is led into a single-floor pinewood structure.

The "bunks" are six-foot wide wooden shelves covered with a thin layer of straw, three high. A lone TILED STOVE sits in the corner.

INMATE 1
It's freezing in here.

INMATE 2 walks over to the stove.

INMATE 2
It's not working.

GEORGE
This all looks brand new. They were expecting us.

INMATE 3
Not so new. The lice beat us to it.

INMATE 3 tries to crush some lice with his fist, but they scurry into the straw.

The Barracks Manager KAPO (45) enters.

KAPO
You are all in protective custody until further notice. Your day begins and ends with roll call at five a.m. sharp and six p.m. every day. My advice: be inconspicuous and maybe you will survive here.

INMATE 2
What do we do here during the day until we are released?

KAPO
They don't know what to do with you Jews yet, so until then, just follow instructions.

And then...

KAPO (CONT'D)
I am sorry.

OFF GEORGE: looks up at the ceiling as the Kapo leaves.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

George and rows upon rows of other male Inmates do meaningless CALISTENICS. Off to the side, George notices the Old Inmate struggling but somehow keeps up.

George notices some Inmates leave the camp dressed in street clothes.

THE TOWER

Bruns looks on.

EXT. CAMP PX - DAY

George stands in line with his metal bowl. He watches Inmates ahead of him being served a piece of STALE BREAD and a ladle-full portion from a vat of SWILL STEW.

OLD INMATE

I cannot eat what the pigs eat.

GEORGE

That is all there is. You need to eat something.

As they walk back to the barracks, the Old Inmate eats two pieces of bread, while George spots DEAD INSECTS in his stew, but drinks a bit of it anyway, before dumping the rest on the ground.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

George sees one POLITICAL PRISONER adjusting the stove and notices a BULLSEYE below a RED TRIANGLE on his pajamas. The other Inmates take notice.

GEORGE

Are you here to fix the stove?

POLITICAL PRISONER

It's fixed. Thanks to me.

INMATE 1

What's with the bullseye?

POLITICAL PRISONER

I'm a serial escapee.

INMATE 2

And you're still breathing?

POLITICAL PRISONER
(glancing at stove)
As long as they need me around to
fix these things...

Inmate 1 grins and eyes Inmates 2 and 3.

POLITICAL PRISONER (CONT'D)
But it is not that bleak for your
lot. Germany still would rather
expel you Jews than keep you
around.

OFF GEORGE: eyes widen a bit as the wheels turn.

LATER

George signs a post card that says, "I am well. Hope to see you soon.

We pull back to see the Kapo wait with a mail bag. George tosses it in the bag, but the Kapo catches it first, briefly reads it, then drops it in.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

George tussles in his straw and slaps his neck at crawling lice.

BARKS of a GERMAN SHEPARD slice through the chilly night air, then an ELECTRICAL BUZZ, followed by a PLEADING MOAN.

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

STOMPING BOOTS on wooden planks disrupt the still quiet.

KAPO (O.S.)
Weekly inspection!

George and the Inmates jolt awake and stand at attention lined up shoulder-to-shoulder as they each hold out their bowl filled with utensils and toothbrush.

The Kapo, two CAMP GUARDS and Bruns enter.

The Camp Guards check each Inmate's bowl, utensils and toothbrush.

One Camp Guard checks George's spotlessly clean bowl and utensils, but flicks some toothpaste off of his brush, then shows it to Bruns.

Bruns walks up to George.

BRUNS

You know what we do to Inmates who do not do their part to keep this camp clean.

He nods to the other Camp Guard who SLAPS George hard across the face with both hands, then again, again and again.

George does all he can not to break down or complain to give Bruns the satisfaction.

Seeing no reaction, Bruns nods for the Camp Guard to stop.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

Come on, we do not have all day to waste on this Jew.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ilse reads when Lena enters from the kitchen holding George's post card.

LENA

He's in Dachau!

She almost collapses from the shock, but recovers.

ILSE

What can we do?

LENA

We have to prove he has another place to go.

ILSE

The scholarship!

LENA

That was George's only hope.

ILSE

Then I know where hope is.

INT. ILSE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ilse dumps out a box full of papers from a box onto her bed. She pulls out the all-important crumpled but flattened-out scholarship letter.

ILSE
See mama? I pulled it out of the
garbage.

Lena breaks down and cries as she hugs Ilse.

EXT. DACHAU - PX - DAY

George and Inmate 1 stand in line with their clean bowls.

INMATE 1
These pajamas are useless in the
cold. We'll freeze to death.

GEORGE
I have an idea.

THE TOWER

From a distance, Bruns looks on, suspicious.

INT. BARRACKS BATHROOM - DAY

George notices a pile of towels, grabs a few and hides them under his pajamas.

INT. CAMP PX - DAY

George palms Inmate 1 some money for a needle and spool of thread.

INT. COURTYARD - DAY

More calisthenics. This time, several men drop from exhaustion and are SHOT DEAD. George keeps going, refusing to look, relieved it's not him.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

George furtively sews towels together to make an undershirt.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

George and the Old Inmate lift sacks of sand into wheelbarrows at a construction site for new barracks as a LETHARGIC CAMP GUARD looks on.

When the Old Inmate drops his sack, it breaks open.

Bruns sees this.

BRUNS

*Kick him until he can't get up
anymore.*

George cannot look away this time.

As Bruns walks away and out of sight, George walks up to the Lethargic Camp Guard and stands at attention.

GEORGE

Kick me instead.

The Lethargic Camp Guard stops and stares at George as if he were crazy. Then he looks around, seeing no one watching.

LETHARGIC CAMP GUARD

Get away from here. Go!

The Lethargic Camp Guard kicks him in the rear end as George walks away.

As he walks around a building, George glances back to see the Lethargic Camp Guard helping up the Old Inmate to his feet.

LETHARGIC CAMP GUARD (CONT'D)

*You're no use lifting these. Just
go back to your barracks and stay
there.*

KAPO (PRE-LAP)

Inspection!

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

George and the Inmates stand in a shoulder-to-shoulder straight line with their bowls, but George senses something is off. The line is shorter.

The two BARRACKS GUARDS whisper to each other.

BARRACKS GUARD 1

*Three of your bunkmates are
missing. Tell us where they are.*

Everyone shrugs.

EXT. VACANT COURTYARD - NIGHT

A WHINEY FEEDBACK sounds through the camp speakers.

BRUNS (ON LOUDSPEAKER)
All Inmates report to the parade grounds now.

The Courtyard lights BLARE ON as Camp Guards march all the Inmates in formation.

Bruns walks up a raised platform overlooking all the Inmates and speaks through a megaphone.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
Three of your comrades have escaped. Until they are caught, all of you will stand at attention. No matter how long it takes.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Camp Guards walk through the columns of Inmates.
- George fights to stay awake.
- Other Inmates collapse around him. One is the Old Inmate.

MORNING

Three escapees are herded up to the platform where three nooses await them.

George recognizes them as Inmates 1, 2 and 3.

Bruns nods to the Camp Guards who put the nooses around the three Inmates' necks. He speaks through his megaphone.

BRUNS
It is because of these three Inmates that the rest of you have suffered the consequences. Now, it is their turn.

Bruns nods and the floor beneath the Inmates opens. After a few moments gyrating, the three Inmates hang motionless.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
You are all expected to report for breakfast and return here for exercises in one hour.

As George is led away, we pull back to see the Courtyard littered with lifeless Inmates.

INT. BARRACKS

As George and the surviving bunkmates walk in, Bruns stands in front of George's bunk. The two Barracks Guards hold two piles of undershirts.

BRUNS

You should know by now there is no reward here for altruism.

Bruns nods and two more Camp Guards appear and grab George out of the barracks.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

Bruns watches George who is suspended from a gallows-like structure on his arms while shackled behind his back, clearly suffering.

Bruns enjoys this.

BRUNS

You will not leave here alive. That is my job, proscribed by the Führer himself.

GEORGE

What do you want?

BRUNS

To see every Jew wiped off German soil.

GEORGE

Then let me go. Please!

BRUNS

The world does not wish to have you, so I have the responsibility of fulfilling that wish.

GEORGE

Then shoot me now!

BRUNS

I will shoot you... once your arms are ripped from your body. The next time I pay you a visit.

Bruns leaves as the metal door SLAMS SHUT.

LATER

The metal door SCREECHES open. Two Camp Guards enter. Bruns is nowhere in sight.

The Camp Guards untie George, who tumbles to the floor.

They grab him and walk him out.

EXT. PARADE GROUNDS - DAY

The Camp Guards escort him at gunpoint, just like his arrival.

GEORGE

Are you going to kill me?

INT. CHECK-IN BUILDING - DAY

George is handed his box of clothes and personal items, even his BROKEN GLASSES.

An S.S. OFFICER appears and hands him an envelope.

S.S. OFFICER

Listen very carefully, Jew. Your family has secured your release to Palestine. Do not visit them. Proceed directly to the nearest border checkpoint immediately and show border patrol what is inside. You must leave German soil within twenty-four hours from now. If you do not, you will be shot.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

CLOSE ON CRUMPLED SCHOLARSHIP LETTER as George reads it.

Mouth agape, George sifts through the other papers that secure his release before putting them back in the envelope.

George, who fights to stay awake, and a few other RELEASED INMATES are held at gunpoint by S.S. GUARDS.

WHACK!

A gun butt strikes the back of the head of one Released Prisoner, who slumps to the floor.

S.S. GUARD

Do not think we are done with you yet.

END EXTENDED FLASHBACK

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Viktor, Murray and Kurt process what they've just heard.

MURRAY

That's some story. You have a score to settle.

KURT

We're with you.

VIKTOR

That's all well and good, guys, but we need to figure out how to get back to camp.

GEORGE

Let's take another look.

They commiserate under a blanket with Kurt holding a flashlight on the map.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Since I can't make out the notations, we need to rely on visual landmarks. If we head back this way, in about four-and-a-half miles, we should see the footbridge. Then from there we can hit our first checkpoint here. Are you with me?

MURRAY

I still think we should have stormed that farmhouse.

VIKTOR

We're with you, Let's go.

EXT. MAIN BUILDING - DAY

George the rest of the group arrive at the check-in point.

LIEUTENANT

You're late!

VIKTOR

By eighteen minutes.

The Lieutenant shrugs.

LIEUTENANT

You guys are also the first group
back in. Well done.

EXT. CAMP RITCHIE - SOCCER FIELD - DAY

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt watch a soccer match between
fellow soldiers on the base.

VIKTOR

Probably the only place in America
where you can find this many soccer
players.

GEORGE

You think they even know how
popular it is in the rest of the
world?

MURRAY

Not a chance. Back in Wisconsin,
they go crazy for that pig-skin
kind of "football".

(to Viktor)

Hey, you think they'll use you on
the Eastern Front?

VIKTOR

Why would they do that?

MURRAY

I don't know. Maybe they'll have
you debrief Soviet POWs after we
plow through Germany and Poland.

One of the players pushes a player from the opposite team to
the ground in a blatant foul.

George shuts his eyes as we

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM - SOCCER STADIUM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

One soccer player running past another player from the
opposite team after having just pushed him to the ground.

SUPER: JERUSALEM - SUMMER 1941

George (21), bored and world-weary and older brother PAUL (24), muscle-bound and happy-go-lucky, watch from the bleachers with other SPECTATORS.

Paul leaps up as some Spectators around them BOO.

PAUL

*What's the matter with you. Get up.
GET UP!*

GEORGE

*He was fouled, yet they won't card
the other player.*

A stone pelts Paul, then another, and another. One hits George, too, and all the Spectators around them.

George and Paul look down to see three BLACK-HATTED MEN wearing white shirts with black suits throw the stones at the Spectators.

BLACK HAT

*Stay home and honor Adonai on his
day of rest!*

PAUL

Damn them!

A few female Spectators around them SCREAM as they are pelted.

GEORGE

We need to go.

PAUL

But the game...

GEORGE

*Forget about the game. I want to
live!*

George and Paul are pelted as they run out of the stadium onto the

EXT. STREET - DAY

Paul now runs scared. George can't keep up.

PAUL

*C'mon. What's wrong with you? You
have to keep up.*

GEORGE

No! I'm sick of this place. I'm not staying here.

Paul stops as George catches his breath.

PAUL

So, let's go home.

GEORGE

No, I mean I am leaving for America.

PAUL

Since when?

GEORGE

Since I heard from American Immigration yesterday. Uncle Sig finally came through for me. The ship leaves in three weeks.

PAUL

But I thought we'd leave together. That's what we agreed.

GEORGE

I know, but it's always me bringing in the rent, paying for your food. Doing any part time job I can get. All you do is spend your time in that gym lifting weights with your buddies.

PAUL

Those weights build me up to compete in wrestling tournaments.

GEORGE

For what? The 1940 Olympics were cancelled. Papa said you were working to be a plumber. What ever happened with that grand plan?

PAUL

You don't tell me what to do.

GEORGE

I do if I'm paying the rent. If you worked, then maybe you could prove to American Immigration that you wouldn't be a 'public charge'.

PAUL

Oh yeah? You'd fit in here better if you'd only learn some Hebrew. That's why the Technion wouldn't accept you.

GEORGE

The reason they wouldn't accept me was because I spent my first semester and a half in a camp. It was all a big sham!

PAUL

Bullshit. You still could have studied on full scholarship if you'd actually put in the effort to learn the language.

GEORGE

And get stoned on Saturdays. What hypocrites they are. Remember that Kosher butcher I worked at when I first arrived?

PAUL

Yeah?

GEORGE

He always bought non-Kosher chickens from Yugoslavia and sold them as Kosher to the same crazies who stoned us.

PAUL

They were good chickens.

GEORGE

That's not the point!

PAUL

You think I'm not as smart as you, but what I do know that you still don't, is that without that "sham" scholarship, you'd be dead by now.

George storms off, leaving Paul cold.

GEORGE

I'm not waiting for the ship. I'm moving out tonight.

PAUL

Good riddance!

EXT. DOCK - DAY

George checks in his steamer trunk and is about to board the ship.

PAUL (O.S.)

Hey!

George turns around.

GEORGE

I didn't expect you'd see me off.

PAUL

They rejected me.

GEORGE

What?

PAUL

American immigration. You were right. I'll need to stay here for a while before I can re-apply.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

PAUL

Don't be, because as it turns out, I got a job with the Post Office.

GEORGE

I'm happy for you.

George looks away to the ship, to the sea.

PAUL

I know. I think about them, too.

GEORGE

Let us promise each other that if one of us hears anything, we'll tell the other.

PAUL

Okay. Now get on that ship... and make me a proud big brother.

Paul bear-hugs George, nearly suffocating him, as we:

END FLASHBACK

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

George breaks free of a bear hug from another Classmate by kicking him in the shin and takes down one of the Classmates.

Everyone watching is impressed.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

George hits the bullseye consistently like a pro to the astonishment of the Sergeant and everyone else, especially the Annoying Soldier, to whom he nods with satisfaction.

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

Same as the opening scene. George sits facing the entrance.

A bottle of water and pack of cigarettes on the table.

An OBSTINATE GERMAN POW stumbles inside, having been pushed in by a MILITARY POLICEMAN who sits him down in the chair facing George.

MILITARY POLICEMAN

Another one for you.

The MP steps back and stands guard by the entrance.

GEORGE

You look tired. Would you like some water and cigarette?

GERMAN POW

Yes, thank you.

The POW gulps down the water and George lights a cigarette that he gives to him.

GEORGE

Now, what is your name, rank and serial number

GERMAN POW

*Hans Friedrich. Sergeant.
283957230.*

The POW inhales a puff.

GEORGE

You follow American baseball?

GERMAN POW

Yes. How did you know that?

GEORGE

Because we found a Joe DiMaggio baseball card hidden in your pay book.

GERMAN POW

The Yankees are my favorite team.

GEORGE

That may be, Hans, but the Saint Louis Cardinals are the best team.

The POW, unable to respond with a topper, inhales another puff.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I see from your pay book you were assigned to the seventy-sixth Panzer Division under Captain Friederick.

GERMAN POW

No, I was not.

GEORGE

Surely your pay book would not misrepresent your assignments. It says you were paid for your service to the Fatherland, correct?

GERMAN POW

Of course I was, but they started pay cuts.

GEORGE

But as a sergeant, you still earned more than those you command. But I'm thinking, are you worth it?

GERMAN POW

What is this? How dare you question my ability!

GEORGE

Well, how good a sergeant in the German Army could you possibly be if you let a bunch of young Yankees like us capture you?

GERMAN POW

Who do you think you are? My unit was doing just fine holding the line at Reims, until my Captain decided to run.

George yawns, not taking any notes.

GERMAN POW (CONT'D)

So I had to call H.Q. in Brest for supplies.

GEORGE

So you were out of munitions?

GERMAN POW

Damn right we were. And no help from H.Q., so I had to contact other units in the area to cover the shortage.

GEORGE

Other units, you say?

George leans back and clasps his hands behind his neck, disinterested.

GERMAN POW

Yes. Aren't you writing any of this down? What kind of interrogator are you?

George takes out a map from his jacket and flattens it on the table.

GEORGE

This is a U.S. Army terrain map, but being you are German, I'm not certain you can read this.

GERMAN POW

Of course I can!

GEORGE

Okay, so go read it and circle for me where the other units in the area are located.

George hands the Sergeant a pencil which he grabs rudely, proceeds to scan the map and make a few circles on it.

GERMAN POW

See? I told you I could read it.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (O.S.)
Your examination is over, private.

We pull back to see Hardin sit and scrutinize the exchange from a corner behind George's right. Hardin stands with arms folded, towering over George.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (CONT'D)
Private Field, you remember I specifically told you NOT to bribe them with anything unless they serve up the information before that, and you failed to raise your voice even once. Do you know what that makes you?

GEORGE
No, sir. I do not.

CAPTAIN HARDIN
That makes you my most obstinate student... and one of the best damned interrogators I've had the pleasure of training. Congratulations private.

INT. BACK STAGE - CAMP THEATER - NIGHT

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt stand in line wearing military dress along with fifteen other Soldiers.

GEORGE
I ended up getting a ninety-two average.

MURRAY
Even though Hardin gave you a seventy-nine in interrogation.

VIKTOR
Let's congratulate the man, Murray. After all he's had a further climb than most of us.

A DOUBLE WHISTLE SOUNDS and they all march into

INT. CAMP THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The tenth class stands abreast on the stage in full military dress.

A small crowd of Military Officers watch.

Colonel Banfill enters and speaks from the podium.

COLONEL BANFILL

I present to you the tenth graduating class of the Military Intelligence course. Each of you has overcome the obstacles we put before you to pass this most rigorous test. A special commendation for Viktor Bromberg, who achieved the highest grade in the course with a ninety-three average and will be rewarded with the highest rank in the class, that of Second Lieutenant.

The crowd CLAPS. Viktor grins. George can't believe it.

COLONEL BANFILL (CONT'D)

Congratulations are in order, but now is little time to celebrate. I have just been informed that as of oh-five-hundred tomorrow, you will be assigned active duty in the European Theater. May God bless you in our fight to free Europe from tyranny.

EXT. THE QUEEN MARY - MAIN DECK - DAY

A sheet of billowy clouds enshrouds the NORTHERN IRELAND COASTLINE as the deck pitches and rolls from the rough sea.

George VOMITS over the ship's railing. He looks up to see the IRISH COASTLINE.

Viktor, Murray and Kurt hang out on the for-deck. Viktor and Kurt watch a small group of WACS. Murray is more interested in a group of young soldiers across the way.

A pea-green-faced George rejoins the group.

MURRAY

How'd you come over if you can't hold down your lunches?

KURT

The mess here is the Army food I had expected.

VIKTOR

We were spoiled at Camp Ritchie I'll give you that.

MURRAY

It's like you'd never been on a boat before.

GEORGE

You would be wrong. But after my crossing from Palestine, I'd swear I'd never want to go on a cruise for rest of my life.

MURRAY

How bad could it have been?

EXT. ANOTHER SHIP DECK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

George gazes out over the open sea and cloudless sky.

Other YOUNG MEN in worn clothing walk sit and pass behind him.

GEORGE (V.O.)

It was a sixty-day trip around the Cape on a ship meant for short runs in the Mediterranean.

INT. SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

George tosses and turns, finally VOMITING in a rusty can.

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE - VARIOUS AFRICAN PORTS

GEORGE (V.O.)

Its route shadowed the African and South American coasts throughout the entire journey. Mogadishu, Amaputo, Cape Town, Georgetown, Caracas...

INT. CHOW HALL - DAY

Dressed in street tattered street clothes, George and other Young Men stand in line who stoically await some mushy slop in a bowl.

GEORGE (V.O.)

The food, I'd have to say was no better than at Dachau.

CHOW HALL TABLE

George sits down alone grimacing and swallowing with each bite.

GEORGE (V.O.)
But on that ship, I met an
American.

An AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN wearing clean clothes and suspenders sits down next to George and starts reading a NEW YORK TIMES NEWSPAPER.

George takes notice and we see them talking.

INT. CHOW HALL - DAYS LATER

George and several other Young Men listen to the American Businessman as he holds up a newspaper with circled words.

GEORGE (V.O.)
He was some salesman who taught a
bunch of us English using a
newspaper. I could figure out the
words because I studied Latin.

EXT. THE QUEEN MARY - MAIN DECK - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Viktor, Murray and Kurt take in George's story.

MURRAY
So did we.

KURT
Not me.

GEORGE
But you didn't learn English in two
months.

VIKTOR
We still have our accents. That
doesn't go away quickly.

MURRAY
Maybe for you and George, but Kurt
and I have lived in the states
longer.

KURT
Problem is, in New York, everyone
around still speaks with an accent,
so there's no reason to change.

MURRAY

Not in cow country, Wisconsin.
Midwesterners don't put up with
accents. George should know.

VIKTOR

I thought you settled in New York
where you docked.

BEGIN EXTENDED FLASHBACK

EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY

George looks out to see the New York City skyline.

GEORGE (V.O.)

No, in Saint Louis where my uncle
taught at University on a
sabbatical. But he just stayed.

EXT. SAINT LOUIS - UNION STATION - DAY

George walks away from the train on the platform, dragging
his steamer trunk.

INT. SIG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's an explosion of papers and disheveled books on the
floor.

UNCLE SIGMUND (60), gray wirey-haired and aloof sits at his
desk as George tries to get his attention.

GEORGE

I'd thought you'd meet me at the
station, that's all.

SIG

I was working on a paper.

GEORGE

Too important to meet me? Do you
know what I've been through? What
Mama and Papa and Ilse are going
through? Had you even tried to get
them out? Now it's too late.

This gets Sig's attention.

SIG

I did try and you know what Immigration told me? That because your parents were not gainfully employed in a desirable trade and near retirement age, they couldn't admit them because they'd be seen as a public charge. George, this whole thing will blow over soon and then you'll be able to go back to them.

GEORGE

But Uncle Sig, do you not understand? Austria is no more. Germany has swallowed it whole. And Germany doesn't want us to set foot there. Better that I enlist in the Army rather than stay here in this sea of useless books.

Sig turns to George and cocks his head curiously.

SIG

Hmm... since when did you view books as useless?

EXT. MUNITIONS FACTORY - DAY

Workers huddle around a radio listening as they eat their bag lunches.

F.D.R. (RADIO)

...Yesterday, December 7, 1941--a date that will live in infamy--the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan...

INT. MUNITIONS FACTORY - DAY

George works a machine that cuts sheet metal as his BOSS (50s) interrupts him.

BOSS

Hey, turn that thing off.

George does.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Sorry George, I gotta let you go.

GEORGE
Why? Did I make too many mistakes?

BOSS
I can't have German folk workin' in
my factory. It's bad for business.

The Boss walks off and George tosses the sheet metal to the floor with disgust.

EXT. MUNITIONS FACTORY - DAY

As George walks out, other EMPLOYEES SHOUT epithets at him.

EMPLOYEE
Go back home, ya' fuckin' Kraut!

INT. ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

George walks in.

INT. ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

George stares at an ARMY RECRUITER (40s).

RECRUITER
Roosevelt's letting you guys in, so
nothing I can do about it. God help
you.

END EXTENDED FLASHBACK

INT. NORTHERN IRELAND - ARMY BASE MESS HALL - MORNING

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt eat their meals at the table.

MURRAY
He really said that to you?

GEORGE
I should have given him a "Heil
Hitler" salute.

VIKTOR
(sarcastic)
Careful, they might hang us on the
spot.

ENLISTED MEN from an adjacent table give them odd looks and they look at each other and laugh.

ANNOUNCER (ON LOUDSPEAKER)
 Attention troops. Attention troops.
 Allied forces have landed
 successfully on the beaches at
 Normandy, France. The invasion of
 Europe has begun!

CELEBRATORY CHEERS fill the large room.

MURRAY
 Damn. I wish we were there.

GEORGE
 Be glad we are not.

FADE TO:

EXT. NORMANDY BEACH - DAY

With the beaches secured by Allied Forces, the four of them
 walk off the transport.

As they walk up the ridge, they see endless tarps that cover
 the remains of DEAD SOLDIERS.

MURRAY
 Smells like shit.

KURT
 That is death.

GEORGE
 Looks like end of the world.

VIKTOR
 For us, it's only the beginning.

EXT. NORMANDY - FIELD H.Q. - DAY

The low hum of military vehicles crawling by. In the distance
 INTERMITTENT MORTARS, some GERMAN SHELLS and SMALL ARMS FIRE.

George, Murray and Kurt follow Viktor inside a SANDBAGGED
 BUNKER.

INT. H.Q. BUNKER - DAY

They walk down some make-shift stairs and salute a waiting
 MAJOR.

VIKTOR
Belmont, S-2 Squad, V-182. This is
my I-P-W crew.

MAJOR
Good. You're all with me. The main
road to Saint Lo's been secured. We
ship out there at oh-nine-hundred.
You birds ready?

VIKTOR
Yes, sir.

MAJOR
(looks them over)
Pretty green, Lieutenant, but I'll
take 'em 'cause we need y'all up
there. Just took in three Wehrmacht
companies. Ninety-seven POWs to
debrief and counting.

EXT. POW CAMP - DAY

Murray drives a jeep and Viktor in shot gun, with George and
Kurt in back arrive at a BARBED WIRE POW PEN, behind which
are dozens of German soldiers.

The captain's jeep drives up beside them.

CAPTAIN
You guys had better get busy.

BEGIN INTERROGATION MONTAGE

- George sews on various epaulets for Viktor and Murray
depending on the rank of the POW.
- Kurt types up reports and hands them to an AMERICAN
OFFICER.

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

Viktor faces a BELEAUGURED POW.

VIKTOR
*You wouldn't want it to get back to
Nazi officials that you deserted,
right?*

The beleaguered POW shakes his head nervously and starts
talking.

LATER

George faces a STONEWALLING POW.

GEORGE

We already know who your commanding officer is and what your objective is in this sector.

The Stonewalling POW thinks for a moment before talking.

LATER

Kurt faces DISTRESSED POW.

KURT

Look, we've both fought in this war long enough, seen our comrades fall. Aren't we both tired of this whole mess?

The DISTRESSED POW relaxes a little, nods his head and then starts talking.

LATER

Murray faces a FRIGHTENED POW.

MURRAY

Really? You're from there, too? I routed for the same soccer club.

The Frightened POW smiles slightly, shows him the soccer club emblem before talking.

END MONTAGE

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George faces an INNOCENT POW.

GEORGE

You were assigned to Theresienstadt.

INNOCENT POW

Oh yes. Before I was transferred to the front six months ago.

GEORGE

What did you do there?

INNOCENT POW

*I guarded Inmates and shot them
when they asked.*

GEORGE

When they asked?

INNOCENT POW

*Those who misbehaved or caught
trying to escape were executed by
firing squad. There were so many
Jewish Inmates arriving there
every day... more than enough
opportunities, and we were all to
happy to volunteer for the squads.*

GEORGE

But why?

INNOCENT POW

*If I didn't, others would. After I
volunteered enough times, I earned
enough points for a free day pass
to Berlin to see concerts.*

GEORGE

Concerts?

INNOCENT POW

*Oh, yes. I always looked forward to
listening to Mozart and Beethoven.*

EXT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George walks out shell shocked as he hand his notes to Kurt,
who sits on a folding chair typing away.

GEORGE

Nothing of value for that one.

Kurt nods as he types, not looking up.

Viktor walks up to George.

VIKTOR

*Just got another one in for you.
Recently been dispatched from the
Eastern front.*

GEORGE

How could you tell?

VIKTOR

Because he looks like the most demoralized and battle-weary guy I've ever seen. They all look that way.

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George faces the RUSSIAN FRONT POW who speaks freely.

RFP

...and that's when we arrived by train at night. No idea where, but we marched off until dawn, and then the next night we went right into position... until this morning when we were attacked by your troops... and here I am.

GEORGE

Is there anything you can tell me?

RFP

Well, I was shown where a minefield was. I think about eight kilometers away. I still have my map right here.

GEORGE

Can you show me where it is?

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

George drives a jeep with the Major in shotgun and the RFP and an MP in back.

MAJOR

Let's hope he knows what's he's talking about.

GEORGE

Or get us blown up in the process.

Up ahead they see a U.S. Army checkpoint with an M-1 carrying CORPORAL and PFC.

MAJOR

Any of you know today's password?

George shrugs.

MP 1

No, sir.

MAJOR

Shit.

George gulps as he stops the jeep at the check point.

Both soldiers salute the Major.

PFC

Destination, sir?

GEORGE

We're taking a POW with us to
locate a mine field.

The PFC points his M-1 directly at George.

PFC

He's a kraut. Should I shoot him?

MAJOR

No, private. Driver's one of our G-
2 interrogators, corporal. The guy
behind me is the only German in
this vehicle.

CORPORAL

Sorry, sir, but we need the
password.

MAJOR

The password is not your God-damned
concern, corporal. We've got a
minefield to neutralize. Think,
son. If we were German spies, why
would we be heading to the German
lines?

The corporal and pfc exchange looks before letting them pass.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

At the edge of a tree line, the Major, George, the RFP and
the MP stand abreast.

RUSSIAN FRONT POW

*It is right here. I know where they
are and how to deactivate them.*

GEORGE

Then get started.

The RFP takes careful steps, reaches down, pulls a pin --
And silence.

MAJOR
*Keep going until they're all
deactivated.*

A SNIPER RIFLE BLAST rips through the air and through the RFP's chest. As he falls, a MINE EXPLODES, throwing his body up into the air before it lands with a THUD.

The Major and George hit the deck prone on the ground. The MP hesitates, tries to make a run for the tree line but is CUT DOWN by another RIFLE BLAST.

The Major looks up and sees smoke from behind a nearby tree, then looks at George.

MAJOR (CONT'D)
Over there!

George is frozen -- at first.

Then a CLICK-CLICK sound. RELOADING or OUT OF AMMO?

GEORGE
(to sniper)
*It is useless for you to shoot.
There are so many more of us.
Please surrender.*

Then George vaults up. A sitting duck.

MAJOR
Sergeant, no!

George steps toward the tree ever so slowly.

GEORGE
*There is no need to keep killing
us. We are here to save you from
your own people.*

SNIPER
I would rather die.

George walks slowly up to the tree.

GEORGE
*If you surrender now, you will get
to see your family again. Isn't
that far better than dying here
alone in a nameless forest?*

George stops.

After an intense silence, a waving white FLAG OF SURRENDER APPEARS. Then the Sniper peeks out from behind the tree. George sees that he is crying. The rifle lies in the grass.

The Major breathes a sigh of relief.

MAJOR
(to himself)
Crazy George Field.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt camp out in a clearing.

Viktor is fast asleep.

Murray sneaks up to Viktor's sack, rummages through it with his flashlight and shines it on a photo of Marlene Dietrich, which he grabs.

Murray takes a flash photo of a sleeping Viktor that jars him awake.

MURRAY
Hey fearless leader, look what I
found!

Viktor gets up, and chases down Murray.

George and Kurt shake their heads at the ridiculous scene, as they cook dinner over a camp fire.

LATER AROUND THE CAMP FIRE

MURRAY (CONT'D)
How long is this thing going to
last, you think?

VIKTOR
Why, you want to go home now? I'll
drop kick you like an American
football there myself.

MURRAY
I'm just saying. Fifth Division's
going to reach Metz soon.

VIKTOR
Why do think they moved us up to
the First Army?
(MORE)

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

There's no more meaningful intelligence to gain anymore where we were.

MURRAY

The only meaningful intelligence I need is to get rid of the fucking "Crabs".

GEORGE

There was plenty of that going around at Dachau.

MURRAY

Hey tough guy, Viktor told us what happened with the minefield. You really are one crazy Jew.

Murray notices Kurt writing in a notebook.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

And what are you writing about?

KURT

What a fruit loop you are.

VIKTOR

Is that what you did in the states? Torture your friends to death?

MURRAY

Back home, fruit loop's a term of endearment.

They all chuckle.

VIKTOR

When I get out of here, I'm going to see about the Foreign Service.

GEORGE

Makes sense. You have the language skills.

MURRAY

These Germans are easier to break than I ever imagined.

VIKTOR

When they're defending someone else's real estate. Let's see how they fight when it's their own homeland on the line.

MURRAY

C'mon, Hitler will surrender by
Christmas.

GEORGE

The German people have had the Nazi
propaganda drilled into them for a
long time now. I'm not so sure it
will end so soon.

EXT. BELGIAN FOREST - POW CAMP - DAY

Snowfall settles over the landscape as an American Army jeep
caravan drives past a roadside that reads, "BLEIALF - 3.2
km."

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

ANOTHER INTERROGATION MONTAGE

Murray faces a CHATTY POW.

MURRAY

So where are you from?

CHATTY POW

Darmstadt.

MURRAY

Berlin.

CHATTY POW

You left?

MURRAY

*When your Führer came to power, my
family had to leave.*

CHATTY POW

You are Jewish?

MURRAY

Yeah.

CHATTY POW

*I am sorry that happened to you. I
was young.*

MURRAY

That's what all you guys say.

LATER

Kurt faces a SHY POW.

KURT

I know you must be worn out by all this by now. I know I am.

SHY POW

Yes.

KURT

Don't worry. Once the war ends you will return to your family.

SHY POW

They are dead. Their building was bombed while they slept.

KURT

Hey, I've lost family and friends as well since I left Berlin. I don't know what happened to them. I'm Jewish, so my family and I had to leave.

EXT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George smokes a cigarette as Viktor approaches.

VIKTOR

We just got a new batch in.

GEORGE

What do you think will happen to most of these prisoners? They'll get released after the surrender and go home to their families. Germany will always be Germany. Nothing will have changed.

VIKTOR

Hey, I'd love to chat about your plan for post-war nation-state realignment, but there's a live one for you.

GEORGE

How so?

VIKTOR

Better get your sewing kit.

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George, wearing U.S. Army Major insignia on his shoulder pads, faces a smug S.S. MAJOR (35) in his black uniform.

GEORGE

Name, rank and serial number.

The S.S. Major merely grins.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Very well, I will find out soon enough from your men. I believe twelve have already surrendered under your command. We know there have been reports of Panzer divisions behind the Siegfried line. You could help yourself by telling me what you know is going on there.

S.S. MAJOR

I demand to see your superior officer.

George leans back.

GEORGE

Major, no one has the time or desire to roll out the Benny Goodman band for you. And besides, any American officer in charge of you is your superior officer.

S.S. MAJOR

You are not even an officer, are you?

GEORGE

Excuse me?

S.S. MAJOR

Even I can identify an incompetent tailor.

George is tongue-tied for a moment.

S.S. MAJOR (CONT'D)

Do you know what else I can identify?... an Austrian traitor!

GEORGE

Major, it will not end well for you if you continue this obstinate behavior--

S.S. MAJOR

Yes, I've heard the Americans recruited traitor scum like you.

George maintains eye contact, but for the moment, has no words.

S.S. MAJOR (CONT'D)

And you know something else? I know you are a Jew.

GEORGE

That is--

S.S. MAJOR

I could tell by the shape of your nose and cheekbones. Ah yes, the Americans are to be undone by your filth. Rot its core from the inside out. I hate Soviet Communist scum, but the one good thing about them is that they don't want you either.

George stands, towering over the S.S. Major.

GEORGE

You are wrong about one thing: I am no traitor. I know this because at Dachau, it was made eminently clear to me that I was not an Austrian or a German. I ask you, what do you think would have become of you if you had addressed a guard with such arrogance?

The S.S. Major bursts out laughing.

S.S. MAJOR

I only regret that the Dachau guards did not finish you off!

George tries to slap him on his left cheek but he ducks. But he doesn't see George's left hand before it makes contact with his right cheek.

The S.S. Major now cries with laughter.

S.S. MAJOR (CONT'D)

What a fool you are!

George turns to leave.

EXT. INTERROGATION TENT - CONTINUOUS

George turns to the two MPs guarding the entrance.

GEORGE
Do not let him leave!

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

George and Viktor walk up to a single-story wooden structure. Some windows are smashed in.

VIKTOR
They told us these Black Shirts
would be the toughest to crack.

GEORGE
I know. I should have showed more
self-control.

VIKTOR
It happens. I can assign him to
someone else.

George stops and turns to Viktor on the front steps.

GEORGE
No.

VIKTOR
So how do you want to handle it?

GEORGE
Finding out what scares them is the
hardest part.

VIKTOR
Listen comrade, what doesn't kill
you--

GEORGE
If I have to hear someone babble on
about another German philosopher
one more time--you just called me
"comrade"?

VIKTOR
So?

GEORGE

Didn't those conscripts from the Eastern Front bring back medals off some dead Russian officers?

VIKTOR

What are you thinking?

GEORGE

How's your Russian?

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

George walks in, the S.S. Major still soaks it all in and notices George's original Master Sergeant insignia. *No more charades.*

GEORGE

You are right. I underestimated you. You are too smart for the Americans.

S.S. MAJOR

Your flattery--or pity--won't work with me, Sergeant. I have also done my share of interrogations.

George stares down at his notebook, oblivious.

S.S. MAJOR (CONT'D)

What is wrong with you?

GEORGE

I... I understand you don't wish to talk to me, but by General Eisenhower's agreement with General Zhukov, all uncooperative prisoners must be transferred to our Soviet allies. I am so sorry.

Before the S.S. Officer can protest, Viktor barges in, dressed as a Soviet army officer with a gaggle of medals across his tunic.

VIKTOR

(Russian accent)

Step aside sergeant. I have waited long enough to take possession of this sorry excuse for a Nazi.

GEORGE

Commissar Krackoff, I beg you, please. Just one more chance to break him.

VIKTOR

(Russian accent)

You American idiot! Only we know how to break this S.S. scum. At Stalingrad, I ate his kind for breakfast!

GEORGE

But Commissar, the Geneva Convention--

VIKTOR

(Russian accent)

You really think we care about such "humanitarian" drivel? I will make him talk, as long as he can survive the transport to Siberia.

GEORGE

Please sir, I must ask you to calm down or else--

Viktor whips out a pistol and fires at George, who falls to the ground, lifeless.

The S.S. Major is effectively HORRIFIED by the scene.

VIKTOR

(Russian accent)

This tent is now under Soviet Army control.

S.S. MAJOR

This is not--

VIKTOR

(Russian accent)

Shut-up, prick!

Viktor grins as he whips out a large knife. He sits across from the S.S. Major and leans in with the knife tracing the S.S. Major's face, then cuts off a button on the S.S. Major's uniform. Viktor laughs with cunning.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

(Russian accent)

We've always hated the Americans. Consider yourself lucky to be shipped away from here.

S.S. MAJOR
Lucky!? But--

VIKTOR
(Russian accent)
Now listen very carefully, scum.
Rather than ship you off, I could
kill you where you sit and allow
you to write a "last letter" to
your family. Or, I can offer you a
deal. You tell me what you know
about your Army's plans against the
Americans.

The S.S. Major looks as though he's about to pass out.

S.S. MAJOR
It's Griffen! The Führer calls it
Operation Griffen!

VIKTOR
(Russian accent)
Go on.

S.S. MAJOR
He is building up an army of three-
hundred-thousand strong across the
Siegfried line to mount a counter-
offensive that will destroy the
inept American defenses with tanks
and artillery, so we can reclaim
Antwerp along with the rest of
Belgium and France in a week.

VIKTOR
(Russian accent)
And when will this happen?

S.S. MAJOR
I don't know--I don't know! But it
is coming soon. That I do know.

VIKTOR
(Russian accent)
How would you know?

S.S. MAJOR
Because incursions have already
been made by our troops wearing
American uniforms.

VIKTOR
(Russian accent)
Very good.

(MORE)

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

I will reconsider your death sentence.

(to George in English)

You can get up now.

George rises, dusting himself off.

GEORGE

How was I?

The S.S. Major is flabbergasted.

EXT. BASTOGNE - CORPS H.Q. - FARMHOUSE - DAY

George and Viktor drive up in a jeep with an MP in the back seat. They salute the sentries as they walk in.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FOYER - DAY

George and Viktor salute the ADJUDANT (20s).

ADJUDANT

Follow me.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

George and Viktor sit on a couch in a rustic living room that's been converted to a make-shift office. A COLONEL sits behind an out-of-place oak desk.

COLONEL

You're askin' me to take the word of some psycho-Nazi? Gentlemen, Hitler's Army's on its last breath. Our lines are thin, but there's nothing I can do about it. We're swapping out new troops as we go.

VIKTOR

Inexperienced ones, sir. They're liable to crash right through our overstretched lines.

COLONEL

Lieutenant, it so happens we've received similar warnings about Germans massing troops and equipment across the Our River. Tank noises, ha! They're just pumpin' records though megaphones to try to scare us.

GEORGE

You've learned from other
intelligence as well, then why--?

Viktor motions for George to cut it out.

COLONEL

I'll ignore that outburst,
sergeant. Look, you fellas are new
to the division, along with a bunch
of other green troops with a case
of the jitters. Rest assured, the
German Army is in no position to
mount an viable offensive... It's
just a diversionary tactic.

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - NIGHT

George, Viktor, Kurt and Murray sit on the steps.

GEORGE

We're sitting ducks.

MURRAY

More like guinea pigs.

VIKTOR

We'll just need to be on alert for
whatever's coming.

MURRAY

That's helpful. What happened to
black shirt?

VIKTOR

Shipped off to more "appropriate
accommodations" in Paris.

MURRAY

Great, he gets to go to Paris while
I get turned down for weekend pass.

Murray glances at the POW pen filled with docile GERMAN POWs.

INT. TENT - MORNING

George's eyes POP OPEN to the RUMBLE OF GERMAN SHELLS AND
MORTAR EXPLOSIONS in the distance, followed by heavy
footfalls and shouting.

EXT. BELGIUM - ARDENNES FOREST - EARLY MORNING

George, Viktor, Kurt and Murray step out of the tent into the cool morning mist to see other AMERICAN SOLDIERS. Some run past the tent in a panic, some stand around too shocked to move while others RETREAT from the sound of the distant barrage.

A surly CAPTAIN PETERS walks out of the Customs house across the road.

PETERS

Where are my God-damned switch
outs?

VIKTOR

Sir, they caught us before the
change.

MURRAY

That's not our guys?

GEORGE

They're coming. Sir.

PETERS

Can't be. The 423rd and 106th are
holding firm on the other side of
the river. No way the Krauts--

Another much closer BOOM!!!

KURT

(under breath)
They were.

PETERS

EVERYONE HOLD YOUR GROUND AND TAKE
YOUR DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.

(to the four men)
Shit! I'll call for backup.

Peters dashes inside the Customs House.

MURRAY

What are we supposed to do?

The Captain runs back inside the Customs House.

George and the others stand firm watching the panicked looks of the other soldiers as some CHEERS from the German POWS from inside the pen.

Some American soldiers drive jeeps away from the direction of the growing RUMBLE and MORTAR EXPLOSIONS, but George notices a beat-up U.S. Army jeep with FOUR AMERICAN SOLDIERS WEARING RAGGED UNIFORMS drive in from the opposite direction and stop next to a gas pump.

SOLDIER 1 (FRONT PASSENGER) grabs the hose, but TWO MPs approach.

MP 1

What's going on out there?

SOLDIER 1 (FRONT PASSENGER)

Do not know. Probably some lost Krauts discharging their last ammunition.

SOLDIER 2 (BACK SEAT)

Please we need petrol. We are empty.

MP 2

What unit y'all from?

Soldier 1 hesitates.

George takes notice of the conversation and NUDGES VIKTOR.

All four eye the jeep suspiciously.

KURT

Look lieutenant. Headlight dimmers.

Viktor nods.

SOLDIER 3 (BACK SEAT)

We are from "E" Company.

MP 1

I don't know 'em, do you?

MP 2

Step out of the vehicle. All of you.

MP 1

Let's go.

A THUNDEROUS BOOM, then an EXPLOSION in a near-by clump of trees.

VIKTOR

Hit the deck!

GEORGE
They've crossed the river!

The MPs are distracted by the blast and look toward the explosion.

Soldier 3 reaches inside his coat and withdraws a WALTHER PISTOL and fires, killing MP 1.

Soldier 1 hops back in the jeep. They are German soldiers.

SOLDIER 1
Go quickly!

SOLDIER 4 (DRIVER) accelerates through the encampment

A SHOT IS FIRED.

The left front tire of the jeep BLOWS OUT.

The jeep slides out of control on an icy patch, FLIPS OVER and CRASHES into a supply truck.

ON GEORGE: with arm extended holding his discharged pistol.

George, Viktor, Kurt and Murray run over to the overturned Jeep. All four soldiers ARE DEAD.

Peters runs out of the Customs House over to the overturned jeep.

George sees one wearing a German uniform under the American Army coat.

PETERS
God-damned spies!

VIKTOR
Sir, when are reinforcements coming?

German WALTHER PISTOLS, a TWO-WAY RADIO, GRENADES, EXPLOSIVES and GERMAN ARMY DOGTAGS have fallen out of the trunk onto ground.

PETERS
Lines are down. We're on our own.

MORE THUNDEROUS MORTAR AND ARTILLERY FIRE DRAWS CLOSER.

THE LOW HUM OF GERMAN TANKS GROWS LOUDER AS THE GROUND SHAKES beneath them.

CAPTAIN
Pull back! Pull back!

MURRAY
To where!?

IT'S TOO LATE. The BARRAGE seems to come from all directions!

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt look at each other with a sense of doom.

A GERMAN TIGER TANK rolls into the encampment, and then ANOTHER.

GERMAN TROOPS clad in white ghostlike camouflage emerge from nowhere out of the forest from all directions and quickly occupy the space. Most American Soldiers freeze in their place.

Those who try to run are SHOT DEAD.

GERMAN SOLDIERS
HANDS UP!!!

George, et. al. are COMPLETELY SURROUNDED. The German POWs behind the barbed wire CHEER.

Kurt drops to his knees and sits with crossed-legs

MURRAY
Dammit!

VIKTOR
God help us now.

The American Soldiers clutch their WHITE FLAGS.

GERMAN SOLDIERS
ON YOUR KNEES!!!

FADE TO:

EXT. FROM INSIDE POW PEN - DAY

As a light snow falls, George and about fifty other Soldiers are now POWs. Their collective breathes appear and quickly vanish in the cold air.

George, Viktor, Murray and Kurt huddle up near the fence. Through the barbed wire, George watches the freed German POWs hug their liberators and celebrate.

KURT

What will they do with us?

VIKTOR

Probably ship us somewhere in-country and keep us until either they surrender, or until...

MURRAY

Can't fucking believe this!

GEORGE

Keep your voice down. That won't help us.

Through the wire, George notices a German jeep arrive in the encampment and park next to the customs house.

Stocky SERGEANT GREUNER (28) extends a Nazi salute to the GERMAN OFFICER, who George cannot make out.

The German Officer gets out, speaks inaudibly to Greuner, who extends a hearty Nazi salute.

GREUNER

Heil Hitler!

The German Officer enters the Customs House.

LATER

The POW pen gate opens as German Soldiers round up the American POWs and march them out at gunpoint to the road in front of the Customs House.

SERGEANT GREUNER

All of you surrender your dog tags or you will be shot.

All the American POWs comply. Those who throw the dog tags to the ground are KICKED.

Then the German Officer appears as he exits the customs house.

George recognizes him as BRUNS, now a captain!

Bruns stands before them, triumphant.

BRUNS

You are no match for Germany's superior fighting machine. The Reich intends to take back what was wrongly taken from us.

George notices Sergeant Greuner examine each dog tag, and pulls out two of them.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

For all your leaders' talk of
"freedom," "liberty" and
"independence," your Ape-ish
intellect and degenerate society
will crumble in the face of
National Socialism's raw power.

George then sees the Sergeant Greuner speak with CHATTY POW and SHY POW, who point in the direction of Murray and Kurt.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

And that power will assert itself
in the propagation of the Master
Race to the exclusion of all
others.

Sergeant Greuner holds the dog tags, whispers to Bruns and points to Murray and Kurt.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

And we will begin the cleansing
today.

Bruns nods to the rifle-bearing soldiers, then to Sergeant Greuner and then turns to the American POWs.

SERGEANT

Stand up, American pigs. Hands over
your heads.

The American POWs comply as they stand shoulder-to-shoulder along the road facing the customs house.

Bruns walks slowly down the line, passing Viktor... then George, until he stops at Murray.

BRUNS

This one...

A German Soldier prods Murray with a bayoneted rifle against the customs house wall so that all the POWs see him.

Bruns continues walking down the line until he stops at Kurt.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

And this one.

Kurt is also bayoneted to where Murray is standing.

With two Soldiers and Sergeant Greuner beside him, Bruns faces Murray and Kurt.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
You interrogated my men in German, yes?

MURRAY
Yeah, so?

Kurt nods.

BRUNS
So how is it possible that you speak such good German?

MURRAY
We were both born in Berlin.

KURT
Captain, I earned a law degree in Berlin. We beseech you to treat us with respect, as we had treated your men pursuant to the Convention.

MURRAY
It's only fair.

BRUNS
That might very well have helped you, but there is the issue with your names... and your dog tags.

Bruns whispers something to Sergeant Greuner, who steps up to the POWs.

SERGEANT GREUNER
March until we tell you to stop.

George, Viktor and the POWs begin to march, flanked by the rifle-bearing German Soldiers.

AT THE CUSTOMS HOUSE WALL

BRUNS
I was serious when I said I believed in a pure Germany... Turn around.

George hears this as he marches away.

Bruns nods to the two Soldiers who draw their pistols and point them at a resigned Kurt and a shaky Murray.

MURRAY

God, no!

KURT

We have a right to live.

BRUNS

*Jews have no right to live in
Germany.*

Bruns nods to the Soldiers.

ON GEORGE: turns back quickly to see the Soldiers FIRE their pistols into Murray's and Kurt's skulls. He looks straight ahead as he marches away, not knowing if he'll be next.

FADE TO:

EXT. POW PEN - NIGHT

A steady snow falls. The American POWs huddle under tarps.

George and Viktor lean against fence posts.

VIKTOR

You know him.

GEORGE

Yes.

VIKTOR

The Dark Place?

George nods.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

George, Viktor carry wooden crates and load them onto the back of a truck.

Sergeant Greuner watches.

George drops one, its contents of papers spilling onto the ground.

VIKTOR

That your idea of slowing down the
enemy?

German soldiers laugh.

DISTANT MORTAR AND MUNITIONS BLASTS.

Bruns gets out of his jeep and walks over to Sergeant Greuner.

George is turned away from Bruns as he reads one while gathering gathers the papers.

BRUNS

Sergeant, I require someone to clean up the customs house.

SERGEANT GREUNER

Did you want the bodies buried, sir?

BRUNS

No, leave them just as they are, to rot... But remove their shoes and socks.

Bruns eyes George from behind for a moment.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

*(points to George)
Bring me that one.*

SERGEANT GREUNER

Yes, sir.

Bruns walks back to his jeep and waiting driver.

SERGEANT

*(to George)
You! Get up and march.*

Viktor turns to intervene, but thinks better of it as he watches helplessly as Sergeant Greuner marches George down the road.

MORE DISTANT MORTAR EXPLOSIONS AND MACHINE GUN RAPID FIRE.

The sun begins the BREAK THROUGH the fleeting clouds.

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

Sergeant Greuner marches George and two other American POWs past Murray's and Kurt's corpses to the entrance.

INT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

George walks in as Sergeant Greuner covers him with a pistol.

A modest-looking wooden desk with folders laying on top sits across from a window. A Nazi flag and photo of Hitler adorn the wall.

Sergeant Greuner leaves.

George sweeps and takes a moment to look over the desk. He grabs a SHARP PENCIL and stuffs it in his pocket.

George hears a jeep pull up, looks out the window and sees Bruns get out and walk to the entrance.

George quickly sweeps a corner, turning away from the doorway as Bruns enters.

BRUNS

I want this office spotless.

GEORGE

Okay.

Bruns sits at his desk, picks up the phone and dials.

George continues to sweep, always looking away.

BRUNS

*Get me Lieutenant Colonel Witte...
Yes, sir... Thank you, sir... Two-
hundred-and-twenty-one at last
count... I also wish to report two
Jews within their ranks that I had
executed... Thank you, sir.*

George freezes for an instant. Bruns notices this.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

*Yes, of course, sir. I assure you
if there are more, I will
personally find and kill them.*

Bruns hangs up.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

*So, you know how to read German, do
you?*

GEORGE

Huh?

BRUNS

*I saw how you sorted those flyers
back there. Don't think I didn't
notice.*

George moves to another corner of the office. Bruns stands up and walks toward him.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
I also know an Austrian accent when
I hear one.

George HEARS THE CLICK of a trigger being pulled back.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
Turn around. I want to see the face
of a traitor.

The WALLS VIBRATE as the LOW ROAR and HUM OF TANKS and AIRCRAFT grow louder.

George's hands shake with fear as he turns to face Bruns, who merely raises an eyebrow at him.

BRUNS (CONT'D)
This time, I'll make sure to finish
you off.

THE LOW ROAR TURNS TO A DEAFENING WHINE as Bruns glances out the window.

George sidesteps and whips the broom across Bruns' wrist, separating the pistol from Bruns' grasp and discharges, clattering to the floor.

Bruns charges George and tackles him to the floor, then starts to strangle him.

George grabs the pencil and JABS IT INTO BRUNS' CHEEK.

Sergeant Greuner bursts in to see them brawling, advantage Bruns.

A MORTAR EXPLODES behind Sergeant Greuner, killing him.

George breaks free and grabs the pistol, stands, aims and pulls the trigger - but it jams.

RAT-A-TAT-TAT MACHINE GUN FIRE OUTSIDE.

American Soldiers enter to see George pointing the gun at Bruns.

FADE TO:

INT. DOCUMENT STORE ROOM - DAY

SUPER: WEISBADEN, GERMANY - APRIL 1945

George's desk is swamped with piles of documents. George reads one sheet of paper, picks up the desk phone receiver and dials.

GEORGE
(into receiver)
I need to speak with Judge Advocate
Jenkins.

INT. JENKINS' OFFICE - DAY

George sits across from Jenkins sitting at his desk.

GEORGE
But why not? The letter shows the
Grand Mufti's support for Himmler's
ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.

JENKINS
I know what it says, sergeant.

GEORGE
So why won't you include it as
evidence for the trial?

JENKINS
Sergeant, what you and your group
did was nothing short of heroic.
The tactical information you guys
obtained shortened the war and
saved lives. You should be proud of
that.

GEORGE
I don't feel like a hero and
patronizing my service makes me
feel even less so.

JENKINS
(sighs)
No one here denies what the Nazis
did was unforgivable. I've got a
list a mile long of high-ranking
Nazi officials who will most
certainly hang for what they did.
But when we start dragging in
complicit parties who bring value
to American interests, we need to
keep communications like this
buried.

GEORGE

All I can see buried here is
justice for the sake of oil.

A KNOCK on the door.

JENKINS

Come in.

A CLERK peeks her head in.

CLERK

Mr. Jenkins, Master Sergeant Field
has a visitor.

EXT. BUILDING - THE GROUNDS - DAY

Viktor and George walk side by side.

GEORGE

When I hadn't heard from you, I
wondered.

VIKTOR

I know.

GEORGE

Did you track down your family?

VIKTOR

Gone. France wasn't far enough away
to protect them...

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

VIKTOR

By the time we reached Vienna, the
place was already bombed out. Fires
everywhere.

George stops in his tracks and turns to Viktor: *Well?*

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Russians got there first, it took
me a while to track down their
records.

Viktor withdraws a folded paper from his jacket and holds it
out for George to take.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)
Red Cross records are known to be
inaccurate, so there's really no
telling what really happened...

George cautiously grabs the letter and unfolds it.

GEORGE
...Deported, August 1942. To Minsk.
Nothing else?

Viktor shakes his head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
This only mentions--

VIKTOR
George, there's no record of Ilse.

George holds his head down and shuts his eyes. His worst
fears have been realized.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)
Now *I'm* sorry.

A beat.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)
I was on the team that liberated
Buchenwald. You should have come.

GEORGE
I've read the reports.

VIKTOR
Not for *you*. For *me*. I needed
someone to help me get through the
stench of bodies piled high to the
rafters with numbers etched on
their stomachs.

GEORGE
I already knew where it was headed.

VIKTOR
But you never saw the worst,
George. It took all I had to keep
it together. Several American
soldiers dropped to their knees and
vomited at the sight. Some, who I
knew were battle-hardened, wept on
the spot. They looked to me to
bring them back. And I needed you
to bring *me* back.

GEORGE

I'm never going to set foot in one of those places as long as I live.

This hits Viktor hard. George doesn't know what to expect.

VIKTOR

You enlisted to get even with the Nazis, right?

GEORGE

We all did, but there's nothing I could do now to even that score.

VIKTOR

What if I said that you could, but the price to pay was to return to the scene of the crime?

GEORGE

What do you mean?

VIKTOR

They found Bruns.

George can't breathe.

GEORGE

Where is he?

VIKTOR

The Dark Place.

EXT. DACHAU - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

A U.S. Army CONVOY of jeeps and transports drives through.

JEEP

Viktor drives with George in shotgun. An MP sits in the back.

U.S. SOLDIERS stand guard. All traces of dead bodies has been cleared away, but the clouds cast a dreary pall over the site.

George looks out amongst the VACATED BARRACKS and spots his, as well as the COMMISSARY and COURTYARD.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

George and Viktor sit at a table across from German POW
CORPORAL KORN.

VIKTOR

Do you remember this man?

KORN

Yes--Yes, I do. He interrogated me.

GEORGE

From Bleialf, yes?

KORN

You were most kind to me.

GEORGE

Why do you come forward, now?

KORN

After fighting in the Ukraine, I was lucky to escape back to the Fatherland, or so I thought. There was no fight left in us, so they transferred me to Bergen-Belsen for clean up duty.

GEORGE

Clean up?

KORN

Yes. I couldn't believe what I'd seen. I was ordered to...

GEORGE

To what?

KORN

To destroy all records there and set fire to the camp, with the bodies inside, dead or alive. It is something I would like to soon forget. It made me ashamed to be a German.

GEORGE

So what do have to offer us?

KORN

Back in February, I shared a cell with Bruns. He said things.

VIKTOR

Go on...

KORN

I told him of my participation in the death squads. Nasty business, but he lit up at my mention of it.

INT JAIL CELL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A metal bunk bed.

Bruns lies on the lower bed looking up as Korn listens from the upper.

KORN (V.O.)

We discussed his role at Bleialf, and the executions of those two Americans. When some freed prisoners told him about the Jewish Americans, he told his Sergeant he wanted to--

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Bruns talking low to the Sergeant.

BRUNS

--squeeze them out, then lay them down. I made sure to watch them die at my command, because that's what Hitler would want me to do.

Bruns watches as the German Soldiers shoot Murray and Kurt in the back of their heads.

BRUNS (CONT'D)

I wanted their bodies left to rot for all the Americans to see.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Bruns, arms casually crossed behind his head as Korn takes this in.

KORN (V.O.)

And that he--

BRUNS

--swore to uphold my holy oath that if the war for Germany was won or lost, I will shoot every Jew I ever lay eyes on.

KORN (V.O.)

Then when I asked him how he would get away with it, he told me he'd--

BRUNS

--blame the whole thing on my Regimental Commander because he was already back in Berlin out of reach of the Americans.

END FLASHBACK

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

VIKTOR

Would you like to go home to see your family again?

KORN

Oh, yes.

GEORGE

Then do this favor for us.

INT. MILITARY COURTROOM - DAY

George and Viktor, in military dress watch the trial.

A MILITARY TRIBUNAL of three U.S. Army officers sit behind a long table.

The PROSECUTOR stands while addressing the Tribunal.

Bruns and his DEFENSE COUNSEL sit and listen intently.

PROSECUTOR

I call to the stand, corporal Anton Korn.

Korn steps up to the witness stand. A BALIFF holds out a bible.

BALIFF

Do you agree to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

KORN

I do.

PROSECUTOR

State your name.

KORN

Corporal Anton Korn of the second Battalion, 293rd Regiment, 16th Volks Grenadier Division, German Army.

PROSECUTOR

Were you in fact a prisoner of war of the Americans when you were liberated on December 16, 1944?

KORN

Yes, I was.

PROSECUTOR

Did you witness the events of on that day at the Bleialf customs house?

KORN

I did.

PROSECUTOR

Please tell the court in your own words what you saw.

KORN

We marched about one hundred captured Americans at gunpoint down the Bleialf-Schonberg Road to the Bleialf customs house. When we arrived there, Captain Curt Bruns was standing in front of the building.

PROSECUTOR

Can you identify the defendant as Curt Bruns in the this courtroom today.

KORN

Yes.

Korn points to a stone-faced Bruns.

KORN (CONT'D)

That is him.

PROSECUTOR

And what happened next?

KORN

We collected all dog tags from the Americans and gave them to Sergeant Greuner. Then two liberated comrades who had been captured with me, approached the Sergeant and pointed to two Americans. The Sergeant separated two dog tags from the group and said something to Captain Bruns and showed him the two dog tags.

PROSECUTOR

And what happened next?

KORN

Bruns ordered the Americans lined up in front of the courthouse and personally inspected each American before ordering the two dead Americans out of the line up. Then he spoke with each of them briefly and had them drop to their knees up against the building. And ordered the Sergeant to march the Americans back up the road to the pen.

PROSECUTOR

And then what happened?

KORN

And then he ordered the two Americans to be executed.

PROSECUTOR

Thank you. No further questions.

THE GALLERY

VIKTOR

(to George)

Are you ready?

PROSECUTOR

I now call to the stand, Master Sergeant George Robert Field.

Ignoring Viktor in the hushed courtroom, George stands and walks up to the witness chair.

Sitting in the chair, George briefly locks eyes with Bruns.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

State your name and rank for the record, soldier.

GEORGE

George Robert Field, Master-Sergeant.

PROSECUTOR

Thank you, Sergeant. Please tell the court how you knew the victims, Murray Zappler and Kurt Jacobs.

GEORGE

I worked alongside Murray and Kurt as I-P-W G-2 interrogators. They had emigrated to the U.S. from Germany because... because they were Jewish.

PROSECUTOR

So after staff sergeant Zappler and and corporal Jacobs were pulled out of the line up, what did you observe?

GEORGE

Captain Bruns had them get down on their knees with guns pointed at the backs of their heads as they faced the customs house wall. Then the sergeant ordered us to walk back down the road to the pen. As we started marching, I heard Captain Bruns say, "Jews have no right to live in Germany."

PROSECUTOR

And then what happened?

GEORGE

And then I heard two shots.

MOMENTS LATER

DEFENSE COUNSEL

So, you never saw Captain Bruns shoot them, or saw him order his men to shoot them, did you?

GEORGE

No, but I knew the man who calls himself, Curt Bruns.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I knew him when I was an inmate under protective custody of the German government at the Dachau labor camp. I saw him carry out unjustified murders there solely for the purpose of breaking us psychologically... And I saw Murray and Kurt's bodies left to rot for a week outside the customs house, which Brunns made into his personal office.

PROSECUTOR

You were also singled out by Captain Brunns to clean his office at the customs house?

GEORGE

Yes, I was.

PROSECUTOR

Would you tell us what you heard while you were cleaning the office?

GEORGE

I was sweeping the floor when Captain Brunns made a call to a Lieutenant Colonel Witte.

PROSECUTOR

Were you aware that Witte was his Regimental Commander?

GEORGE

No, I was not.

PROSECUTOR

And what happened next?

GEORGE

Captain Brunns reported to this person that he had captured American POWs and that he had personally took it upon himself to execute Zappler and Jacobs.

PROSECUTOR

So based on what you heard, Captain Brunns was never ordered to carry out their executions?

GEORGE

That is correct.

MOMENTS LATER

Sitting in the witness chair, Bruns wears a slight grin on his face.

PROSECUTOR

So you executed them on orders from your regimental commander?

BRUNS

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

Yet you never received any written orders from him?

BRUNS

I don't recall.

PROSECUTOR

In the heat of a battle zone where it would have been impossible to reach him back in Berlin?

BRUNS

I followed my orders from the Führer.

PROSECUTOR

Excuse me? What orders?

BRUNS

The freedom of Germany from all Jews. I upheld my solemn oath to carry out those supreme orders.

LATER

One of the Tribunal members reads a statement.

TRIBUNAL MEMBER

Based on the evidence presented, we rule the defendant, Captain Curt Bruns, 'GUILTY' of the murder of United State Army staff sergeant Murray Zappler and corporal Kurt Jacobs. His sentence shall be death by firing squad.

CHATTER fills the courtroom as George and Viktor speak in one corner.

VIKTOR

You did well, up there.

GEORGE

I thought I'd feel something.
Anything.

VIKTOR

What if I said you could have the
ultimate closure on this?

GEORGE

Why dream about something that
could never happen?

VIKTOR

I've arranged a special meeting for
both you *and* Bruns.

GEORGE

I'll finally get to look a monster
in the eye and stare him down.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

It's same one where Bruns had held and tortured George earlier. Two MPs open Bruns' cell door for George, who enters. Bruns lies on his cot, then sits up. George towers over him.

BRUNS

So you have come to gloat.

GEORGE

*I'm come to look into the eye of a
monster without blinking...*

Bruns bursts out laughing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

...And to bear witness.

BRUNS

*Of what, you traitor of the
Fatherland?*

GEORGE

*The last moments of a man who has
caused me so much pain.*

BRUNS

*You think that killing me will end
this? You are so weak. Weak now and
as weak as when you first set foot
in Dachau.*

GEORGE
Your crowning achievement.

BRUNS
Yes, it is. I only wish I had
killed more of you.

George paces with an eery serenity, that Bruns cannot gauge.

GEORGE
I am gratified I played part in not
letting that happen.

BRUNS
In a few minutes, I will leave the
world of the living to that of the
dead, but you will always be a
coward. You couldn't take me down
when you had the chance, and so you
never will.

The cell door creaks open. The two MPs stand guard right outside.

MP 1
It's time.

George walks out and down the hallway. The two MPs and Bruns follow.

EXT. PRISON COURTYARD - DAY

The MPs lead Bruns to a post where two more MPs tie him to a post.

As Bruns looks up to face the FIRING SQUAD, he sees that George is one of them.

Bruns inaudibly giggles as he shakes his head.

ON VIKTOR: we hear the BLAM-BLAM-BLAM of the rifles.

BRUNS DIES.

FADE TO:

EXT. FARMLAND - CROSSROADS - DAY

SUPER: SOLARY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MAY 1945

A sunny day as George and Viktor stand in front of the back of a U.S. Army supply truck.

A long line of German Soldiers hold various rifles, machine guns and pistols with outstretched hands eager to accept Holy Communion.

Each German Soldier gladly hands over their weapon to George and Viktor, who toss them in the back of the truck.

VIKTOR

(to the Soldiers)

*After you surrender your weapons,
you are to continue down the left
fork in the road to the Americans.
You do not want to take the right
fork, as that will lead you
directly into the hands of a
Russian army division.*

GEORGE

*You sure it was the left fork and
not the right?*

Viktor shrugs as some of the Soldiers gasp in horror. George and Viktor share a laugh.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I know a certain Commissar Krakoff
who is waiting down there to eat
Germans for breakfast.

VIKTOR

I think the Commissar has
officially retired.

GEORGE

Yesterday, they all would have shot
us with glee. Today, they gleefully
hand over their weapons to us.

A U.S Army CAPTAIN appears.

CAPTAIN

Hey fellas, just got word of more
camp survivors in the area. Get
your gear cause I'm leading a
convoy search moving out in one
hour.

Viktor and George glance at each other.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Leading a small convoy of jeeps and trucks, George drives
Viktor.

GEORGE
I never thought I could kill a man.

VIKTOR
Well, you can.

GEORGE
But there's no finality to it like
I thought there would be.

VIKTOR
You wouldn't be human if you did.

An emaciated YOUNG WOMAN (18) staggers out into the dirt road in front of them and collapses.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)
LOOK OUT!!

George swerves and the BRAKES SQUEAL, narrowly missing the Young Woman.

Viktor motions to the convoy behind them to stop.

George and Viktor run over to the Young Woman, a near skeleton lying in the road, whose dress and short hair are in tatters.

Georges stoops down and holds her other hand. 1

YOUNG WOMAN
They... left us... need... help.

Viktor looks back at the convoy.

VIKTOR
Hey, we need medics up here!

The Young Woman raises her hand to point in the direction of a barn that George clocks.

GEORGE
(to Viktor)
Over there!

The Young Woman DIES.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The Captain leads George, Viktor and ARMY MEDICS to the door. George and Viktor slide it open to reveal

INT. BARN - DAY

Three dozen emaciated YOUNG WOMEN and GIRLS moaning from hunger and sickness as they lie on beds of hay. Some do not stir at all with eyes wide open.

The Soldiers and Medics react by covering their nose and mouth with a hand, shirt or cloth. One Medic vomits.

CAPTAIN

(to George and Viktor)

Take out the ones who can't be saved.

GEORGE/VIKTOR

Yes, Sir.

George and Viktor grab a corpse and start to carry it away.

ILSE (O.S.)

(weakly)

George?

George stops cold. He recognizes that voice and turns around.

CAPTAIN

Friend a yours?

George nods. The Captain grabs George's end of the corpse.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I've got this one, Sergeant. Go.

George runs up to Ilse, a ghostly pale figure with scraggly hair and a soiled dress. He kneels down and grasps her limp hand.

GEORGE

How is it possible?

(to a Medic)

You! Over here. Please help her.

She is my sister.

A Medic comes over an immediate eyes Ilse's calloused and bleeding bare feet. He gives her a cup of water, which she guzzles.

MEDIC

Not to fast... That's it.

The Medics starts bandaging Ilse's feet.

Ilse sits up.

ILSE

For so long I had hoped.

GEORGE

*When I learned they took Mama and
Papa, I had feared the worst.*

ILSE

*They marched one thousand of us
from Schlesiersee weeks ago. Every
day more fell and were shot. Until
last night they stopped here and
left us.*

George quickly glances around at two dozen souls. *My God.*

Viktor walks up to them empty-handed.

VIKTOR

So this is Ilse?

(to Ilse)

*I'm Viktor. Pleased to finally meet
you.*

ILSE

You both fight for the Americans?

George and Viktor smile at each other.

GEORGE

*Well, he outranks me, but I'm
better with a pistol.*

Viktor registers the dig and grins.

VIKTOR

I'd better check on the others.

Viktor steps away to grab another corpse.

ILSE

*Every single day was a fight to
stay alive. But every single day it
also got warmer.*

GEORGE

Is that how you stayed hopeful?

Ilse grins serenely.

ILSE

You remember Goethe?

GEORGE
"On the Devine."

ILSE
Noble be man, merciful and good.

GEORGE
Merciful and good... I can't believe you kept it.

George and Ilse hold each other tight.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I'm just happy to get the chance to say, "thank you," for keeping the letter. I am certain I would not be alive without it.

George's eyes turn to glass.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I wore a uniform and was handed a gun to protect me, but still there was nothing I could do keep you from suffering.

ILSE
You still can.

MEDIC
She is right. They all need a hospital, or they won't make it to the next morning.

George walks to the center of the barn.

GEORGE
Everyone! We need to transport all of these girls to the hospital in town, now.

SOLDIER
But Sergeant, they said it's full with their German patients.

GEORGE
Then we'll all drive down there right now and make room. Let's go!

Viktor grins and nods to acknowledge George's steely reserve.

George motions to the medics to move the patients and orders other soldiers to come with him to address the situation.

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE: The Ritchie Boys, as they are known, provided valuable intelligence to Allied commanders and displayed individual acts of heroism that helped shorten the war.

TITLE: Approximately 19,600 soldiers participated in the U.S. Army's rigorous military intelligence classes at Camp Ritchie, Maryland from July 1942 through September 1945.

TITLE: Almost 2,500 were German and Austrian immigrants. Only 20% were Jewish.

TITLE: Many Ritchie Boys became American citizens and raised their families and lived productive lives.

THE END