The Dragons

by
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Inspired by True Events

First Draft

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EXT. FIELD - DAY (RAMREE ISLAND, OFF THE COAST OF BURMA - 1944)

Waist high grass blows in the wind. Nine American SOLDIERS in full battle fatigues cross toward a heavily wooded glen. They look exhausted, mostly trudging with heads down, swatting at mosquitos and wiping at the beads of sweat streaming down their faces from under their helmets.

Their relaxed, even casual, grip on their rifles suggests it’s been a few days since they’ve seen any combat.

From the rear of the line, SGT. ELLIOT HOLLOWAY jogs past a few soldiers, who only glance at him as he passes, to catch up with STAFF SGT. MARSHALL PARKER. Holloway is 27, old for this group, thin but solid, his sinewy build somewhat concealed beneath his uniform and an inconspicuous manner; you’d pass him a hundred times and never realize how badly he’d kick your ass in a fight.

Parker is the oldest of them at 34, doing his best to exude authority in spite of his smaller frame. He barely acknowledges Holloway when he appears beside him.

HOLLOWAY
What about those trees?

He indicates the glen they’re approaching.

PARKER
What about them?

HOLLOWAY
We just go marching toward them like we are, it’s a turkey shoot.

Parker notices the next two men in line cock their ears toward Holloway’s cautious words.

PARKER
Keep your fucking voice down, Sargent. We haven’t seen anything for two days. They saw us coming and pulled off the island. God damn cowards.

HOLLOWAY
Or they pulled back and set up a better line of defense. Like a tree line with great visibility.

PARKER
Your objection is noted. Now why don’t you go back to covering our rear so we don’t get our asses shot off.

HOLLOWAY
Just call a water break, send a scout. It’ll take five minutes.

More ears cocked in their direction. Parker sighs-

PARKER
When they report back clear, you owe me ten smokes.

HOLLOWAY
Deal.

Parker raises a closed fist.

PARKER
Wallis! Hold it up!

WALLIS, barely a day over 18, stops from the point position and turns to face Parker.

PARKER
Water break!

He glares at Holloway.

PARKER
Five minutes!

The men drop supplies and pull out their canteens. Parker lowers his voice and turns to Holloway again.

PARKER
Alright, Sargent. Who’s your scout?

Holloway is silent.

PARKER
C’mon, Holloway. Who’s it gonna be? You?

Holloway looks down.

HOLLOWAY
Ryder’s the fastest-

PARKER
Ryder!

A lithe Midwesterner with a baby-face approaches them quickly.

RYDER
Sir!

PARKER
Scout ahead, make sure there’s no Japs in that glen.

RYDER
Yes, sir.

He drops more gear and starts off. Holloway calls after-

HOLLOWAY
Stay low!

Ryder drops a few inches, but is still plainly visible above the grass line.

PARKER
Easiest half-a-pack I eve-

Thip! Ryder flops beneath the grass line. There’s no loud report, no battle cries, just the sudden, ubiquitous whisper of bullets splitting the air everywhere around them, punctuated by *thumps* and *thuds* as rounds kick up clouds of dirt around them.

Every one of them hits the deck, the tall grass suddenly making the rest of the world invisible.

Holloway quickly snakes his way forward, grabbing a first aid kit off a soldier, PVT. BURNS, without even looking at the man on whose back it was slung.

Burns turns when he feels it go.

BURNS
Sarg, where are you-

Bang! Burns is cut off when half his face disappears. Holloway just keeps going, crawling rapidly until he can see Ryder, lying on his back and howling in pain.

When Holloway reaches him, he can see that Ryder is holding both hands to his left thigh.

HOLLOWAY
Keep pressure on it.

He rips open the med kit, jabs Ryder with a morphine injection, and gives him a clean bandage to cover the wound with.

HOLLOWAY
Now hang tight.

He looks back at Parker, who motions him over. Holloway crawls back to him, one bullet coming so close to him that he rolls onto his back and stares at the sky, trying to collect himself, before continuing.

When Holloway gets back to Parker, the officer grabs him by the collar.

PARKER
Don’t you fucking storm off like that!

HOLLOWAY
Park-

PARKER
My name is *Staff Sargent* Parker, and I am ordering you to take two men to the right flank and try and flush those bastards out. Got it?

Holloway hesitates.

HOLLOWAY
They’re gonna be looking that way-

PARKER
That’s a fucking order, Sargent. You’ve been backseat driving me since I got here and it is fucking over, you understand?
(MORE)

PARKER(cont'd)
You’ve got lots of suggestions about how to save your own ass without ever putting it on the line. Man up, and take the right flank. Flush them out, and we’ll clean them up. Now.

Holloway holds his stare, realizes a court martial is his only other choice, considers it for a moment, then nods his reluctant assent.

HOLLOWAY
Yes, Staff Sargent.

He looks at the others around him, barely visible in the grass. He mutters to himself-

HOLLOWAY
Goddamn nun-touching cock-monkey...

Then shouts-

HOLLOWAY
Paul! Keisel! You’re with me!

Holloway is joined by ALAN PAUL, 22, smarter than he is strong but looking cool as the other side of the pillow considering all the bullets flying around. Just behind him is BARRY KEISEL, a stout Southerner who treats war like duck hunting back home; he’s actually smiling at Holloway as he crawls up to him.

KEISEL
What’s the plan, boss?

HOLLOWAY
We’re gonna push the right flank, try and flush them.

Keisel’s smile fades.

KEISEL
They’re gonna be looking for that.

HOLLOWAY
I know.

PAUL
Well, did you tell him-

HOLLOWAY
Yeah, I told him. But it’s an order, so go single file, and you goddamn freeze at the first sign of movement. Clear?

KEISEL
Crystal, compadre.

Holloway throws one last pleading look at a stone-faced Parker, then motions Paul and Keisel to follow him.

A dozen yards on, Holloway FREEZES, and holds up a fist, stopping Paul and Keisel behind him. He removes a knife from a sheath on his waist, rolls onto his back, and uses the reflection in the knife to scan above the tall grass.

Something small FLASHES across the blade. It take a split to register-

HOLLOWAY
Grenade!

And then it lands in the grass two feet past him. His face is panic, terror, and resignation all at once.

But before it goes off, PAUL THROWS HIMSELF ON IT. The explosion lifts his body a foot off the ground, and blood spatters over Holloway and Keisel.

Keisel lifts his rifle and begins shooting at the tree line. Further behind them, where Parker and the others were laying down covering fire, there is a louder EXPLOSION. Screams. More shots.

Holloway is just staring at Paul in shock.

HOLLOWAY
Alan?

He turns the body over, and finds Paul’s eyes open, a few ragged breaths being pulled into his convulsing body, in spite of the crater where his stomach should be.

Holloway jerks back from it. All around him, more explosions. More screams.

KEISEL
Sarge! They’re ripping us up!

But he can’t look away.

KEISEL
Sarge!

Frozen.

KEISEL
Elliot! Two dozen advancing! Pick up your fucking rifle, man!

Finally, he snaps out of it. Shaking, he gets to his knees, able to see over the grassline. What he sees are six Japanese SOLDIERS moving through the grass toward them.

Behind the soldiers, Parker is on his knees. One of their soldiers levels a rifle at his head and pulls the trigger. There is a SPRAY OF RED, and Parker’s body flops to the ground.

Holloway is now in charge. And from the terrified look on his face, he knows it.

Keisel is frantically trying to slap a new clip into his rifle.

HOLLOWAY
Drop your weapon!

Keisel looks at him in disbelief.

KEISEL
What?! Those bastards-

HOLLOWAY
I said drop it! Now!

When Keisel hesitates, Holloway grabs it and rips it from his hands. Then he raises both hands and gets slowly to his feet.

HOLLOWAY
Koufuku! Koufuku!

The Japanese soldiers advance with rifles at the ready once they see their hands in the air.

One of them steps forward, shouting at them, and levels his sight on Holloway.

HOLLOWAY
Koufuku! I said Koufuku, goddamnit!

The soldier doesn't seem to care, but then a younger, soft-faced soldier in his early 20's puts a hand on his rifle, pushing it down. This is GENJIRO SOSHUMI, or just GEN.

The soldier holding the rifle looks at him, offended. They exchange harsh words, but Gen refuses to back down. Finally, the one with the rifle turns and stalks away.

NOTE: THERE ARE NO SUBTITLES AT ANY POINT.

Gen nods at Keisel and Holloway, ushering them to join the other soldiers scouring the field.

KEISEL
What the hell is 'koufuku'?

Holloway looks from their captors to Keisel.

HOLLOWAY
Surrender.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

CLOSE ON a tree branch a dozen feet off the ground. The bark is mostly pale grey, with green splotches of some sort of growth here and there.

And then the bark begins to MOVE.

Pull back to reveal DR. BENEDICT RILEY observing a flying gecko moving cautiously down the limb. Riley himself is perched on a twisting limb jutting out from the trunk of one of the enormous trees making up this dense forest.

But if the distance from the earth makes him the least bit uncomfortable, he is too fascinated by this animal to show it.

Riley is in his 40's, but in as good of shape as any of the soldiers. His clothing, while still helping him blend into the environment, betrays him as a civilian; his accent as being a Brit. And his fascination with the extraordinary variety of lifeforms around him gives him away as a university-trained naturalist, albeit one quite used to field work.

An American SOLDIER approaches on the ground.

SOLDIER
Doc-

RILEY
Shhhhh! Don’t move.

The soldier freezes.

SOLDIER
(whispering)
What is it? Is it poisonous?

Riley gives him a brief, withering look, then returns his attention to the gecko.

RILEY
No. But watch... this...

Riley plucks an insect off the branch and tosses it in the air. The gecko leaps off the branch, spreading out its legs and revealing enough webbing to *glide* down near the bug, which it then SNATCHES out of midair before landing on the branch of a nearby tree.

Riley can’t help but grin.

RILEY
Amazing, isn’t it? Just amazing.

Then, with the agility of a twelve year old, he shimmies effortlessly down the tree and lands at the soldiers feet.

RILEY
Now, what can I do for you?

INT. COMMAND TENT - LATER

The soldier leads Riley into a large tent, covered with mosquito netting on all sides. Several tables are set up with maps spread out over them.

A number of uniformed men hustle about, but LT. COLONEL CLARENCE STANLEY stands stock still, looking at a layout of RAMREE ISLAND.

Riley approaches Stanley cautiously, waits a moment for a reaction that doesn’t come, then clears his throat.

RILEY
You asked to see me, Colonel?

Finally, Stanley turns to him.

COL. STANLEY
Yes, I did, son.

RILEY
I believe I’m older than you, sir.

Stanley sneers at this - he doesn’t like dealing with civilians.

COL. STANLEY
Look here. You see this?

He indicates the map before them. There is a large grouping of red chips at the north end.

COL. STANLEY
That’s a battalion of Japanese troops, and we’ve got ‘em on the run with half as many soldiers. Their supply line was coming through here-

He indicates a southern area, now occupied by a single blue chip.

COL. STANLEY
And we just blew the shit out of it. They’re stuck. Running like hell to get to the north coast. If they make it, they’ve got ships out there that can resupply them, and make our lives hell.

He looks at Riley, waiting for some response.

RILEY
Well, I guess you’d better stop them then, eh?

COL. STANLEY
Thank you, professor. There’s just one little problem.

At this, he turns away from the map, facing Riley.

COL. STANLEY
Normally, I’d just call in an air strike and let God sort ‘em out. Do you Brits believe in God?

RILEY
We do, sir.

COL. STANLEY
Good, good. Well I can’t do that, because we lost contact with one of our squads, over here.

Back to the map, he indicates a section of dense green.

COL. STANLEY
They may have taken some of them hostage, and I won’t bomb my own men.

RILEY
So you want to get your men back.

COL. STANLEY
You got that right, redcoat.

Riley looks at the map, traces over the northerly area with his finger.

RILEY
Well, they can’t go that way.

COL. STANLEY
That’s exactly where they’re going.

Riley almost laughs in incredulity.

RILEY
Oh no... there’s no way they’d...

COL. STANLEY
Why not?

RILEY
That’s fourteen, fifteen kilometers of mangrove swamp.

COL. STANLEY
Which is exactly why I wanted to speak with you. What can my men expect when they get in there?

RILEY
You're not listening to me. You *can't* go in there.

COL. STANLEY
There is nowhere on God's green earth that my men *can't* go, professor.

RILEY
Alright. Then as an embedded advisor to the United States Military, I would very much like to stress that neither you nor the Japanese military *want* to go in there.

COL. STANLEY
Well they're almost out of ammo. They're looking at a slaughter if they don't.

RILEY
They're looking at a slaughter if they do.

EXT. VILLAGE - EVENING

Holloway and Keisel march behind two dozen Japanese troops, with more behind them than they can count. Ryder has an arm slung around Keisel, limping badly on a hastily bandaged leg. Holloway is carrying a sack of supplies pilfered from his own men.

They approach a dozen huts, mostly made with sticks and thatch, a few with stone. A small pen holds a few pigs, being tended to by two shirtless BOYS. Other villagers mill about, emaciated and in ragged clothes.

Everything about the place suggests that it has been isolated from the war surrounding them.

A Burmese girl, KHIN, 17, sees the soldiers coming, and walks to the edge of the village. She stands perfectly still, watching them.

As they approach, Holloway notices that she is MISSING HER LEFT ARM, the sleeve of her shirt pinned up at the nub.

HOLLOWAY
Jesus.

KEISEL
Welcome to bumfuck, boys.

The soldiers stop, and Holloway sighs at the chance to put down his load. Keisel lowers a wincing Ryder to the ground.

The Japanese commander, GENERAL KYOSHI RYOATA, 45, a born soldier with a stern countenance, steps forward and says something to the girl. She just stares at him blankly. Ryoata calls out to the men, and eventually Gen steps out, reluctantly.

They exchange a few words, the commander gripping Gen by his arm and shoving him toward Khin. Gen translates Ryoata’s question, and Khin turns and RUNS to one of the huts.

Holloway turns to Ryder.

HOLLOWAY
What’s going on?

RYDER
The big dog wants to know how far to the coast. Your friend there is translating for him.

A group of older MEN approach Ryoata and Gen. One of them has ancient but vicious SCARS across his face, including an eye that’s paled over and glassy.

KEISEL
Japs don’t usually take prisoners. Wonder why they’re keeping us around?

HOLLOWAY
We’re keeping them from calling in a bomber and just leveling this half of the island.

KEISEL
Shit.

Ryoata is speaking at a furious pace, and Gen is flustered, trying to keep up. Finally, one of the villagers responds with a few words. Gen translates, and Ryder watches his lips carefully.

RYDER
Sounds like fourteen clicks to the shore.

KEISEL
Probably a ship waitin' for 'em. They're just turning tail and running.

HOLLOWAY
Or it's a supply ship, and they're getting ready for a counter offensive.

Ryoata asks more questions, which Gen repeats. Again, the answer from the villagers is just a few words, immediately relayed again in Japanese.

Ryoata doesn't like the response, and SLAPS Gen, who stumbles back a step in shock. Ryoata repeats his questions, pointing at the villagers.

HOLLOWAY
What's goin'-

RYDER
Shhhh!

This time, it's the badly scared villager who responds. Gen looks frightened to translate, and hesitates until Ryoata fixes him with a glare.

Gen says the same thing again. Ryoata scans the villagers, not just the elders but the two dozen others now gathered and watching from a safe distance.

Almost a quarter of them appear disabled in some way. Scarred, or missing limbs.

RYDER
Dragons.

HOLLOWAY
What?

RYDER
Little guy said something about dragons.

Ryoata mutters something to Gen, then turns to the troops and ushers them forward. In a second, a soldier is jabbing at Holloway with a rifle, motioning them up.

Holloway picks up the supplies with a groan. Keisel takes a little longer, leading the soldier to KICK HIM. Keisel barely seems to notice the blow, but gets to his feet.

KEISEL
Alright, alright. We're coming. C'mon, buddy.

He pulls Ryder to his feet, who winces at putting the weight on his leg. A fresh trickle of blood squirts from the edges of the bandage.

RYDER
Shit!

KEISEL
Don't be such a baby. My daddy took off half his foot chopping wood, and still drove himself to the hospital.

RYDER
You know, if I sprain my ankle and your daddy broke his leg, it doesn't make my ankle hurt any less.

KEISEL
Well, I could just throw you over my shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

RYDER
And who the hell still talks about their 'daddy'? What are you, twelve?

The soldiers begin marching them through the village. The people part to make way, no one speaking or even moving. Just following the seemingly endless parade of uniformed men with their eyes.

Holloway locks eyes with Khin as they pass, his gaze flicking to the pinned-up sleeve that should be filled by her missing left arm.

HOLLOWAY
(under his breath)
Dragons...

EXT. BASE CAMP – EVENING

Stanley strides across the camp with the single-minded determination of a leader, everything about his demeanor seemingly oblivious to Riley, who struggles to keep up.

RILEY
You’re not listening to me, Colonel. When I was in Africa, I saw one grab a two ton rhino by the horn when it stopped to drink at a river. For two hours it held on, until it dragged the damn thing down and drowned it. Two hours, pulling it an inch at a time to its death. They’re the finest killing machines the world has ever seen.

STANLEY
And you’re not listening to me, Riley. The American war machine is the finest killing machine the world has ever seen. The Krauts can’t stop it. The Japs can’t stop it. So a few alligators sure as shit aren’t going to stop it.

RILEY
They’re crocodiles, sir. Salt water crocodiles.

STANLEY
What’s the difference?

RILEY
About four to six feet and 250 pounds.

Stanley stops at this, and looks at him.

RILEY
And it’s not a few you’re dealing with. Not even dozens. It’s *thousands*.

EXT. SWAMP - EVENING

Holloway, Keisel, and Ryder approach the marshy area where dry land gives way to the swamp. It stretches as far as the eye can see in every direction. The twisted, leafy branches of the mangrove trees seem to gobble up sunlight, and cast an unsettling pattern on the water’s perfectly still, murky surface.

It looks both beautiful and haunting to Holloway’s incredulous eyes. His boots stop at the water’s edge. A glance behind him reveals a few of the villagers gathered, watching them go. Khin is among them.

KEISEL
What are you doing, Sarg?

Before Holloway can answer, a soldier smashes the butt of his rifle against his back, shoving him forward a few steps and down onto his knees in the water.

He catches himself with his hands, but has to struggle to get them out. When he pulls them up, they’re covered in BLACK MUD halfway to his elbows.

HOLLOWAY
Oh, Jesus...

Keisel steps past him, helping Ryder. It doesn’t take long before Keisel’s made it past the deepest mud, and he motions to Holloway.

KEISEL
Ground toughens up a little ways out.

The Japanese soldier behind Holloway angrily SHOUTS something at him, and he gets to his feet and plows ahead, trying to keep up with Keisel.

INT. TENT - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Stanley arrives at a tent and finds FOUR BORED SOLDIERS lounging around on cots, smoking cigarettes, one reading, two sleeping, and the last just staring, literally doing nothing but watching the smoke trail up from the cigarette dangling between his lips.

The growing ash threatens to fall on his face, but his distant expression seems not at all concerned about it, until-

STANLEY
Bell!

The man JERKS, and the cigarette ash lands on his face.

BELL
Shit!

And then he’s on his feet, shirtless, cigarette still dangling, and saluting his superior. SGT. AMBROSE BELL is in his early 30’s, dark hair and a five o’clock shadow, tanned, muscular, but edgy. His eyes look like they’ve seen a lot of combat, and he looks ready to hit the deck at a moment’s notice.

The other three men join him at attention - MOSS, early 20’s and black; CORBIN, also black, a day over 18, and WOODY, early 30’s, a jock in his former life, but now wiser and humbled. All of their eyes share the same distant look as Bell’s. But behind them is a stillness, almost resignation.

BELL
Sir!

STANLEY
You boys fit to head into the field?

BELL
Sir?

STANLEY
I got something needs doing, Sargent. I can’t wait for your unit to reup.

BELL
Understood. We’ll do the best we can.

STANLEY
You’re goddamn right you will.

BELL
What’s the mission, sir?

STANLEY
Nips got a few of our boys. I need recon - are they still alive, and is there any chance of getting them out. Pure intel; if you can avoid it, I want no shots fired. But it’s in dangerous territory.

BELL
How dangerous?

INT. COMMAND TENT - NIGHT

Bell is standing over the map of the island with Stanley and Riley. Behind him, the others pull on gear.

STANLEY
There’s a village here on the edge of the swamp. You should be able to make it tonight. Set up camp there, start for them at first light.

BELL
Sir, we’ve got a lot of ground to make up. Shouldn’t we push on into the swamp-

RILEY
No.

Bell looks back at him, skeptically.

RILEY
They prefer to hunt at night, Mr. Bell.

BELL
Sargent Bell, Mr. Riley.

RILEY
If you try at night, you'll never see them coming. All of your men will be dead well before sunrise. I guarantee it.

Stanley nods his agreement with Riley.

BELL
Check. So first light we move.

STANLEY
They're pulling a lot more men than you. They're tired, and running low on supplies, so you should be able to make up ground quickly. Once you spot them, get eyes on our POW's. Give me an estimate of what it'll take to spring them.

RILEY
If there's anyone left.

BELL
We like to think positive regarding POW's.

RILEY
I was talking about the Japanese.

BELL
There's a thousand of them.

Riley meets his stare and holds it, then nods.

RILEY
I know.

Stanley turns to Riley-

STANLEY
Give us a minute, Mr. Riley.

Riley excuses himself, and Bell turns to

BELL
Sir, if I may, what the hell are we getting into?

STANLEY
We don’t know that it’s as bad as all that. But Riley here seems damn sure, so I’m letting him put the fear of god into you.

BELL
How many of our guys do they have?

STANLEY
Don’t know.

BELL
You know the men at all?

STANLEY
Does it matter?

BELL
If it’s as bad as the limey says, I’d like to know if the boys have a chance of holding their own there.

Stanley nods.

STANLEY
Sargent named Holloway’s the only one I’m familiar with. He keeps a cool head, but not a lot of fire in his belly. Kind that wants to get out with his beans still attached more than he wants to win the war for God and country.

BELL
He’s a coward.

STANLEY
He’s a man, Bell. Just like you and me. Wants to get home. He’ll keep those boys alive just as long as he can.

BELL
What about us? Who’s gonna keep us alive, going in there after them?

Stanley’s eyes shift to RILEY, then back to Bell. He raises his eyebrows...

EXT. JUNGLE - EVENING

Bell, Moss, Corbin, and Woody are trekking through the thick jungle in limited light. They move confidently, Moss - on point - using a machete to cut through vines and anything too thick, leaving an easier path for the others behind him.

They’re also quiet as ghosts, and damn near invisible in their camouflage.

The same cannot be said of RILEY, who tags along behind them, stumbling frequently, sweating profusely, and carrying about half the load that the others are.

Riley catches his boot on a root and trips, going down hard.

RILEY
Shit! Wait, guys!

Moss sighs heavily, holding up a fist that brings them all to a halt. He turns to Bell, behind him.

MOSS
You sure about this?

BELL
No. But Stanley is.

MOSS
I notice he ain’t here.

BELL
Believe me, he wants this to work.

MOSS
Yeah, well, we’ll see. Probably get eaten by a tiger or something.

EXT. SWAMP - EVENING

The sun is almost set, and the Japanese soldiers are moving sluggishly through water that is almost chest high. Even the stalwart Keisel is showing signs of slowing, although he is essentially carrying Ryder along with him.

The soldier behind him is struggling to keep his gun above the water. Ryder cautions a glance at his trembling muscles, then whispers to Keisel and Holloway.

RYDER
We're gonna have a chance to break for it.

HOLLOWAY
You're crazier than a shit-house rat. This is a battalion we're surrounded by. And we're not setting any land speed records in this shit.

RYDER
It's good cover, especially at night. Hell, if we play our cards right, we could be gone for an hour before they even notice.

HOLLOWAY
No.

Keisel chimes in-

KEISEL
I don't know, boss. Kid might be right.

HOLLOWAY
It's too risky.

Behind them, the Japanese shoulder SHOUTS something at them - probably along the lines of *Shut up!*

They walk on in silence for a few moments. Then Ryder whispers to Holloway-

RYDER
I'm not gonna make it, Sarge.

HOLLOWAY
I saw the wound. It'll hurt like a son of a bitch, but it won't kill you.

RYDER
It's already infected, man. Look at this shit. It's getting worse, and I hold you guys up any more than I am, they'll put a bullet in me and move on. They don't need all three of us.

HOLLOWAY
Shut up, Ryder. That's not gonna happen, 'cause you're not gonnna hold us up. You understand me?

Ryder rolls his eyes.

HOLLOWAY
Now move your ass.

They trudge on in silence, followed by a dozen soldiers. Among them is GEN, who looks like he's having a harder time than they are. He's ill suited to this kind of hiking, and his skinny arms struggle to keep his rifle dry.

And he's walking by himself, the other soldiers plainly ignoring him. One even jostles him as he passes the slower-moving Gen.

Then, a FLASH of movement catches his peripheral vision. By the time he gets his head around, there is only a RIPPLE spreading out around them.

He looks around to see if anyone else noticed, but of course, no one did.

Another solider knocks into him while he's standing, watching the epicenter of the ripple. With a heavy sigh, he continues on along with the others, but looking around at the nearly black swamp more nervously than before.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Bell, Riley, and the others arrive at the edge of the village. Bell motions to Riley with his index finger pointed sternly at the ground - *stay here.*

He motions Woody and Corbin to their right, while he and Moss head to the left.

Bell presses himself flat again a hut, peeks quickly around the corner, and then motions Moss over to the next building. They move like this, cautiously, eyes constantly scanning their surroundings, pausing at the lightest creak from the surrounding woods.

As a result, Bell draws his gun and almost FIRES when Corbin darts around one of the buildings.

Each team has made it to the middle with no contact. Bell motions them together, and they move quickly, but less nervously, through the narrow dirt lane in the middle of the village, only to find Riley, right where they left him, but sitting on the ground and chatting amicably with KHIN.

As they approach, Riley says something and Khin even LAUGHS - more emotion by a lot than we've seen from her to this point.

BELL
(whispering intensely)
Riley! Who the fuck is she?!

Riley looks confused by their alarm. Khin looks alarmed at their alarm. Riley motions an open hand at her - *stay. It's alright.*

RILEY
Her name is Khin. She lives here.

BELL
What are you two, fucking pen pals now?

Riley shakes his head at him.

RILEY
She says the Japanese came through a few hours ago.
(MORE)

RILEY(cont'd)
They had three Americans with them, and one of them was wounded.

Bell’s alarm begins to fade. He glances at Moss, who’s actually smiling at Riley’s usefulness.

BELL
How many Japs?

Riley turns to Khin and asks. She responds quickly, still glancing nervously at the others.

RILEY
She doesn’t know exactly, but they marched through for at least fifteen minutes.

MOSS
Sounds like a thousand, just what recon said.

BELL
Where is everybody?

RILEY
Asleep.

Moss, Corbin, and Woody chuckle.

BELL
Can she show us where they went in?

Riley asks her, and she nods.

BELL
First light. You tell her.

He does, and she nods, then gets to her feet and disappears inside one of the huts.

The men drop their packs, and Bell sits down next to Riley.

BELL
Nice work.

RILEY
It’s easy to forget what a smile can do out here.

Bell nods.

BELL
Did she tell you want happened to her arm?

RILEY
She said the dragons took it.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Holloway, Kiesel, and Ryder are moving at a snail’s pace now. Ryder looks even worse - pale, shivering, and barely hanging on to consciousness.

Ahead of them, Holloway sees some lights that were bobbing along RISE slightly, slow, and then STOP. Holloway’s eyes light up.

HOLLOWAY
Holy shit, I think we’re stopping.

They approach twenty soldiers piled onto a strip of tree roots and mud two dozen yards long and half as wide. Two trees at either end take up a good chunk of the available land.

Others crowd on. Holloway takes a step onto the land and is met with a RIFLE BUTT to his FACE. He falls down into the muck, sinking completely below the surface. Keisel reaches his free hand down, searches until he finds Holloway, then drags him to the surface by his collar.

Holloway is woozy from the blow, blood streaming from his nose into the water. Keisel look angrily at soldier that hit him, and points to the faint RYDER hanging from his shoulder.

KEISEL
Him! Okay? Just him!

He moves slowly to lower Ryder onto the dry ground, waiting for the soldier to stop him. The soldier watches warily, but makes no move.

Once Ryder is lying down, Keisel holds up his hands and backs away.

Satisfied, Keisel reaches out and squeezes Ryder’s boot.

KEISEL
You’re gonna be okay, buddy. Hang in there.

It’s Holloway that notices the long track pushed out through the mud, like something long and thick slipped across it into the water.

HOLLOWAY
What’s that?

Keisel shrugs.

KEISEL
Man, I worked in a garage back in Alabama. Unless it’s a tire track, your guess is as good as mine. What the fuck are we gonna do now?

Holloway sighs, wipes the blood from his nose, and looks around, his eyes finally settling on the trees rising from the water around them.

HOLLOWAY
You ever get to the zoo in Alabama?

KEISEL
When I was a kid. My daddy-

He catches himself.

KEISEL
My dad took me. Why?

HOLLOWAY
Remember the monkey house?

EXT. SWAMP - LATER

The night is deep, the darkness almost impenetrable except by a few daggers of moonlight, and the mangrove swamp is as quiet as it gets - lonely insects and frogs echoing among the trees and not much else.

Holloway and Keisel have drug themselves up into the branches of two different trees, feet dangling, heads resting against the trunk.

Keisel snores softly, but Holloway searches for twinkling stars through the trees, lost in thought.

A *shuffling* sound brings his attention to the small island a few meters away. Most of the Japanese soldiers are sleeping, but one - GEN - is standing watch, trying to keep awake.

He and Holloway make eye contact. Gen looks so miserable that Holloway can't help but smile, and damn if Gen doesn't return it. *Boy, does this suck.*

That's it. Just a small, friendly moment between them that's BROKEN BY THE SOUND OF WATER MOVING. Both Gen and Holloway snap to attention, their eyes fixed in the direction of the sound.

Gen points a flashlight there, but they see nothing but RIPPLES drifting toward them. All around them, the sounds of the insects and frogs CEASE.

The entire swamp is suddenly EERILY SILENT.

The sound of more displaced water draws the Gen's flashlight to another, tiny strip of land twenty yards away. The light just catches the flash of a SCALY TAIL sliding off the mud and into the water.

It leaves a mark in the mud that looks familiar to Holloway. His eyes go wide.

HOLLOWAY
Oh shit.

He tries to reach Keisel's tree, shaking an overlapping branch.

HOLLOWAY
Keisel! Keisel, wake up!

Gen's eyes snap to him. He presses a finger to his lips - *shhhhh!*

Gen reaches for his rifle, pairs it with his flashlight, and turns a slow circle, scanning the murky water surrounding this tiny spot.

Suddenly, a SCREAM echoes through the swamp, startling Gen so badly that he drops his flashlight.

It’s coming from one of the other clusters of soldiers deeper in the swamp, on another patch of dry-ish land.

Gen searches frantically for his light, finds it, and turns in that direction, but it’s much too far away to see. The other soldiers around Gen are startled awake, scrambling to their feet even as the scream is suddenly CUT OFF.

Rifles are suddenly picked up. Everyone scans the darkness. Questions are fired at a confused Gen, who does his best to answer but has nothing to relate.

Keisel comes around, too, and turns to Holloway.

KEISEL
What’s happening?

Holloway just shakes his head. Keisel turns to Ryder, laying on the ground.

KEISEL
Ryder!

Ryder moves a bit, but doesn’t come fully around.

KEISEL
Ryder!

Keisel breaks a stick off the tree he’s sitting in and throws it at Ryder, who finally forces his eyes open enough to focus on Keisel.

KEISEL
What are they chattering about?

Ryder cocks his ear in their direction, then turns to Keisel.

RYDER
They want to know why there weren’t any shots.

HOLLOWAY
They’re not sure what to shoot at. Ryder- pull your legs up, buddy.

RYDER
What?

HOLLOWAY
Away from the water.

RYDER
Why?

HOLLOWAY
It’s about to get hairy.

Ryder manages to move his legs a few inches, but GROANS in pain. This gets the angry attention of a nearby soldier, who turns to him and shouts - *shut up!*

Another SCREAM echoes through the trees around them, this time followed by BURSTS OF GUNFIRE. The group tenses up more.

Rifles are whipped around at the slightest sound. Questions are shouted. One soldier CALLS to one of the other islands, listening for a response.

Gen begins flashing his light at the other island for a response. Far away, through the darkness, a light FLASHES BACK.

Once.

Twice.

And then it’s JERKED INTO BLACKNESS, accompanied by more SCREAMS. More GUNFIRE.

HOLLOWAY
Ryder! Get your fucking legs away from the water!

KEISEL
What the hell is goin’ on out there, sarg?

Ryder does his best to roll toward the center of that tiny strip of land, and this time the soldier isn’t having it. He KICKS Ryder-

HOLLOWAY
Hey!

- who rolls back toward the water. Holloway sees ripples in the water near him. The soldier kicks him again, and Ryder desperately GRABS his foot - begging him to stop in Japanese.

With Ryder clinging to his leg, the soldier TOPPLES OVER into the water.

The other soldiers JUMP, and shout at Ryder, pointing rifles at him. The soldier in the water is offered a hand, which he takes, and is pulled back up onto the land.

He takes one step, then two, shaking the water off. He picks up his rifle from where he dropped it and points it at Ryder-

AND A 13 FOOT SALTWATER CROCODILE **EXPLODES** FROM THE WATER, GRABS THE SOLIDER BY THE LEG, AND DRAGS HIM OFF THE ISLAND AND INTO THE WATER.

He screams for less than a second before he’s dragged under. Soldiers fire several bursts at the area, to no effect.

The soldier is gone.

NOTE: The saltwater crocodile is the largest of all living reptiles, growing as long as 20 feet and weighing over a ton. They attack from the water at 30 feet per second. They can bite down with a force of more than 5,000 pounds per square inch... compared to a great white shark, at just 800.

Gen holds the flashlight on the area, and sees BLOOD dispersing through the water.

Then the soldier’s FOOT - SEVERED JUST ABOVE THE ANKLE, rises to the surface, still wearing the military-issued boot.

KEISEL
What the fuck was that?

HOLLOWAY
A dragon.

At the appearance of the foot, another soldier shrieks and stumbles back, away from it. He trips and lands on his butt, scrambling away like a crab but not realizing that their strip of land is so narrow that he is only a few feet from the water on the other side.

Another EXPLOSION of water and SCREAMS, another solider drug away into the depths, followed by useless gunfire and confused, terrified shouting among the soldiers.

The water ripples at one end of the island, the sound of something huge flicking its tail, and five men, including Gen, back as far away from it as they can without getting too close to the water.

The monster *hisses,* a strange and terrifying sound, but in the dark, they still can’t see where it is.

Just then, Keisel notices BUBBLES near the surface underneath him. And then his eyes can trace the form of another crocodile just beneath the surface, driving straight toward the prone Ryder!

Suddenly, something ERUPTS from the water onto the island, so quickly that it’s nothing but a BLUR. The men SCATTER into the water, running at random and engulfed in an elemental PANIC.

Keisel reaches up and breaks off a large, sturdy branch from the tree.

The crocodile nearest Ryder ROCKETS out of the water toward him.

KEISEL DROPS FROM THE TREE like a rescue diver, landing atop the crock and jamming the log into its incredibly powerful jaws, then holding onto either end like it was a muzzle.

It distracts the monster from Ryder, but only for a moment before it FLINGS Keisel off with a violent whip of its body, sending him crashing into a tree and then plummeting into the water.

HOLLOWAY
Fucking hell!

Next the croc chews through a branch as thick as Holloway’s arm like a Twix bar, and disappears under the water. All this in a matter of seconds.

Gen stops, turns, and sees Ryder doing his best to scramble away from the encroaching creature but struggling with his wounded leg.

Holloway sees Gen head back to him, and shimmies across the tree to the branch closest to where Keisel went in. He calls down-

HOLLOWAY
Keisel!

No sign of him. Here, at least, the water is perfectly still. Holloway frantically scans the area around him, looking for any sign of movement.

Only a dozen yards away, Gen is dragging Ryder into the water with him, pulling him toward another grove of trees. Two crocodiles surface briefly, then DISAPPEAR, the last image of them darting like torpedoes toward them before they disappear into the murk.

Holloway screws up all his courage and slips out of the tree into the water. He dives beneath the surface, searching around for Keisel.

No sign.

He bursts up for a quick breath, just long enough to see Gen helping Ryder climb one of the trees by lacing his hands together as a step for Ryder’s good leg.

With a GROAN of agony, Ryder is able to pull himself up onto a branch.

The second he does, one of the crocodiles LEAPS out of the water after him, snapping its jaws shut a split second too late. The teeth close on tails of his shirt, almost PULLING HIM OUT OF THE TREE before the material tears.

Ryder is left hanging on by his finger tips, one good leg wrapped around the branch, his back dangling just a few feet from the surface of the water.

Before he can even right himself, the second croc BURSTS from the water and drags a SCREAMING GEN UNDER. In a flash, Gen DRAWS A LARGE KNIFE from his belt and PLUNGES IT into the thing’s pool-ball-sized eyeball.

That’s enough that it releases him, and he quickly swims to the nearest tree and pulls himself from the water, trailing BLOOD from a dozen puncture wounds on his abdomen.

Nearby, Holloway dives back under, and for an agonizing moment the water is still. Gen and Ryder look on, anxious for something - anything - to happen.

Then Holloway emerges, dragging an unconscious Keisel with him. With great effort, he’s able to pull the big man onto the island, and keeps moving until they’re in the center of the strip of land.

Holloway glances around and spots a MACHINE GUN WITH THE SOLDIER’S HAND STILL ATTACHED.

He drags it over by the barrel, pries the fingers off, check the cartridge for ammo - maybe a dozen shots - and slams it back into place.

Adrenaline practically streaming from his ears, he sweeps the area, looking for any sign of movement, a sound, a ripple, anything.

But there’s nothing. And for the first time, the men are able to process the background noise that’s been surrounding them the entire time.

SPORADIC GUNFIRE AND SCREAMING. All around them, in every direction, a never-ending chorus of terror and suffering.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Riley is lying on his sleeping bag, trying to sleep. But it’s hard with the SCREAMS and the GUNFIRE echoing out of the jungle. He turns over onto his back and stares at the starry night sky.

It’s beautiful. Almost beautiful enough to make him forget about the massacre taking place about a mile from where he’s lying.

But not quite. With a grunt he sits up, staring into the swamp but unable to see anything through the darkness, except that all the huts seem to be still.

There’s a rustle next to him, however. He looks over and sees that all the other soldiers are awake. Listening. No one could sleep with the sounds coming from the woods.

EXT. SWAMP - DAWN

Holloway dozes on a thick branch next to an unconscious Keisel. He wakes with a START that almost shakes him off the branch.

But he catches himself, and quickly glances around, taking in their dismal surroundings and remembering, suddenly, the events of the night before.

About thirty yards away, Ryder is also passed out several yards above the chest-high water. Then Holloway’s eyes travel past a few trees and find GEN STARING BACK AT HIM.

Gen’s used strips of his shirt tied together into a bandage over his torso, and though it’s stained with red the bleeding does seem to have stopped.

Gen looks a little pasty, but also surprisingly sharp and alert. They watch each other across the swamp for a moment that feels like an eternity.

Then Holloway, somewhat tentatively, WAVES at him. Gen looks confused for a moment, then SMILES BRIEFLY at the gesture.

Next to him, Keisel STIRS, groans, and rubs absently at the back of his head. When he touches the spot where he collided with the tree, the sudden sharp pain RIPS his eyes open, and he too takes a moment to process his surroundings.

He tries to say something that just comes out as-

KEISEL
Wha-

He chokes, and Holloway hands him his canteen. Keisel takes a big swig-

HOLLOWAY
Easy on that. Right now it’s all we’ve got.

Keisel’s shoulders slump, and he reluctantly pulls the water from his lips and hands it back to Holloway.

KEISEL
...the fuck happened?

HOLLOWAY
Things went from bad to worse.

KEISEL
Ryder?

Holloway nods in the direction of Ryder’s sleeping form. Then Keisel sees Gen.

KEISEL
Who’s the Jap?

HOLLOWAY
Beats hell out of me. But he came back for Ryder, and got grabbed there-

He gestures at Gen’s mid-section.

HOLLOWAY
-while he was helping him up in the tree. Then he killed the damn thing with a knife.

KEISEL
You sound like you’re in love.

HOLLOWAY
Bravest thing I ever saw.

Holloway takes a breath, reconsiders.

HOLLOWAY
Well, almost, anyway.

Keisel locks eyes with the smaller man across the swamp, and the question dances across Keisel’s disbelieving face - *who is this guy?*

EXT. VILLAGE - DAWN

When Riley opens his eyes, Bell, Woody, Corbin, and Moss are already awake and mostly done packing up. Only the first rays of sunlight are peaking up over the horizon.

Bell gives him a nudge with his boat.

BELL
Time to get moving, Wiley.

RILEY
It’s Riley.

BELL
Nope. It’s Wiley now.

RILEY
No, It’s definitely Riley. I’m sure of it.

MOSS
Well, now it’s Wiley motherfucker.

Bell smiles.

BELL
Yeah. You know? Riley E. Coyote. Get it?

Riley gives him a blank stare.

RILEY
No.

BELL
You don’t get out to the movies much, do you?

RILEY
Is he an actor?

Behind him, Moss LAUGHS.

MOSS
No, man. The cartoons they play before the show. He’s always trying to catch this bird, right? But the bird’s faster than him, so he’s got to use his brain.

He taps his forehead.

MOSS
Like you do.

RILEY
So he gets the bird?

Moss shakes his head.

MOSS
Nope.

CORBIN
Bird’s too fast.

They share a laugh, but offer no more explanation, so Riley begins rolling up his stuff. The others are done, and watch him struggle to get everything into his pack, then awkwardly get it over his shoulders with a groan.

Moss grabs his by the shoulder pads, and flips it over his head and smoothly onto his shoulder. He winks at Riley.

Bell quickly scans the group.

BELL
Woody, you’re on point. Let’s move out, everyone.

Nods, and the four soldiers head off in the direction of the swamp, while Riley turns to head inland.

He stops when he notices that he’s alone, waiting for Woody to take point.

RILEY
Wait. Where are you going?

Bell looks over his shoulder at him, brow furrowed.

BELL
Recon. The mission, remember?

Riley jaw DROPS.

RILEY
You’re not *still* going in there, are you?

BELL
Yeah. And you’re coming with us.

RILEY
But... all the screaming, and...

He seems at a loss for words. None of the others notice; they just keep walking. Riley calls after them-

RILEY
You’ve achieved a level of commitment that borders on stupidity.

WOODY
Borders on? We done crossed well into stupidity, man. I should be home watchin’ the Sox.

Riley walks on, his face a mask of incredulity. He mutters to himself-

RILEY
Oh good, certain death. This should be interesting. Fun, really.
(MORE)

RILEY(cont'd)
Me against four thousand crocodiles. They won’t even give me a *gun.*

EXT. SWAMP - MORNING

General Ryoata pushes boldly through the water, his sword drawn. A half-dozen far less enthusiastic men follow behind him, but he barely acknowledges them.

Instead, he scans the swamp around him, searching for signs of motion. A sound echoing in the distance catches his attention, and he gives a stern order to the other men - *follow me* - and heads in that direction.

EXT. SWAMP - MORNING - ELSEWHERE

Keisel and Gen are watching Holloway try to piss without falling out of the tree. Their LAUGHTER is the sound that Ryoata heard.

HOLLOWAY
Would you two shut the fuck up? You’re gonna have to do this, too, at some point.

He has one arm clutching the trunk of the tree, as he tries to pull down his fly with the other. But his balance keeps slipping, and he almost swings off the tree.

This just makes Keisel and Gen laugh harder.

HOLLOWAY
Maybe a little help?

KEISEL
No way, Sarg. I’ve done my bit for God and country without man-handling your johnson.

Holloway gives him a half-serious look from around the tree.

HOLLOWAY
I could order you, you know.

KEISEL
Then throw me in the brig.

Now Holloway’s got everything in order, and the splash of urine dropping six feet into the swamp echoes between the trees.

HOLLOWAY
See? Not so hard. Just wait until-

And then his balance goes, he rocks back on his feet, lets go of his johnson to grab the tree, and in the process of swinging manages to piss all over the front of his pants.

Keisel and Gen ERUPT WITH LAUGHTER.

Gen is the first to stop, when he sees RYOTA nearly upon them. Keisel is so amused, he doesn’t notice until Holloway punches him.

Ryoata is simply staring at Gen, a fury beyond words vibrating off of him. When he speaks, it’s to the men behind him, and accompanied by a finger pointing in the direction of Holloway and Keisel.

Immediately, the men slosh toward them, guns at the ready, and begin shouting at them in Japanese and motioning toward the water with their guns.

KEISEL
I’m no translator, but I think they want us to get down.

Holloway takes a hasty beat to zip up, then turns to them violently shaking his head.

HOLLOWAY
No! Na dai, motherfuckers! You just go on ahead. We’re not getting in the goddamn water again.

But they keep shouting and pointing.

KEISEL
Again, not a translator, but they’re gonna shoot us if we don’t do it.

HOLLOWAY
They still need us alive.

KEISEL
They need one of us alive.

Holloway still looks unsure.

KEISEL
We’re gonna have to do it at some point, anyway.

That seals it. Keisel is right. Holloway holds up his hands in a defenseless position.

HOLLOWAY
Okay! Okay!

He sits on the branch, lowers himself to the next one. Keisel follows suit.

HOLLOWAY
We’re coming down.

Near them, Gen winces, grabbing his side, as he does the same. Once in the water, he and Ryoata exchange tense words, but Gen seems to bail himself out.

Ryoata turns his attention to Ryder, still unconsious in the tree. The general pulls a pistol from his belt and gives it to Gen.

Gen looks at it, hesitant. Worse than hesitant. He looks miserable. Like he wants to be anywhere but here.

Keisel and Holloway drop into the water, but their attention isn’t even on the six guns trained on them. It’s on Gen.

KEISEL
What’s he doing?

HOLLOWAY
What’s it look like?

KEISEL
He won’t do it. Will he? Christ, he just saved the guy.

Gen looks at Ryoata, who continues to glare at him, and raises the pistol.

KEISEL
He can’t. He goddamn *can’t!*

A rifle pokes Keisel hard, ushering him forward.

HOLLOWAY
Reverse the situation. What would you do?

Keisel thinks a beat, but comes up with nothing.

KEISEL
Shit.

Gen risks a glance at them. His eyes are sad. They scream *I'm sorry.* But then Ryoata shouts at him, and his eyes return to Ryder, just in time to see his eyes flicker open.

He sees Ryoata and Gen, the gun pointed at him. It all takes a second to register, and when it does, his reaction is resigned.

He glances around to find Holloway and Keisel watching, multiple guns pointed at their backs. But it's Holloway he looks to with a shred of hope-

RYDER
Sarg...?

Holloway sucks in the most difficult breath of his life, lets it out slowly, meets Ryder's pleading gaze, and slowly shakes his head.

Ryder's last words are barely above a whisper, but Holloway understands them perfectly.

RYDER
Don't let 'em get me.

BANG!

The first shot hits Ryder in the shoulder, near his heart but not close enough. The force of it shoves him against the tree's trunk, for a second the breath sucked out of him.

It returns in a wet, rattling gasp, and is followed by a SCREAM. Gen looks horrified, and quickly pulls the trigger again.

The next explosion leaves a hole in Ryder's neck. His one good arm tries to cover it, but blood spills from between his fingers, runs down his arm, and becomes a quickly spreading maroon cloud in the water.

The scream abruptly stops.

It isn't until he's nearly unconscious that he finally drops from the branch into the water. Gen fires at his floating form AGAIN. And AGAIN.

Before he can pull the trigger again, Ryoata rips the pistol away from him. Somehow, he manages to look both impressed and disappointed.

Gen lowers his head. The general speaks to him softly, then motions to the others - *Let's go.*

The others jam their guns into Keisel and Holloway, nudging them forward. Holloway takes a few steps, hears SHOUTING, and turns to find Keisel not moving. Tears run down his face, and he stares at Ryder's gently rocking form.

HOLLOWAY
Let's go man.

If Keisel hears him, he makes no motion to indicate it. The soldier shouts again. Holloway runs over and grabs him.

HOLLOWAY
Private!

Keisel snaps out of it, locking eyes with Holloway, and his commanding officer suddenly understands that something in the man just... broke. Something that will never be fixed.

HOLLOWAY
I am not losing another soldier today. Do you understand?

Slowly, Keisel nods. But he still doesn't move.

HOLLOWAY
Let's go!

That does it. Keisel takes one step. Then another. Within a few steps, they're catching up to Gen, who trails Ryoata. Holloway fixes Ryder's floating body with a pained stare as he passes it.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

Bell, Riley, and the others arrive at the water’s edge. Khin pokes her head out of one of the huts, pauses to briefly argue with someone inside, then slips out into the morning air.

She shouts something to Riley, and he stops, surprised to see her coming up behind him. The soldiers watch as she moves right past them, until she is standing in front of Riley, her eyes locked on his.

She speaks quickly, confidently. Riley responds with a question, and she answers with the same tone. Then they stare at each other for a silent beat, until finally Bell can take it no longer.

BELL
This is fucking adorable, Riley, really just heartbreaking, but-

RILEY
I’m not going.

Bell looks a little stunned.

BELL
Excuse me?

Riley finally turns to him.

RILEY
You’ll have to go on without me.

BELL
What the hell did she say?

RILEY
It doesn’t matter. This is a death sentence. And I don’t want to die yet. It’s that simple. You don’t need me anyway.

BELL
That’s not your call.

RILEY
Of course it is. I’m not even in your army.
(MORE)

RILEY(cont'd)
The only thing you can do is shoot me. And I know you won’t do that.

BELL
What makes you so sure?

RILEY
You’ve done enough already, Sargent Bell.

Corbin raises his gun and points it at Riley.

CORBIN
Don’t mean I won’t.

He takes a step toward Riley, and Bell reaches out and pushes down the barrel of the gun. Corbin looks at him, and Bell shakes his head.

BELL
(to Riley)
Anything you can tell us? Anything to look for?

Riley walks over to the bank and kneels next to the water. He pushes the mud out into a V pattern with his arms, spreading them three feet apart.

RILEY
If you see this, the V shape in the mud, stay the hell away. That’s where they’ve slipped into the water, and if they’re on a stretch of land it could very well be a nest. Backtrack a hundred yards at least, and keep that much between you and-

He motions to the ‘V’ in the mud.

RILEY
-that as you go around.

WOODY
I’ll just shoot the motherfuckers.

RILEY
I’ve seen one take five shots to the head from a Remington elephant gun and still break a man’s legs with a flick of its tail. Besides, you won’t see them in time, if you see them at all.

Woody looks appropriately humbled by the plain seriousness in Riley’s tone.

RILEY
You’re walking into the middle of Berlin with an airhorn announcing that you’re the enemy, but all the Nazis are invisible and bulletproof.

He looks past them, into the woods beyond.

RILEY
Use the trees if you need to get away.

BELL
Thanks. Now drop your pack.

RILEY
What?

BELL
We’re taking your food. You’re not in my army, so I sure as shit don’t have to feed you.

RILEY
Fine.

He drops the pack, and Bell motion for Moss to get it. He quickly removes a half-dozen MREs, and shoves them into Woody’s pack.

Then they turn back to the swamp, and begin wading in.

RILEY
Good luck.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

Ryoata has collected another dozen men, doubling their numbers, all of them slogging through the swamp.

The general is bravely in front, when something occurs to him. He stops the group, and speaks quickly to Gen, who turns and finds Holloway and Keisel among the stragglers.

His eyes are reluctant, even as his voice booms out a sharp command, and he motions with his rifle for them to move to the front.

They make their way up, past Ryota, until they’re ten yards ahead of the rest. Gen pokes at them, forcing them forward, and after a second, Ryota and the other men follow.

KEISEL
What the hell is this?

HOLLOWAY
Operation human shield.

KEISEL
Nice to feel useful, I guess.

In MONTAGE, we see them making their way through the swamp, the water always somewhere between their knees and their chests. They swat at mosquitos and pull LEACHES from their bodies. They pick up a group of weary and wounded STRAGGLERS.

Periodically, they hear blood-curdling CRIES or the loud CRACK of gunfire.

Then one of the men passes out, his skin pasty and his breathing just labored gasps. At gun point, Holloway and Keisel drag the man over to a tree and drape him between the branches, then continue on, leaving him behind.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY - BELL

Moss is on the point, followed by Bell, Corbin, and Woody. They move almost silently through the water, eyes scanning every inch of the swamp, but made all the more nervous by the long shadows and numerous hiding places.

Still, they move much more quickly than their prey, and with a confidence of purpose.

Moss stops when they come upon a floating human a few tatters of uniform and a Japanese army-issued boot still on the foot. Just past it, Bell spots a pile of gore that was, only hours earlier, one of the Japanese soldiers.

He looks at the others, who don’t see it, and decides to keep it to himself.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY - BELL (LATER)

Moss is still on point when Bell stops him with a hand on his shoulder, and points to something to their left. A body, floating thirty yards away.

Moss shakes his head.

MOSS
(whispering)
Just another body.

Bell shakes his head, and points. The shoulder patch has the insignia of their division, just visible above the water line.

Bell moves into point, and they approach the body.

When they’ve cut the distance in half, Corbin stops them -

CORBIN
Sarg!

He motions with his rifle, and they see the small island on which the Japanese soldiers rested. There are tracks all over it, but none cover up the distinctive ‘v’ marking in the mud, where the croc slipped back into the water.

They all freeze, quickly scanning their surroundings. Listening.

Nothing but the ambient noise of the swamp.

Bell gestures for the others to stay, while he approaches the body alone. RYDER is floating face up, his eyes still open and staring blankly at the canopy above him.

He pulls the coat flaps open, and grabs Ryder’s dog tags. He rips them off with a jerk, and RYDER SUDDENLY GASPS, sucking in a ragged breath and clutching blindly at Bell’s outstretched arm.

Bell JERKS away from him, falling backwards into the water. The other men immediately shoulder their rifles on Ryder, who flails in AGONY.

But Bell holds up a hand and gets back to his feet, and trigger fingers loosen just a bit.

BELL
Private!

Ryder’s eyes never seem to even see Bell, but he begins to croak pleadingly-

RYDER
Don’t let them get me. Please don’t let them... don’t... take me...

Bell reaches out and grabs his flailing arm, pulling him closer to him-

BELL
Private! It’s alright, no one’s going to-

The water EXPLODES near Ryder’s feet. It’s an ENORMOUS CROCODILE - at least 20 feet. Ryder SCREAMS when the creatures jaws clamp down on him, attempting to pull him under.

Even in his shock, Bell is able to hold on to Ryder’s arm, trying to yank him away from the half-submerged croc. Behind him, Moss, Woody, and Corbin fan out to the left and right, trying to get a shot that won’t hit Bell or Ryder.

Corbin gets it first, and unleashes a burst of fire into the water covering the beasts body.

The creature’s only reaction is an even more violent wrenching on Ryder’s lower body, it’s tail kicking up huge clouds of water, obscuring the view.

Moss has the next clear shot, unleashing another burst into the same area. More shots from Corbin.

Woody jumps in, and now the whole swamp is a cacophony of screams and gunshots, the soldiers seeing nothing but smoke, water, and blood.

The croc goes into a death roll, twisting its one thousand pounds of body weight more rapidly than would seem possible, RIPPING RYDER'S BODY APART AT THE ABDOMEN AND DRAGGING IT UNDER.

The bullets continue to rip up the muck for a moment, but they stop when Bell drops the corpse and gestures for the others to lower their guns-

BELL
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

The gunfire stops, and the swamp around them returns to normal. Like nothing happened. Everything seems to be still.

WOODY
Fuck me sideways!

MOSS
Man told you, Woody. Invisible and bulletpr-

Moss is cut off by the slightest *GLUCK* before HIS LEGS ARE RIPPED OUT FROM UNDER HIM, and he disappears below the surface.

It happens so fast Woody and Corbin can't quite believe it.

CORBIN
Moss?

Woody just scans the water furiously, waiting for something, anything, to announce the croc's presence.

CORBIN
C'mon, Moss. Quit screwing around!

WOODY
I don't think he's screwin' around.

CORBIN
But he was right there, man.

BELL
We need to move out. Now.

Corbin turns to his commanding officer, his face anguished and confused.

CORBIN
But he was right there!

BELL
And now he’s not. We’re gonna join him if we don’t get moving.

Corbin still stares at him, but Woody puts a hand on his shoulder and turns him back in the direction they were heading.

BELL
Woody - you’re on point now. Cut a wide birth around that island, just like Wiley said. And double time. We lose another day on these fucks, we might lose another soldier.

EXT. SWAMP - EVENING - (HOLLOWAY)

Holloway and Keisel are still running point for the Japanese soldiers, just a few yards ahead of a group that’s grown to several dozen soldiers.

Keisel sees BUBBLES floating up ahead of them. A few more surface and burst, a little bit closer. Keisel FREEZES.

HOLLOWAY
What?

Keisel points to the slightest WAKE barely disturbing the surface of the water. Holloway sees it heading toward them. Behind him, a Japanese soldier SHOUTS something, but next to him, Gen follows the Americans’ eyes and says something like - *shut up!*

Fists go up, and behind him the soldiers all, with stunning synchronicity, are suddenly STILL. All eyes scanning the water around them.

Holloway and Keisel watch the approaching wake peel off just a bit before them, moving past Holloway, and disappear into a cluster of trees.

The collectively held breath of the soldiers is released almost simultaneously, none sighing more heavily than GEN.

But the relief lasts only a second, before HOLLOWAY CRIES OUT, and appears to be jerked under water. Gen takes a few instinctive steps toward him, reaching out, but grasping nothing.

In a second, Holloway has DISAPPEARED.

And only a second later, THE SAME THING HAPPENS TO GEN.

He’s standing there; there’s a scream; he’s gone. Nothing left but the a ripple where he was standing, and kicked-up mud clouding the water further.

Keisel looks like he might burst into tears.

KEISEL
Sarg?

He scans the water with increasing concern.

KEISEL
SARGE?!

He tears through the water, trying to find him, moving in the direction of the grove of trees. But he doesn’t get a few feet before a bevy of soldiers have guns pointed at him and are shouting commands.

Keisel ignores them.

KEISEL
HOLLOWAY??!!

But now the only ripples are coming from Keisel, who keeps pulling the water away with his hands, as though it might reveal his CO. But the muck keeps pouring right back into the space, and he pushes forward another step... and another-

CRACK! He’s leveled by a blow to the head from the butt of a rifle. He drops below the surface, then emerges a second later gasping and clutching the back of his head.

He raises his eyes to find Ryoto standing over him, motioning him forward with an infantry rifle. His expression suggests that this will be his final warning.

Reluctantly, rocking a bit from the blow, Keisel gets back to his feet, and pushes back toward the front of the group. Ryoato SHOUTS to the men, short and stern, and they begin to move, following the woozy Keizel deeper into the swamp.

EXT. SWAMP - A FEW SECONDS LATER (HOLLOWAY)

As the men move past, HOLLOWAY'S FACE EMERGES SLOWLY FROM THE WATER behind the cluster of trees, gasping short breaths as quickly as possible, then disappearing again.

After doing this two or three times, the soldiers are nearly past, and he risks bringing his head up for a look around.

He's well concealed by the trees, and watches as the last few soldiers slog past him, completely unaware.

He JUMPS at the light sound of displaced water just a few feet away from him, and is surprised to see GEN surface next to him.

His first reaction is apprehensive, as is Gen's of him. They take a second to size each other up, eyes flicking to the passing soldiers from whom they are both hiding.

Eventually, the soldiers disappear, although their sloshing through the water continues to echo toward them. Holloway and Gen are forced to confront their problem, as their eyes settle on one another again. But with no translator, Holloway looks lost.

GEN
Watashi wa koufuku.

HOLLOWAY
Koufuku? Surrender? You want *me* to surrender? I will kick your little Japanese ass-

Gen realizes he's not being understood, so he very calmly draws his pistol. Holloway's eyes go wide when he sees it, and he's about to lunge for it-

When Gen turns it around and presents it to him, handle first. Holloway stops short of clobbering him, but still looks unsure.

Gen turns a finger to his own chest, and repeats-

GEN
Watashi. Wa. Koufuku.

He pokes the finger into his sternum with each word, enunciating as best he can.

HOLLOWAY
You surrender.

He reaches slowly for the gun, not relaxing until his fingers close around the grip. Gen’s hand falls away, and without hesitation Holloway raises the barrel to Gen’s face.

HOLLOWAY
You killed my friend.

Gen stares at him, his eyes wide with fear, but unmoving.

HOLLOWAY
Did you hear me motherfucker?

He points his own finger at Gen, not quite poking him to enunciate-

HOLLOWAY
You. Killed. My. Friend.

Gen doesn’t know what to do. He doesn’t understand, but Holloway’s face says it all. He raises two trembling hands up over his shoulders, but he doesn’t break Holloway’s gaze.

They hold for a tense beat, neither sure what to do. Finally, Holloway lowers the gun.

HOLLOWAY
Shit.

Gen breathes a sigh of relief and lowers his hands.

HOLLOWAY
Well you can’t surrender to me.

Holloway motions with his hand like he’s scribbling something.

HOLLOWAY
Pen? Do you have a pen?

Gen watches for a second, then nods, and roots around in his pockets. He emerges with small pen. Holloway takes it, then takes off his helmet and turns it over.

Taped to the inside is a carefully folded letter covering about three quarters of the page. No idea who it's to, or what it says.

Holloway tears off the bottom quarter and, bearing down on his helmet, scratches out a few words.

THIS MAN IS A POW. TREAT HIM WELL.

SGT. ELLIOT HOLLOWAY

98TH INFANTRY

He gives the paper to Gen and points back in the direction from which they came.

HOLLOWAY
Go.

Gen looks confused. Holloway points more forcefully.

HOLLOWAY
Go!

Gen turns away from him, and begins walking away. He stops a few steps away, to check on Holloway, then continues.

Holloway watches him go for a moment, then turns back toward the other soldiers who disappeared with Keisel. He checks the ammo in Gen's pistol, the follows after them.

INT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Keisel is now alone, marching ahead of the others. His eyes are distant, something in his face slack. Wet, shivering in the cold night air, pushing ahead at a slow, steady pace... he looks like a zombie.

Behind him, Ryota SHOUTS something. The men behind him all stop. Keisel just keeps going, as though he didn't hear.

Ryoata shouts again. Keisel slogs along.

He doesn’t stop until a bullet kicks up a spray of water only a few inches from him. The loud CRACK of it echoes through the trees.

Keisel’s eyes turn to the spot, but he doesn’t turn to the soldiers trailing him. Rather, he closes his eyes, waiting for the next shot. Hoping for it.

It doesn’t come. Finally, he turns to face them. There are roughly fifty rifles pointed at him.

He’s thinking about just charging them, the animal instinct in his huge frame starting to take over. But then it passes, and his face sags in resignation. He raises his hands in acquiescence.

Nothing to do but go on.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (HOLLOWAY)

Holloway watches from a good distance and sighs with relief, as a few of the soldiers advance on Keisel, push him over to a tree, and tie his hands to the trunk. Others are climbing into trees or looking for patches of dry land on which to settle.

Holloway sighs in relief, then pushes to the group’s left, flanking them.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (BELL)

Corbin is on point, with Bell and Woody right behind him. The darkness is so thick that it’s hard to see your hand in front of your face.

CORBIN
C’mon, Sarg. Can’t see shit. We could stumble right on ‘em and be dead before we know who it is.

BELL
God-willing, they’re resting now. This our only chance to make up ground. Keep pushing.

CORBIN
Maybe you should take point, then, and I’ll-

He stops at the sound of MOVEMENT in the water, somewhere ahead of them, and to their left. Corbin’s closed fist goes up immediately, and they are instantly still and silent.

Rifles at the ready, Bell motions them forward, into the darkness, in the direction of the sound.

Corbin works his way out to the left, trying to be as quiet as possible. He looks down and sees RIPPLES coming toward him, moving past him.

Whatever it is, it’s very close. He lifts a hand and motions toward Bell and Woody, but with the darkness and the trees, they have no chance of seeing him.

Corbin’s muscles tighten around his rifle. He makes his way slowly around a tree, and finds GEN WITH HIS BACK PRESSED AGAINST THE TRUNK, looking terrified.

As calmly as possible, Gen says-

GEN
Watashi wa koufuku.

-and steps toward him, holding out the paper.

Corbin’s eyes go wide, and almost as a reaction, his finger CLOSES ON THE TRIGGER.

Bell WHACKS the rifle’s barrel up in the air at the last possible second, sending the shot wild.

BELL
Hey!

CORBIN
Fuck, man!

BELL
He surrenders!

Bell turns to Gen, who has gone completely pale and looks on the verge of fainting, and SNATCHES the piece of paper from his hand.

Gen jumps back, but Bell just reads it, then hands it to Corbin.

BELL
We’re not murderers.

CORBIN
I’ve seen you kill ten people.

BELL
There’s a difference between a killer and a murderer.

CORBIN
Whatever helps you sleep, Sarge.

Woody has joined them, and jumps in.

WOODY
Cut the shit, guys. We got him. What are we gonna do with him? Leave him?

CORBIN
The guy’s gator bait.

BELL
We should take him. He can show us where they took them.

CORBIN
He can give away our position.

BELL
Look at him, Corbin. The guy WANTS to get caught. He’s a deserter - they’ll kill him.

CORBIN
Could be a trap.

BELL
That’s a hell of a lot of trouble for three soldiers. There’s a goddamn battalion out there.

WOODY
At least, there was.

Bell turns to Gen, points his index finger at him.

BELL
Namae?

For a beat, Gen just remains frozen. Then, it’s like he snaps out of trance.

GEN
Gen.

Bell turns back to Corbin.

BELL
Gen’s with us now.

Bell turns Gen back in the direction he came from, and points in that direction.

BELL
Show me.

Gen seems to understand, nods, and begins leading them deeper into the swamp.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (HOLLOWAY)

Holloway is hugging a large tree a dozen yards from where fifty Japanese soldiers are resting. Three of them have taken up watch positions, one of them very near Keisel, who is still tied to the tree.

Holloway searches the area with his eyes, looking for some way to get to Keisel-

HOLLOWAY
Shit.

-but doesn’t see any.

A slow, subtle MOTION in his periphery gets his attention. When he looks to his right, he sees an ENORMOUS CROC lazily swimming past him, toward the soldiers.

It’s at least 20 feet long, and drifting past within three feet from him. He can see small dents in the hide - bullets that either bounced off or are clinging to the thing’s flesh, having penetrated a few inches at most.

Holloway’s breath catches, jaw hanging open.

It’s so big, it takes several seconds for it to pass. Holloway is frozen with fear, his body as still as the tree. He doesn’t dare draw breath until it’s several yards past him.

Just as Holloway inhales, the creature *slips* beneath the water, something so enormous just DISAPPEARS silently.

Holloway takes a few quick breaths, and disappears beneath the water himself, swimming toward Keisel, and away from the croc.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (BELL)

Bell and Gen lead the way, Woody and Corbin behind them. Gen starts to go left around a dense thicket of trees, then pauses. He turns and motions them in the other direction.

The others follow, but a few steps that way, and he pauses again. He looks around him, at what little he can see, turns to Bell and shrugs - *I'm lost.*

Bell shakes his head, opens his mouth to curse-

AND CORBIN SUDDENLY CLAMPS HIS HAND OVER BELL'S MOUTH.

It catches Bell so off guard that he WHIRLS on CORBIN, who holds up a finger - *shhhhhh* - then points above them. Bell follows his eyes and finds A JAPANESE SOLDIER ASLEEP IN THE TREE ABOVE THEM.

Bell's eyes go wide. He looks down at his men, finds Corbin looking back at him, but Woody is looking at the sleeping soldier about six above him like he's sizing something up.

He motions Bell and Corbin to step back. They hesitate a second, not understanding, but do it anyway. He motions again, and they take another step. They're now about two feet behind the soldiers, looking up at his back as his head rests on the trunk, snoring softly.

Woody nods at them - *that's good* - and pulls an eight inch KNIFE from its sheath on his belt as slowly and quietly as possible.

Once it's free, he flips it around so he's holding the blade, and in one fluid motion FLINGS IT AT THE SOLDIER.

IT STICKS IN THE SOLDIER'S NECK ALL THE WAY TO THE HILT. The soldier jerks awake, clutching his neck, but his pierced airway can only emit a *gluck* sound.

He tips back off of the branch, FALLING RIGHT INTO THE WAITING ARMS OF BELL AND CORBIN.

They keep the noise to an absolute minimum, lowering the soldier softly into the water, seemingly oblivious to the spurting blood covering their arms.

Woody comes over, turns the sputtering man over so that he can grab the hilt of his knife. Then he RIPS it from the man’s throat, wipes it on his uniform, and sheathes it again.

The man drifts right past GEN, his eyes staring desperately at a fellow soldier, who can do nothing but look away as he slides past.

BELL
(to Corbin, whispering)
Nice throw.

WOODY
(whispering)
Thanks.

Bell addresses the group.

BELL
(whispering)
Keep it tight.

He grabs Gen by his uniform and pulls him closer.

BELL
(to Gen, whispering)
Tight. Got it?

Gen nods.

CORBIN
Sarge... we can’t take him in there. If shit hits the fan and he has to pick between himself and us, he’s gonna run right back to daddy cryin’ ‘they made me do it,’ and if it gets us all killed they might just take him back.

WOODY
He’s right.

Bell looks at Gen, sighs.

BELL
Shit on a stick.

CORBIN
Send him on out there. Somebody'll pick him up. Us or them.

BELL
Fine.

He grabs Gen again, but this time he points out into the swamp.

BELL
Go.

Gen looks confused, then at the men around him.

GEN
Tight.

Bell shakes his head.

BELL
No. Go.

Again, Gen looks confused. Woody points his rifle at him, not seriously, but sternly enough to make the point.

WOODY
You heard him, slant. Get out of here.

Gen glances at him, but knows Bell is the one in charge and looks back to him. Bell nods, but digs around in his pocket and hands him the NOTE that Holloway gave him.

BELL
Thanks.

Gen trudges off reluctantly, glancing back at them over his shoulder a few times. When Bell is convinced that he's gone for good, he turns back to his men.

BELL
We're close. Nobody fires a shot until I do. When we do fire, we kill anything that moves, swinging dick or otherwise.

CORBIN
Thought this was a recon mission.

BELL
Fuck that. Everyone in this whole place is gonna be dead by sunup. We spot our guys, it’s a smash and grab and we’re gone.

WOODY
You sure about that?

BELL
I’m tired of letting men get killed. Aren’t you?

Both Woody and Corbin give a thoughtful pause before nodding.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (KEISEL)

Keisel nods off, falling away from the trunk until his weight is caught by the ropes binding his wrists behind the tree. That causes a quick sharp pain that jerks him awake.

It’s like a little slice of hell.

He looks around at the numerous sleeping soldiers, then at the few guards barely keeping their eyes open. One is stationed just a few feet behind his tree; Keisel can barely see him from the corner of his eye.

KEISEL
Hey.

No response.

KEISEL
Psst. Hey.

The guard glances at him. Keisel raises his hands out of the water.

KEISEL
Can you just loosen these a little? I’m dying here.

The guard looks at him, at his hands, shakes his head and turns back to the surrounding darkness.

Keisel does not look surprised at the reaction. He turns his miserable eyes forward again, finds them closing against his will.

Then something BRUSHES past him. His eyes shoot open, and catch the vague outline of that enormous croc sliding past him.

He turns back to the guard.

KEISEL
Hey!

The guard turns to him with an exasperated look, and mutters something that sounds like *shut up.* Keisel tries to motion with his head toward the croc.

KEISEL
There's a-

Gluck! The guard's face registers a moment's surprise before he's JERKED under the water.

Everything is still except for the ripples lapping at Keisel and the tree he's tied to.

There was just enough commotion to attract the attention of one of the other guards, who moves toward him, carefully sweeping the area with his rifle as he does.

When he gets close, he calls out as quietly as possible-

GUARD 2
Takai?

Of course, there's no answer. A little more loudly-

GUARD 2
Takai?!

Still silence.

KEISEL
He ain't gonna answer, buddy.

The second guard pokes Keisel with his rifle. And asks him a question - *where is he?* Keisel shakes his head, and tries to motion toward the water-

KEISEL
It was a goddamn-

Then, the first guard - Takai - BURSTS from the water, SCREAMING, his abdomen in the grip of the ENORMOUS CROC, which is shaking him so violently he’s almost ripped him in two.

The croc flips him up and then CRASHES down into the water with him.

But when Takai is at his apex, he and Keisel lock eyes for the briefest second, and Keisel sees the GRENADE clutched in one hand, his other hand moving toward the pin.

And then, with another incredible splash, the croc drags him back under the water.

KEISEL
Oh boy.

Keisel swivels as best he can, putting the tree between him and the impending explosion. The second guard has time to fire exactly one shot into the water where the croc was, then-

BOOM!

The EXPLOSION sends a churning mixture of fetid water, blood, and guts TWO STORIES HIGH. The concussion throws the second guard into a tree so hard that Keisel can hear his spine snap, but his RIFLE winds up dangling by the strap from a nearby tree.

It also severs Keisel’s bindings, but takes three of his fingers with them. He immediately falls away from the tree into the water, clutching his devastated hands.

He screams in pain, but that’s quickly drowned up by an explosion of GUNFIRE all around him.

All the sleeping soldiers leap into the fray, guns blazing, the water ripped apart by a thousand bullets.

Keisel looks down into the water just as another croc LUNGES for him. He’s able to get his good hand up on the animal’s nose, forcing its lunge off to his left, barely dodging a mouthful of razor sharp teeth. He throws himself the other way, and begins swimming toward the RIFLE left dangling from the trees.

Around him, more crocs are emerging from the water, pulling soldiers out of trees, lumbering onto the tiny strips of land where men were sleeping.

A quick glance around and Keisel sees that there are dozens of them. No, HUNDREDS. More are swimming toward them from the surrounding darkness, attracted by the sounds of flailing and screaming and the blood pouring into the water.

Then his eyes return to the second guard’s rifle hanging from the tree, and he breaks for it, the croc recovering and trailing after him.

He has to jump to reach it, and his hands, slick with blood, slip off the grip. Behind him, the croc is closing. He tries again, this time getting his fingers around the barrel and catching on the sight. It digs into his skin as the branch it’s clinging to refuses to give.

He looks back and sees the croc just a few feet away. He grabs with the two remaining fingers on his other hand, howling in pain as one of the fingers slips into trigger and YANKS the gun down.

Keisel turns and throws himself onto his back, landing on a tiny strip of mud exposed over the water, thrusting the rifle forward with one bloody middle finger squeezing the trigger just as the creature LUNGES-

The first bullet goes right into its OPEN MOUTH from about two feet away. The creature crashes its jaws onto the rifle just as the second shot RIPS ITS BRAIN on the back of its skull.

When it lands, it’s literally on top of him, his left arm INSIDE ITS MOUTH up to the elbow. Even in death, the jaws close around him, and he screams as one of the massive teeth sinks into the flesh of his forearm.

On top of which, he’s now trapped under several hundred pounds of crocodile.

In the chaos around him, no one even notices him, much less offers to help. He grabs the animal’s top jaw, trying to at least pry his arm free, but it’s no use. And it hurts like hell.

Suddenly, another CROC EXPLODES from the water to his right, coming right at him-

When HOLLOWAY leaps at it, catches it mid-lunge, wrapping his arms around its jaws and rolling the thing away from Keisel. After one flip he’s straddling the thing’s back.

It snaps it’s jaws and jerks its head back, trying to buck him, but not before Holloway can put the pistol point blank against the back of its head and FIRE SIX CONSECUTIVE SHOTS - BOOM!BOOM!BOOM!BOOM!BOOM!BOOM! - INTO IT.

The head flops down onto the mud.

KEISEL
Holy shit, Sarg!

Holloway puts a finger to his lip.

HOLLOWAY
Shhhhh!

He crawls over and together they pry the animals’ mouth open, freeing Keisel’s arm. Then they push it off of him.

KEISEL
Wasn’t sure you’d come after me.

HOLLOWAY
Wasn’t sure I would, either. But I knew you’d come after me, so I was kind of stuck.

They look around to see if anyone notices their activity, but it’s safe to say they haven’t. An incredibly well-trained, well-armed battalion of battle-tested soldiers are reduced to tiny pockets of survivors surrounded by monsters they can’t see, firing at nothing, and still getting dragged away at a staggering rate.

Some are just sitting in the trees, weeping. Others are missing limbs, wandering aimlessly through the water as their life drains away, waiting for the death roll that will drag them under and drown them before they bleed to death.

And then there’s Ryoata. He’s collected a handful of men around him, and, after he BARKS a command at them, they each pull a grenade.

Another command and they turn so they are all facing away from each other, and out into the swamp. They each wade out into the water.

Some are fearless, determined, true believers in their commander to the end. Others tremble and freeze. One soldier cannot bring himself to take a step. Ryoata draws his pistol and SHOOTS him in the back.

He shouts the command again. Now even those who are gripped with terror are dragging themselves forward, one cautious step at a time.

One by one, crocodiles grab hold of each man, who then pulls the pin on the grenade.

BOOM!

A second later, a fine red mist settles on the few remains of each soldier and crocodile.

And just seconds after that, more crocodiles are swarming, tearing at the remains, fighting with one another for the scraps.

In the center, Ryoata, watches the carnage unfold, and then smiles as the biggest crocs drag the remains away to some place safer, and the others follow.

His smile falters when he sees Holloway dragging Keisel away.

Holloway glances back, catches the general staring, and GRINS at him before disappearing into the swamp.

Ryoata shouts an order to whoever is still listening - *GET THEM!*

A few pairs of eyes follow Ryoata’s extended finger in the direction that Holloway and Keisel disappeared. And among the survivors, there are many who just want to get the hell out of there, and see this as an opportunity.

A few knowing glances are exchanged before twenty soldiers charge off after them.

As they go, all around them, the soldiers and Ryoata hear gunfire, explosions, and screams. Some are from far in the distance.

The remnants of the Japanese battalion of more than a thousand are being slaughtered.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT (HOLLOWAY)

Holloway pulls Keisel along, but his injured hands are trailing blood behind them. Holloway rips a scrap of his shirt away and gives it to Keisel.

HOLLOWAY
Keep pressure on it. Japs can see the blood, and the crocs can smell it.

KEISEL
Nice to know that’s your concern, and not me bleeding to death.

HOLLOWAY
You just had a grenade go off a couple feet from you. Gonna take more than a few missing fingers to bring down a bear like you. Now c’mon, we-

A SHOT wizzes past Holloway’s head and lodges in a tree right next to him. He grabs Keisel and together they PLUNGE under the water.

More bullets pelt the water. Within a few seconds, the twenty Japanese soldiers are standing over the area.

Holloway and Keisel surface quietly BEHIND THEM. They begin moving away as quietly as possibly, their faces barely breaking the surface of the water.

They get a good bit of distance between them, but the soldiers are scanning the area and spot them.

HOLLOWAY
Shit.

No more hiding under the water. They’re back on their feet, barrelling through the swamp. Keisel is pale and faint.

KEISEL
Ain’t got much more in me, boss.

HOLLOWAY
Cut that shit right now! Move your ass, private!

KEISEL
Just leave me. I'll buy you some time.

HOLLOWAY
NO!

He grabs hold of Keisel and DRAGS him through the water, practically throwing him through a grove of trees. Holloway risks a glance behind, and sees the soldiers hot on their heals, then follows-

-AND FREEZES, finding Bell, Corbin, and Woody with barrels leveled right at him.

Everyone freezes for a beat, just taking a second to comprehend *we're on the same team!*

Holloway breaks it only a second later-

HOLLOWAY
Twenty behind me.

Bell motions him behind their rifles, and they spread out around the grove. Holloway joins them, his pistol pointed at the point he came through.

It's only a few seconds later when the first two soldiers come through. They're riddled with bullets before they can even get a shot off.

The next soldier takes a quick shot from Woody, but still manages to squeeze off a round that goes wild.

More pile through, firing blindly and forcing the others to take cover. A group of five moves AROUND the grove, flanking them to the right.

Woody is the closest to that group. He sees them a second before a shot RIPS into his left shoulder, sending him spinning like a top.

He catches himself on a branch, then uses his right arm to pull a grenade, rip the pin out with his teeth, and throw it.

One of the flanking soldiers puts another shot through his head before he can even hear the explosion.

Corbin sees Woody go down-

CORBIN
Woody!

BOOM! The grenade detonates, scattering the group of flanking Japanese soldiers. Corbin breaks for Woody's still form while the Japanese are distracted by the grenade.

BELL
No! Corbin!

The soldiers coming through the grove recover, see Corbin running away from them, and put two shots into his back, sending him sprawling face first into the water.

Bell tries to run after him, but Holloway grabs him.

BELL
Let me go!

Holloway shakes his head, holding him.

HOLLOWAY
You can't help him.

Corbin is still swimming, pulling himself toward Woody with trembling bloody hands, gasping for air.

A CROCODILE ERUPTS FROM THE WATER and literally decapitates Corbin.

BELL
No!

One of the soldiers has Holloway and Bell in his sights, but Keisel - huddled against the trees in the grove, just out of their scope of vision, TACKLES him, throwing him into the water.

Keisel, far larger than his opponent, reigns blows down on the smaller man, then holds him underwater.

Two more soldiers take aim at Keisel, but Holloway drops one with his pistol, and wings the other.

Keisel finally lets go of the soldier, who drifts to the surface like one of the logs, then grabs his sinking rifle and joins the fray, settling the gun on his wrist and using his good hand to pull the trigger.

Keisel SCREAMS as he charges into the heart of the group. Bell doesn’t hesitate before following him, his own gun firing as quickly as he can get the shots off.

Holloway watches them go, unsure.

Keisel forces the remaining four soldiers back through the grove. When he emerges on the other side, his rifle *clicks* - out of ammo. He just flips it around and CLUBS the nearest soldier in the face with the butt of the gun.

Another pulls a knife and leaps at him before his comrade hits the water, but Bell takes him out with a shot from his rifle.

Two left. Both have the distance to kill either Bell or Keisel before they could do anything. Both have rifles leveled.

But the first has his ARM RIPPED OFF BY A CROC. The beast immediately flips around and grabs him in the abdomen and pulls him under.

The other stumbles back, and never even sees Holloway come around the other side of the grove, taking the opposite flank the first group of Japanese soldiers did.

Holloway’s shot rips through his neck. The man drops his rifle and grabs his throat, blood spilling from between his fingers. He gurgles and spits more blood from his mouth before Keisel brings the RIFLE BUTT DOWN ON HIS HEAD.

His still form floats away, leaving a tiny trail of blood from the hole in his neck.

Finally, the men have a chance to catch their breath.

BELL
Sgt. Ambrose Bell.

HOLLOWAY
Holloway.

He points to Keisel, who is still breathing in great, heaving gasps as the adrenaline slowly drains from his body and watching the dead man’s body float away.

HOLLOWAY
Keisel.

BELL
Pleasure.

HOLLOWAY
Likewise. Can we get the fuck out of here?

Bell nods at Keisel, and his missing fingers.

BELL
How’s he?

HOLLOWAY
He’ll make it.

There’s a sudden eruption of gunfire from somewhere close, and both Holloway and Bell immediately press themselves against nearby trees, and lower their bodies further into the water.

Keisel doesn’t move.

BELL
He doesn’t look so good.

Holloway lowers his voice and fixes Bell with a glare.

HOLLOWAY
I said he’ll make it.

BELL
If you say so.

THe gunfire ceases, and after a moment of relative calm-

HOLLOWAY
Which way?

Bell grabs a compass from his pocket, and uses a flashlight to check the direction, flicking it quickly on and then off to keep from giving away their position.

He points in what could well be a random direction.

HOLLOWAY
How far?

BELL
If we push it, we can make it just after dawn.

HOLLOWAY
Then lets push it.

Holloway puts a hand on Keisel’s shoulder.

HOLLOWAY
C’mon, buddy. We’re going home.

It takes a second before Keisel acknowledges Holloway, but when he turns, his pale face looks on the verge of tears.

KEISEL
Home?

HOLLOWAY
Home.

Still, he doesn’t move until Holloway tugs on his arm, pulling him in Bell’s direction.

HOLLOWAY
Come on. Let’s go.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The village is still and quiet, even though echoes of the gunshots can be heard from the swamp.

A FIGURE appears in the darkened doorway of one of the huts. After a beat, he steps through, into the moonlight, revealing RILEY, pulling on his shirt.

He looks out at the swamp, haunted by the sounds he hears coming from it. He closes his eyes, sighs, and goes back into the hut.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT - LATER

Together, the three of them trudge through the swamp, heading back toward solid land. Keisel looks worse, the cloth he holds to his severed fingers soaked in blood, his eyes open but unfocused.

Bell stops and checks his compass, again using the quick flash of the light to keep their visibility minimal.

He points to their left, correcting their direction.

Suddenly, there’s a SHOUT from the somewhere in the darkness. Water SPLASHING.

BELL
Shit! They saw my light.

They turn and run as fast as they can, which isn’t very with the enormous Keisel being essentially dragged by the two men.

Holloway risks a glance over his shoulder, and sees a small group of soldiers surging toward them and gaining quickly.

HOLLOWAY
We gotta do something. They’re gonna catch us.

Before he can respond, something catches Bell’s eye. He points to their right, and Holloway can make out the outline of a CROC sliding off a small, muddy patch of land into the water.

They veer away from that, to the left, now looking over their shoulders for the croc and the soldiers, and are barely looking at where they’re going-

-when they stumble into a clearing and find the ancient stone remains of a BUDDHIST TEMPLE.

EXT. TEMPLE – NIGHT

The temple sprawls through the invading vines and trees, it’s large stone blocks towering fifty feet above them. The outside is guarded by the enormous stone image of the Buddha, sitting peacefully despite the choking vines, missing arm, and crumbling face. The doorway behind him reaches twenty feet high, and sits atop a dozen stone steps colored a sickly green by moss.

It takes the men a second to internalize the sudden appearance of shelter in the inky blackness, and in that time their pursuers catch up with them.

Bell whips around and begins firing. He calls back to Holloway and Keisel-

BELL
Go!

Holloway DRAGS Keisel up the steps, but his ragged breathing and pale skin make it clear he’s got nothing left. He COLLAPSES a few steps from the top.

HOLLOWAY
What’re you doing?!

KEISEL
Can’t.

HOLLOWAY
The hell you can’t. I’m not leaving-

Keisel shakes his head. Bell joins them, still firing. Bullets chip into the stone around them, closing in.

BELL
Let’s go!

Holloway tugs on Keisel’s arm-

HOLLOWAY
C’mon!

BELL
Leave him!

Holloway looks up at Bell, just as a bullet whizzes past his head. The Japanese soldiers are advancing.

Bell GRABS Holloway and drags him to his feet, pulling him away from Keisel, who is barely conscious. But before they get up the next step, Keisel grabs Bell’s leg. Bell looks down, frantically trying to pull away from him, but something in Keisel’s look gives him a split-second’s pause.

Keisel lets go of his leg and points to the grenade hanging from Bell’s belt. Bell nods, pulls it off, and hands it to Keisel.

Then he and Holloway disappear in to the darkness of the temple, using the walls around the doorway for cover and returning fire as best they can.

INT. TEMPLE – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Bell is pumping shots out as fast as he can, but it only takes a few seconds before he hears the dreaded click of an empty magazine. He turns to Holloway.

BELL
I’m out.

He reaches into his boot for his knife. Holloway looks around the room for anything else they can use as a weapon. In the darkness it’s hard to make out how large the space is, but finds the stone room mostly barren, the sunken floor filled knee-high with water, deeper in places where the stones have been tossed aside by roots and growth.

HOLLOWAY
Then I think we’re screwed.

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

Realizing that there’s no more enemy fire, the soldiers move cautiously to the base of the steps and climb, paying no attention to Keisel, who is doing a masterful job of playing dead while curled up on his side, concealing the grenade.

When they near him and the top of the steps, one of them SHOUTS a command to Holloway and Bell inside, but gets no response.

Another soldier nudges Keisel’s still form with his foot, turning him over and revealing wide, conscious eyes, a grinning face, and a left hand missing three fingers but holding the PIN FROM THE GRENADE.

The soldiers barely have a second to register their surprise before-

INT. TEMPLE – NIGHT

BOOM!

The explosion flings Holloway and Bell back into the room, where they sink below the water while the stones around the doorway COLLAPSE, burying the entryway in a twenty-foot high mound of rubble.

As the dust begins to settle, they burst back through the water and find themselves TRAPPED inside the tunnel. A tiny bit of light escapes through a small hole at the top of the rubble blocking their way. Through it, they can just make out a couple of stars.

Bell looks at their utterly blocked escape, then back to Holloway.

BELL
Now we’re screwed.

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT - LATER

Holloway and Bell are leaning against the wall, looking up at the few visible stars and the shafts of moonlight creeping between the trees.

HOLLOWAY
When they took us, there was this guy, Alan Paul. Private, only been with us a few months, but we just kind of... clicked, you know? The way you know somehow that somebody’s gonna be your friend. We played a lot poker.

He sighs.

HOLLOWAY
Anyway, they chucked a grenade at us. Landed a few feet from us. I was gonna be vapor. Fucking Alan didn’t miss a beat. He threw himself on it, while I was standing there, a slack-jawed idiot. That was the bravest thing I ever saw. I could never do that.

BELL
Yeah. But he’s dead and you’re not.

He turns to Bell.

HOLLOWAY
Isn’t the world better off with him than me? How many more cowards do we need?

BELL
How long you been out here?

HOLLOWAY
Nine months.

BELL
I been here two years, all of them with the same unit. So we're trying to take a hill on the mainland. And we were firing, man. Artillery, air support... I'd have been crapping my pants if it'd all been leveled at me.

He pauses, takes a settling breath.

BELL
But we fucking lost. And it's not that we weren't fast enough, or strong enough, or smart enough. We just couldn't match their fearlessness. Our lives are too precious. The only regret those men fear is not dying for their country. To beat that means going to a place I don't want to go. And if you don't want to either, that's pretty fucking sane to me.

Bell leans his head back and closes his eyes.

BELL
Now we just do what we gotta do to stay alive.

HOLLOWAY
If that's your goal, then this was a pretty stupid mission for you to take on.

BELL
It was just recon. We weren't supposed to do anything.

HOLLOWAY
A recon mission? I'd have walked ten feet into the swamp, climbed into a tree, taken a nap, then gone home and said they'd already killed you.

BELL
They'd ask for our dogtags.

HOLLOWAY
Took fire. Had to run before I could get them.

BELL
Did you sell cars back in the world?

HOLLOWAY
Drove a cab, mostly. But I had a few side projects.

BELL
I bet you did.

They’re silent for a beat.

HOLLOWAY
Seriously. Why did you come after us?

BELL
Beats the hell out of me. You sold me. I should have left your ass out here.

SNAP! Movement from somewhere inside the temple. Bell whips his flashlight in that direction. The beam is narrow, and swallowed by the darkness all around it.

Holloway follows the light with the barrel of his pistol.

The light passes over the enormous croc initially, it sits so still in the water.

But the faintest ripple flowing out from its body brings Bells light back to the outline. The light GLINTS off it’s eyeballs, each one the size of a kiwi.

HOLLOWAY
Holy shit.

From nose to tail, the beast is easily twenty feet long, 2000 pounds.

BELL
It looks like a fuckin’ dinosaur. How big is that?

HOLLOWAY
Bigger than my truck.

BELL
What do we do?

HOLLOWAY
I’d say ‘run’, but...

BELL
We could shoot it.

HOLLOWAY
With this thing? We’d only piss it off.

The light plays over a few quarter-sized rivets in his hide.

BELL
Looks like it’s taken a few shots already.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY - FLASHBACK

Moss, Woody, and Corbin pump shells into the water, where the croc with Ryder’s body just disappeared. Bell can just make out the outline of the croc swimming away, for a split second.

It’s a monster just like this one.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY - PRESNET

BELL
I’ll be damned.

HOLLOWAY
What?

BELL
I think this one’s the motherfucker that took Ryder’s body right out of my goddamn hand.

HOLLOWAY
Shut up. How the hell can you tell?

BELL
Same size, and my guys pumped a shit ton of bullets into it. You seen any others that size?

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Holloway clings to the tree, watching the enormous croc drift past him, toward the soldiers, bullet holes dug into the thing’s back.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT - PRESENT

HOLLOWAY
Just one.

BELL
I’m telling you, that’s him.

With the softest flick of its tail, the croc begins to drift toward them.

HOLLOWAY
We gotta fuckin’ kill it.

BELL
I admire your sudden courage, but this isn’t the time or place to settle scores, Elliot.

HOLLOWAY
No. I mean we gotta fuckin’ kill it. We’re trapped.

BELL
With what? Foul language?

HOLLOWAY
Think.

Bell does, and quickly comes up with nothing.

BELL
Five thousand years of making war with every living thing on earth, and we’re useless against a goddamn animal.

HOLLOWAY
Animals' been doing it a lot longer than we have.

They step back until their backs are against the rubble. The beast closes, but slowly.

BELL
What the fuck are we gonna do?

Holloway turns back to look at the rock pressing into his back, then up at the top of the pile.

HOLLOWAY
We climb. When it gets close enough, we pull that boulder loose-

He indicates a large chunk of rock near the top, about six feet above them.

HOLLOWAY
-and it either kills it or pins it. Then I'll put my last two shots into its eye. Point blank.

BELL
That's not a good plan.

HOLLOWAY
I could shoot you in the leg and climb up alone. What else have you got?

A second later, they're scrambling up broken and tumbling stones, trying to get far enough above the water that they'll be safe from a strike.

The croc flicks its tail again, and doubles its pace.

They're a few feet up when the stone under Holloway's foot rolls out from under him, and he slides two feet down, the tip of his boot dipping into the water.

The croc whips its tail again. It's closing fast, as Bell offers Holloway the hand he needs to get back up. They're racing for the boulder as the animal is within *six feet of them.*

They climb another foot.

The croc is now four feet away.

Holloway reaches up and gets a hand on the boulders side.

Two feet.

Bell gets a good grip on the rock, a little higher. It starts to shift. Pebbles rain down around the massive head of the crocodile as it sizes them up, preparing to strike.

Finally, the boulder pulls free, just as the creature LEAPS out of the water with blinding speed. It knocks Bell's feet free, and sends him tumbling into the water a half-second before the rock CRASHES ONTO ITS HEAD.

It pins the monster underwater, even as Bell tumbles into the water next to it.

He leaps immediately to his feet, backing away from the thrashing form several panicked steps before he realizes-

BELL
Fuck me. It worked.

He looks up at an equally shocked Holloway, clinging to the rocks.

BELL
Well get down here and shoot the fuckin-

THWIP! The monster's thrashing tail connects with Bell's mid-section, TOSSING him forward like a chew toy.

At the same instant, the crocodile frees its snout from under the rock, and LUNGES for the battered Bell.

Without a thought, HOLLOWAY THROWS HIMSELF ON IT, landing mostly on its back.

HIS FOREARM IS JAMMED INTO THE VERY BACK OF ITS JAWS, where there are no teeth. For a second, the creature is unable to close its jaws because of the obstruction, which is good for Bell, because his HEAD is what they would close on.

Even without teeth the size of shot glasses tearing into his flesh, the pressure alone is enough to SNAP THE BONES IN HOLLOWAY'S ARM. Then SNAP THEM AGAIN.

The sound of crunching bone actually echoes through the chamber before it’s drowned out by HOLLOWAY’S SCREAM.

That’s so loud that it brings the dazed and bleeding Bell back to his senses, and he JERKS back, away from the jaws.

He draws a KNIFE from his boot and JAMS IT INTO THE GAPING PALLET of the creature, driving it through the roof of his mouth until the bloody steel emerges from its nose.

The monster bucks and writhes in pain, momentarily releasing the pressure on Holloway’s arm and allowing him to slip it free. But the second he does, he’s sent crashing into the wall.

The croc keeps snapping its jaws shut, like its trying to chew and swallow the knife still protruding from its snout. Bell does his best to maneuver away from its head while its distracted.

He makes eye contact with Holloway, who is clutching his shattered arm, and mouths-

BELL
Shoot it.

Holloway fights back tears as he drops his left arm, pulls his pistol with his right, aims at the creature but CAN’T GET A SHOT ON ITS EYES!

Suddenly, rocks tumble from the opening above them. Just pebbles at first, but then some larger stones.

Enough to get the croc’s attention.

It turns its massive head toward the opening to find RILEY poking his head through. That also gives Holloway a clear shot at the creature’s eye.

BELL
Wiley!

BANG!

The report is deafening in the small space, but the eyeball DISINTEGRATES. Riley is so startled he nearly falls out of the opening, onto it. Then, before the thing can even react-

BANG!

The second shot HITS THE EXACT SAME SPOT, driving the bullet into its brain.

BLOOD spatters against the wall. Again, it THRASHES VIOLENTLY, and Bell and Holloway do their best to avoid the heavy limbs and sharp scales.

After a few seconds, the animal calms. Its movements slow. The life drains out of it, through a tiny hole where its left eye used to be.

And then it STOPS.

RILEY
What are you guys doing in here?

BELL
Killing crocodiles.

RILEY
Oh.

He turns to Holloway.

RILEY
I’m Dr. Benedict Riley. Or, you know, just Ben.

BELL
Call him Wiley.

HOLLOWAY
Wiley?

BELL
Yeah.

HOLLOWAY
Like the coyote?

BELL
Yeah.

Holloway shifts his eyes back up to Riley.

HOLLOWAY
Get us the hell out of here, Wiley.

RILEY
Right.

He disappears from view, scrambling back down the rocks. A few seconds later, a vine comes tumbling down, followed by Riley's voice -

RILEY (O.C.)
Can you reach it?

It's a stretch, but Bell can get his hand around the bottom of it.

BELL
(calling)
Yeah!

He climbs up a few rocks until he's got a better grip, then reaches out to Holloway.

BELL
Let's go, Sargent.

Holloway looks down skeptically at his broken arm, then up at Bell's outstretched hand.

HOLLOWAY
This is gonna suck, isn't it?

Bell nods.

HOLLOWAY
Syphilitic Jesus...

BELL
What?

Holloway just shakes his head.

HOLLOWAY
Nothing. Let's do it.

Bell grabs his arm, pulls him up the wall as much as he can-

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

Riley sits on some rocks a little ways down from the hole, making sure the vine doesn't slip off the boulder he tied it to.

He JUMPS when he hears HOLLOWAY SCREAM!

He starts to scramble toward the opening-

RILEY
Are you okay? What happened?!

Bell calls back-

BELL (O.C.)
Nothing!

The screaming dies down, but is quickly followed by another SHRIEK OF PAIN.

BELL (O.C.)
We’re fine!

Another SCREAM. Riley is now staring at the hole in HORROR.

RILEY
Are you sure?

BELL (O.C.)
Be right there!

And then Holloway is being SHOVED through the opening by Bell, collapsing almost immediately and CLUTCHING his broken left arm.

Riley races over to him.

RILEY
My god! What happened?

Bell pokes his head, emerging much more smoothly.

BELL
Dummy stuck his arm in a croc’s mouth.

RILEY
Jesus Christ. Really?

Holloway nods.

RILEY
And you got it back?

Holloway lifts it a few inches.

HOLLOWAY
You’re looking at it.

RILEY
You are officially the luckiest man on the planet.

Bell smiles down at him.

BELL
And a hell of a soldier.

He tries to help him up, but Holloway groans and pulls away from him. Bell turns to Riley.

BELL
What the hell are you doing here, anyway?

RILEY
Couldn’t sleep.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Riley emerges from the hut again, this time pulling on boots, while a concerned Khin tries to talk him out of it.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAWN

BELL
Well, I’m glad you came. Now let’s get the hell out of here.

RILEY
Wait. What?

Bell succeeds in pulling Holloway to his feet.

BELL
He needs a doctor. And not a doctor like you’re a doctor. A *real* doctor. We gotta move.

They start down toward the swamp waters.

RILEY
Whoa! Wait! Don’t go in there!

BELL
We can’t fly out of here.

RILEY
No! I mean, wait for sunrise.

Bell and Holloway stop with one foot in the water.

HOLLOWAY
Seriously?

RILEY
Yes, seriously. What’s the matter with you? They’re nocturnal hunters.

He turns to Bell.

RILEY
I told you that.

BELL
No you didn’t.

RILEY
Yes, I- Forget it. Let’s just sit awhile, please. I promise you our odds of survival will go up by 75%.

HOLLOWAY
What’ll that put us at?

RILEY
75%.

HOLLOWAY
I’ll take those odds.

He sits down next to Riley with a heavy thud. After a beat, Bell joins them, just as the first orange-yellow blast of sun trickles in through the trees...

EXT. SWAMP - DAWN (RYOATA)

Ryoata steps cautiously off his small island, into the water. He sees some men in the distance, moving past him. He shouts something at them, but the second they see him, THEY RUN.

He levels his PISTOL at the back of one of the fleeing men, and SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER.

Click.

Ryoata looks at it strangely, then watches them disappear, before beginning to walk in the same direction. From a sheath on his belt, he draws a large, ornately handled KATANA SWORD.

As he walks through the waist-high water, morning sunlight barely penetrating into the swamp, he passes the remnants of his soldiers. There are only pieces and bits of gore left. The water around him is tinted by swirling pools of RED.

The images are UNNERVING HIM. His hands clutching the Kitana begin to tremble, and his eyes dart around everywhere, but no matter where he looks there's just more *death.* Even in the trees, men have crawled into them and died, or the hideous things, in their frenzy of feeding, flung bits of their prey into the branches.

Some of the trees he passes appear to be bleeding, because of the blood running down the trunks.

There's a FORM floating toward him that's larger, and strangely shaped. The ripples that precede it give the impression that it's MOVING.

Ryoata FREEZES and grips his sword in white-knuckled terror.

His breath catches as the thing gets closer. Wide eyed and trembling to the point of seizure, he suddenly lets loose an animal CRY and CHARGES the last few steps to the thing, PLUNGING HIS SWORD INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT.

It takes a second to register that he's just stabbed the REMAINS of a Japanese SOLIDER THAT'S BEEN BITTEN IN HALF BELOW THE WASTE.

When it finally sinks in that it's not a croc, that he's still alive, Ryoata visibly relaxes. He grabs the sword's handle to try and pull it free-

WHEN THE BODY'S EYES OPEN AND HIS HAND *SHOOTS OUT* AND GRABS HOLD OF RYOATA!

The man's mouth falls open, as if to speak or beg or scream, but only BLOOD trickles out, with a few dying gasps for air.

Ryoata tries to RIP his hand away, but the man won't let go. And then something SNAPS in Ryoata. He becomes engulfed in terror. He twists the sword and TEARS IT AND HIMSELF FREE, shoving the soldier's bloody form further away in the process, ignoring the desperate hand still outstretched toward him.

Then RYOATA turns tail and RUNS.

He moves with nothing but blind panic. The faint light casts just enough shadows that in his terror he sees movement and monsters EVERYWHERE.

So he actually SCREAMS in terror when he nearly runs smack into GEN.

Gen is six feet away, shivering and clutching his arms, one hand holding the note from Holloway like a talisman. He's almost as shocked to be confronted with RYOATA as Ryoata is to see him.

Finally, Ryoata asks Gen a question - *Why aren't you dead?* Gen doesn't answer, just stares back at his commander. Ryoata asks again, more forcefully.

Still, Gen is silent.

Ryoata CHARGES Gen just like he did the mysterious form, but Gen deftly SLAPS the sword's blade to the side with his open palm, then uses Ryoata's momentum to THROW HIM FORWARD INTO A TREE.

Ryoata practically BOUNCES off of the tree, his head swollen and red, nose gushing blood, before he even gets to the surface.

When he does, he finds Gen standing over him, sword leveled at his neck.

Ryoata spits two words at him - *do it.*

But Gen instead pulls the blade back. He turns and walks away, not even looking back when he hears Ryoata get to his feet. Four words this time - *do it, you coward!*

Ryoata charges again, and Gen SPINS, swinging the sword into Ryoata's midsection and slicing across his side. But he stops short of doing any serious damage.

Ryoata grabs his side, realizing that it’s only a flesh wound. His incredulous eyes shoot up to Gen, only to find him walking away again.

With a primitive growl, he starts after him, but STOPS and GRIMACES IN PAIN, again clutching his side.

When he looks up again, Gen is GONE.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

Riley, Bell, and Holloway emerge from the swamp, hobbled with injuries, badly shaken, but smiling as some of the villagers congregate to greet them.

First among them is KHIN, who grins sheepishly, with an obvious crush, at Riley. His reaction matches hers, and Bell gives him a knowing elbow.

EXT. SWAMP - MORNING

Ryoata plunges forward, clutching his bleeding side. He mutters to himself, and his eyes dart around him like a cornered animal, seeing danger behind every tree.

The water has gotten shallow, only just past his ankles, but the trees are thicker, and their branches tear at him. But through the leaves he can see patches of bright sunlight.

His desperate steps carry him faster and faster, until he’s grunting like an animal, stumbling forward, onto dry land, onto the first grains of golden sand spilling into the muck, finally tearing through the limbs and leaves and vines and emerging, as though being born-

Onto a quiet, sandy BEACH. Waves no higher then a few inches gently lap at the shore.

BUT THERE ARE NO SHIPS WAITING FOR HIM. No reinforcements. No supplies. His agonizing effort has been for naught.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING - LATER

The group has dispersed, but Holloway finds himself standing alone at the edge of the swamp, staring into it.

Far in the distance, between the trees, he sees flashes of MOVEMENT. A uniform. Someone is coming toward him.

It isn't long before he can make out GEN, still carrying Ryoata's sword, marching toward him. Gen sees him and stops. He raises the sword above his head, making it plain to see, then drops it into the water next to him.

Holloway nods at him and smiles, and Gen can't help but smile back. Holloway uses his good arm to help Gen onto the dry land.

Gen hands Holloway back the sheet of paper with his note on it. Then they both begin to LAUGH.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Ryoata, still in shock, looks to his left, and sees a handful of soldiers spread out down the beach, most wounded, bleeding, missing limbs. Some sit absently on the sand, their bare feet licked by the tiny waves washing over them.

To his right, more of the same. A few stragglers come stumbling past the tree line, their hearts and faces falling when they realize that they, too, have been abandoned.

In all, twenty men have emerged on the other side of the swamp, all of them shaken to the core, staring out at the morning sunlight with vacant stares.

Ryoata clenches his fists, throws is head back, and HOWLS in an eruption of frustration and animal fury.

But he is cut off by a FLASH OF MOVEMENT from behind him, the rustling of leaves and silvery splashing of water. He can't even get his head around to look into the brush before a CROC LEAPS OUT AT HIM, SNATCHES HIS LEGS OUT FROM UNDER HIM, AND DRAGS HIM BACK INTO THE SWAMP.

If the other soldiers notice or care, they make no move to show it. Instead, their eyes remain fixed on the steadily lightening horizon.

BLACK SCREEEN.

FADE UP TEXT:

"That night was the most horrible that any member of the...

crews ever experienced. The scattered rifle shots in the pitch black swamp punctured by the screams of wounded men crushed in the jaws of huge reptiles, and the blurred worrying sound of spinning crocodiles made a cacophony of hell that has rarely been duplicated on earth. At dawn the vultures arrived to clean up what the crocodiles had left...

The text fades away, then is gradually replaced by:

Of about one thousand Japanese soldiers that entered the swamps of Ramree, only about twenty were found alive."

Wildlife Sketches Near and Far

by Dr. Benedict 'Wiley' Riley

END