

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

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FADE IN:

1 INT. IWO JIMA CAVE - DAY (2006)

1

A dark, but large cave in the depths of the Motoyama Mountains of Iwo Jima. The hand carved walls show striations of pick axes from many years past.

A PHOTOGRAPHER makes notes on his clipboard and takes flash pictures of labeled artifacts laid out on the floor -- a dust covered BOOT, a rusted and dented CANTEEN.

A group of JAPANESE EXCAVATORS wearing hard hats with the words "Association of Iwo Jima" emblazoned on them, carefully dig the floor with shovels.

The dirt is thrown into wooden boxes with rhythmic THUMPS, and carried out to be sifted.

Drenched with sweat and their faces red with exertion, the excavators wither under the humid heat.

EXCAVATOR #1

How did those soldiers dig out
these tunnels in the first place?

Exhausted, Excavator #1 has to pause.

EXCAVATOR #1

Let's get a rotation in here.

He starts to leave.

EXCAVATOR #2

Wait a minute.

His shovel hits something which looks like a LEATHER SATCHEL.

The two Excavators take a closer look and carefully dig around the artifact.

2 EXT. IWO JIMA BEACH - CLOSE ON VARIOUS SHOVELS - DAY - 2
(JUNE, 1944)

as they pierce the black sandy dirt of the beach. They dig in and lift.

The voice of PVT. KATSUHIRO SAIGO, in his thirties, reads a letter.

SAIGO (V.O.)

To Hanako. We soldiers dig. We dig all day. We dig holes where we are to stand when battle comes. Holes just big enough to stand in. Not wide enough to move forward or to move back. Holes where we are expected to fight and stay in until we die, for die we most likely will.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

An entire beach lined with trenches and SOLDIERS digging. The sun beats down on their sweat-drenched backs.

SUPERIMPOSE: IWO JIMA ISLAND, JUNE 1944.

Other soldiers maneuver artillery pieces into position or work on constructing bunkers and pillboxes -- buried huts for housing machine guns and antitank weapons.

SAIGO (V.O.)

Hanako, now I know what it feels like to dig my own grave.

Saigo wipes his face dirtied with the black sand. He has an unrefined look, but with kind eyes and an energetic demeanor. He's seen enough in life to either make him wise or a wise-ass.

A FLAG of the Japanese Navy & Army, bearing the sun motif with banded rays, flutters on the beach encampment.

Overhead, a PLANE approaches the island.

INT. PLANE HEADED TOWARDS IWO - DAY

LT. GENERAL TADAMICHI KURIBAYASHI, fifty-three, staunch and tall, with an air of regality, sits on a bench of the supply plane.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

Today, I head for my post where my men are stationed. To avoid detection by the enemy, I take a supply plane and the hour of my arrival remains unannounced. My heart is as strong as that of General Kusunoki who gave his life for Japan 650 years ago at the Minato River.

Kuribayashi looks out a window as the plane descends.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

I hope you and the children are well. I'm sorry I wasn't able to attend to the kitchen floor before I left. Make sure to have Taro take care of it as those drafts may give you a cold.

As the plane approaches Iwo Jima, the island materializes below like a large, brown pork chop. The distinct dome-shaped volcano, Mt. Suribachi, rises up out of the South end.

4 EXT. BACK ON IWO JIMA BEACH

4

The black-sanded beach is busy with the activity of soldiers.

The men dig at different intervals from one another. PVT. KASHIWARA digs in the hole next to Saigo's.

SAIGO

Damn this island! The Americans can have it.

He continues digging as he mutters.

SAIGO

Nothing grows here, it smells, it's hot, there are too many damn bugs and there's no water.

KASHIWARA

This island is part of Japan's sacred homeland.

SAIGO

There's nothing sacred about this island.

CAPTAIN TANIDA, late twenties, and sharply dressed, walks along the trenches inspecting. Kashiwara sees him and tries to warn Saigo.

KASHIWARA

Hey Saigo! Hey!

Saigo ignores Kashiwara as he continues grumbling.

SAIGO

We should just give this island to the Americans, and then we can go home.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

What did you say, soldier?

Saigo finally sees the Captain and puts his shovel down. Salutes.

SAIGO

Sir, I said if we beat the Americans, then we can go home.

Captain Tanida looks at Kashiwara.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

You there. Is that what he said?

Kashiwara seems helpless. There is a moment of hesitation.

KASHIWARA

Yes, sir.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI, forties, waits patiently on the beach along with his OFFICER STAFF MEMBERS.

Finally, the war-torn plane drones in for a landing. It lands safely on the landing strip.

Kuribayashi steps off onto the tarmac. LT. FUJITA, twenties, Kuribayashi's personal aide, follows behind him.

They make their way to Ohsugi and exchange salutes.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Welcome, General Kuribayashi. I'm Admiral Ohsugi.

They bow politely.

KURIBAYASHI

How long have you been waiting here for me?

Ohsugi checks his watch.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Three hours, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Sorry to hear. They wouldn't allow me to wire my arrival after what happened to Admiral Yamamoto.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

I understand, sir.

Kuribayashi turns to Lt. Fujita.

KURIBAYASHI

This is my aide, Lieutenant Fujita.

Admiral Ohsugi and Lt. Fujita bow to each other.

Ohsugi touches his stomach and grimaces.

KURIBAYASHI

What's the matter, Admiral? You don't look very well.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Oh, it's nothing, sir. The water here does not agree with me.

KURIBAYASHI

Sorry to hear that.

Ohsugi motions the way.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

This way to your quarters.

KURIBAYASHI

Admiral, I want to make a round of the island first.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Shall I fetch a jeep?

KURIBAYASHI

No, let's walk. Walking's good for the health. It might be just what you need, Ohsugi.

He chuckles, but Ohsugi does not look pleased.

They walk together, while the members of the staff walk a respectful 3 paces behind.

Kuribayashi stops in front of a view of the cone-shaped volcano, MT. SURIBACHI on the South end of the island.

KURIBAYASHI

I could see it from the plane.
Mt. Suribachi. That's the first
place the Americans will want to
take, Ohsugi.

Captain Tanida quickly finds a stick and whips Saigo and Kashiwara with it. The two grimace with the pain.

Tanida doesn't notice when Kuribayashi and his entourage pass by behind him.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

You no good peasants! Scums!

Kuribayashi approaches Captain Tanida, who immediately stands at attention and stops beating Saigo and Kashiwara.

KURIBAYASHI

Captain, what are you doing?

CAPTAIN TANIDA

These soldiers were conspiring
with unpatriotic words, sir.

Kuribayashi looks over at the haggard looking soldiers.

KURIBAYASHI

I see. And Captain, do you have
such an excess of soldiers that
you can put two of them out of
commission?

Captain Tanida is hesitant.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

No, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Then stop beating them. Deny their
lunch rations instead.

Ohsugi and Tanida look at each other, miffed.

KURIBAYASHI

A good captain uses his brain, not
just his whip.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Yes, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

And what is all this?

CAPTAIN TANIDA

This? Trenches, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Why are the men digging trenches here?

Tanida looks to Ohsugi once again for support.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

This is where the Americans are expected to land, sir.

Kuribayashi looks at the men digging.

KURIBAYASHI

Have them stop immediately.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

But, sir...

KURIBAYASHI

If you had studied Tarawa, you would know that concentrating our defenses at the beach would be futile.

Captain Tanida is hesitant. Kuribayashi gives him a firm look. Captain Tanida turns towards the soldiers.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Stop digging!

The men stop and look up, surprised.

Kuribayashi turns to Captain Tanida.

KURIBAYASHI

And Captain, make sure these men get proper breaks. They look like they're from Mars.

The soldiers sit on the sand, eating out of their mess kits. All except Saigo and Kashiwara who watch them hungrily.

Kashiwara rubs his stomach.

KASHIWARA

Just as well. My stomach's been bothering me anyway.

A soldier on water duty comes by with a pitcher, and they are allowed a tiny cupful, which they take gratefully.

SAIGO

A toast to General Kuribayashi. A fine commander.

Kashiwara drinks as well.

SAIGO

Mmmmm. Better than sake.

PVT. NOZAKI, another soldier in his thirties, comes to join them.

NOZAKI

I heard he lived in America. Maybe that's why he doesn't want us digging trenches. Maybe he likes the Americans.

SAIGO

No, stupid. He studied the Americans, so now he knows how to beat them.

NOZAKI

I heard from someone in the 204th that another general was supposed to command the island, but he didn't want the job, so Premier Tojo gave it to Kuribayashi instead.

SAIGO

You hear a lot of things, Nozaki, but your ears are full of wax!

Nozaki brushes him off.

SAIGO

Anyway, you can't trust anyone from the 204th. They're part of the Navy. I think this Kuribayashi must be a superb general. Look, we're not digging those damn trenches in the sand anymore, are we?

7 CONTINUED: (2)

9.
7

Kashiwara's stomach makes a large GROWLING noise.

8 INT. COMMAND CENTER - DAY

8

Kuribayashi inspects a map of Iwo Jima with defense plans marked.

Admiral Ohsugi and a stern looking Naval officer, LIEUTENANT ITO, are in the room with him.

KURIBAYASHI

How many planes do we have?

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

41 Zekes and 13 bombers.

KURIBAYASHI

Is that all?

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

We sent 66 planes to reinforce the fleet at Saipan.

Kuribayashi looks grave.

KURIBAYASHI

We will have to rely on support from the Combined Fleet.

He turns his attention to defense maps.

KURIBAYASHI

These are your defense plans?

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Yes, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

And what about the army troops? Where will they be stationed?

Ohsugi hesitates.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Well, sir, I don't know exactly. They are under the command of Col. Adachi.

Kuribayashi looks at him, surprised.

KURIBAYASHI

You haven't coordinated your plans?

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

Col. Adachi prefers that we do not interfere with each other's chain of command.

KURIBAYASHI

This is no time for childish games, Admiral. This is war.

Ohsugi feels the sting.

Kuribayashi sighs and goes back to looking at the map.

KURIBAYASHI

This will not work. You are concentrating all your efforts on the beaches. Move the artillery to higher ground.

LT. ITO

But sir, we just had them moved down to the beaches.

KURIBAYASHI

Well, move them back up. We'll need fortifications at Suribachi. Coordinate with Col. Adachi and have them start immediately.

LT. ITO

Yes, sir.

9

EXT. IWO CAMPGROUNDS - DAY

9

Admiral Ohsugi walks briskly with Lt. Ito, annoyed.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

This one's trouble.

Lt. Ito nods in agreement.

LT. ITO

Army commanders usually are, sir.

10

EXT. ALONG TRENCHES - LATER

10

Captain Tanida barks commands like a fierce little pit bull.

Saigo, Kashiwara and Nozaki stand to attention.

10 CONTINUED:

11.
10

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Our new orders have come in for
the day! Prepare for relocation!

11 EXT. MT. SURIBACHI BASE - DAY

11

The soldiers dig at the base of the volcano. The men are
stripped to the waist in the heat. Now the dirt they dig
is more like lava, still steaming with heat.

KASHIWARA

It stinks.

Saigo lifts up a dirt-full and some of it falls on his
back.

SAIGO

Damn Kuribayashi!

KASHIWARA

Shhhh!

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Come on! Dig! Put your backs
into it.

Saigo mutters to himself.

12 INT. COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

12

Kuribayashi inspects A MAP on the wall highlighting areas
once occupied at the height of the Japanese Empire in
1943. The "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

The area stretches over a vast circle over the Pacific.

Covered with pins of Japanese flags, the map shows
locations of strategic forces. White flags represent
areas won back by the Allied forces. The white flags
encroach on the Japanese flags.

13 EXT. TOKYO STREETS - NIGHT

13

SUPERIMPOSE: SHINJUKU, TOKYO

Under curfew, the streets of Tokyo are mostly dark and
unlit.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI, a stern looking Kempeitai officer
patrols the street.

Next to him is YOICHI SHIMIZU, 17. Everything about Shimizu is orderly and pristine, from his shiny boots, to his perfectly aligned cap.

Both wear a WHITE BAND on their left arm with kanji characters, "Ken" (law) and "Hei" (soldier) inscribed on them.

SHIMIZU (V.O.)

To mother. I am proud to say I graduated training with flying colors and I will be training under the guidance of Captain Iwasaki. It fills my heart with joy to serve my Emperor and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. You can rest assured there won't be any spies or Communists under my watch. Thank you for the rice crackers, but please don't send anymore. We must all conserve our food rations for the war effort. Luxury is the enemy. Saving is the road to victory.

A BICYCLIST rides through the main street, ringing his bell.

Captain Iwasaki yells at the Bicyclist as he passes them by.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

You there!

The Bicyclist halts.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

You should not be riding right in the middle of the street like that. What if there were an air raid or a military convoy coming through here?

The Bicyclist looks frightened. He bows in compliance.

BICYCLIST

I'm very sorry, sir.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Get off to one side there.

The Bicyclist complies. Officer Iwasaki turns to Shimizu.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Remember, Shimizu, as *Kempeitai*, you have all the authority, so don't be intimidated by a person's age. You have complete control.

SHIMIZU

Yes, sir.

They arrive at an office building with a signage Chuo Koron Magazine and bust the door open.

INT. OFFICE OF CHUO KORON (TOKYO) - LATER

Shimizu roughly rummages through PAPERS.

A JOURNALIST, late forties, watches nervously, while Captain Iwasaki stands before him.

JOURNALIST

What have I done?

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

You are suspected of violating the Peace Preservation Law.

Shimizu continues to go through papers and magazines, throwing useless ones on the floor.

JOURNALIST

Tell me which article it was. I'm sure I have complied to all the rules --

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Be quiet!

The Journalist stands up.

JOURNALIST

Look, I have a family to support. Just let me know what it was and I'll retract the article.

He takes out his wallet and lays out his cash on the table. Shimizu looks at the cash, disgusted.

SHIMIZU

Do you think we can be bribed? How dare you insult us!

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Shimizu, I'll find the articles.
Take care of him.

Shimizu nods in compliance and strong-arms the
Journalist.

JOURNALIST

Just a minute..

Shimizu leads him out the door as he protests. Captain
Iwasaki deftly takes the money off the table and pockets
it. Then he confiscates copies of the magazine *Chuo
Koron*.

EXT. IWO CAMPGROUNDS - EVENING

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS YAMAZAKI mans the POSTAL TENT,
relaxing with a copy of a magazine.

Saigo walks to him and hands over a letter.

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI

Another letter? You know that the
mail only goes out when there's a
boat available, don't you?

Saigo laughs, embarrassed.

SAIGO

I have a lot of family.

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI

Then how come all your letters are
addressed to your wife?

Saigo gives him a look.

SAIGO

Nosey.

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI

Here let me do you a favor.
Otherwise, your letters will never
make it through.

He opens Saigo's letter.

SAIGO

Hey, what are you doing?

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI
I used to work at the Office of
Censorship in Tokyo, you know,
before I got transferred.

SAIGO
Transferred? You mean demoted?

Yamazaki tries to ignore the last comment. He reads the
letter.

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI
(reading)
"To Hanako. We soldiers dig..."
No, no, no. This will never pass.

He starts crossing off lines of Saigo's letter.

SAIGO
Hey!

Private Yamazaki continues blacking out lines. Most of
Saigo's letter is crossed out as he reads/mumbles the
rest of the letter. He suddenly LAUGHS out loud.

SAIGO
Give me that back!

Yamazaki finishes crossing off the letter so that the
only lines that remain are "To Hanako," and "Hope you are
doing well."

PRIVATE YAMAZAKI
There. You'll thank me for this
later, Saigo.

He seals the letter back up.

Saigo grumbles as he leaves.

16 EXT. IWO JIMA TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

16

Saigo and the men have rifle practice. Each soldier gets
their turn at hitting a bulls-eye.

Kuribayashi stands watching from a distance.

One of the soldier's gun jams and he fiddles with it.
Another is slow to aim.

CAPTAIN TANIDA
Faster!

Kuribayashi continues to watch, disappointment registering on his face.

When it's Saigo's turn, he aims his rifle. At the last minute, he jerks his gun. His shot is way off the mark.

Captain Tanida storms up to him and shouts in his ear.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Saigo, are you blind? Can't you see the target? Even my 6 year old could shoot better than you do.

Saigo bows his head in apology.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Do it again.

Saigo fumbles. He aims his rifle and once again, his shot is way off the mark.

Captain Tanida hits the back of his head.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

You're an embarrassment! You're a poor excuse for a soldier. Tonight, you will clean the boots of your entire troop. Go to the rear!

Kuribayashi turns to Lt. Fujita.

KURIBAYASHI

Better they should learn to clean their guns properly rather than their boots.

General Kuribayashi, with a company of army soldiers, marches through the local village. Ever his shadow, Lt. Fujita marches alongside him.

It's a small town with a dusty main street, a bar, general store and single-story houses bedecked with banners.

Children, women and grandparents run out to greet the men with Rising Sun flags and cheer them on.

Kuribayashi notices a collection of idle TANKS in the village with a few ARMY MECHANICS working on them.

KURIBAYASHI

What are those tanks doing here?

LT. FUJITA

Those are out of commission, sir.
They are waiting for parts.

KURIBAYASHI

Waiting for parts? How long have
they been like this.

LT. FUJITA

I have been told about a month,
sir.

Kuribayashi looks again at the tanks.

A LITTLE BOY of about four plays in the foreground with
toy tanks.

FLASHBACK - EXT. BOSTON STREETS - DAY (1928)

The streets are jammed with cars, HONKING, and stalled in
traffic.

Kuribayashi sits on a park bench with HARVARD UNIVERSITY
in the b.g., a stack of textbooks beside him.

Kuribayashi sketches a picture of a car in a notebook.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

To Taro, from Father. This is a
picture of a car. America is
filled with cars. I have to be
very careful when crossing the
streets. Cars come from every
direction. Even my maid has a
car. Japan has a lot of catching
up to do with America.

Kuribayashi looks up again at the traffic jam.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

Taro, are you minding your mother?
I wish you were here with me.

Kuribayashi pulls out a picture of his young son, TARO.

END OF FLASHBACK.

19 EXT. MOTOYAMA VILLAGE - DAY 19

Kuribayashi is still focused on the young boy playing in front of the idle tanks. He turns to Fujita.

KURIBAYASHI

These civilians need to be evacuated as soon as possible.

LT. FUJITA

Yes, sir.

20 EXT. CAMPGROUNDS - NIGHT 20

Saigo is busy cleaning stacks of shoes. Kashiwara approaches him with his own boots.

KASHIWARA

Saigo, I know that you must be a better shot than that after a year and a half.

Saigo doesn't look up from his cleaning.

SAIGO

I have no aim, that's all.

Kashiwara hesitates for a moment, shakes his head and leaves his boots.

21 EXT. BEACHES - DAY 21

Kuribayashi with walking stick in hand, makes his way briskly across the beach. He sees the mountains in the Northern hills and heads over towards them.

22 EXT. NORTH HILLS - DAY 22

Kuribayashi stares at the mountains, starts to climb up one of them.

He carefully ascends and peers into one of the natural caves.

23 EXT. MOTOYAMA VILLAGE - DAY 23

The village is now an empty ghost town. The flags have all been taken down, turning the city from colorful to monochromatic.

Only bits of litter remain, scattering in the wind.

Saigo and other members of his troop tear down a school house, collecting the wood into piles.

Captain Tanida inspects another nearby structure.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

We can use the wood from this one
as well.

All the men stop when they hear the sound of a GALLOPING HORSE. They turn to see BARON TAKEICHI NISHI, tall, handsome and gallant, riding with gusto towards them.

SAIGO (V.O.)

Hanako, we have a celebrity in our midst. Do you remember Baron Nishi, the Olympic gold medalist in horse jumping? He has just arrived from Tokyo and is stationed here as Commander of the 26th Tank Regiment.

The men watch as he rides full speed, and hurdles over a fence. A study in grace and agility.

The men CLAP. Baron Nishi smiles and salutes them as he rides on.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Get back to work, men.

Baron Nishi nearly mows Captain Tanida over as he gallops away.

SAIGO (V.O.)

Lieutenant Colonel Nishi is very handsome, so I'm sure the rumors of his womanizing skills must be true, but there are no women left on the island to woo. He is friendly with the troops and sometimes talks casually among them. Strange for a Lieutenant.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

Kuribayashi walks along the sand with his walking stick. He stops when he sees Baron Nishi approaching, sand flying from his horse's heels.

Baron Nishi dismounts his horse, his spurred boots CLINKING as they hit the ground. He salutes Kuribayashi.

General Kuribayashi walks up to Baron Nishi and they shake hands like Westerners.

KURIBAYASHI

Lieutenant Colonel Nishi. I used to be a cavalryman myself, you know.

BARON NISHI

Yes, of course. I've been looking forward to serving under you. One who understands horses the way I do.

KURIBAYASHI

Those were the days, when soldiers could ride in on horses. Not these mechanized contraptions.

Kuribayashi admires the horse.

BARON NISHI

I could send for another horse and we could ride together, General.

KURIBAYASHI

I'm afraid my riding days are over, Nishi. But tell me about this famous horse of yours that you won the Olympics with.

BARON NISHI

My stallion, Uranus?

• He pulls out a picture of Uranus, a stallion of Anglo-Norman stock, and shows it to Kuribayashi.

KURIBAYASHI

That's a fine horse.

BARON NISHI

The Italians thought I was doing them a favor, getting rid of him to me. No one could tame the beast, but I told them 'If that's a really headstrong horse, it's just the one for me, a headstrong man.'

They share a laugh.

KURIBAYASHI

I'm dying for some news from the mainland on the war effort. We mostly just hear what they filter on the radio broadcasts.

BARON NISHI

I understand. It's hard to know what's really going on these days.

KURIBAYASHI

Dine with me tonight. And if you have brought any sake back with you, that would be a double welcome.

BARON NISHI

I think that can be arranged, sir.

25

INT. OFFICER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

25

Kuribayashi and Baron Nishi sit at a table with cups of sake before them.

The COOK enters and serves them plates of fish and rice. He then continues to place empty plates on the table.

KURIBAYASHI

Is that still really necessary?

COOK

Regulations, sir.

Baron Nishi looks at Kuribayashi questioningly.

KURIBAYASHI

I have told our cook that all officers will have the same rations and food as our men.

The Cook looks flustered.

COOK

It is not right. Officers should not eat the same food.

KURIBAYASHI

Apparently, military regulations dictates that officers must be served at least three dishes.

COOK

That's right. At least three dishes. This is a travesty, sir. I am very ashamed.

The Cook finishes placing the empty dishes.

KURIBAYASHI

So as a compromise, I told him he could bring out empty dishes.

The Cook bows and exits.

KURIBAYASHI

He's a stubborn son of a bitch. I had to give in to him.

Kuribayashi and Nishi LAUGH. Kuribayashi jovially pours another cup of sake in Baron Nishi's cup.

KURIBAYASHI

We will defeat the enemy this time, Nishi. It will be different from past island battles.

BARON NISHI

I'm sure it will be, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

After all, *Iwo Tou* is part of Japanese soil.

Kuribayashi sips his sake.

KURIBAYASHI

When the enemy arrive, we will contain them, and then our Combined Fleet will take them out. Blast them back to America.

Baron Nishi turns grave and is silent for a moment.

BARON NISHI

General, there is no longer any Combined Fleet.

KURIBAYASHI

What do you mean?

BARON NISHI

I guess you haven't heard about what happened with Operation A-Go ten days ago.

(MORE)

BARON NISHI (cont'd)

Most of Admiral Ozawa's carrier planes and float planes were destroyed off the Marianas. We still have some scattered naval forces, but there will be no striking power from the air, or sea for that matter.

Kuribayashi looks dark, then laughs.

KURIBAYASHI

You must be drunk. This island is under the jurisdiction of the city of Tokyo. We'll get our support.

BARON NISHI

If you want my honest opinion, the best thing to do would be to sink this island to the bottom of the sea.

Baron Nishi takes a large gulp of the sake. Kuribayashi is speechless, his jovial mood wiped out.

KURIBAYASHI

And yet, you still came.

BARON NISHI

Well, I figured your men were going to need all the tanks I could bring.

This brings a light smile back.

Kuribayashi looks over the strategic plans. He slowly removes all air attack force plans from the table model. He stands over the table in grave contemplation, then angrily pulls strategic PLAN PAPERS off the wall.

Kuribayashi strides along the beach with Fujita behind him.

KURIBAYASHI

This beach is wide. Yes, the enemy must land here. They have no alternative.

Kuribayashi rushes the beach. Fujita watches him, perplexed.

KURIBAYASHI

Fujita!

LT. FUJITA

Sir!

KURIBAYASHI

Run along the beach there.

LT. FUJITA

Sir?

KURIBAYASHI

Like you're one of the Americans.
Go on. Which direction would you
take?

Fujita contemplates for a minute, then rushes up towards the airfield.

Kuribayashi quickly takes up a position and aims his walking stick at Fujita, pretending to shoot, moves around, looks for another vantage point.

He looks at the surroundings, measuring where the best positions would be.

KURIBAYASHI

Okay, come from the other side.

Fujita complies. Kuribayashi takes up another position and mock shoots him again.

Kashiwara and Saigo stare in awe at the beach activity.

KASHIWARA

I think your general is a bit
nuts.

Captain Tanida strides up the slopes barking commands.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Break time is over! Back to work!

The men get up immediately. Kashiwara suddenly bowls over from a cramp. Saigo looks at him concerned.

SAIGO

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

KASHIWARA

It's fine. Just the damn water,
I'm sure. But I really need to
go.

He quickly makes his way to a discrete location behind
the mountain.

EXT. MOTOYAMA HILLS - DAY

Kuribayashi walks along the hillside with a gaggle of
Officers struggling to keep up with him.

Admiral Ohsugi, aging 57-year-old COLONEL ADACHI and MAJ.
GENERAL SATO are among them.

Finally, Kuribayashi comes to a stop and turns to the
officers.

KURIBAYASHI

Our strategy will be to take a
defensive position and use the
terrain to our advantage. We will
build caves and tunnels in the
mountains, place our artillery
along this ridge and Suribachi.

COL. ADACHI

What about the beaches?

KURIBAYASHI

The men will have a clear view of
the beaches from Suribachi and
Motoyama. There is no need to
fortify the beaches.

GENERAL SATO

General Kuribayashi, you must
understand that the trenches are
the first line of defense. We must
resume work on the beaches.

KURIBAYASHI

General, do you know how many cars
America produces in a year? Five
million. Five million cars,
General. The American forces and
their technological advancements
should not be underestimated. The
Americans will cross the beaches
eventually and the soldiers' lives
will be needlessly wasted there.

COL. ADACHI

It's inevitable that men will die.
But I've never heard of an island
operation without a line of
defense at the beaches.

KURIBAYASHI

And how long did our guns last
along the beaches at Saipan and
Guam? Will you please show me
just how effective the beach
pillboxes at Tarawa were?

The officers are silent for a moment.

GENERAL SATO

So we build tunnels and caves in
the mountains?

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

It will be a futile waste of time.
The men cannot dig through a
mountain. Besides, what kind of
war is fought in caves?

GENERAL SATO

The strategy should be to force
the ships in for a heavy air
attack.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

I agree. That makes the most
sense. We will have support from
our Combined Fleet.

Kuribayashi is quiet for a beat.

KURIBAYASHI

We can no longer count on our
Combined Fleet.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

What do you mean?

KURIBAYASHI

The Combined Fleet has been
broken.

The officers look at each other with gravity.

KURIBAYASHI

What's more, I received an order on the wire this morning that all our remaining planes are to be sent back to Tokyo to defend the mainland.

GENERAL SATO

We won't be able to last five days without air support.

KURIBAYASHI

We will hold the island as long as possible, no matter the outcome. Once the Americans take *Iwo Tou*, they will have a clear route for their bombing runs. But if we can draw out the battle, hold this island for at least 20 days, the Americans will think twice about attacking Japan.

30 EXT. RAIN COLLECTION SITE - DAY

30

RAIN comes down in torrents, a tropical storm in the midst of the heat.

Tarps that have been put up to collect the water fill up with the rain.

Soldiers transfer the water from the tarp into buckets and haul them to camp.

31 EXT. IWO JIMA AIRSTRIP - DAY

31

Another rainy day on the island.

SUPERIMPOSE: DECEMBER, 1944

Shimizu steps off an air carrier along with other soldiers. He looks around him, carrying his pack.

SHIMIZU (V.O.)

To mother, today I am to join my new unit. I know you have been wondering about my transfer. This is something I cannot discuss now, but I will explain to you some day.

32 INT. TROOP'S CAVE - DAY (DEC. 1944)

32

The soldiers lie on their bedrolls, reading books, writing letters or mending their uniforms. Even though it's winter, the men are stripped to their undershirts and try to fan themselves in the heat.

Saigo reads a BOOK with pictures of Egypt on the cover.

Saigo shows Nozaki a page from the book.

SAIGO

Look at this picture.

NOZAKI

That's some fancy castle.

SAIGO

You know who that castle was made for? Somebody who was already dead.

NOZAKI

They must have had a lot of money back then to make a castle like that for a dead person. Why are you reading a book about Egypt anyway? We're never going to war over there.

SAIGO

(ignoring)

We'll be lucky if we even get a hole in the ground when we're dead.

NOZAKI

Don't talk about that. It's bad luck.

Shimizu enters the cave. Despite the rain, his uniform still looks crisp and clean.

NOZAKI

Here comes the new recruit.

SHIMIZU

Is this the 312th?

SAIGO

That's right.

Saigo continues reading his book.

NOZAKI

I'm Nozaki. This is Saigo.

SHIMIZU

Shimizu, Yoichi.

NOZAKI

You can put your bedroll there,
Shimizu.

He points to an empty space. Shimizu is about to put his bedroll down, but Saigo tries to prevent him.

SAIGO

There's another empty space at the
back end of the cave.

NOZAKI

(to Shimizu)

Don't mind him. His friend
Kashiwara just died. That used to
be his spot.

Shimizu methodically puts his bedroll out, where
Kashiwara's spot used to be.

SAIGO

But we are all going to die.
That's our plan, isn't it?

SHIMIZU

If it serves the country, it is a
death of honor.

SAIGO

Kashiwara died of honorable
dysentery.

NOZAKI

Where are you from, Shimizu?

SHIMIZU

From Kanagawa-ken.

NOZAKI

Kanagawa-ken. Ozawa is from there,
aren't you?

OZAWA, a young soldier in his twenties, nods his head.

OZAWA

That's right. Where did you
train? Maybe we were at the same
camp.

Shimizu is hesitant.

SHIMIZU

No, I trained in Tokyo.

NOZAKI

I trained in Tokyo, too. What camp was it?

Shimizu is hesitant again.

SHIMIZU

The *Koho Kimmu Yoin Yoseijo*.

Everyone becomes silent. Shimizu turns to continue unpacking his bedroll.

Nozaki quickly leaves his vicinity and sidles up to Saigo.

NOZAKI

Why do you think they put a *Kempeitai* in our unit?

SAIGO

He's not wearing the white arm band. He's not *Kempeitai*.

NOZAKI

He went to the *Kempeitai* military academy.

SAIGO

Maybe he flunked out.

Nozaki notices a holstered PISTOL on Shimizu's belt.

NOZAKI

He acts like a *Kempeitai*. And look at his holster. That's not standard issue. And are riflemen even supposed to have pistols? He's been put here to spy on us.

SAIGO

Why would he spy on us?

NOZAKI

Maybe it's those letters you've been writing. I think you should be careful what you say, Saigo.

Saigo looks worried. They watch Shimizu. He sits down and pulls out a small mirror, checks his closely cropped hair. He jumps up suddenly with a YELL.

A CENTIPEDE crawls on him.

Nozaki and Saigo try to suppress their smirks.

Shimizu looks embarrassed. He stomps on the insect angrily.

The soldiers line up for their lunchtime rations. They each get a bowl of soup with weeds floating in them.

SAIGO

Weed soup again?

They look over towards Shimizu, who stands behind them in line.

NOZAKI

Kuribayashi's conserving our food supplies for the battle.

Saigo and Nozaki sit down.

Shimizu sits slightly apart from the rest of the men. He looks at his soup, trying to suppress his shock. He digs in and eats without comment.

Saigo looks at Shimizu and then back into his soup.

SAIGO

We'll be dead before the Americans even get here. And you would think with all my war effort contributions, we should be eating *kasutera* cakes or sandwiches.

NOZAKI

What?

SAIGO

I ran a bakery shop in Tokyo with my wife. We sold *kasutera* and *ampan* cakes, back when we could still get sugar.

Saigo motions towards Shimizu.

SAIGO

His *kempeitai* brethren used to come in and take what they wanted. Said it was for the war effort.

NOZAKI

We ran in to those types at our clothing store as well.

SAIGO

When we started making sandwiches, they took those too. And when we ran out of meat and just had bread, they still came. Finally, they took our baking equipment for the metal and we were out of business.

(a beat)

I should have been a fisherman.

NOZAKI

It must be hard on your wife without the shop and without a husband.

34 FLASHBACK - INT. BAKERY SHOP, ENTRANCE - DAY (1943) 34

HANAKO sweeps the floor of the empty bakery shop, pausing to rub her swollen belly.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

INT. BAKERY SHOP - BACK RESIDENCE - DAY

Saigo sits on a mat on the floor reading a book.

SAIGO

Tell them to go away. We have nothing to sell.

BAKERY SHOP - ENTRANCE

Hanako opens the door. Her face turns pale.

SAIGO (V.O.)

Who is it?

A CITY CLERK and WOMEN FROM THE PATRIOTIC WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, wearing governmental sashes stand at the door.

CONTINUED:

The City Clerk holds out a red letter. He bows with the letter outstretched in his hand. Hanako stares at it and does not take it.

LEAD WOMAN

Congratulations. Your husband's going to war.

Saigo comes to the door. He also turns pale when he sees the red letter, but tries to compose himself. He takes it and bows to them.

SAIGO

Thank you very much. I'm happy to serve the nation.

The LEAD WOMAN, in her forties, steps forward.

LEAD WOMAN

Prayers for your eternal success at arms.

HANAKO

Please. We have only each other.

Lead Woman gives Hanako a look of anger.

SAIGO

Hanako, go to the back, dear.

HANAKO

He's already been to war once.

LEAD WOMAN

We have all sent our husbands to war, Mrs. Saigo. And our sons. We all have to do our part.

She looks at Hanako's belly.

LEAD WOMAN

At least you'll have a little one to carry on your name.

35 INT. BAKERY SHOP - NIGHT

35

Saigo and Hanako sit across from each other at the dinner table. There is a meager ration of rice gruel and dried fish. Hanako is unable to eat and weeps silently.

Saigo puts his chopsticks down.

SAIGO

Hanako, I can't taste the food
with you like that.

HANAKO

What am I going to do after you
die?

SAIGO

Am I already in the coffin?

HANAKO

The men never come back. Don't
you see all the black streamers
flying in our village? They never
come back. They're not supposed
to come back.

She weeps some more. Saigo comes over to her side.

SAIGO

I know.

HANAKO

And now, with the baby...

She leans into him.

HANAKO

I'm scared.

Saigo bends over and puts his ear to her stomach, then
talks to it.

SAIGO

Hey, little baby. This is your
father speaking. Let me tell you
a secret. You're not to repeat
this to anyone, okay?

(whispering)

I plan to come back.

Hanako brightens when she hears this.

END OF FLASHBACK.

The sound of PICK AXES CLANGING against STONE WALLS
emanates from a complex network of multilevel caves and
tunnels in the Motoyama mountainside.

Saigo, Nozaki and Shimizu work in a separate area where sulfurous HOT STEAM rises from the rocks. They wear GAS MASKS to protect themselves.

The mountain is like a busy anthill where men dig, remove, cart and carry.

Baron Nishi, still wearing his spurred boots, directs his men on camouflaging tanks in gunner positions.

Kuribayashi looks at his plans, comparing the work to his map.

He remains unnoticed by Admiral Ohsugi and Lt. Ito as he walks behind them.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

This is ridiculous. Why waste time digging these impossible caves when they are all going to die anyway?

LT. ITO

At least he has conceded to the pillboxes on the beaches.

Kuribayashi continues to walk on.

General Kuribayashi sits at his desk, writing a memo. Admiral Ohsugi enters.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

You wanted to see me, sir?

KURIBAYASHI

Yes, Admiral.

Kuribayashi continues writing and Admiral Ohsugi has to wait patiently. Finally, Kuribayashi looks up.

KURIBAYASHI

Admiral Ohsugi, you have been looking quite pale these days.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

It's the water. It has never agreed with me.

KURIBAYASHI

I think you need to go back to Tokyo to recoup.

Kuribayashi hands him the memo.

Admiral Ohsugi looks at it and is momentarily speechless.

KURIBAYASHI

I have just commissioned Admiral Ichimaru to take your place.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

General, the island won't last more than five days without fleet support. I'm not alone in thinking the cave work is... futile.

Kuribayashi stands up from the table, angered.

KURIBAYASHI

The cave digging may be futile. Maybe the stand on Iwo Tou will be futile. Maybe the whole war is futile. But will you give up then? What will we tell the people of Japan? Admiral Ohsugi, we will stay and hold this island until we die, until every last breath of us is expired. If my children can live to see one more day of a free Japan, that would be worth the one more day that we suffer instead of surrender. So don't tell me that the cave work is futile.

He sits back down. Admiral Ohsugi looks defeated.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

I'm sorry, General. I was mistaken.

KURIBAYASHI

You are dismissed.

Admiral Ohsugi turns and walks out.

Fresh from a ride, Baron Nishi fondly brushes his horse's coat.

BARON NISHI

Hey, Jupiter. That's a good boy.

39

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAY

39

Admiral Ohsugi walks in the direction of the airstrip. Behind him, his AIDE follows, carrying his bags.

General Sato sees him on the way. They stop and salute each other.

GENERAL SATO

It's true then. I didn't believe it when I heard.

Admiral Ohsugi tries not to show his humiliation.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

I'm glad to be gone from this island.

GENERAL SATO

We may have had our differences, but I'm truly sorry to see you go.

Admiral Ohsugi starts on his way again, then stops.

ADMIRAL OHSUGI

General Sato, it's up to you now. I hate to say it, but Kuribayashi belongs back behind a desk at the Imperial Palace, not commanding a war.

Baron Nishi emerges from the horse pen and overhears the two talking.

General Sato nods.

GENERAL SATO

I understand. There are many of us whose sentiments are with you.

Ohsugi continues on.

40

EXT. OUTDOOR INSTRUCTIONAL HUT - DAY

40

Saigo, Shimizu and Nozaki sit in a hut for an instructional lecture, with Captain Tanida speaking.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

The Americans are likely to land here.

He points to the South beach on a map of Iwo.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Cross fire positions will be here,
here and here.

He points to Motoyama and Suribachi.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Now, to be truthful, we will
likely be outnumbered by the
Americans in troop size and air
and naval support. But we have a
great advantage. Can anyone tell
me what that is?

The soldiers look at each other at a loss, still trying
to digest the fact that they will be outnumbered in all
aspects.

Finally, Shimizu stands up.

SHIMIZU

The Americans are weak-willed and
inferior to Japanese soldiers.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Very good, Shimizu. Why is that?

SHIMIZU

They are not as disciplined and
let their feelings interfere with
their fighting.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

That is correct.

Saigo and Nozaki give each other looks, distrustful of
Shimizu.

Captain Tanida displays a picture of a uniformed American
medic.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Here is the uniform of an American
medic. He should be your target,
for Americans will risk the lives
of many soldiers to save this one.

Kuribayashi stands, looking at the map of the Empire.
The number of white flags has proliferated, while the
Japanese flags have diminished.

Kuribayashi turns towards Baron Nishi.

KURIBAYASHI

What is it that you wanted to tell me?

BARON NISHI

I just thought I'd warn you, sir, to keep an eye on your commanders.

KURIBAYASHI

Thank you for your concern, Nishi, but I have it under control. Admiral Ohsugi is gone and I trust General Sato and Colonel Adachi will keep things in order.

Baron Nishi looks unconvinced.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU, the new naval officer, walks into the command hut. His right leg has been injured from a previous war wound, and he limps as he walks in.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU

Admiral Ichimaru reporting for duty, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Ah, Admiral Ichimaru.

BARON NISHI

Excuse me.

He bows to them and starts to leave, when the WAIL of an AIR RAID SIREN interrupts their greetings. The SIRENS are immediately followed by the DRONE of approaching B-24s.

Kuribayashi grabs his paperwork. The men quickly make their way out of the tent.

Saigo and the rest of the troop get up and run quickly from the huts seeking shelter.

The squadron of planes descends upon them. STRAFING FIRE riddles the earth.

Saigo and Nozaki jump behind a large rock formation.

Shimizu finds shelter in a nearby trench.

As they watch, the SAND EXPLODES before them in black plumes. The men cover their heads from the falling debris.

A BOMB disintegrates the instructional tent that the men have just escaped.

BOMBS continue to fall like explosive rain around the island.

The command hut is ablaze in a orange plume of fire.

Finally, the bombing stops.

Baron Nishi emerges from one of the trenches.

BARON NISHI

Jupiter!

43 EXT. HORSE PEN - DAY 43

Baron Nishi rushes out to the pen. The horse lies dead on the ground.

Baron Nishi goes over to it. Falls on his knees, devastated. Pets its neck.

44 CAMPGROUNDS 44

The men start cleaning up the debris.

Saigo picks up planks of wood when he sees Private Yamazaki in the distance, sitting upright. He approaches him.

SAIGO

Hey. Hey, Yamazaki. What are you doing just sitting there? Help us out here.

Yamazaki does not respond.

Saigo gets closer to him and reels back in horror. Yamazaki's skull has been blasted out of his head, leaving his distorted face.

45 INT. TROOP'S CAVE - NIGHT (FEBRUARY, 1945) 45

More AERIAL BOMB BLASTS can be heard outside the caves. Saigo, Shimizu, Nozaki, Ozawa and other troop members bide their time in their sleeping quarters.

Shimizu writes a letter.

SHIMIZU (V.O.)

To mother. We are being bombarded daily by B-24s. They fly at an altitude too high to be reached by our anti-aircraft guns. Officer Tanida estimates there have been over 20,000 shells on this tiny island. When the Americans finally arrive, we'll give them our own Hell.

The men look haggard, with rings under their eyes from lack of sleep.

Nozaki approaches Saigo, motions towards Shimizu.

NOZAKI

I think he's writing about us. In his reports.

SAIGO

He's just writing a letter. It's been two months, Nozaki. He would have reported us by now.

NOZAKI

How can you be sure?

They watch Shimizu.

The GROUND RUMBLES with another bomb blast.

OZAWA

Will they ever stop? Day and night. Day and night. It's driving me nuts!

A TIRED SOLDIER in his thirties, tries to sleep in his bedroll, covering his ears.

Another EXPLOSION causes debris to rain down from the cave walls.

The Tired Soldier finally gets up angrily.

TIRED SOLDIER

If the damn Americans are going to invade, why don't they hurry up and land already?

46 INT. OFFICER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

46

The BOMBING NOISES are more distant in the deeper and larger cave of the Officer's Quarters.

Kuribayashi sits at his desk. He doodles a drawing on a letter he has written.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

Tako-chan. Your last letter was written very well. You used some very big words. You've grown very wise and I am very happy. You made just five errors in your kanji. This is a picture of your father walking around the island.

Kuribayashi looks at a portrait of his family--his wife, son and two daughters. Lt. Fujita enters the cave holding a wire.

LT. FUJITA

General, the fleet of American ships have left Saipan.

Kuribayashi stands to receive the note.

KURIBAYASHI

So they are on their way. Have all beach positions manned and ready for action.

LT. FUJITA

Yes, sir.

47 INT. PLANNING ROOM - DAY

47

Kuribayashi turns on a microphone. Outside BOMBS continue to be dropped.

KURIBAYASHI

Men, the time has come at last to show your true colors. To fight as honorable men of the Imperial Japanese Army.

48 INTERCUT - PLANNING ROOM/TROOP'S CAVE

48

Saigo, Shimizu and Nozaki stand at attention, as they listen to Kuribayashi's voice over the LOUDSPEAKER.

KURIBAYASHI

Iwo Tou is of utmost importance to our Nippon. If the army takes this island, they will land their planes here, refuel and fly their bombs to the homeland. They will attack our villages and destroy them with fire bombs. For the sake of our homeland, we must delay them as long as possible. We cannot expect to return home.

Saigo and Nozaki look at each other, the last sentence confirming what they fear.

KURIBAYASHI

For 5000 years, no foreign army has desecrated the land of Japan. All of you must fight like *Nipponjin*. In the name of our fathers who held back the Russian marauders at Port Arthur and Mukden, and our forefathers before that who fought against the invasions of the mongols over 600 years ago, I ask each of you to defend this island to the limit of your strength. No man must die until he has killed at least ten Americans. We will hold *Iwo Tou* until the last of us has perished. Long live the Emperor!

The MEN raise their hands in the air.

MEN

Long live the Emperor! *Banzai!*
Banzai! Banzai!

49 TROOP'S CAVE - LATER

49

Nozaki pulls out his money. A few bills and some coins. He pours them into an envelope.

Other soldiers follow suit, collecting money and small trinkets of value, folding them into letters.

Saigo similarly places his bills into an envelope.

50 EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT

50

The armada of American ships makes its way.

51 INT. BARON NISHI'S QUARTERS - NIGHT 51

Baron Nishi composes a letter.

BARON NISHI (V.O.)
 Keep warm and safe. I will fight
 courageously in the spirit of
 Yamato. Do not expect my return.
 In the end, I would just like to
 say, my heart has always been with
 you. Takeichi.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

52 INT. TROOP'S CAVES - NIGHT 52

A soldier passes out clean socks and towels.

The men strip, changing into clean clothes.

One by one, the men face a religious altar adorned with
 zig-zag strips of paper (*gohei*). They bow before it.

53 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S QUARTERS - NIGHT 53

Kuribayashi is contemplative as he looks over letters
 sent from his family -- the scrawl of his youngest
 daughter, the elegant calligraphy of his wife's hand and
 finally, the bold strokes from his son.

He slowly folds them and takes out his pen.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)
 Taro, I will fight as a son of
 Kuribayashi, the Samurai, and will
 behave in such a manner as to
 deserve the name of Kuribayashi.
 Now is the time for you to step up
 and lead the family. The life of
 your father is like a flicker of
 flame before the wind.

54 INT. TROOP'S CAVES - NIGHT 54

Saigo picks up a cotton BELT with numerous stitchings.
 He puts it on and boasts to Nozaki.

SAIGO
 No one can shoot me now.

Nozaki looks at it.

NOZAKI

That's a nice belt. My wife sent me one too.

Nozaki picks up a similar belt. He looks around the room. Some of the other soldiers have similar belts.

He looks at Shimizu.

NOZAKI

Doesn't look like Mr. *Kempeitai* has a thousand-stitch belt, does he?

SAIGO

Maybe he thinks it will clash with his uniform. He probably doesn't believe in superstitions, anyway.

Shimizu finally picks up a similarly stitched belt.

NOZAKI

His mother made him one after all.

The island is clouded in LARGE BLACK PLUMES as it is pounded relentlessly by planes flying sorties, dropping mega-ton BOMBS.

Saigo's unit is amassed at their position in the volcano dressed in uniform, some wearing their thousand-stitch belts.

The entire GROUND SHAKES with each BOMB. Saigo and Nozaki can barely keep upright after each blast.

NOZAKI

Maybe they're trying to sink the island.

SAIGO

My head hurts.

NOZAKI

How many ships do you think there are out there?

SAIGO

At least 30. Maybe even 50.

NOZAKI

They must be really close.

Saigo gets up.

SAIGO

I need to take a leak.

NOZAKI

Don't go near the sewers. I heard dysentery is spreading through there.

SAIGO

Where do I go then?

NOZAKI

There's a pot, at the end of the cave.

Saigo takes off.

INT. SURIBACHI CAVE - EARLY MORNING

The troops eat their morning ration of porridge.

Captain Tanida enters, adjusting his pants.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Someone needs to go throw out the shit pot.

The men put their heads down, concentrating on their food, trying not to be picked.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Saigo!

Saigo reluctantly gets up.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

And Saigo, if anything happens to that pot, you'll be carrying our shit away with your hands.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

58 INT. END CAVE - MORNING 58

Saigo picks up the CHAMBER POT, holding it at a distance with disgust. He makes his way through a --

CAVE NETWORK

-- and finally comes to an -- OUTLET.

59 EXT. MT. SURIBACHI - MORNING 59

Saigo carefully navigates around the base of Suribachi.

He comes to a crag and dumps the filthy contents of the bowl.

Saigo looks up to see the ARMADA OF SHIPS -- an imposing mass of 485 ships converged around the island.

The sight of the enormous fleet causes Saigo to drop the bowl. It tumbles down into a crevice.

SAIGO

No!

Saigo reaches down into the crevice, tries to retrieve the bowl, but can't reach it.

SAIGO

Damn!

Suddenly, a WHISTLING NOISE causes Saigo to run for cover. A BOMB EXPLODES, sending sand flying in the air.

PUFFS OF WHITE SMOKE off the ships convey that a SHOOTING BARRAGE has begun.

Dark FIREBALLS and GEYSERS of black sand and rubble ERUPT over the landscape.

Saigo crawls back towards the crevice and tries to reach down again without success. He looks up to the Heavens.

SAIGO

Is this some kind of joke? What kind of God are you? Making us suffer like this! You're probably laughing aren't you? You think this is funny.

Saigo looks around and finds a STICK. He fishes down in the crevice and catches the bowl on the end of the stick.

Carefully, carefully, he raises the stick, balancing the bowl on it.

A BOMB EXPLODES in the sand yards away from him. But determined, Saigo manages to keep it steady.

At last he pulls it up and takes it with relief, then runs for the caves.

As he runs, a BOMB SHELL falls in his path.

Saigo drops into the sand, still holding the pot, bracing for the explosion, but nothing happens.

Saigo slowly gets up and stares at the dud. He looks to the Heavens.

SAIGO

Thank you, God. I take back what I said before. You are truly great.

Kuribayashi peers through his binoculars. General Sato and Admiral Ichimaru stand at his side, also monitoring the activity.

He sees GUNBOATS and DESTROYERS approaching the island.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU

Shall we commence fire?

KURIBAYASHI

It's not yet time.

Hundreds of LANDING CRAFTS hunker on to the beaches, Marines pouring out of their hulls.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU

The men wish to commence firing.

KURIBAYASHI

Tell them to hold their fire.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU

(into the radio)

Hold your fire! Hold your fire!

General Sato looks angrily at Kuribayashi.

GENERAL SATO

The Americans will have the beach
in no time if there is no
resistance.

KURIBAYASHI

Let them land until there is no
more room for reinforcements.

He continues to watch with binoculars. Amphibious
vehicles converge on the beach like a swarm of bees.

61 EXT. BEACH - MORNING

61

From the viewpoint of one of the beach pillboxes, the
massive number of approaching Americans is even more
frightening.

A PILLBOX GUNNER looks on nervously, clasping his
automatic weapon.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU(V.O.)

Hold your fire!

A BARRAGE of RIFLE FIRE and SEMI-AUTOMATIC BULLETS fly in
from the amassing American army.

The Gunner ducks.

62 EXT. NORTH HILLS - EARLY MORNING

62

Kuribayashi peers through his binoculars again. The
beach is flooded with MARINES and VEHICLES. TANKS,
trying to make their way, mire in the sand.

KURIBAYASHI

See how they've bunched up there
on the beach? There's no room to
advance or retreat.

General Sato looks through his binoculars.

KURIBAYASHI

Give the order. Commence firing.

ADMIRAL ICHIMARU

(on the radio)

Begin firing.

- 63 INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - DAY 63
Men at the windows of their caves UNLEASH FURY, FIRING with MACHINE GUNS onto the beach.
Saigo runs between the interconnected caves, supplying ammo.
- EXT. MOTOYAMA MOUNTAIN - DAY
Baron Nishi stands by his men as they load a concealed tank unit.
- BARON NISHI
Fire!
- The FORCE of the FIRE causes the tank to recoil.
- 64 EXT. SURIBACHI BEACH - DAY 64
The American marines are FIRED UPON from every direction. MINES BLOW, soldiers fall. Men and machines disintegrate.
A marine runs up the beach and throws a grenade into a pillbox.
The pillbox & bodies of the Japanese gunners fly.
Another marine with a FLAMETHROWER INCINERATES a hidden pillbox and Japanese soldiers run screaming out in flames.
- 65 INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - DAY 65
Shimizu and Nozaki FIRE DOWN on the marines. The flamethrower is GUNNED DOWN.
- 66 EXT. MOTOYAMA MOUNTAIN - DAY 66
The chaos of GUNFIRE, SHELLS and HOWLING ROCKETS ECHO through the mountains.
- 67 INT. COMMAND CENTER - EVENING 67
Kuribayashi fields reports from his officers.

LT. FUJITA

The gun emplacement of the Kitakubo Unit was destroyed. Also, pillbox units on the beach have all been taken or destroyed. However, all other forces are intact and we estimate more than a thousand enemy casualties.

Kuribayashi beams proudly.

KURIBAYASHI

The pillbox destruction was unavoidable. Overall, that is good news. How are the men holding up at Suribachi?

LT. FUJITA

Forces are intact.

KURIBAYASHI

Good. Good. What is the enemy situation?

LT. FUJITA

Enemy strength is estimated at approximately 20,000 men and 80 tanks.

KURIBAYASHI

No. There are far more than that. They still have soldiers waiting to land in their boats.

LT. FUJITA

At present, the enemy bridgehead extends between South Landing and Futatsune Iwo, with its depth greatest in the vicinity of the Western tip of Chidori airfield.

Kuribayashi looks at the map.

KURIBAYASHI

Just as I thought. They are making a two-pronged attack. Suribachi and the Motoyama airfield.

68 INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - NIGHT

68

Saigo, Shimizu, Nozaki and the other men line up in formation. They salute Col. Adachi as he makes his way among the men.

COL. ADACHI

Well done, men. You have proven yourselves today as worthy soldiers. As reward, you have earned Imperial Gifts.

Each man is given one CIGARETTE and one piece of CANDY.

The soldiers bow and gratefully take their booty.

COL. ADACHI

Infinite is the graciousness of our Emperor.

Lighters are passed around, as each soldier savors his cigarette.

69 INT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - NIGHT

69

Baron Nishi's troop, in contrast, are more relaxed, already seated on the ground with cigarettes.

Baron Nishi lifts a bottle of liquor to toast his men and takes a swig. He still wears his boots with spurs.

70 INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - NIGHT

70

Saigo and Shimizu sit by the cave entrance on night guard duty.

Compared to the chaos of the daytime bombardment, the night air is relatively silent, interrupted only by occasional SPORADIC FIRE.

Saigo starts to drift, his hand slipping off his rifle.

Shimizu nudges him.

SHIMIZU

Hey!

Saigo wakes up, quickly picking up his rifle.

SHIMIZU

You were dozing.

Saigo stands, stretches, and goes to the cave opening. He watches the bright NIGHT FLARES flying into the air.

SAIGO

Reminds me of the summer fireworks at *Obon* season.

Saigo wipes his eyes.

SAIGO

You were from Kanagawa-ken, right?

Shimizu nods.

SAIGO

Before I moved out to Tokyo, I grew up in Yokota. In Akita Prefecture.

Saigo reflects, while Shimizu remains silent.

SAIGO

It doesn't feel like February here. Right now, there would be lots of snow back home. It's right about the time that the village children would be building kamakura. They'd be building snow houses lit with lanterns, offering toasted *mochi* cakes and warm *amazake* to passersby. All along the river, tiny white houses lit with candles. It's really something you ought to see. The pure white snow, the river, the warm glow of the candles...

Saigo reflects on the image in his mind.

SHIMIZU

(softly)

I've heard about it. I would have like to have visited Akita once.

There is a moment of silence.

SAIGO

You're not really *Kempeitai* are you? If you were, you wouldn't be here now.

Shimizu doesn't respond.

SAIGO

If there's something you don't want anyone to know, I'm good at keeping secrets.

Shimizu looks at his watch.

SHIMIZU

Our shift is ended. It's time to go back in.

He gets up and leaves.

71

INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - DAY

71

MORTARS pound the mountain. Ozawa mans a gunner position.

OZAWA

I need more ammo!

Saigo picks up a machine gun tray, when suddenly the CAVE MOUTH EXPLODES with a direct hit.

Ozawa is blasted to the back of the wall, his left arm torn off. He SCREAMS in pain, goes into shock, then slumps over dead.

Saigo rushes to him.

SAIGO

Ozawa!

Captain Tanida emerges.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Saigo, take his place.

SAIGO

The machine gun's blasted.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Use your rifle.

Saigo clumsily tries to undo the safety of his gun. As he does so, his gun points at Tanida.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Watch out! Imbecile!

SAIGO

Sorry, sir.

71 CONTINUED:

71

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Saigo, forget about the rifle.
Your shots have always been
useless. Go send a report to Col.
Adachi that we need another
machine gun.

Saigo is inwardly triumphant.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

Saigo runs through the network of caves. He hears
SCREAMS as men are hit by direct SHOTS. SMOKE and DUST
fill the caves.

72 EXT. NORTH HILLS - DAY

72

Kuribayashi watches again with binoculars.

The EXPLOSIONS are spectacular. Relentless.

LT. FUJITA

Sir, Suirbachi is taking a
pounding. Col. Adachi is asking
for reinforcements.

KURIBAYASHI

We cannot send reinforcements.
Tell him to hold out.

73 INT. SURIBACHI BASE CAVE - DAY

73

Shimizu and Nozaki man a machine gun position. The
HOWLING of BLASTS and SHELLS ECHOES throughout.

Shimizu's body reverberates as he controls the machine
gun.

74 EXT. SURIBACHI CAVES - DAY

74

The American Marines rush towards the mountain. One
Marine heads straight for Shimizu's hole, with a live
grenade in his hand.

NOZAKI

Shoot him.

Shimizu aims the gun at him, but it's jammed. He hits
the machine.

NOZAKI

What's the matter?

SHIMIZU

It's jammed!

The American keeps rushing. Shimizu fumbles for his pistol, but in his nervousness, his hand shakes. He drops the pistol.

Just as the American is about to throw the live grenade, he is shot down. The GRENADE EXPLODES in his hand.

Nozaki holds the smoldering pistol.

75

INT. ADACHI'S CAVE - DAY

75

Saigo arrives at Adachi's cave. Col. Adachi looks tired and beat. He nervously sucks on a cigarette as he speaks into a radio transmitter.

Saigo waits for him to finish.

COL. ADACHI

General, we are losing Suribachi. It's all lost. Request permission to lead a suicide mission at 2100 hours.

76

INT. COMMAND CENTER - DAY

76

Kuribayashi hears Adachi's haggard voice.

KURIBAYASHI

No. No suicide missions. You and your men must try to hold out. If all fails, join forces in the North caves.

COL. ADACHI (V.O.)

But, sir. I have failed to hold Suribachi. Permit me to die with honor with my men.

KURIBAYASHI

No, Colonel, this is an order --

The LINE IS CUT and it turns to STATIC.

KURIBAYASHI

Adachi...Hello?

77 INT. ADACHI'S CAVES - DAY

77

There is just STATIC on the WIRE. Col. Adachi finally turns to Saigo, his eyes bloodshot.

SAIGO

Sir, Captain Tanida requests to have a machine gun team sent to his area.

COL. ADACHI

It's lost. It's all lost.

SAIGO

Sir?

COL. ADACHI

Suicide. It's the only thing left. Your men should commit suicide.

Adachi scribbles a NOTE.

SAIGO

But the General--

ADACHI

Here, take this to your commander.

Saigo takes the note. He looks back at Adachi who goes back to sucking his cigarette and staring at the cave wall.

Saigo retreats through the caves with the note.

78 INT. SURIBACHI CAVES - EVENING

78

Captain Tanida stares at the note. It reads "Jiketsu" (mass suicide).

The men are solemnly gathered around, knowing what is to come.

SAIGO

Captain, I heard General Kuribayashi order Col. Adachi to escape --

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Quiet! Escape is the coward's way. Sit down!

Saigo complies and sits down in the back.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Men, we must remember that we are the Emperor's soldiers. We must now die illustriously and find our place at Yasukuni Shrine. This is our destiny.

One of the soldiers sobs.

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Tennoheika Banzai!

MEN

Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!

CAPTAIN TANIDA

Pull your grenades men.

There is silence. Finally, one of the soldiers shouts.

SUICIDE SOLDIER

Tennoheika Banzai!

He pulls the pin off his grenade, holds it to his chest. This starts a chain reaction.

Saigo watches in horror as Nozaki pulls his GRENADE and EXPLODES.

Saigo falls back away from the rest of the men.

Captain Tanida takes his PISTOL out and SHOOTs himself in the head, falling over dead bodies.

Shimizu has his hand on his grenade, but it shakes. He sits there frozen.

Saigo retreats backward, heading for an outlet. Then he makes a run for it.

Shimizu sees this, pulls out his pistol and follows after him.

SHIMIZU

Stop!

Saigo turns around. Shimizu has his pistol pointed at him.

SHIMIZU

You should die like an honorable soldier!

SAIGO

Look, Shimizu, we can still join
the troops in the Northern caves.

SHIMIZU

Our orders are to stay here until
death.

SAIGO

I heard General Kuribayashi
himself give orders to escape.

Shimizu hesitates.

SAIGO

I heard it on the wire.

Shimizu still seems undecided.

SAIGO

Would we better serve the Emperor
as dead men or if we continued
fighting?

Shimizu finally puts his gun down.

They both run off through the --

- an intricate system of tunnels below Suribachi.

SHIMIZU

Where does this go?

SAIGO

Underground. It'll take us closer
to Motoyama.

Saigo and Shimizu make their way through the tunnels when
they spot two other soldiers, PVTS. ONO and HASHIMOTO.

ONO

Do you have orders to move back?

Shimizu hesitates.

HASHIMOTO

Where's the rest of your men?

SAIGO

All dead.

ONO

It's the same with us.

The tunnel narrows. Up above, they can hear the FOOTSTEPS of Marines running.

HASHIMOTO

There's an outlet somewhere near here.

SAIGO

Shhhh.

MARINE 1 (O.S)

(in English)

I can hear Japs below us.

MARINE 2 (O.S.)

Hey guys, there's a hole here.

LIGHT pours through the tunnel. The men freeze. A BLAST OF FIRE from a tunnel hole enters the cave. Hashimoto, closest to the outlet, is set aflame.

He SCREAMS in agony.

ONO

Hashimoto!

The flame consumes him. He rolls on the ground, but there is no putting the fire out.

A GRENADE is tossed from above. Saigo pulls Ono back with him and the men turn and run back the way they came as the EXPLOSION rocks the narrow cave walls. Saigo looks back at the blocked passage way.

ONO

Hashimoto!

Ono looks disheartened as the men trudge through the tunnels, back the way they came.

SAIGO

We'll have to find another way.
We'll go back to Suribachi.

They continue to make their way through the tunnels when they hear Japanese SOLDIERS YELLING.

They turn a bend and see a group of soldiers, dragging a BATTERED AMERICAN MARINE/KID.

SOLDIER #1

We got one!

SOLDIER #2

Pulled him out of the ceiling!

Soldier #1 yells at the Kid.

SOLDIER #1

So you thought you could blow us up, or burn us alive like the rest, did you?

The Kid doesn't understand a word.

Ono joins the other soldiers, pulls him up by the scruff.

ONO

You damn Americans killed Hashimoto!

He punches the Kid and knocks him to the floor. Then he starts kicking him.

Other members of the garrison join in on the kicking.

The Kid trembles with fear.

KID

Please!

Soldier #1 takes out his bayonet and attaches it to his rifle. Ono follows his example. They close in on him and spear him.

Shimizu watches frozen. Saigo turns away, unable to watch.

Blood spurts on the walls as the Kid SCREAMS.

ONO

Dirty American!

Kuribayashi paces back and forth.

KURIBAYASHI

Have we heard anything more from the Suribachi sector?

81 CONTINUED:

81

LT. FUJITA

No, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Send out a messenger.

LT. FUJITA

Yes, sir.

82 INT. SURIBACHI TUNNELS - NIGHT

82

Soldier #1 leads Saigo and the rest of the men.

SOLDIER #1

Lieutenant Oiso has ordered all survivors to rendezvous at the East Main cave.

83 INT. EAST CAVE - NIGHT

83

Saigo, Shimizu, Ono and the other soldiers gather along with a large group of soldiers.

A haggard looking LT. COL. OISO briefs them.

LT. COL. OISO

We will make a run for the Motoyama mountains. There is no cover for two kilometers. It's every man for himself.

He looks at the men.

LT. COL. OISO

See you on the other side. If not on this earth, in the next world.

84 EXT. SURIBACHI MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

84

Saigo and Shimizu stand waiting among the troops, ready to make their mad dash.

SAIGO

(whispering)

Don't run up with the herd. That's where the enemy will aim their guns. Fall back behind and stay low.

SHIMIZU

That's cowardice!

SAIGO

Call it what you will, but there's
no use for a dead soldier.

Shimizu falls back slightly.

Lt. Col Oiso lets out a YELL, leading the desperate
charge.

The troops follow, rushing out in an unorganized
stampede.

The night sky explodes with FLARES and ARTILLERY SHOTS.

Lt. Col Oiso's short-lived charge ends as he falls to the
ground. Others meet a similar fate.

Saigo and Shimizu straggle from behind.

SAIGO

Keep down! Keep down!

Men continue to fall before them in a virtual bloodbath.

A BARRAGE OF BULLETS hits the ground before them.

SAIGO

Get down!

Saigo and Shimizu fall to the ground.

The slaughter continues.

Finally, the rapid FIRE slows as the number of men left
standing diminishes.

SAIGO

Crawl forward.

Shimizu and Saigo do a slow crawl along the ground.

SAIGO

Wait until the flares go out.

The flares dissipate to black.

SAIGO

Now!

They rush forward. A new flare goes up.

SAIGO

Get down!

They lie amongst dead Japanese soldier bodies.

Another STRAFE OF BULLETS hits the ground and Shimizu quickly pulls a dead soldier's body over him for protection.

When the flare dies out, they continue on.

Other Japanese soldiers follow their example. Those whose movements are caught in the light of the flares are instantly shot.

85

EXT. MOTOYAMA MOUNTAIN - MORNING

85

Shimizu and Saigo scramble up a mountain. They are covered with black, sooty sand, weary and exhausted.

SHIMIZU

Look!

Saigo turns around to see the AMERICAN FLAG flying on top of Mt. Suribachi.

86

INT. COMMAND CENTER - DAY

86

Kuribayashi paces.

KURIBAYASHI

Have we heard back from the messenger to General Adachi?

LT. FUJITA

No, sir. He never came back.

Kuribayashi looks perturbed.

KURIBAYASHI

I'll go out there myself.

LT. FUJITA

But, sir...

He starts to head out. Lt. Fujita runs after him.

LT. FUJITA

General, Motoyama has a transmitter as well. Perhaps they have been able to receive a message. We should try there first.

87 INT. MOTOYAMA CAVES - DAY

87

Shimizu and Saigo come to the mouth of a cave. They hear the CLICK of a GUN.

SAIGO

The password.

SHIMIZU

Nogi.

GUARD (O.S.)

Togo.

The GUARD emerges and they are led into the cave.

88 INT. ITO'S CAVE - DAY

88

Lt. Ito stares out one of the gun ports of the caves towards the flag on Suribachi with anguish.

GUARD

Sir, these men escaped from Mt. Suribachi.

Lt. Ito looks at them harshly.

LT. ITO

What?

The men stand at attention.

SHIMIZU

Shimizu, Yoichi reporting for duty, sir.

SAIGO

Saigo, Katsuhiko.

LT. ITO

You escaped from Mt. Suribachi?

SHIMIZU

Yes, sir.

LT. ITO

How dare you!

He pulls out his sword. All the men take a step back away from him.

LT. ITO

It was your duty to stay in your positions until death! You should have died with your fellow troop members! You're both a disgrace. Get on your knees!

SAIGO

But, sir...

He advances with his sword.

LT. ITO

I said get on your knees!

Trembling, Shimizu and Saigo fall to their knees.

Lt. Ito lifts his sword. Just as he does, Kuribayashi enters with Lt. Fujita.

KURIBAYASHI

Lieutenant Ito!

Lt. Ito turns around, puts his sword down and salutes them.

KURIBAYASHI

What are you doing?

LT. ITO

These men ran from Mt. Suribachi.

KURIBAYASHI

Lt. Ito, I gave the order that all survivors make their way to the North caves. I can't have you decapitating my soldiers.

LT. ITO

I'm very sorry, sir. It's just...

He looks towards Suribachi with the flag waving and sits down on the ground.

LT. ITO

Suribachi has fallen.

He puts his head into his hands.

Saigo and Shimizu, grateful that their lives have been spared, retreat to the back of the cave.

Kuribayashi looks out towards Suribachi and sees the flag atop the mountain. He looks crestfallen.

A barrage of BOMBS and SHELLING starts.

KURIBAYASHI

Now that Suribachi has been taken,
the enemy will maneuver all forces
onto the hillside.

Kuribayashi turns to Lt. Ito, puts a hand on his
shoulder.

KURIBAYASHI

Fight for your fallen brethren.

INT. MOTOYAMA CAVES - NIGHT

Shimizu and Saigo, wiped from their ordeals, SNORE like
two chainsaws.

They are kicked awake by one of ITO'S SOLDIERS.

ITO'S SOLDIER

Get up!

Shimizu and Saigo slowly get up.

ITO'S SOLDIER

Major General Sato is leading a
general attack. Our men are to
join him.

SAIGO

But General Kuribayashi's orders
are to remain in the caves.

ITO'S SOLDIER

Lieutenant Ito says Kuribayashi is
a weak American sympathizer.

INT. MOTOYAMA CAVES - NIGHT

Lt. Ito gathers his force of about 25 soldiers together.

LT. ITO

We will take back Mt. Suribachi!
Let us march!

The soldiers follow behind him as he leads the way out of
the caves.

91 EXT. NAVY CEMETERY - NIGHT

91

Lt. Ito's men gather near the cemetery between airfields No. 2 and No. 3.

They are behind a gathering of a large group of men, hopelessly disorganized, milling around in the darkness.

Lt. Ito approaches one of them.

LT. ITO

Where is Major General Sato?

SOLDIER

We don't know.

LT. ITO

Who's in charge here?

The Soldier looks around hopelessly.

SOLDIER

I'm not sure.

Lt. Ito returns to his men.

LT. ITO

Stay here until I determine the plan of action.

Suddenly an undisciplined yell of "Banzai!" rings out, starting a chain reaction and the men in front of them stampede forward.

SAIGO

(muttering)

We're dead.

Lt. Ito looks surprised by the movement.

Almost instantaneously the sky lights up with star-shell FLARES, exposing the attackers. MORTAR ROUNDS throw up geysers of earth and ash.

MACHINE GUNS pellet the men and they drop like flies.

Lt. Ito, Saigo, Shimizu, and the rest of his regiment are pinned down, crouched behind rocks.

BULLETS WHIZ in every direction.

A man next to Shimizu attempts to get up but is immediately shot in the head, falling down next to him.

LT. ITO
Pull back! We'll get
reinforcements.

The men retreat and head back for the caves near Nidan Iwa, the area the Americans have dubbed Hill 382.

92 EXT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - NIGHT

92

Lt. Ito leads his team to the mouth of the cave.

NISHI'S GUARD (O.S.)
Nogi.

LT. ITO
Togo. It's Lt. Ito.

NISHI'S GUARD lets him pass through.

LT. ITO
Why didn't your regiment join the
attack? You're not rats. Come
out of your caves and fight!
Where is your commander?

Baron Nishi appears.

BARON NISHI
There is to be no attack.

LT. ITO
What? General Sato sent the
order.

BARON NISHI
Kuribayashi countermanded Sato's
order. There is to be no attack.

LT. ITO
We will take back Suribachi! With
or without Kuribayashi. There are
already troops on the attack. Get
your men in order!

This riles Baron Nishi.

BARON NISHI
Lieutenant, may I remind you of
your rank. Your disrespect of
your senior officers puts your men
at needless risk and compromises
the island's general defense
strategy.

92 CONTINUED:

BARON NISHI (cont'd)

I suggest either you go back to
your cave, or hand over your men.

Lt. Ito storms out of the cave, cursing Nishi.

LT. ITO

(to his men)

We'll do it ourselves.

Shimizu turns to Saigo.

SHIMIZU

(whispering)

This is against rules. It's mutiny
to counter a senior officer.

SAIGO

Never trust a captain that tries
to cut your head off.

93 EXT. NAVY CEMETERY - NIGHT

93

SMOKE rises from the field -- a surreal sea of dead
Japanese soldiers on a dark battlefield.

The men stare at the scene in shock.

Lt. Ito sits down crestfallen.

Finally, he gets up, faltering a bit.

LT. ITO

I won't go back. I've had enough
of cave fighting. You men are now
under Lieutenant Colonel Nishi's
command.

Lt. Ito picks up an EXPLOSIVE and straps it to his back.

LT. ITO

I won't die before I take out at
least one of their machines. Even
if I have to throw myself under an
enemy tank.

The men look at each other in awe. Lt. Ito solemnly
turns and leaves the men.

Lt. Ito staggers forth into the darkness.

94

INT. KITANO POINT COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

94

Kuribayashi takes counsel with his staff. Lt. Fujita walks in holding a piece of paper.

KURIBAYASHI

What is the status?

LT. FUJITA

A thousand men were lost in a night time skirmish along Chidori Airfield 1.

KURIBAYASHI

Wasn't my order not to lead a general attack conveyed?

LT. FUJITA

It seems the orders countermanding General Sato were not conveyed to all sectors.

Kuribayashi pounds the table.

KURIBAYASHI

Damn that General Sato!

Kuribayashi paces.

KURIBAYASHI

And the American advancement?

LT. FUJITA

A battalion is headed North as expected and meeting light resistance along Nishi ridge.

Kuribayashi looks at a map. He outlines the Marine movement.

KURIBAYASHI

Good, then they are falling into our trap. Once they cross Nishi ridge, they will be surrounded on three sides.

Kuribayashi looks at Fujita.

KURIBAYASHI

Have we received a response yet from Tokyo for reinforcements and supplies?

LT. FUJITA

This came in sir.

He passes the piece of paper to Kuribayashi. Kuribayashi reads it gravely.

KURIBAYASHI

(reading)

'I regret that we are unable to send reinforcements to Iwo at this time. However, in view of the overall requirements, I earnestly hope you will maintain calm and fight staunchly by all means.'

EXT. GULLY - MORNING

Lt. Ito, with the bomb still strapped to his back, finds FIVE DEAD BODIES along what looks like a logical route of advancement.

He settles himself among the dead bodies, FLIES BUZZING around him.

He stares at the sky above in silence, waiting for the tanks to come.

EXT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - MORNING

GUNFIRE and TANK BLASTING ECHO through the mountains.

Saigo and Shimizu are assigned the strenuous duty of loading a SPIGOT MORTAR. Loading and BLASTING. The SHELL makes a WHIRRING noise as it flies through the air.

Three American tanks are taken out as they head along the 3rd Motoyama airfield.

Now in the daylight hours, the Americans take a beating. Trying to advance along the airstrip, they are mercilessly slaughtered.

One GRENADE-BEARING MARINE bravely rushes out, throwing a grenade into a fortified pillbox in the hillside. He is immediately SHOT down.

INSIDE THE CAVE

LT. OKUBO, Nishi's aide, notices movement directly below them.

OKUBO

Look!

SAM, a lone American flamethrower, has somehow made it through the front lines. He is about to spray a cave, when Okubo SHOOTs the marine and he falls.

It is apparent he is still alive as he MOANS.

BARON NISHI

Bring him in.

BARON NISHI'S CAVE - LATER

Okubo and Shimizu drag Sam in. He's about Shimizu's age, not more than 17 or 18.

OKUBO

Shall I finish him off?

BARON NISHI

No, have Medic Endo treat him.

They look at him surprised. MEDIC ENDO turns from bandaging a minor wound on another soldier.

OKUBO

But sir...

BARON NISHI

You would expect the same if it were the other way around, wouldn't you?

Medic Endo approaches them.

MEDIC ENDO

We're short on morphine.

SHIMIZU

Sir, the Americans would not treat a wounded Japanese soldier. They would run him over with their tank treads.

BARON NISHI

What do you know of Americans? Have you ever met an American, young boy?

SHIMIZU

No, sir.

98 CONTINUED:

98

BARON NISHI

I have.

(to Medic Endo)

Give it to him.

The three begrudgingly comply and help Sam over to the back. The medic administers to his wounds.

99 EXT. GULLY - DAY

99

Lt. Ito still lies patiently among the bodies waiting for a tank to arrive.

100 INT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - NIGHT

100

Baron Nishi takes a swig from a sake bottle. Sam lies on a bedroll, a bandage wrapped around his chest.

BARON NISHI

How is the prisoner doing?

MEDIC ENDO

He is awake.

BARON NISHI

I will question the prisoner for information.

Okubo looks at him suspiciously.

Baron Nishi approaches Sam and converses with him in English.

BARON NISHI

(in English)

Where are you from, soldier?

SAM

(weakly)

Able Company --

BARON NISHI

No, I mean what is your home town?

Tense, Sam doesn't answer.

BARON NISHI

I lived in California for a while. Do you know of Mary Pickford? Or Douglas Fairbanks?

SAM

You mean the movie stars? Why sure, everybody knows them.

BARON NISHI

I took my picture with them. It was in the papers.

Sam loosens up a bit.

SAM

No kidding. You somebody famous?

BARON NISHI

I was in the Los Angeles Olympics.

Sam's eyes widen.

SAM

Is that the God's honest truth?

Baron Nishi beams. He pulls out a PICTURE.

BARON NISHI

That's a picture of me and my horse jumping.

Sam weakly tries to get up to see it.

SAM

No kidding.
(a beat)
Oklahoma. That's where I'm from.

Baron Nishi holds out his hand.

BARON NISHI

Takeichi.

SAM

Sam.

They shake.

Lt. Ito is still among the bodies. Finally he gets up.

LT. ITO

Where are you American tanks?
Come and get me!

Silence.

102 EXT. BEACH - MORNING 102

An American soldier turns on a MILITARY RADIO.

AMERICAN SOLDIER

(in English)

Turn it up, Charlie.

The VOLUME is blasted LOUDLY. BIG BAND MUSIC.

103 INT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - MORNING 103

Saigo and the others pass around a cigarette, sharing puffs in the momentary calm.

Shimizu holds a piece of a cracked mirror, looks at himself. He shaves his face smooth with a dry razor.

Baron Nishi can hear the strains of the RADIO MUSIC. He goes over to Sam, who looks paler than the previous day.

BARON NISHI

(in English)

What is this music?

Sam's eyes flutter, half conscious.

SAM

Swing music.

BARON NISHI

Swing music? Is it what they play in the clubs now?

Listening to the MUSIC, Baron Nishi seems to be in another place and time. He looks to Sam, but there is no response.

Baron Nishi looks to Medic Endo.

MEDIC ENDO

He's lost a lot of blood.

104 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - MORNING 104

Kuribayashi also hears the FAINT MUSIC through the RADIO TRANSMISSION.

In the dark cave, Kuribayashi doodles a picture of a dinner party.

105 FLASHBACK - INT. FORT BLISS (TEXAS) - DANCE HALL - 105
NIGHT - (1929)

An elaborate dinner party for the officers. MUSIC WAFTS through the hall. American officers and their wives mingle, dressed in formal attire. Kuribayashi is seated at a dinner table, looking awkward.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

Taro, on Friday, there was a dinner party for the officers and their wives. Americans have a strange custom where men have to stop eating and stand every time a woman comes in. It makes no sense to me.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

KURIBAYASHI

is about to take a bite of his meal, when one of the OFFICERS' WIVES walks to the table and all the men stand. Kuribayashi looks at them mid-bite, then puts his fork down and stands with them.

They sit back down, but another woman enters and the men stand once again. Kuribayashi reluctantly stands with them.

After they are all seated, a conversation carries over to Kuribayashi.

OFFICER'S WIFE

(in English)

Let's ask Captain Kuri.

All turn to Kuribayashi. He is oblivious at first.

OFFICER'S WIFE

You don't mind me calling you Kuri, do you, Captain?

Kuribayashi realizes she is speaking to him and looks up questioningly.

OFFICER'S WIFE

How would you feel if America and Japan were to enter war?

KURIBAYASHI

I believe they would make splendid allies.

AMERICAN OFFICER

No, she means against each other.

The company is poised on Kuribayashi's every word.

KURIBAYASHI

The United States is the last country in the world Japan should fight, but if this were to happen, I would serve my duty to my country.

OFFICER'S WIFE

Do you mean if Bertie here was on the opposite side, you would shoot him?

Kuribayashi hesitates.

KURIBAYASHI

I would have to follow my convictions.

AMERICAN OFFICER

Do you mean you would have to follow your convictions? Or your country's convictions.

Kuribayashi hesitates again.

KURIBAYASHI

Are they not the same?

AMERICAN OFFICER

Spoken like a true soldier.

OFFICER'S WIFE

Oh that's awful. Bertie, that means you're dead.

There is nervous laughter.

END OF FLASHBACK.

Kuribayashi, still sketching the dinner party, puts his pen down.

107 EXT. GULLY - MORNING 107

Lt. Ito has once more settled himself among the dead bodies.

He stares up into the sky. The distant strains of the RADIO MUSIC can still be heard.

108 INT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - MORNING 108

Baron Nishi notices Sam's pale complexion. Baron Nishi comes to him.

BARON NISHI
(in English)

Hey.

He touches him gently and realizes he is dead. Baron Nishi looks discouraged.

He covers the boy's body with a blanket. As he does so, he notices a PIECE OF PAPER in the soldier's shirt pocket. He pulls it out.

Okubo notices Baron Nishi pull out the paper.

OKUBO
Is there any enemy plan
information?

BARON NISHI
No, it's just a letter.

He reads through it.

OKUBO
What does it say?

Saigo, Shimizu, and other soldiers in the cave stop to listen to what the letter says.

BARON NISHI
It's from his mother.
(translating)
'I have mailed you a couple of
books to read. I hope you like
them. Yesterday, the dogs dug a
hole under the fence. They ran
all the way down the neighborhood
and terrorized the Harrisons'
roosters before we found them.'

Baron Nishi smiles at this.

BARON NISHI

'Don't worry about us. Just take care of yourself and come back safely. Remember what I said to you -- always do what's right because it is right. I pray for a speedy end to the war and your safe return.'

The soldiers are silent.

Suddenly, a BARRAGE of SHELLING and GUNFIRE ERUPTS.

The men, quickly go to their posts.

They FIRE at the advancing Americans with MACHINE GUNS and RIFLES.

Baron Nishi directs his men at the front.

109

EXT. OUTSIDE CAVE - LATER

109

Saigo and Shimizu carry a mortar from the cave to reload their spigot, when a BOMB BLAST hits their machine, putting it out of commission.

Another large BLAST hits the cave.

Baron Nishi reels back, his face covered in blood.

SAIGO

Medic Endo!

Medic Endo attends to Nishi. He opens his kit. It's empty, except for a roll of bandage.

MEDIC ENDO

I'm sorry, sir. There's no more medicine.

The medic covers Baron Nishi's eyes with a strip of bandage.

BARON NISHI

It's all right. I'm useless anyway. Go help the others.

Medic Endo complies, attending to other injured soldiers.

110 EXT. GULLY - EVENING 110

Lt. Ito stares into the sky. He has had two days to contemplate life beyond the war.

A lone SEA BIRD flies overhead, small and fragile, making its way through the remnant smoke of bombardments, up into the darkening blue sky.

A change comes over Ito and he starts to CRY.

At last, he gets up. He unstraps the bomb from his back, and leaves it.

He makes his way to a naturally formed cave and sits there on the ground CRYING.

He wants to live.

111 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - NIGHT 111

Kuribayashi looks at his strategic map of Iwo Jima. He crosses out Japanese positions that have been quashed by the Americans.

LT. FUJITA

Sir, supply planes have been spotted.

KURIBAYASHI

Are they ours?

LT. FUJITA

Yes, sir.

Kuribayashi brightens.

KURIBAYASHI

At last.

112 EXT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - NIGHT 112

Kuribayashi watches off in the distance. The DRONE of JAPANESE PLANES can be heard.

He smiles as he sees the cargo planes approach, bearing the unmistakable emblem of the red sun. His smile turns to dismay when one by one the planes are shot down.

113 EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT 113

GUNNERS on ships, quickly home in on the lumbering Japanese planes and let out an ALL-OUT ASSAULT, sending the supply planes careening into the Pacific in horrific fireballs.

Only two supply planes make it through.

114 EXT. NEAR FRONT LINE - NIGHT 114

The two planes begin dropping their precious CARGO. A single string of a dozen PARACHUTES.

Under the light of thousands of flares, the parachutes are as clear as day.

115 EXT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE 115

Kuribayashi holds up his binoculars

KURIBAYASHI

They're off mark! Off mark! Too close to the line.

Kuribayashi anguishes as he watches the life-saving supplies drop into unreachable zones.

116 EXT. NEAR FRONT LINE 116

Soldiers spot the supplies parachuting. At first, they CHEER loudly.

But as they land, the soldiers soon realize they are irretrievable.

A few brave souls make a mad dash out towards the supplies, but are easy targets and are immediately GUNNED DOWN.

117 INT. BARON NISHI'S CAVE - NIGHT 117

Baron Nishi feels around for his bottle of sake. It's empty. He opens his canteen, shakes it, turns it over. It's also empty.

BARON NISHI

Okubo, come here.

Okubo obeys.

BARON NISHI

How are we on ammunition?

OKUBO

Not good, sir. Our mortars have been taken out and we're out of machine gun ammo. We just have our rifles.

BARON NISHI

Okubo, listen. You're now in charge of the men.

OKUBO

Sir?

BARON NISHI

We can no longer hold this area. You must guide the rest of the men up to Kitano Point. They should hold out there as long as possible. Take whatever food and ammo we have left.

OKUBO

But, what about you, Colonel?

Baron Nishi chuckles.

BARON NISHI

I'm tired of sharing this cave with all of you. I'm a one man show from here on.

OKUBO

But, sir..

BARON NISHI

Okubo, you're trying my patience. Your first order of business should be to find some water.

OKUBO

Yes, sir.

Okubo bows in front of him, even though Baron Nishi can't see him.

OKUBO

Sir, it has been a great honor to serve under you.

118 BARON NISHI'S CAVE - LATER

118

Saigo and the men are packed up and ready to leave the cave.

They line up in formation.

Okubo stands next to the bandaged Baron Nishi

OKUBO

Bow!

The men all bow to Baron Nishi, even though he can't see them.

BARON NISHI

Do your best, men. Fight bravely for our Emperor and homeland, but above all else, do what's right because it's right.

MEN

Yes, sir.

Okubo turns to Baron Nishi.

OKUBO

I will ask General Kuribayashi to send a doctor and supplies to come to your assistance.

BARON NISHI

Thank you, Okubo.

Okubo leads Baron Nishi to a stool to sit down on, and leaves a rifle in his hand.

Okubo and the men slowly exit the cave, looking at Nishi as they leave.

INTERCUT MEN/BARON NISHI

The men make their way out of the cave.

Baron Nishi pulls out a pistol and puts it to his head. The sound of SWING MUSIC wafts in the air, whether in his head or not, it is unclear.

As the men make their way around the mountain, they hear a SINGLE GUNSHOT.

Okubo pauses and the other men look at each other. Okubo continues on without a word.

119 EXT. WELL - NIGHT

119

The soldiers hunker down along a sand bank, close to a CONSTRUCTED WELL. They hold out their rifles in ready position.

Saigo lies in the sand next to Shimizu.

Okubo motions for two of the soldiers to move out. They quickly move out towards the well, holding two metal canisters each.

SAIGO

They've got to make it.

NIGHT FLARES light up the sky.

The soldiers make it to the well without incident. They quietly fill their containers with the precious water.

Saigo licks his lips.

Back at the sand bank, the soldiers continue to look out for signs of the enemy, but all seems peaceful.

Successful, they begin hauling the containers, when a bright WHITE LIGHT spots them and freezes on them.

They try to duck down, but its difficult with the containers.

Suddenly, the area explodes with RAPID FIRE.

The two soldiers are gunned down.

The men in the sand banks return fire, but they are outgunned.

The METAL CANISTERS are RIDDLED with BULLETS and the precious water seeps into the ground.

SAIGO

Damn!

The soldiers watch as the water continues to seep. Dismay in their eyes.

OKUBO

Get Down! Move back! Move back!

The men turn back.

120 INT. CAVE - NIGHT

120

Shimizu and Saigo sit together. They both look frustrated.

SAIGO

Damn it, I've had it! I'm going to surrender.

He looks angrily at Shimizu.

SAIGO

Go ahead and arrest me. I don't care anymore. That's what you were put here for, isn't it? To report treasonous thoughts?

SHIMIZU

No, you're wrong.

A beat.

SHIMIZU

I was put here because I was dismissed from the *Kempeitai*.

Saigo looks at him, surprised.

SAIGO

Dismissed?

SHIMIZU

That's right. For disobeying a senior officer.

121 FLASHBACK - EXT. TOKYO STREETS - EVENING

121

Shimizu and Captain Iwasaki walk along the streets of Tokyo.

SHIMIZU (V.O.)

I had only been in service for 5 days.

Captain Iwasaki walks with Shimizu.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

You must always be firm, Shimizu. Any hesitation and people will know that they can't respect you.

SHIMIZU

Yes, sir.

They walk through the quiet village, not a soul on the street, only the sound of the imperial FLAG FLAPPING in the WIND in front of houses. All the houses, except one.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

That house does not have the flag displayed. Go sort it out, Shimizu.

SHIMIZU

Yes, sir.

Shimizu runs up to the house and bangs on the door.

A MOTHER opens the door. Her two CHILDREN cling to her and peer out at him. An AKITA behind a fence BARKS at him.

SHIMIZU

(sternly)

You do not have the imperial flag properly displayed, ma'am.

MOTHER

Oh, I'm sorry. My husband has gone to war, and I couldn't put it up myself.

SHIMIZU

It is unpatriotic not to have the flag displayed.

MOTHER

If you help me, I'll put it up now.

Shimizu waits patiently as she brings out the flag.

The dog runs to the fence and barks ferociously at Captain Iwasaki.

The Mother appears with the flag for Shimizu. He attaches the flag to a pole extending near the roof of the house.

The AKITA continues BARKING at Iwasaki.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Get that dog to shut up.

The DOG continues to BARK incessantly.

SHIMIZU

What's that, sir?

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

That dog is a nuisance. It's disruptive of army communications.

MOTHER

I'm very sorry, sir. Pochi! Be quiet! Pochi!

She tries to drag the DOG away. It continues to BARK and GROWL at Captain Iwasaki.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Shimizu, dispose of the dog immediately. We can't have a dog interfering with important military commands.

Shimizu pauses.

SHIMIZU

Yes, sir. Ma'am bring the dog, please.

The Mother looks horrified.

MOTHER

It's only a dog. It won't happen again.

The children look at Shimizu, fearfully. The BOY runs to his dog and puts his arms around it.

SHIMIZU

Take it out back. Keep the children inside.

Captain Iwasaki looks bored. The Mother complies.

The Mother brings the Akita out back on a leash. Shimizu ties the leash to a fence.

Shimizu aims his gun at the dog. Cocks the trigger. Aims.

The dog looks at him, wagging it's tail.

At the last moment, Shimizu SHOOTs in the air.

Shimizu looks at the Mother.

SHIMIZU

Take the dog into the house and keep him quiet. Don't let him out again.

MOTHER

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

She pulls the dog inside.

123 EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

123

Shimizu emerges from the back.

SHIMIZU

It's taken care of, sir.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Good.

They start to leave, when a BARK is heard from inside the house.

Shimizu's face falters. Captain Iwasaki looks back at him.

Angrily, Iwasaki marches back to the door. He bursts in without knocking.

Momentarily, a SHOT is heard along with a sharp WHIMPER.

A commotion is heard inside, with the MOTHER SHOUTING along with CHILDREN CRYING.

Shimizu closes his eyes.

Captain Iwasaki emerges from the house and storms out towards Shimizu.

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

Are you trying to make a fool out of me?

SHIMIZU

No, sir.

Captain Iwasaki strikes Shimizu with a force that sends him to the ground.

123 CONTINUED:

123

CAPTAIN IWASAKI

If you can't even shoot a dog,
you'll never be able to handle the
Reds.

END OF FLASHBACK.

124 INT. CAVE - NIGHT

124

Saigo looks at Shimizu.

SHIMIZU

I was dismissed for
insubordination and sent here.

SAIGO

Don't look so glum, Shimizu. At
least now only the enemy hates
you.

Saigo and Shimizu chuckle. Then Shimizu becomes quiet
again.

SHIMIZU

It was just an innocent thing.

125 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - NIGHT

125

Kuribayashi paces restlessly.

KURIBAYASHI

Why am I not getting any reports?
Have we heard from Admiral
Ichimaru or General Sato?

LT. FUJITA

No, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

What about the 26th Tank Regiment
or the 145th?

Lt. Fujita is silent.

KURIBAYASHI

Send out messengers.

LT. FUJITA

We have, sir. None of them have
come back.

KURIBAYASHI

(angrily)

We need to find any remaining troops and have them put up a defense position near the commanding post. How can I command a garrison that I can't see or talk to?

LT. FUJITA

Yes, sir.

EXT. MOTOYAMA MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

The troop trudges through the scarred mountains, silent and sedate.

They come into a secluded valley with shelled out pillboxes and caves littered with bodies of DEAD JAPANESE soldiers, some charred beyond recognition.

SMOKE still rises from the flamethrower's trail.

OKUBO

Check the caves for food.

The soldiers comply and a happy SHOUT from one of them indicates success.

The soldier brings out a canister and the men congregate around him, grabbing uncooked rice from the canister with their hands and gulping them down hungrily.

Some of the rice falls to the floor and the men grovel for it.

Saigo and Shimizu grovel with the others on the ground.

Saigo chokes on the rice.

SHIMIZU

Are you all right?

Shimizu and Saigo fall back. Saigo sits on the ground, COUGHING.

SAIGO

This is not the life a human being should suffer, Shimizu.

Shimizu looks at him, understands.

127 INT. NATURAL CAVE - DAY

127

The men are hunkered in a cave, sleeping out the daylight hours.

Shimizu, lying next to Saigo, whispers to him.

SHIMIZU

Saigo?

Saigo rolls over.

SHIMIZU

I have been thinking about what Lieutenant Colonel Nishi said. That I've never even met an American. It's true. I don't know anything about the enemy.

Shimizu looks towards the cave ceiling.

SHIMIZU

I was taught that the American soldier is weak, but he is not. I was told that they are savages, but that American who died -- his mother writes the same things that my mother would write.

SAIGO

I guess we're all just soldiers doing our job.

SHIMIZU

I want to do my duty to my country and my God, but I don't want to die for nothing.

Saigo is silent.

SHIMIZU

What do you think, Saigo? Tell me what you think.

SAIGO

People tell us we serve God by dying a valorous death on a battlefield. I don't know much, but if you ask me, I think God would be more pleased if we lived to experience the world He created. You're still young, Shimizu.

SAIGO (cont'd)

You haven't seen enough sunsets to appreciate all the beautiful shades of orange that change with each minute of each dusk. You haven't been to enough village festivals to taste their local flavors and to discern the subtle differences in their *obon* dances. You haven't been with a woman long enough to recognize her curves and valleys and to hear the sound of a baby's heart beat--your baby's heart beat beneath the skin of her belly. Shimizu, you haven't even begun to experience life to know what you are sacrificing.

Tears stream down Shimizu's cheeks.

SHIMIZU

Saigo, will you surrender with me?

128 EXT. NATURAL CAVE - NIGHT

128

The men crawl on their hands and knees. They have found a new bounty in the soil outside of the naturally formed cave.

They dig through the earth and whenever a beetle or worm is found, they pick it up and eat it.

Saigo and Shimizu whisper, separated from the rest of the men.

SAIGO

We'll have to be careful. They'll notice if we leave together. You go on first. I'll say that you've got dysentery. After a while, I'll tell them I'm going to check on you to make sure you're all right and then I'll join you. By the time anyone notices, we'll be long gone.

Shimizu nods.

SAIGO

Now give me your dysentery look.

SHIMIZU

What?

SAIGO

You have to look like you're sick.

Shimizu scrunches his face into a half frown, his eyelids flutter.

SAIGO

I said sick, not stupid.

Shimizu tries a different expression.

SAIGO

I guess that'll have to do.

129 INT. NATURAL CAVE - NIGHT

129

Saigo monitors the rest of the troops as they mill about. He signals for Shimizu to leave. Shimizu steals his way from the cave.

130 EXT. NATURAL CAVE - NIGHT

130

Shimizu runs out of the cave.

PRIVATE 2ND CLASS KANDA, another soldier, relieves himself on the hillside and makes his way back to the cave.

He sees Shimizu leaving.

KANDA

Where are you going?

Shimizu pauses.

SHIMIZU

I've got dysentery.

He puts on his dysentery face. Kanda stares at him in disbelief.

KANDA

You're going to surrender, aren't you?

Shimizu doesn't say anything.

KANDA

If you are, take me with you.

Shimizu looks surprised.

KANDA
I've had enough of this war.

SHIMIZU
Keep your voice down.

They start to leave.

131 INT. NATURAL CAVE - NIGHT

131

Saigo notices that Shimizu has left behind his lucky thousand-stitch belt along with his pack.

Saigo picks it up gravely.

Okubo spots Shimizu and Kanda.

OKUBO
Hey! Where are those two going?

He gets out of the cave and watches Shimizu and Kanda making their way away from the cave.

Saigo quickly follows after him.

SAIGO
I think Shimizu said something about not feeling well. He has dysentery, sir.

Okubo ignores Saigo.

OKUBO
Hey, you two stop!

The two start to run.

OKUBO
Stop!

He picks up his rifle.

SAIGO
Sir, maybe they just got spooked by something. An animal or a sound --

OKUBO
I said stop!

He SHOOTs and Kanda is hit, falling on the spot. Shimizu continues running.

OKUBO

Miura, you're on guard. Make sure
this doesn't happen again.

MIURA, one of the soldiers, nods his head. Saigo looks
crestfallen.

132 EXT. MARINE POSITION - NIGHT

132

MARINES are gathered at their position, smoking
cigarettes, awaiting orders.

A NOISE in the distance causes them all to be on the
alert, raising their rifles.

Shimizu appears before the marines, with his hands up, a
torn piece of his white undershirt in his hand.

The soldiers approach him, shouting at him with their
rifles pointed.

The Americans surround him. Shimizu falls to his knees.

They search him for weapons. Finding none, they let him
stand back up.

Shimizu makes a motion for water. One of the marines
hands him a canteen and Shimizu drinks thirstily.

Shimizu's hands are bound and he is taken to an area
where another PRISONER also stands with his hands bound.
They look at each other in surprise.

The Marines receive an order over their wire.

MARINE OFFICER

(in English)

We're moving out!

MARINE #2

What about the prisoners, sir?

Marine Officer points to MARINE #3 and MARINE #4.

MARINE OFFICER

You two stay behind and keep
watch.

The two CURSE at this.

133 EXT. MARINE POSITION - LATER

133

Shimizu and the other Prisoner are seated on the floor.

SHIMIZU

Which unit are you from?

PRISONER

20th Special Machine Cannon Unit.
We ran out of ammo and then they
overtook us. I'm the only
survivor. I heard Americans have
real hot food.

SHIMIZU

It would be nice to eat food
again.

He licks his lips.

In the b.g., the Marines assigned to keep watch discuss
their situation in hushed tones.

MARINE #3

(in English)

What a bum rap. We're not going
to be stuck watching 'em all
night, are we?

MARINE #4

Maybe we can take them back to the
beach.

MARINE #3

Are you kidding? We'd be sitting
ducks with those two.

134 EXT. MARINE POSITION - LATER

134

Shimizu and the Prisoner are still talking.

PRISONER

I live in Yokohama. After this is
over, you can come visit me.

SHIMIZU

That would be nice.

The two Marines approach the two prisoners. They hold up
their rifles.

134 CONTINUED:

Unsuspecting, Shimizu and the Prisoner look up. The Prisoner is immediately SHOT.

Shimizu GASPS in surprise. Shimizu is SHOT next. His body goes still.

135 EXT. NATURAL CAVE - NIGHT 135

Okubo leads the troops out of the cave.

136 EXT. MARINE POSITION - NIGHT 136

Okubo notices FOOTPRINTS. Another spots a SPENT CIGARETTE. Okubo motions for the men to encircle the area. They cautiously approach the area with their rifles drawn.

Once they see that no one is there, they relax their rifles and check out the area.

SOLDIER

Lieutenant!

Okubo comes to where the Soldier motions. Shimizu and the other Prisoner's bodies lie dead in a make-shift ditch.

The other soldiers approach. Saigo sees the body of his friend. He drops into the ditch and picks up Shimizu's pale and lifeless body.

OKUBO

Let this be a lesson to anyone else who wants to surrender.

Saigo is in tears..

137 EXT. MARINE POSITION - LATER 137

The men leave the area, two fresh BURIAL MOUNDS behind them.

Saigo looks numb and listless as the soldiers trudge on.

138 EXT. HOT SPRINGS - NIGHT 138

The men gather around volcanic fumeroles with containers and jars.

They try to capture the steam in the containers, then lick them for any bits of condensation.

SAIGO

You need to wait until there is enough condensation.

The men ignore him, trying to get the drops into their mouths.

139 EXT. UNKNOWN CAVE - DAWN

139

Okubo has his men enter the cave.

OKUBO

We'll be at Kitano Point tomorrow.
We'll sleep out the daylight hours here.

140 INT. UNKNOWN CAVE - DAY

140

The sleeping men are awoken by the pattering of RAINDROPS.

CAVE SOLDIER #1

It's raining!

He gets up and rushes towards the entrance of the cave.

OKUBO

Get back here!

The soldier halts. He peers through the entrance.

CAVE SOLDIER #1

Look! I can see it!

Unable to contain himself, he rushes out. The others follow to the entrance.

A SINGLE SHOT is heard. Upon hearing this, the others pull back.

A LOW RUMBLING is heard.

SAIGO

What is that?

CAVE SOLDIER #2

Thunder?

The sound gets LOUDER and LOUDER.

OKUBO
Bulldozers.

CAVE SOLDIER #2
They're coming this way.

OKUBO
Get back! Get back!

The men run towards the rear of the cave.

They keep their eye out towards the mouth of the cave.

A GRENADE is thrown in and the men hug the wall. The GRENADE EXPLODES, causing dirt from the roof to fall, but the men are safe.

The BULLDOZERS continue to come CLOSER and CLOSER, starting a RUMBLING VIBRATION throughout the whole cave.

The bulldozers shovel dirt over the entrance of the cave. The natural light dissipates, until everything is pitch black.

141 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - DAY 141

In Kuribayashi's cave, the sound of the BULLDOZERS can also be heard.

142 INT. UNKNOWN CAVE - DAY 142

The sound of the BULLDOZERS PASSES.

In the darkness, someone lights a match.

CAVE SOLDIER 2
They've buried us alive.

OKUBO
Then we'll dig. We dug in these caves, so we can dig out of them.

Okubo feels the walls of the cave.

OKUBO
The soil is soft here. We can dig an exit hole. Form a line.

The soldiers form an assembly line.

They start to dig with their rifles and their hands.

143 EXT. UNKNOWN CAVE - DAY 143

At last, the soldiers have dug through a hole, just wide enough to escape through.

They scrape more of the dirt out and one of the soldiers pops his head out. He looks around cautiously.

144 EXT. NORTH HILLS - DAY 144

The men trudge forward, haggard and limping.

They come upon an impasse. A line of Marines SHOOTING towards the caves.

OKUBO

We need to get through the crossfire to reach Kitano Point and join our forces on the other side.

He draws a map in the sand.

OKUBO

There's no way in without passing through open area and getting shot at. So we'll go to this nearby cave and make our way from there. We'll have to pass through the rear line of the enemy. We can't avoid a confrontation.

The men make their way.

145 EXT. NORTH HILLS - DAY 145

The men prepare themselves for the run to the caves.

OKUBO

We'll have to make every bullet count, so don't shoot recklessly.

The soldiers make a rushing charge for the hills. GUNFIRE ERUPTS.

Okubo leads the charge. He SHOOTs down two Americans.

Men go down on both sides.

Saigo rushes forward, nervous. Running quickly in a zig zag motion, he is able to dodge BULLETS.

145 CONTINUED:

145

Okubo pulls the trigger of his PISTOL, but it CLICKS empty. He throws the pistol down.

A group of Americans aim their rifles towards him. Okubo pulls a grenade, yells and charges straight at them.

The Americans send a BARRAGE OF BULLETS, riddling Okubo's body before he falls towards them.

Okubo's GRENADE EXPLODES.

Saigo and other troop members manage to cross through, running towards the safety of a cave.

146 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - DAY

146

FOOTSTEPS RUNNING along the corridor alert Kuribayashi and his staff. They all stand with worried expressions.

A GUARD appears.

GUARD

Sir, survivors of the 26th Tank Regiment are here.

Saigo and his men, dirty, haggard and suffering effects of malnutrition, make their way down the tunnel.

Kuribayashi looks at them amazed.

KURIBAYASHI

Are there no officers? Where is Lt. Colonel Nishi?

The men are silent.

Kuribayashi looks genuinely saddened.

KURIBAYASHI

I see. Well, you all did a good job making it over here.

He looks at the sad state of the men.

KURIBAYASHI

Fujita, what's the status of our water rations?

The men look up eagerly at this. Lt. Fujita falters.

KURIBAYASHI

Fujita?

LT. FUJITA

There are no water rations, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

What about the groups we sent out yesterday for water?

LT. FUJITA

None came back.

The men go back to their dejected states. Kuribayashi looks disheartened.

KURIBAYASHI

Well, come and rest.

SAIGO

Thank you, sir.

The men find a place to sit down. Devoid of energy.

Kuribayashi looks at Saigo.

KURIBAYASHI

You look familiar. Aren't you the one whose head I saved?

SAIGO

Yes, sir. I am eternally grateful.

KURIBAYASHI

It's a miracle that you've made it this far.

SAIGO

That was the second time, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

The second time?

SAIGO

That was the second time you saved me. The first time was on the beach the day you arrived.

Kuribayashi laughs.

KURIBAYASHI

Is that so? Well, everything comes in threes. So I may have to save you again.

147 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - NIGHT

147

Saigo and the men rest on the floor of the cave. Some of the men look deathly ill.

A medic checks the pulse of some of them and cover the ones that are dead.

Saigo writes on a piece of paper.

SAIGO (V.O.)

Hanako, I know you will probably never see this letter, but it comforts me to talk to you. We have been without food or water for five days now. We are going through unspeakable measures to keep ourselves alive.

One of the men gets up, pees into a cup. Then, grimacing, he drinks his own urine.

SAIGO (V.O.)

There seems to be no way out now. I have tried my best. I worry about who will take care of you and the baby.

Lt. Fujita enters the cave.

LT. FUJITA

You there. Dig up some worms.

148 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

148

Kuribayashi writes out his last wire.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

The battle is approaching its end. Since the enemy's landing, even the gods would weep at the bravery of the officers and men under my command. Now there is no more ammunition, no more water. All the survivors will engage in a general attack. Praying to God for the final victory and safety of our motherland, let me say "sayonara" everlastingly...

Saigo enters the room. He brings in a pitiful plate of worms, cut into sections.

SAIGO

There wasn't much we could dig up,
sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Thank you.

Saigo is about to leave.

KURIBAYASHI

Saigo.

SAIGO

Yes, sir?

KURIBAYASHI

It was quite a journey you've made
all the way from Suribachi.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

You must be quite a soldier.

SAIGO

Oh no, sir. I am just a simple
baker. I don't know much.

KURIBAYASHI

You're a baker?

SAIGO

Well, I was one back in Yokote.

KURIBAYASHI

Do you have family back home?

SAIGO

Just my wife and a little baby
girl born last summer. I haven't
seen her yet.

KURIBAYASHI

Funny, Saigo, I have just realized
that the irony of being a soldier
is that what compels us to do our
duty is our families and it is
likewise the thought of our
families that makes it difficult
to fulfill it.

Kuribayashi is quiet for a moment. He takes out a
Chinese song book.

KURIBAYASHI

Saigo, do you like Chinese poetry?

SAIGO

I'm afraid I don't know much about poetry, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

Would you like to stay and listen?

SAIGO

Yes, sir. I would like that.

Kuribayashi motions to the floor.

KURIBAYASHI

Sit down.

Saigo complies.

Kuribayashi begins singing translated Chinese poetry.

KURIBAYASHI

*'No end to this marching, forever
and ever...
In life we are separated from one
another,
Parted by a thousand and ten
thousand li,
Each a different corner of the
sky,
The road so long, so perilous.
Who knows when we shall see each
other again?'*

Saigo listens quietly. Tears begin to run down his face.

Kuribayashi stops when he notices Saigo crying.

SAIGO

Sorry, sir.

Kuribayashi nods, closes the book.

The remaining rag tag group of soldiers gather in formation in the cave.

Kuribayashi addresses them. His voice is weaker than in days past.

KURIBAYASHI

Our garrison will make a general attack against the enemy. Starting time will be 0600 hours. Until now, you men have overcome any and all difficulties, obeyed my orders and fought gallantly against an enemy with overwhelming supplies. The loss of this island means that Yankee military boots will soon tread on our motherland. However, you can all be proud that you have acted as honorable warriors of the Imperial Empire, fighting to the last. No one is to return from this mission. Kill as many enemies as possible and fight for your seventh life.

The soldiers look glum, knowing they are to die. Saigo looks especially disheartened.

KURIBAYASHI

Dismissed.

The soldiers fall out. Lt. Fujita approaches Kuribayashi.

LT. FUJITA

Sir, we are getting a radio transmission from Japan.

The sound of a STATIC-FILLED BROADCAST can be heard.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is a special song for General Kuribayashi and his men fighting bravely at *Iwo Tou* from the children of his hometown in Nagano Prefecture.

The voices of schoolchildren singing the "Song of Iwo Defense" plays over the radio.

SCHOOLCHILDREN (V.O.)

'Where dark tides billow in the ocean,
A wink-shaped isle of mighty fame,
Guards the gateway to our empire:
Iwo Jima is its name...'

150 CONTINUED:

150

Kuribayashi breaks down.

151 EXT. NEAR KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - MORNING

151

Saigo, with a force of about 300 rag tag men - many without guns, but holding swords or sticks, are gathered at the entrance to the cave.

Kuribayashi inspects them.

KURIBAYASHI

Shuppatsu!

The troops start to exit the cave and make their way down the slope, looking haggard, but determined.

Kuribayashi stops Saigo.

KURIBAYASHI

Saigo, you will remain here. I have another task for you.

Saigo looks surprised.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

KURIBAYASHI

You see, everything comes in threes.

152 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - MORNING

152

Kuribayashi and Lt. Fujita gather all of their documentation -- plans, code books, maps, etc.

KURIBAYASHI

Saigo, start a fire and make sure all of these documents are burned.

SAIGO

Yes, sir.

153 EXT. AIR FORCE AND SEABEE ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

153

The troops rush forward, giving their last energy into their run towards the enemy.

The Marines and workers are surprised by the attack, some resting in their cots.

- 153 CONTINUED: 153
- The last of Kuribayashi's force wield their instruments holding nothing back.
- Some are shot down, but not before wreaking their own havoc.
- 154 EXT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - MORNING 154
- Kuribayashi, with Lt. Fujita at his side, watches with binoculars.
- 155 INSIDE THE CAVE 155
- Saigo has a fire going, places all the documentation into the fire.
- As he picks up a stack of papers, numerous drawings fall to the floor.
- Saigo looks at them. They are Kuribayashi's sketches.
- 156 OUTSIDE THE CAVE 156
- The CRIES of DYING FIGHTERS ECHO through the canyons.
- Kuribayashi puts down his binoculars, sadness in his eyes.
- 157 AIR FORCE AND SEABEE ENCAMPMENT 157
- The camp is littered with dead bodies. The Americans, now awake and alert, have taken the upper hand and overwhelm the remnants of the Japanese army with artillery.
- 158 OUTSIDE THE CAVE 158
- Kuribayashi turns to Fujita. He hands Fujita a samurai sword. A secret pact between them.
- 159 INSIDE THE CAVE 159
- Saigo continues burning documents. He comes upon a LEATHER SATCHEL, full of mail. It is filled with undelivered postcards and letters.
- He places his letter to his wife into the sack, along with Kuribayashi's sketches.

159 CONTINUED:

159

He is about to throw the whole thing into the fire, then stops.

There is a depression in the floor where supplies had been kept. He takes a shovel and starts digging the hole wider.

160 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

160

Kuribayashi faces north toward the Imperial Palace.

He kneels on the ground and bows three times. Lt. Fujita stands above him, still holding the samurai sword.

161 INT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - DAY

161

Saigo finishes burying the mail sack into the ground. WE SEE it is the same leather satchel as was uncovered in the first scene.

162 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

162

Kuribayashi pulls out a hara-kiri knife. He strips his shirt off.

KURIBAYASHI

Forgive me Emperor for my failures.

Kuribayashi takes a deep breath, then thrusts the knife into his abdomen. In his weakened state, he is unable to pierce his stomach, making only a scratch.

Yelling, he continues to thrust the knife into himself.

163 EXT. ENTRANCE OF CAVE - DAY

163

As smoke fills the enclosure, Saigo emerges from the entrance to the cave.

He hears KURIBAYASHI'S YELLS and heads towards the direction of the clearing.

164 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

164

Kuribayashi finally makes a deep enough incision, then pulls from left to right. Blood spurts out. His face is contorted in pain.

164 CONTINUED:

164

Fujita lifts his sword up to do the final honors of chopping off his head.

165 EXT. LOWER HILL - DAY

165

A MARINE SHARPSHOOTER, alerted by the smoke coming from the cave, does a survey across the hill and spots the two men. He sees Fujita lifting his sword to chop the head off of Kuribayashi.

Shocked, he picks his RIFLE up and aims through the scope for Fujita. He SHOOTS.

166 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

166

Fujita falls over dead.

Saigo witnesses this, falls to his knees in shock.

Kuribayashi is dying a painful death, blood pouring out of his guts.

Saigo ducks down onto the ground and approaches Kuribayashi.

SAIGO

General Kuribayashi.

KURIBAYASHI

(struggling)

Tell me, Saigo, is this still Japanese soil?

Saigo looks out upon the landscape, eerily desolate and silent, filled with smoke and bodies of the dead.

SAIGO

Yes, sir. We have not yet surrendered.

Kuribayashi attempts a smile.

KURIBAYASHI

I served in many far places, but I always hoped to die in my home country.

He grips Saigo's arm.

KURIBAYASHI

Hold on to Japan for as long as possible.

166 CONTINUED:

166

Kuribayashi releases his grip and looks off into the distance. He sees a stretch of emptiness.

The empty clearing transitions into a long stretch of road across the PLAINS OF TEXAS.

167 FLASHBACK - EXT. FORT BLISS, TEXAS (NIGHT)

167

Kuribayashi's car travels across the silent plains in the darkness.

KURIBAYASHI (V.O.)

Taro, tonight I attended a grand farewell party in my honor with many American friends. When the night was over, they wished me well and though I'm glad to be going home, I felt a bit sad to say Goodbye. Then I had to make the long drive back to my apartment. If you were here, Taro, I would put you in the passenger's seat. And Yoko and your mother would be in the back. But it's lonely driving all by myself.

END OF FLASHBACK.

BACK TO CLEARING

Kuribayashi's eyes glaze and he is dead.

SAIGO

General!

168 EXT. BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

168

Saigo struggles, as he drags Kuribayashi's body over to an area he has picked out.

With his shovel, he digs a hole.

169 EXT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - DAY

169

A group of SWEEP MARINES discover the cave, still smoking from the fire.

The Marines surround the cave, their rifles ready.

169 CONTINUED:

169

MARINE

Come out and surrender!

There is no response. The Marine nods to another, who throws in a grenade.

170 EXT. BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN

170

Saigo has dug a grave deep enough. He puts down his shovel and drags Kuribayashi's body.

171 EXT. KURIBAYASHI'S CAVE - DAY

171

The Marines have rigged up a bomb. They run to a safe position.

The MASSIVE EXPLOSION causes the entire CAVE MOUTH to COLLAPSE.

172 EXT. BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN

172

Saigo hears the EXPLOSION. He quickly finishes covering the grave.

He bows.

173 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

173

Marines come upon the body of Lt. Fujita.

MARINE #1

Careful. His body could be booby-trapped.

They approach carefully.

One of the Marines sees the trail from Saigo dragging Kuribayashi's body. He motions to his buddies.

The others follow him.

174 CLEARING - LATER

174

Saigo is taken by surprise as he emerges from behind the mountains. He has no gun or weapon, except for the shovel.

The Marines aim their rifles at him.

Saigo stands still for a moment, at a loss. He glances back towards where his General's body lies.

Finally, he lifts his shovel and waves it at them, ready to fight.

The Marines look at each other, wondering whether to shoot or let the poor, haggard soul live.

Saigo comes forward, waving his shovel this way and that.

MARINE

(in English)

Shall I shoot him, Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

No, don't shoot.

Saigo growls like a mad man. Lieutenant circles behind Saigo.

Finally, Lieutenant knocks him over the head with the butt of his gun.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

Saigo regains consciousness and squints his eyes open.

He lies on a stretcher, awaiting transport to a naval ship.

He is bedazzled by the striking colors of an orange sunset.

A pitch dark cave.

LIGHT suddenly floods the hole.

Lt. Ito lies sleeping in the cave, grimy and half naked. He wakes up and is blinded by the light.

MARINES carrying flashlights and rifles stare at him.

Lt. Ito slowly puts up his hands in surrender.

177 INT. IWO JIMA TUNNEL - DAY - 2006

177

The two Excavators unearth the leather satchel that Saigo had buried over fifty years ago.

They pull the bag out of the hole.

The bag has deteriorated and letters flutter to the ground -- hundreds of undelivered letters.

The O.S. voices of soldiers OVERLAP each other, reading their letters. To their mothers, their wives, their children.

SOLDIER #1 (V.O.)

Father, I resolve to fight to the end for my Emperor and my country. I shall honor our family name.

SOLDIER #2 (V.O.)

Mother, I hope this money will help, as it is all I have left. I won't be needing anything from now on.

SOLDIER #3 (V.O.)

Junko, remember your older brother, and take care of Mother and Father. When the bombs come, remember to run where it will be safe from fire.

SOLDIER #4 (V.O.)

I hope to die an honorable soldier.

Excavator #2 pulls from the bag, the SKETCHES that Kuribayashi had drawn.

CLOSE ON THE SKETCHES as they are handed off to:

178 INT. SHINDO'S HOUSE, TEA ROOM - DAY

178

Kuribayashi's grandson, YOSHITAKA SHINDO, takes the sketches from Excavator #2, who is now dressed in a suit.

EXCAVATOR #2

These sketches by your grandfather were found buried in one of the caves.

Shindo looks at the sketches. Doodles of Kuribayashi's wife and children, smiling, playing. A picture of an automobile, a dinner party. Happier days. Tears start to well in Shindo's eyes.

POSTSCRIPT

The battle for Iwo Jima lasted thirty-six days. The Americans had expected to take the island in five days. Of the roughly 21,000 Japanese troops that defended Iwo Jima, only a little over 1,000 survived. So far, only 8,000 of the bodies have been recovered and excavation continues today to find the remaining 12,000 bodies. Personal items taken as souvenirs are also still being sought for their return to surviving relatives.

FADE OUT.

THE END