

ENEMY PATRIOTS

RODGER CARLYLE

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CHAPTER 1

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, JULY 1940

Michi felt fortunate to secure a second-class stateroom on the German ship *Friedrich*. The troubles between the United States and Empire of Japan meant that their planned return voyage on American President Lines was canceled. He bit his lip, momentarily glancing at Kiko next to him. She hadn't turned a page in her book in ten minutes.

Nine men dressed in cheap brown suits circulated through the room checking documents. All had identical tan fedoras pulled low on their foreheads. There seemed to be no pattern to their inquiries, just random stops among the three hundred waiting passengers. Michi tried to catch snippets of the official conversations, but the echo of conversations in the windowed room and the click of heels on the marble floor made it impossible.

Michi whispered, "I love you," trying to calm Kiko. The gangway outside the double glass doors, rose from the dock to the ship, but no one was boarding. The hands on the wall-clock moved past three, more than two hours after the scheduled departure time. He bit his lip even harder, drawing blood.

"Your parents are healthy," offered Kiko. "I am happy that we made this trip. It is important that we not give up our roots." Kiko checked that the pins holding her hat on her still jet-black hair were in place. She wore little makeup over her California tan, her figure reflecting a mile of swimming every other day. She continued to stare at page 118.

Michi tried to find a smile below his graying mustache. He straightened his tie, buttoning the coat of his double-breasted suit. "The company will be better after my father and I worked out our differences about entering the American market. He doesn't realize how much competition there is in the states for canned salmon." Michi watched the men in suits. He lifted Kiko's tiny hand in his; she pulled away. He dried his hand on his pants and tried again. "My mother looks better than I expected after her fall."

"You sound like a Japanese man now. So formal, so controlled."

"I'm just a little worried, and angry."

"I just wish Mark was traveling with us," said Kiko.

"Our son will be with us soon," offered her husband. "It might be for the best, that Mark is traveling on a different ship. Besides, he wanted to visit my parents' summer home in Karafuto and teach his grandfather how to fly fish."

"It will be good for him to meet his grandmother. She was disappointed that he she didn't get to meet him in Sapporo." Kiko dropped her book into a basket at her feet. She dabbed at her chin and brow with her hanky.

"You don't worry that the interview that you gave to *The Times* will put him in danger?" asked Kiko.

"No dear. Our episode with the Army police was just paranoia," he lied. "My interview stated the obvious; Japan and the United States make better friends than enemies. Both countries' economies are driven by foreign commerce. Japan can feed itself, but food like the salmon we ship here helps keep prices low. That was the point I was making."

Kiko swallowed hard as one of the men in brown suits stopped in front of them, looking down at Michi before moving across the aisle to converse with another man. He handed the man a note. "You said more than that, husband of mine. You basically said that Japan's economy is no match for America's and that Japan had better remember that."

"I can't believe that anyone here could take issue with the truth," whispered Michi. "Japanese culture has traditions about foreigners of Japanese descent. We are Nisei, not Kibei Shimin. We are American nationals of Japanese descent, not returning citizens. Still, as people of Japanese culture, we are to be respected, and Japan expects we will always be part of Japan. Part of that is to help Japan navigate the world."

"Then why did we cut our trip short? Why are we trying so hard to get out of here?" she whispered.

"Because dear, from what I see in Japan, those traditions no longer extend to the government. Regular citizens love to hear about our life in America." He closed his eyes, visualizing four separate Tokko or military "interviews." He hadn't told Kiko of the others. "I don't want to have to explain again why I am American. It's good that Mark will be on his way home by the end of July."

The loudspeaker above them crackled to life, announcing that they were ready to board first class passengers, the announcement echoing through the hall in Japanese, German and finally in English. A group rose, almost like shorebirds from a sandy beach and moved toward the doors. The gate agents began passing out umbrellas to those who asked for one. Michi smiled for the first time that day.

The short man sitting across from them rose, crossing the aisle. His brown suit was still new, his tie twisted. The man wiped his glasses before speaking, then extended his hand. "Mr. and Mrs. Ishihara, I am Peter Yamai and I was planning on traveling with you all the way back to California. But I have been informed that my passage and yours has been rebooked on another ship. In the interim, we have been summoned to visit an old friend of yours. I think the ship we are now booked on is the same one that your son, Mark, plans on taking."

Before Kiko could speak, Michi rose and jabbed out his hand toward the stranger who knew so much about them. He smiled at his wife, as he counted the men in suits moving toward the couple. Ten against two was lousy odds and then there was the

simple fact that there was nowhere to go. "Kiko, a better answer to your earlier question is that I am just plain pissed."

"I assume that you and your friends here will be taking care of our luggage," spat Michi.

"That has all been arranged," replied Peter in a smug tone.

Michi took Kiko's hand. "This will give us some time to work on the plans for installing the new canning equipment that we shipped to my father. He wanted to put a processing plant in Karafuto to cut the waste of moving iced fish to Hokkaido." Michi pulled the hanky from his suit pocket and dabbed at the corners of his wife's eyes, then at his lip.

"Where to, Peter?"

The New Grand Hotel bellboys met the small parade of blue Plymouth cars at the street. Michi waited for Peter to open the door for them, then headed to registration. Peter rushed to catch up. Two men from the following vehicle made their way to the elevator and two more found chairs in the lobby and were fumbling with newspapers.

"I have reserved a room for Mr. and Mrs. Ishihara here," started Peter. "I believe that it is a corner room at the end of the third-floor hallway." He repeated his request in Japanese. The man behind the desk dropped a key in the hand of the bellboy before he finished. "Introduce yourselves to the two men waiting for you at the elevator. They will be in the room next to you. Your host has directed them to take care of anything you need. Within reason." He laughed, trying to calm his own nerves.

"Give me a few minutes, won't you dear?" said Michi to his wife. He took three deep breaths. "At least we have a corner room. I will be up in a few minutes."

Michi started across the lobby toward the bar. Peter, looking a bit confused, followed. The two men found a seat in the empty bar. "I'm going to have a rum and Coke," said Michi. "Under the circumstances that seems 'within reason.' Can my old friend buy you anything?"

"I'm on duty," mumbled Peter.

"I thought you might be military," responded Ishihara. He called an order to the bartender who had made no move to come to the table. "I do not drink alone, so you will have to tell my host that a drink was part of the job."

Michi stared out the window at rain dimples in the small puddles on a mostly empty sidewalk. He ran his finger around the inside of his damp collar. Michi could hear the pop of the bartender opening the bottle of Coke, then the rattle of ice in a glass. When the drinks arrived, he waived the server away after providing his room number.

He picked up his glass and stirred the brown fluid with the tiny bamboo stick. Michi leaned forward, raising his glass. "A toast to USC or is it UCLA, Peter?"

Peter leaned back. "Neither, I graduated in engineering from the University of Washington." Peter held up his right hand to show off his class ring.

"A degree probably paid for by the army. My guess is that you studied aeronautical engineering with a special emphasis on what was going on at Boeing."

"We Kibei Shimin must all do our duty to our ancestral homeland," replied the much younger man. "My parents own a vegetable farm north of Seattle. They sent me back to Japan for high school. The U-Dub sets aside slots for foreign students. I was a two pointer for them, a United States citizen and a graduate of the Japanese school system."

"Well Peter, just what is this all about, and who the hell is my host?"

"You will meet your old friend in a couple of days; he is detained in China. I will let him introduce himself. Japan needs you to remember where you were born. You and your son will simply offer the land of your father, expertise and observations on the U.S. You are quoted in the newspapers as offering Japan your best advice. We intend to take advantage of that offer. I will pick you up at seven for dinner. We will meet with your host's America team."

"You said that you would pick me up. What about my wife?" asked Michi.

"Mr. Ishihara, Japan is not yet like America. You grew up here. Kiko will not be called on, and she will not interfere with your mission."

"After the land of my birth pulled us off from our ship, I am not going to leave her alone this evening," replied Michi.

"I will have my aunt come to the hotel when I pick you up. She will make sure that your wife finds a good meal and conversation."

"Peter, before this goes any further, you need to know that we both consider ourselves Nisei, not Kibei Shimin. We are both Americans now. We have no intention of moving back to Japan."

"Mr. Ishihara, your credentials in the states are why your family can be such an important source of information. Peter finished his rum and Coke, careful not to offend his companion. "I must report in now, I will see you later."

CHAPTER 2

MOFFETT FIELD, SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA, JULY 1941

Second Lieutenant Chad Gritt rolled the North American Aviation trainer into a steep left turn from the downwind leg of his landing pattern. At seven hundred feet and descending, he fed ten degrees more flaps onto the wings and reduced the power of the huge rotary engine. The propelled raindrops on the canopy made the visibility to the front of the aircraft a fraction of that to his left, where the huge prop sent the water passed the cockpit greenhouse, instead of against it.

“Trainer two-niner Charlie, you are cleared for landing,” crackled the radio in his headset. Congratulations, Lieutenant, on your final solo.”

“Two-niner Charlie cleared for landing,” responded Gritt with a smile on his face. The runway to his left looked huge. He had learned to fly in Alaska, as soon as he was old enough to reach the pedals, learning on a tiny dirt airstrip. Like his father, he had received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy, at West Point, where he was a reserve defensive back on the football team. He had finished his classwork in three years and with half the world at war in Europe, and the rest at war in Asia, he was granted a commission a year early. Already a competent pilot, Chad was able to skip the first three months of the normal nine-month cadet pilot program. *Another turn and a landing and I will finally find out what I will be flying in the real world, he thought.*

Moffett Field had been sunny all but one day in the previous months. Today the clouds were only a hundred feet above the canopy. He rolled the big two seat training airplane into another ninety-degree turn to the left, lining up with the runway. He rotated his head from the side window to the windscreen in front of him. Before he could react, the front of the aircraft exploded in white and red as a flock of seagulls was sucked through the spinning propeller. To either side of him, birds slammed into the wings and the extended flaps.

A massive vibration shook the airplane as the damaged propeller began to tear the engine from the engine mounts. Chad instinctively reached down and pulled the power from the engine. “Mayday, Mayday” he spat into the microphone, “Two-niner Charlie, I hit a flock of birds. The engine is shut down. I have wing damage.”

“Two-niner Charlie, can you make the runway?” came an instantaneous response.

The airplane began to twist. *Fly the damned airplane, don't talk,* he thought. He corrected the twist with heavy rudder, but the airplane was dropping way too fast, the one drawback to a radial engine. They would fly with a piston missing, but without power, the huge flat surface at the front of the plane became an airbrake, the fuselage becoming a cinder block with wings.

"Two-niner Charlie you are cleared for landing."

Chad tugged on the handle that controlled the flaps, trying to reduce the drag. They moved up a bit and then jammed. He looked up at the airspeed indicator. It was flickering between the yellow and the red lines. He pushed the nose down to gain a bit more speed, avoiding a stall.

"Two-niner Charlie, this will be close," he called, as the end of the runway appeared through his blood and rain-covered windscreen. Chad managed to keep the nose of the plane toward the runway, which was disappearing into a single thin line on the horizon as the plane settled toward the ground. The runway lights at the end of the runway were still visible in front of him as he felt the main landing gear touch down.

On a normal day, the dirt short of the runway was baked hard, like pavement. On this day, twenty-four hours of rain had softened the ground. He felt the landing gear under the wings dragging. He pulled back on the stick with all of his strength, trying to keep the airplane in a three-point stance.

It worked until the tires, pushing through three inches of mud, hit the edge of the pavement. The plane tipped nose down and in slow motion continued tipping. He watched the landing lights slide by on either side of the cockpit, and then the plane pitched up over the prop and spinner, landing on its back, the tail smashing into the pavement. It slid another thirty feet before coming to a stop, upside down.

Chad reached out and flipped the toggle switches that shut down the electricity in the plane, killing the master and the magnetos. He closed the valve that allowed fuel to flow to the engine. The top of the greenhouse was resting on the ground; there was no way to open the canopy. The smell of aviation fuel invaded the cockpit. He instinctively released his seat belt, falling on his head. In the distance, he could hear the sirens of fire trucks. The increasing fuel fumes burned his eyes.

He rolled onto his side and bundled his legs against his chest before unleashing them against the glass and aluminum around him. The kick launched two sections of glass, and the aluminum frame that held them out onto the pavement. He rolled over and squeezed his body through the opening but could only get his neck and shoulders into it. *Damn it, Chad you are smarter than this.* He pulled back into the cockpit and released the clasps on his parachute, struggling in the cramped space to discard it. A moment later, he crawled to his feet on the runway and turned to look at the crumpled silver airplane.

Next to him a fire truck slid to a stop. Three men began to spray more water onto the plane while the fourth man gently tugged Chad away from the wreck and seated him on the bumper of the truck. "You okay, Lieutenant?"

"Yeah, sure," replied Chad, still stunned. He ran his hand over his close cut hair. He looked away from the plane, trying to focus. Nothing caught his attention on the all-beige airbase, on all-flat ground, on the grey soggy day. He took a deep breath, still trying to focus.

"What about your left leg?" asked the fireman.

Chad looked down at the torn pant leg of his flight suit, covered in blood. He slipped the small knife from its sheath on his belt and pulled at the fabric before slitting it with the honed blade. Below the fabric his leg was split open like a bratwurst on a grill, a slice more than ten inches long in his thigh. "Might take a few stitches," he mumbled.

Seconds later, he found himself on a stretcher in an ambulance on his way to the base clinic. He grimaced, clamping his blue eyes tight, as a medic leaned down with a hypodermic syringe the size of a baseball bat, pointing it at his leg. *God, I hate needles.*

* * *

He watched as the prettiest nurse on the base pulled a clean sheet up around his neck. The tear from dragging his leg over a fragment of aluminum as he had crawled from the crash was deep, requiring forty stitches, landing him in the hospital for observation.

She took a moment to study the blue-eyed man. He barely fit into the bed, and even under the sheet his lean body appeared coiled, ready to spring. "You have company," she offered with a smile as she turned to leave the room.

"That girl has a set of legs, just to carry around a really prime package."

"Thank you, Lieutenant," responded the nurse, as she opened the door to his room.

"Oh my God, did I say that out loud?" gasped Chad, his face turning scarlet. "I am so sorry, ma'am."

"I'll chalk it up to the pain killers, Lieutenant, but only this once," the nurse replied with a smile. She took another moment to study the light-haired man and then was out the door.

"Watch yourself hotshot," snapped Major Alvarez, as he slipped into the room behind the nurse.

"I really can't believe I said that aloud," choked Chad. He took a few minutes to calm himself before continuing. "Anyway, I guess you're here to wash me out, Sir."

"The regulations require one hundred hours of advanced training; thirty hours of solo, with one hundred take offs and landings, on the field of training. Until the wrench jockeys picked up two-niner Charlie and moved it to a hangar, it had in fact, completed a full stop landing on the field of training. You will have to wait for your wings pinning ceremony until you get out of here, Lieutenant, but welcome to the club."

"Thank you, Sir," sighed the young officer.

"You earned it. There probably isn't another cadet in the program who could have survived the damage those birds did to your plane. Now you are only going to be here a couple of days. Is there anything I can get you?"

"Maybe the name and phone number of that nurse, Sir," quipped Chad.

Alvarez walked over to the door and leaned out into the hallway. "Hey sis, can you come here a minute, I want to formally introduce you to someone."

Chad sat frozen. His C.O. was one of his few friends in the training unit, and now he had screwed that up.

Two days later, Chad hobbled down the hospital hallway, stopping at a room where a woman sat stroking the hair of a young boy whose left side was covered in lose bandages. She looked up at the man at the door and smiled.

"Is he going to be all right?" asked Chad.

"Yeah, some scarring from where he pulled a pan of hot oil off the stove," she answered. "The doctors think he there will be no permanent damage except for where the skin is burned."

The boy opened his eyes. "How did you get hurt?" he asked Chad.

"Crashed a damaged plane trying to land."

"Someday I am going to be a pilot."

Chad stepped into the room and slid a chair up to the boy's bed. "What's your name, son?"

The boy's slurred speech telegraphed the power of the painkillers the doctors were administering. "Maxwell, sir."

"You know Maxwell, most pilots are more afraid of burn injuries than anything else. You have already proven you are tougher than most of us. You will make a fine pilot." Chad turned to the boy's mother.

"If your mom will let me, and I am still here when the doctors release you, maybe I could take you flying."

CHAPTER 3

OTOMARI, KARAFUTO, JAPAN, JULY 1941

The Japanese crushed the Russian military in a short war in 1905, sinking most of the Russian fleet in a single battle and destroying the Russian Army in a series of engagements in southern China and along the Korean peninsula. The surrender of Russian forces protecting the harbor of Port Arthur, a city leased from the Chinese, led to a treaty that stripped Russia of islands it claimed north of Japan and opened the island the Russians called Sakhalin to joint occupation. Over the decades, the island had been divided along a line halfway between its northern and southern shoreline. The Japanese had named their half Karafuto Prefecture.

Mark Ishihara watched the sunrise from the passenger deck of the small ferry. He felt the engines reverse and the jostle as the bow pushed into its nest. A sign on one of the pilings read, WELCOME TO OTOMARI in English. The ramp dropped from the dock above. He liked Otomari. He liked Karafuto. He bounced down the gangway in a pair of Levi's and a USC sweater.

At the head of the small harbor, the neatly painted fish processing plant of his family was just coming alive. He picked up the canvas covered cardboard suitcase at his feet and hoisted a long plywood box onto his shoulder. The heavy forest surrounding the town was a welcome change from the crowded cities on the main islands of Japan.

Screeching seagulls bombarded his ears. He stopped to take it all in. The water at Otomari was blue green, not the brown of mainland Japan, and it smelled much the same as the waters of Puget Sound or even Alaska. *You don't have to shut out the stench of sewage and chemicals like in Japan's larger ports*, he thought. At the harbor entrance, schools of salmon swirled on the surface, chased by seals.

Sturdy wooden houses flanked the short road to the cannery. Behind them evergreens and birches covered hills that stretched into a warm blue sky.

"Watashi wa watashi no sofū Haruku o Homon suru Kokodesu," he offered to the first man he found outside the cannery. The man bowed slightly and pointed toward a small office above the building. Mark bounded up the stairs, bursting through the heavy door. The office was empty until a graying man in red striped pajamas emerged from a side room.

"Dokku no otoko ga, watashi wa koko ne watashi no sofū o mitsueru koto go dediru to nobeta," uttered Mark.

"You are Mark then," stammered the man. "I am Roku, manager. The man on dock knows grandfather usually here when he is in Otomari. He is at summerhouse now. I dress and drive you there." Roku walked over to a desk, clamping a headset over his ears.

He dialed in a frequency on a radio and began speaking into a microphone. "Grandfather welcomes you to Karafuto."

The old Ford pickup purred, as it wound its way north. Before reaching the small city of Toyohara Roku, it turned right heading toward the coast. The small dirt road twisted through the hills, before dropping into a beautiful valley spilling out of the highlands. Through the valley a stream grew into a short river as a dozen clearer creeks merged. In the distance the river flowed into the Sea of Okhotsk. Roku pulled the pickup to the side of the road and stepped out of the cab. He motioned for Mark to join him at the overlook.

"Maybe all Japan like this once," he said. "Maybe like you Alaska?"

The valley below was filled with grassy meadows and stands of cottonwood trees. The meadows were a canvas of red, yellow and blue flowers. "It is very beautiful, like a painting," replied Mark. "Alaska is more rugged."

Roku pointed at a house near where three streams came together. A covered porch wrapped around the structure. All around the house, flower gardens added even more color. In a huge vegetable garden, a woman stood waving.

"Airi here almost all summer. Haruku comes when he can. Airi talks of you coming for a week. We go," finished Roku. As the pickup began to roll down the winding hill, a black Mitsubishi sedan rolled to a stop at the overlook.

Mark met his grandfather for the first time only a month before, when he traveled with Mark and his parents around Japan. Grandfather stopped in a half dozen villages to show his son and grandson the expanded family fishing business; places Michi had left behind as he resigned his military life in 1920's occupied Vladivostok, Russia. Mark had never met Airi, his grandmother. He wasn't really sure how to approach the woman who gardened in a silk blouse and skirt and walked with an ivory-headed cane.

Airi planted her cane in soft soil next to her left leg and ran the few feet between where she stood and where the pickup rolled to a stop. She wrapped her arms around her grandson, the top of her head barely reaching his chest. She didn't say a word. She dabbed at tears as she stepped back.

"Kangei mago," she finally managed.

"Watashi wa koko ni, saishutekini anata no sobo o mitasu tame ne ureshiku omoimasu," answered Mark.

Airi smiled at her husband.

"Your Japanese is better than my English," offered his grandfather. "It pleases your grandmother. You honor her in her own language. She worried she would not be able to talk to you."

"Anata wa watashi no teien o goran ne naritaldesu ka?" asked Airi.

Mark rolled his head up, buying time to translate his grandmother's words.

"She invites you to walk through her gardens," offered Haruku. "She is very proud that after so many years away from her family farm, she still remembers how to grow things."

Mark took his grandmother's hand, as she led him into the maze of colors in front of the house. Roku turned to the older man and whispered, "we were followed. There are two men in a sedan at the overlook."

"Thank you for using English my old friend. I do not want to worry Airi," replied Haruku. "Do you think they are Tokko, policy police?"

"Maybe, one of the men was seen following your grandson off from the ferry."

"You must stay for lunch," offered Haruku. "We will make a show of eating at the table in the garden before you head back."

"They will not harass me my old friend. My mother was Korean and Russian and my father, Japanese. I was born on this island. I am a bridge to everyone that the Tokko are worried about. Every week they buy me lunch and I tell them things that they would see themselves if they weren't lazy bastards."

* * *

"We will bring home one salmon for your grandmother to fix for dinner," laughed Haruku. "That is if I can ever get the hook with feathers into the water. I seem to catch only tree limbs and grass. I still do not understand why you catch a beautiful salmon just to turn it loose again."

"In the States, they call this catch and release fishing," replied Mark. "You catch them just for fun and release them so that they can continue upriver to spawn."

"I seem to catch only the trees and the end of my own pole. I struggle to throw the line behind me with this light pole and then bring it forward without wrapping the line around the tip."

A cloud swept over Mark's face.

His grandfather watched as the end of Mark's rod jerked and then jerked again without him noticing. "You are not happy to be here?" asked Haruku.

Mark snapped out of his funk. "I am very happy to be with you and grandmother finally," he replied. "I was just remembering the last time I tried to teach someone to fly fish."

"Your father told me about the accident when Stephan died. He was very proud of how you tried to help the younger ones," guessed Haruku. "The ocean has given our family life for generations, but it has also taken more than one Ishihara."

"Chad and I were so cold. We found a small rock shelter and the kind of rock lamp the Ainu used a long time ago. We managed to get a small oil fire started and then we fell asleep. If we had not stopped to rest, maybe Woody and Stephan would have lived."

"If you had continued, in the fog, cold and wet along a steep cliff, Airi and I might have no grandchildren. Both your aunt Arisu and her infant daughter died in childbirth before you were born. Your father and you are the only blood family we have."

"That is why I studied business just as you and father did," replied Mark. "I am proud to be part of the family and the business. Now, one more time, bring the rod back with your elbow until you feel the line reach its full length behind you before you try to whip it forward, Grandfather. You only need a short line. Look at the line of salmon only a few feet in front of you."

The two men sat on the porch overlooking the spot they had been fishing. Airi was marinating the salmon fillets from the only fish her husband managed to land, in sesame oil, rice vinegar and herbs. She placed a tin bucket of cold Sapporo beers between the men.

"Would you still be proud of being part of the family if your grandfather goes to jail?"

"Father never told me about your secret career as a bank robber," laughed Mark. "Maybe I am going about this success thing the hard way."

Haruku began to laugh. "When your father left the Japanese Army, it was because the military was slowly strangling the elected officials who serve the emperor and the nation. He made an enemy of a senior officer who was obsessed with military power. It is much worse today. I fear that Japan is headed for war."

"Grandfather, Japan is already fighting in Manchuria, on the Chinese mainland and against a rebellion in Korea," replied Mark.

"Your American newspapers are keeping you and others well-posted on the aggression of the Japanese Army," apologized Haruku. "Many like me, speak out against the military leading our nation into overseas adventures. Many of us see a war with the United States at the end of this path."

"Grandfather, that would be a disaster for both countries. President Roosevelt is already preparing our country for a possible intervention in the European war with the Nazis. American industry and manpower are so vast that it could fight an Atlantic and a Pacific war at the same time. Japan could never win a war with the United States."

"Some of us know this, and we are trying to change the direction of the country. The problem is, Japan passed a law in 1925 that makes it illegal to oppose the Kokutai. It was not enforced for many years, but the Tokubetsu Koto Keisatsu special police are becoming very aggressive. Many who speak out are now imprisoned or forced into exile."

"I don't understand the term Kokutai," replied Mark.

"It means the national body, and it is being interpreted to mean anything the government says or does."

"Are you worried about this special police, Grandfather?"

"I have been interviewed at my office twice by officers of the Tokko. I've never seen them here in Otomari. Today some men followed you and Roku."

"You and father are both outspoken on this subject," replied Mark. "He was detained and interviewed right after we finished our tour with you. There has been a couple more times when he was questioned. We believe that we have been followed since we arrived in Japan." Mark felt the muscles in his neck and back tighten, as he visualized his father's scarlet face the last time he was confronted. "Grandfather, you are too old to go to jail. You may survive anything they can throw at you, but Grandmother is very frail."

Haruku pried the cap from another beer and handed it to his grandson. "You are only here for a few days. Let us master that silly fishing method you are so proud of and leave this political conversation for our trip back to the city."

Dinner, served in the garden was raw marinated salmon, rice balls, and pickles. Airi might have been an inquisitor, one with gray hair and an endless smile. She had waited her entire life for a grandchild, and she was bound to make for up lost time.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGSA, CHINA, JULY 1941

The badly mauled Japanese Army was camped only three miles from the city limits of the provincial capital of Hunan province. Three times they had tried to enter the city, and three times they had been repulsed. The Chinese Nationalist Army somehow managed to kill or wound more than a quarter of the Japanese troops thrown against the city. With few planes, little artillery, and no tanks, the Chinese fought with rifles; when they ran out of ammunition, bayonets, and sharpened bamboo poles.

"You are old to be a mere colonel," quipped the Japanese general to his unwelcome guest. "With combat experience in Russia and Korea, one would think you would be a general after thirty years of duty."

Colonel Haru Ito sat stiffly, unwilling to allow the insults of the man in front of him from disrupting his mission. "You were ordered to preserve your army, Sir," replied Ito. "You threw your troops against positions that had been prepared for more than a year, expecting results different than your predecessor. But again, that is not why I am

here. I need to take a look at the weapons your men captured. I need to determine if the American's are supplying Springfield rifles and Browning machine guns to the Chinese."

"I will send you back to Tokyo with a plane load of American weapons," replied his host. "These insects should be no match for Japanese soldiers."

"I hear this all the time, General. Every time our own Army kills Chinese women and children, or slaughter Chinese prisoners, we seem to enhance the enemy's will to fight," replied Ito. "The Chinese people are inferior, but an enraged dog develops super strength. Anyway, that is between you and your superiors, I thank you for the offer of weapons. Two of each weapon you think is being supplied by the Americans is all that is needed. If you would have them loaded into a truck, I would be very grateful. I am building the case to stop American meddling. My aide and I can manage loading them into the airplane waiting to take me back to Tokyo."

"You are very smug, Colonel. You have no idea what it is like to fight a war where the enemy has an inexhaustible supply of manpower. It isn't just the Chinese Army we are fighting. There are rebels all around us. They attack our trucks well away from the battles. They assassinate my officers while visiting comfort houses and taverns. They have even attacked ambulances. When they do, my soldiers sometimes act without orders."

"As I said, General, all of that is between you and your superiors." Ito stood to leave the ornate room that served as the general's office. "The truck you sent to bring me from the landing strip is in front of this building. I appreciate your help."

"If you will follow the Lieutenant at the back of the room, you may choose the weapons you seek yourself. He will escort you and your baggage to your plane." The general rose from his silk brocade chair. He turned on his heel and stormed through the door behind his desk, making no effort to shake hands or salute.

Ito stood, holding his salute until the general left the room.

The general was right about American-built weapons. He and the lieutenant watched as two privates loaded ten weapons into the back of the truck. Somewhere the lieutenant found transport more appropriate for a colonel. The Packard with a driver and a second guard followed the truck for the drive to the improvised airfield.

The vehicles were passing through a small village, the tails of a dozen aircraft visible across the fields a mile away when the truck slid to a stop. Four men with pistols descended on the vehicle. The driver's side door burst open, as did the passenger door. The lieutenant and his driver stumbled from a fusillade of bullets shredding the truck's cab, their bodies riddled.

The attackers walked calmly to the fallen men, laughing before they emptied their weapons into the bodies. From the houses on each side of the stranded truck people began to walk toward the truck. A dozen people, assassins and villagers swarmed onto the vehicle.

“Don’t just sit there, I need the weapons in that truck!” screamed Ito, as he threw open the back door of the Packard. He pulled his pistol from its holster and began firing, joined by the driver and the guard. The small crowd around the truck scattered, never suspecting that the old Packard carried Japanese reinforcements.

Ito ran toward the truck, emptying his pistol. He paused to slip a fresh clip of bullets into the weapon as the two men behind him raced to catch up. The battle was over in less than a minute. Around the truck a dozen people lay bleeding. Two men crawled toward a ditch at the side of the village. Ito thought about his earlier conversation with the general as he calmly walked up behind the men and shot them each in the head. Among the dead and wounded were four women.

“Get the lieutenant’s body and that of the private here into the back of the truck. You climb up into the cab,” he ordered his driver. “The corporal and I will be right behind in the Packard.”

“But Colonel, there is water coming from the radiator,” replied the young private.

“We are only a mile from the airport. You will drive this truck until we get there or the engine seizes,” ordered Ito.

The corporal at the wheel, the Packard pulled back onto the road, following the truck that miraculously still ran.

“What about the wounded people in the road?” asked the corporal.

“Drive over them. They should have stayed in their homes,” directed Ito. “We can’t wait until someone organizes a second attack. Besides, I have a dinner engagement back in Tokyo with an old friend.”

“It is not polite to keep old friends waiting,” agreed the corporal, as he bumped the Packard over the screaming wounded in the road. It occurred to the corporal that he had not been home in almost three years. He was envious, but the older colonel was an important man.

[END OF SAMPLE]

