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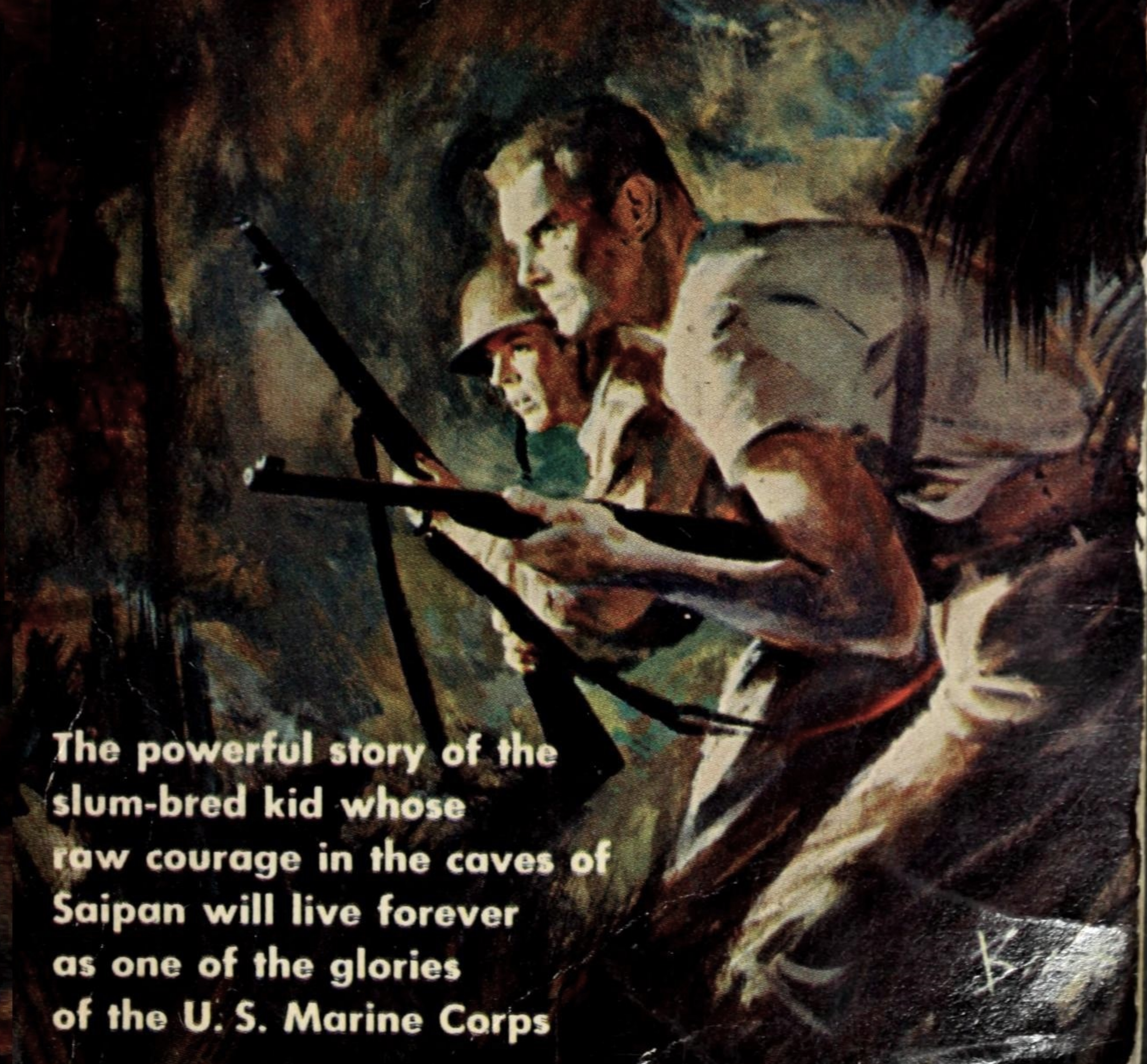
GOLD MEDAL BOOK

HELL TO ETERNITY

EDWARD S. AARONS



The powerful story of the slum-bred kid whose raw courage in the caves of Saipan will live forever as one of the glories of the U. S. Marine Corps

This is the true story of a war hero who was as courageous as any man to come out of any human conflict. Here is the epic account of the life of Guy Cabaldon which began in a poverty-stricken Nisei household in East Los Angeles and came to its incredible climax on the blood-soaked coral of Saipan.

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Hell to Eternity

by Edward S. Aarons

An Original Gold Medal Book

GOLD MEDAL BOOKS
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DEDICATION

EVERY GREAT WAR since the beginning of time has produced its share of immortal fighting men. Out of the great struggle of World War II emerged many heroes: General Patton, Marshal Rommel, Field Marshal Montgomery, General Rose, Lieutenant Audie Murphy, and other valiant warriors, including an obscure PFC, Guy L. Gabaldon, United States Marine Corps.

This is the true story of an extraordinary fighting man. Many who never knew or even heard of him are alive today because of Guy Gabaldon. History, in her peculiar way, has only recently uncovered the exploits and valor displayed by this young soldier during the critical battle of Saipan—the battle that marked the crucial turn in the Pacific War, that signalled the final staging for assault on Japan itself.

Though small of stature, and of minority heritage, Guy Gabaldon proved himself a giant—capturing more than a thousand Japanese single-handed! This U. S. Marine's life came into sharp focus on the blooded hills and in the deadly jungles of Saipan, in an extraordinary example of devotion, valor, and bravery.

To Guy Gabaldon, and the United States Naval Service, this story is dedicated with honor and esteem.

Part One

THE ASSAULT

ONE

PFC GUY GABALDON waited for the dawn of his last day on earth.

He did not think he would live to see the sun go down. He wasn't sure he wanted to.

He lay awake in the narrow, coffinlike tiered bunk aboard the crowded LST and listened to the snores, groans, moans, curses, snuffles, and muttering of his fellow Marines. The LST, even with its load of amphtracs, rolled heavily in the long Pacific swell. Staring into the darkness above him, his eyes wide open, sightless, he could still see the enormous armada of Task Force 58 plowing through the early morning hours of June 15, 1944.

In a few hours, all the plans of high strategy, all the decisions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, numerous aides, admirals, Marine generals, Army and Navy and Coast Guard Intelligence services, would implement what had been labeled last March as Operation *Forager*—the assault on the Japanese held Marianas Islands.

Guy was only dimly aware of the immense forces that had gathered across half the face of the earth to bring

him here as if on the crest of an enormous, westward-rolling tidal wave.

He had his own problems. And they couldn't be answered by the facetious—and sometimes useful—suggestion that he take his troubles to the Chaplain. He didn't tell anybody what was eating him. He couldn't. Not even Bill Hazen or Petey had guessed about it.

Yes, the narrow bunk was like a coffin, and the heat of the LST's hold where the company was jammed in like tiered animals made him sweat, even though he felt cold through and through, and his jaws ached from clenching them to keep them from chattering.

Maybe it was only fear, after all. Were they all afraid, as he was? He listened to the snores and groans. He heard little Semperi, from Brooklyn, sighing, "Oh, it's a fuggup, it's a fuggin' fuggup, it's a. . . ."

Over and over again, a monotonous whispering sigh echoing terrors that moved dimly in Semperi's sleeping brain.

Sullivan, directly under Guy, slept like a baby. But Sullivan had no imagination, Guy thought. He couldn't reach out with his mind and see what was going on all around them, even if he could hear, with his sleeping mind, the thunder of the naval bombardment that was supposed to be softening up the Japanese defenses on Saipan.

In a few more hours, they would be landing—and dying—and killing Japanese—on the beaches over there.

Guy began to shiver. His whole body shook, and he felt a sudden terror lest the shuddering of his body be communicated to the steel pipe frame of the tiered bunks, and the others of the squad know what was happening to him.

Out there in the darkness, the battleships and heavy cruisers were pasting the beaches and enemy artillery positions with sixteen- and eight-inch shells, while the fast-moving light cruisers and destroyers contributed their bursts of six- and five-inch H.E. This prebombardment had been going on for days, Guy knew, while the transports and tractor groups of the Northern Attack Force, carrying the Second Marine Division, plowed the thousand-mile emptiness of the Pacific from the Eniwetok staging area. It had seemed unreal then, going back to maneuvers of the V 'Phib Corps, rehearsing at Maalaea Bay. It hadn't seemed real even when the first snooper

plane, a Judy that scuttlebutt said came all the way from Truk, first spotted the fast-moving carriers in the van of the transports and was shot down. Or the next night, too, Guy thought, about 0300 as he remembered, when a force of ten Bettys came roaring in, to the accompaniment of flares and float lights and the hammering of antiaircraft that deafened the ears and shook the brain loose. No damage had been done that night, either. And still he had not faced the reality of Saipan, ahead of him.

His body seemed detached now, trembling of its own accord on the narrow, slablike bunk. Guy gritted his teeth. His sweat felt cold under his skivvie. He wished he could pray, but he couldn't. Not now.

He listened to Semperi murmuring in his sleep, "Ah, it's a fuggin' fuggup—" And then Semperi suddenly stopped sighing and screamed and sat bolt upright, smashed his head against the iron piping, and fell like a scrambling cat on all fours to the steel deck.

Instantly Guy came out of his bunk and landed on top of the little Italian, smothering the harsh, ululating scream with a hand clapped over Semperi's mouth. For a moment, wrestling with the thrashing body on the deck, fighting for silence in the hot darkness, he thought he had tangled with a wild animal.

"Hey, Semp! Semp!" Guy whispered urgently. "Take it easy! Hear me? It's Guy! Take it easy, Semp!"

"Huh?"

"It's me. You've been dreaming," Guy whispered.

He had pinned Semperi to the deck, and the little man's heaving chest had subsided, the wild unseeing glare had left the whites of his eyes, dimly seen through the red glow of the bulkhead light.

"You all right?" he whispered to Semperi.

"Yeah, I—I had a dream, I guess. Lemme up, Guy."

Guy stood up carefully. Semperi looked a little odd. From the bunk across the aisle, Sullivan said irritably: "Come on, you jerks, stop the dance, huh?"

"Knock it off," Semperi said. His voice was shaky, but his effort to pull himself together was having effect. "Thanks, Guy. I don't know wha' happened—"

"You were dreaming, you said."

"Yeah, yeah." Semperi's narrow face was sweaty. He tried a shaky grin. "There was this babe, see, and she got a stranglehold on me all of a sudden, like—"

"Sure, Semperi."
"What time is it?" Semperi asked suddenly.
"0230."
"You able to sleep, Guy?"
"I'm fine," Guy said. "Hit the sack, Semp."
"Yeah. Okay. Thanks again." Semperi hesitated. "You sound funny, Gabby, boy. You thinkin' about things again?"

"Shut up," Guy said easily. "Go back to sleep."

He felt better now. He wasn't alone. He knew that every man in the squad, in his own way, was either facing or running from the actuality, the reality, of what the next few hours would bring. Pain and blood or sudden obliteration from a mortar or the slow torture of a wound when you were hung up with guts falling out of you and no corpsman to help. You felt the smoothness of your body, the hard flat musculature of biceps and forearm, of stomach and thigh, and you knew this familiar flesh, this warmth that was *you*, could be torn apart, incredibly, blasted and shattered into splintered bone and pink meat—

He told himself to stop thinking like that.

In any case, even though this was part of the fear, it wasn't all of it. He had other problems. Something special. Something none of the others could understand.

He moved silently down the narrow aisle between the crowded gear and equipment, the M-1's and the helmets, the BAR's and bayonets and sheath knives, all the implements of death and killing. He couldn't stay here any longer. If he went back to the bunk, he thought, he would begin to scream like Semperi. . . .

TWO

BILL HAZEN, Master Sergeant, lay quietly awake for a few more moments after Guy Gabaldon left his bunk. He, too, had not been asleep. He had been aware of Guy's wakefulness, and it troubled him, just as the sounds of distress, fear, anger or bewilderment from every man under him was his business and his concern. For himself, he knew he was an imaginative man, with too much education for his own good—he had a law degree

from Stanford U.—and with a man like himself, the only refuge from what was happening tonight was to shut out all images, all dreams, all distortions of thought except the immediate, fundamental, and most pressing of realities of the moment.

Bill was a tall man, powerfully muscled, dark-haired, with a body honed to razor-edged perfection. He knew he was well-liked by the men he had to command; it was not a matter of egotism to admit this to himself; it was part of his job to know how much he could depend on the men when the chips were down. He accepted their friendship and respect as part of the job, a heritage from earlier campaigns, on the 'Canal, and Tarawa, before he'd been given a rest in Hawaii, convalescing after the hip wound when that Jap sniper got him.

He was an old pro compared to most of the sleeping men around him. And yet he knew that this assault was going to be different from the others he had gone through.

The Mariana Islands—his education cropped up, bringing with it odd bits of information, scraps of intelligence he could not deny—were sometimes called Las Islas de los Ladrones—the Isles of Thieves—after Magellan's discovery in 1521. The native race were Chamorros, friendly to Americans, but the islands, after Japanese seizure in World War I, were now populated mostly by Japanese and Okinawans, loyal to the Empire of the Rising Sun. Yes, this assault would be different. Here was no small coral atoll, or wild jungle inhabited only by confused and ignorant natives. For the first time, the Division would be landing on an island that could be defended in depth, with artillery emplacements hidden in limestone caves, with a population that would be distinctly unfriendly to the Second Marines.

Maybe this was where he would buy it, Bill thought. You couldn't push the idea of inevitable death down forever. Sooner or later, your survival factor ran out. After that, you rode along on luck alone.

Well, he had been lucky before. Maybe he'd be lucky this time, too.

He had given Guy enough time, Bill Hazen decided.

He slipped out of his bunk and went after him.

Up on deck, in these small hours before dawn, the sea looked strange and unreal, lit by flashes and flares, rocked by thunderclaps of sound from the bombardment.

Saipan was low on the horizon, not really visible; but you knew it was there. The convoy was making a slow, steady circuit to approach the west coast, passing Marpi Point to the north, heading for the landing beaches near the small town of Charan Kanoa. He wondered what kind of dawn it would be.

Yesterday, the 14th, had seen an overcast and a waning moon, and the sun came up out of greenish, grayish light that persisted until the easterly trade winds sprang up and changed the weather.

Bill stepped out through the bulkhead door to the deck and looked first at the sky, then at Guy Gabaldon.

"Hi," he said.

"Hi," Guy returned.

"Can't sleep?"

"No more than you, I guess," Guy said.

Bill gestured toward the horizon, lit by the flashes of Naval gunfire, rocked by concussion. "Quite a sight over there."

"Probably all they're accomplishing is to knock flat a few farmhouses and sugar mills," Guy said.

"You're always the optimist."

"It's been a long trip. We're coming to the end of it," Guy returned.

"You really feel that way?"

"Don't you?"

Bill Hazen was silent for a moment. "Every man aboard this LST thinks he's going to live through it, Guy. He has to, or he'd go crazy. He has to think that maybe some other guys will buy it, but not him. Never himself. It always happens to the next man. Maybe even to his buddy. But not to him."

"I never wished—" Guy began to object.

"Sure, you do. Everybody does. It's only natural."

They were both silent. The LST plunged heavily into the Pacific swell, shattered white water around its vast blunt bow, rolled and straightened and drove on. All around them on the sea were other craft, large and small, in close formation. Overhead came the scream of early Avengers lofted from carriers hull-down on the night horizon, sent to begin the coordinated air strikes against pillbox and bunker on Saipan's beaches. Bill Hazen had no illusions about this softening-up process. He had believed it would be a walkover on the 'Canal, and again at Tarawa. He knew better now. It would be

tough. Tougher than anything he had known before.

Guy had known Bill Hazen ever since the day he reported for training at Camp Pendleton—later they had gone on together to Captain Schwabe's intelligence unit in Hawaii. He felt close to Bill, appreciating the friendship of the sergeant, whose ready grin and quiet competence had steadied him through other hours of difficulty. Probably, Guy thought, Bill Hazen was the first and only real friend he had ever had.

A magnesium flare burst high in the sky and hung there like a fantastic white lamp, swinging from its parachute. In the unnatural light, Guy saw that Bill Hazen's face had hardened as he looked toward the invisible shores of Saipan. Hardened into a killer mold, a handsome travesty of the laughing, easy-going man he knew Bill Hazen to be. That's what would happen to all of them soon, Guy thought. He wet his lips. We'll all change, and I'll change, too, and I don't know if I can or want to, I'd rather die first—

"Bill?" he said.

"Yeah?"

"Does it get better, or worse?"

"Better," Bill said. "Later on, you don't have to fight yourself. You don't have time to think." He turned and looked at Guy and grinned tightly. "You got something on your mind, you can spill it to me, Gabby. You know that. I'm just one big confidential ear."

"I can't—talk about it," Guy whispered.

"Is it something to do with your family, Gabby?"

"No, I don't—no."

"You never mention them."

"There's nothing—they don't have anything to do with this—I can't believe—"

"You said you were an orphan, once, back in Hawaii."

"That's right."

"But you got a family, anyway."

"Shut up, Bill," Guy said quietly. "I don't want to talk about them."

"Well, you're a Marine with a very special problem," Bill said. "If I can't help you, nobody can."

"Nobody can help me," Guy agreed. "Not even God."

They were not the only wakeful men aboard the LST at that hour.

Louie Semperi was praying. He lay stiffly on his bunk,

bracing himself rigidly against a return of the nightmare that had wakened him, and he whispered swift pleadings and prayers inside him, soundless against the muted noise of his comrades all around him. He was tough. He had been brought up in the shadow of the Williamsburg Bridge, and you had to be tough on those streets and alleys to survive. You couldn't go running to the padre with your troubles. Mama wept about it, and tried to bribe and threaten him, when he refused to go to Sunday Mass, and she seemed to get smaller and darker in her black peasant's dress that looked as if she had brought it over from Italy. Maybe the church was good in the old country, or in other days; but it didn't do much good in Brooklyn. Not for Semperi and the Tarantulas, the street gang that had taken him in and provided security, friendship, danger and excitement for him in his early teen years. No, you had no time to go to church. And who needed it?

Yes, it had been a long time since he had prayed. He could hardly remember the words, or the way it was supposed to go. But maybe that didn't matter. It probably wouldn't count anyway, Semperi thought; not after all these years. But he kept vocalizing the words of remorse in his throat anyway, staring into the darkness . . .

. . . While Sullivan, on the slat below him, thought about Katie, in 'Frisco. He hung on to the vision of Katie as if he were drowning and she was the only thing that could hold him up. There was darkness all around everything else, and only Katie, naked and gleaming, smiling with wet lips and inviting eyes that laughed and teased him, was alive and shining and real. Sullivan held on to her. He could feel none of the usual lift or rigidity of passion when he conjured her up like this, as he had done in the past. It didn't matter, though. Let her dance like that, watch her hips slide, her legs move, her mouth smile. *Go, Katie, go!* he whispered to himself. The only thing was, the music was wrong, erratic, a dull thudding in irregular tempo like the sound of guns on the far horizon. . . .

. . . That woke up Pete Lewis, Pfc, veteran of New Guinea and New Britain, where a Jap sniper had finally knocked him out of the active ranks and gotten him rotated back to Hawaii for convalescence with Bill Hazen. He, too, had helped to train replacements back at Camp Pendleton in the States, and for a time, the war seemed

far, far away, and the jungles and mud and scabs and ulcers a thing to be forgotten. Now, when he awoke and heard the familiar thunder that muttered endlessly even through the steel bulkheads of the LST, he knew that the States and Hawaii had been the dream, and this was the reality.

You never get used to it, he thought. Up to a certain point—like the morning of the 7th, when the Northern Attack Force sortied out of Eniwetok, a tremendous display of Naval power, transports, sleek DE's and distant escort carriers all in their panoply of outraged camouflage and firepower—then you felt a surge of confidence, you knew that you were part of a tremendous, inexorable machine, and the machine would carry you along, take care of you, organize everything for you and see you through the dirty business ahead, see that you came out of it alive and ready for—for the next one.

No need to think about the next one yet, though, Pete Lewis thought. This morning would be tough enough. He felt a twist in his belly, of apprehension, perhaps, and then he resorted again to his image of the vast, paternal, omniscient organization of the U. S. Marine Corps, of Cincpac and J.C.S., and he felt comforted.

He wished, though, that Hawaii, after he and Guy and Bill had joined the Second Division, could have lasted longer. He'd had good times there with Guy and Bill. They had become the conquering trio, the inseparable buddies, the sharers of all good things—wine, women, and song—in those days of training. He owed a lot to Guy; a lot to Bill. More than he could ever tell them.

He wondered what Aunt Minnie would say if she knew some of the things they'd done, back there in the islands. With Sono and Famika and Sheila Lincoln. Pete Lewis grinned tightly into the hot, smothering darkness. He didn't think Guy or Bill ever suspected that that had been the first time for him, the first with any girl. You had to put on a good act, or life would be made miserable for you by your so-called buddies. Back there on New Britain, before that lousy sniper winged him, he'd joined in all the big talk, the bragging and promises of sex and more sex to come, after Herculean performances in the past. You invented a few yarns yourself. But none of what you said then was true. You didn't really know anything. Aunt Minnie had never really let you learn, back there in the New Hampshire hills, among

the Presidential Range of sleeping mountains. The farm was all you knew, and even though there were chances a-plenty with tourist girls and summer people, there was always the image of Aunt Min, dour and caustic, and the dire retribution of disease, sin, and eternal damnation rising in triple specters whenever he even got close to a girl.

So he'd put on a good front, a snappy routine with a wink and a sly grin on his round, fresh face, and Pete Lewis had no trouble with the bull sessions. And after his forty-eight with Guy and Bill, none of it was a mystery any more.

No matter what happened today, Pete thought, he'd had one great experience back there, one he'd never forget.

And anyway, nothing was going to happen, Pete comforted himself. Not with Captain Schwabe to look after the Special Intelligence Squad.

If anyone had suggested to Pete Lewis that he had substituted his boyhood reliance on the omniscient authority of the maiden aunt who had raised him to the equally strong, omniscient image of Captain Schwabe, he would have hooted the idea down. Yet he dismissed all worry about the coming day by comforting himself with the certain knowledge that the skipper wouldn't let any of them down. . . .

THREE

JOHN SCHWABE, Captain, USMC, stared for a moment at the miniature snapshots of his wife Cecilie and his two daughters, then snapped the locket firmly shut and dropped it inside his shirt, along with his dogtags, as M.Sgt. Leonard knocked and stepped in, careful of the blackout curtain over the cabin door. Leonard brought him a mug of coffee.

"You said at 0200, Captain," Leonard said, putting the mug down before him.

"That's right, Len. Thanks."

"You get any sleep tonight?" Sergeant Leonard asked quietly. "Any at all?"

"No more than you, Len. Sit down. Take your shoes off," Schwabe said, which was his way of nodding the big sergeant off his military formality to a temporary equality. Leonard was in his late thirties, a career man in the ranks of the Corps, sweating out his pension years. Tough, honest, obedient, devoted. A big family back home somewhere in Nebraska, a small ranch run by his oldest son. The heavy maturity of Leonard was a solid bedrock anchor for Schwabe's control of the unit. Schwabe himself, being past forty now, was also a professional Marine, and because they were both thus old-timers, having sweated out years of peacetime neglect to the Corps, and now sweating out the fantastic expansion and beefing-up of Marine Corps regiments to undreamed-of firepower, he and Leonard understood each other with the quiet, deep friendship that only years of quiet cooperation could give.

"Are we going to make it, John?" Leonard asked quietly.

"The Second always makes it," Schwabe said. "You know that."

"How much is it going to cost?"

"I don't know. This one will be different."

"I'm a little scared of it, John," Leonard said.

"So am I," Schwabe admitted.

Because he was head of the Special Intelligence Unit, Captain John Schwabe had been privileged to sit in on most of the details of Operation Forager from the beginning, back in March—12 March, he remembered, when the decision was made by J.C.S. to invade Saipan and he was given the first prewar charts of Saipan, woefully inadequate, code-named "Tattersalls" and told to study it for his life. After that there was all the staff work with Admiral Turner's staff at Hospital Point in Pearl Harbor, and the slow accumulation of intelligence photos, including some excellent obliques, taken by raiding Navy Avengers, of the shores where the Second and Fourth Marines were to land in June. He sweated out the slow organization of Task Group 58.2 under Vice-Admiral Turner, commanding the Joint Expeditionary Force, mounted in Hawaii and on the West Coast.

This one was the big one, Schwabe thought, sipping coffee and accepting a cigarette from Leonard. The timetable called for occupation of the Marianas by June with the object of controlling the eastern approaches to the

Philippines and Formosa, cutting the vital Japanese communication lines, and establishing the first forward bases for long-range bombing of Japan itself. Control of Saipan and Tinian could destroy Japan's capacity to wage war.

It could mean the beginning of the end.

If he was still around afterward, John Schwabe thought, he might begin to think a little hopefully of seeing Cecilie again, and the kids.

He talked easily to Sergeant Leonard then, sipping the hot coffee, estimating the capacities of the men in the unit, debating how much could be asked of each of them as individuals when the chips were down. But his thoughts still ranged over the broad aspects of the campaign ahead.

Not like the 'Canal, or Tarawa, no. Saipan was a beautiful island, two to five miles wide, thirteen long. Total of seventy-one square miles, Schwabe thought, and the Japs would fight to the death for every inch of cornfield, sugar plantation, rice terrace and cattle pasture. Rich soil, heavy rainfall, some swampy areas. But it was the reef, and the shallow lagoon beyond, that worried Schwabe. To reach Red Beach Two there were natural barriers, and Japanese-made barriers, and maybe the amphtracs would make it, and maybe the Elsie-Eyes would go in there as gunboats and blast them off the beach and out of their pillboxes—and maybe not. Maybe the UDT boys, the Underwater Demolition Teams, had done the job—and maybe not.

You'll soon know, he told himself. When the sun comes up, you'll know the answers to a lot of things.

He just wished he didn't keep thinking about ill omens all the time. He had never felt like this about an invasion before.

First there had been that fatal accident that marred the Maui rehearsal, when the *LST-485* pitched so heavily in the seas that an LCT, in which nineteen Marines were sleeping, was lost overboard and the men never recovered. Then, a few days later, at West Loch in Pearl Harbor, there was that explosion of mortar ammo aboard *LST-353* that triggered off a chain reaction of blasts that spread to other LST's and wooden ammo barges, beginning the threat of a major catastrophe averted only by heroic firefighting. Even then, casualties were rough: 396 injured, 163 dead.

Bad omens enough.

And enough thinking about it, too, Schwabe told himself. He finished his mug of coffee and looked at Leonard. "Any special problems, Len? We've got a couple hours yet."

"Among the men, you mean?" Leonard frowned heavily. He was a slow, patient thinker, but he arrived at proper conclusions. "I think not, except—maybe your interpreter."

"Pfc Gabaldon?"

"Guy. Yes."

"Something still eating him?"

"It's a lot worse than it used to be."

"He hasn't talked about it yet?"

"Bill Hazen is on deck with him. But Guy won't let out whatever worms are eating at him."

Schwabe sighed. "He's carrying something special on his shoulders, Len. We'll just have to keep an eye on him."

"Yes, sir," Sergeant Leonard said. "I'll do that . . ."

The convoy had come to a stop. From where he stood, Guy could see the ring of man-made lightning flashing on the horizon, illuminating the low terraces and hills, and the height of Mount Tapotchau. Battlewagons nearby belched great clouds of yellow smoke with ear-splitting roars, and farther away others, DE's and heavy cruisers, emitting flashes of gunfire like spitting tongues of flame. Ashore, planes were dropping white phosphorus bombs which exploded in snowy clouds, bursting like flowers with silver streamers that set afire cane fields and houses alike. From Cape Nafutan came a thin return fire, atop the steep cliffs. The enemy return fire fell short. Planes screamed overhead like avenging hawks. Carefully, deliberately, methodically—trying to make every shell count, with the nearest ammo replacement depot over a thousand miles to the east—the bombardment group went on with their deadly work.

It could be called a beautiful spectacle by some, Guy thought, and he shivered inwardly again, glad of the irregular, spastic light of gunfire that hid his face from Bill Hazen. Beautiful, if you could just shut out the image of the human beings on the receiving end of all that hell.

People were being destroyed, thinking, feeling men and women and children, the innocent among the guilty, by those distant beautiful silver bursts of phosphorus, by

those billowing tongues of sugar-cane fire, by those whip-snap crackling bursts of five-inchers.

To most of the men, if not all of them, aboard the LST with Guy, it was great, there were fervent prayers that everything that moved, walked, or crawled on the island would be dead, shattered, torn to ribbons before the first Marine hit the beach that morning.

Guy couldn't feel that way.

He seemed to feel the pain and anguish and terror of those others across the dark sea, those men and women cowering in fear and agony from the devastating bombardment. They were human, too. No matter what the usual talk was, he understood them and knew the truth.

And he was afraid.

His stomach twisted, and his fear grew, because he did not know what he would do when the time came for him to prove himself against people he could not hate and did not hate. He had to find the answer somewhere, he thought in panic. Soon, in the next hour or two. This fear he felt was familiar. He had known it in the past. And he cast his mind backward suddenly, seeking desperately a meaning and a response to the questions that tortured him. . . .

FOUR

FEAR was something he had known all his life, it seemed. From the very beginning, he had lived with it intimately, knowing its treacherous, varied faces. Yes, he knew fear. He wasn't ashamed of it. He knew how to fight it, turning its own deadly, paralyzing weight against itself, if necessary, in order to win out.

He remembered crouching like this a long, long time ago. He was younger, smaller, and—how old?—twelve, maybe. He had been in the dark then, too, with the same stomach-cramping gripe in his belly, the same frozen attitude pushing him down on his haunches.

Yes, that's where it began, Guy thought. 'Way back there, in that alley behind the supermarket, across half the world, in a Los Angeles most people had been happy to forget long ago.

Crouching, shivering, hungry and cold, trying to crawl into a hole and pull the dark in after you—that's how it was when it began. You went hungry just so long, you flattened your nose against the windows of Jorge's Supermarket and looked at all the food in there, all those things to eat—and that night you went in there, driven by the belly cramps, to grab what you could.

He had gotten into the store through the gloomy shadows behind the supermarket, up through a high small window on a barrel in the alley. East Los Angeles, in those early depression years, was a jungle of filth and squalor. But he was at home among refuse cans, empty crates, stacked cartons. He preferred the dimly lighted streets, the shanties and substandard shelters in stark contrast to the multi-million dollar City Hall and elaborate Civic Center buildings beyond the periphery of his jungle world. He was hungry—and so he set out to steal enough to eat. To Guy, this world was normal, these slums and this poverty, this mood of quiet desperation among minority groups packed by vast economic forces into unofficial but very real ghettos.

He remembered how the clang of the burglar alarm had shattered the stillness inside Jorge's Market. Like the sudden sharp burst of H.E. overhead, making him duck, making him want to pull his head down into his neck and melt into the earth. Fear had burst upon the nine-year-old boy who was Guy Gabaldon then, so long ago. He no longer tried to be quiet. He heard glass break, tinned goods clatter under his scrambling feet as he raced to get away with his sack of stolen foodstuffs.

He was young, small and tough and wiry. You had to be or you didn't survive in those days. He tumbled out through the back window of the supermarket, the burglar alarm shrilling like a demon at his heels. He looked both ways. Nothing. The alley was dead-ended to his right by a high factory wall. Quickly he started off toward the street.

Just in time, he saw the police car flash around the corner and come to a lurching halt in front of the store. Guy vanished to one side among a cluster of rubbish cans, only a few yards from the end of the store building. He was pinned there, with his sack of loot, pressed face-first into the jumble of trash. His heart hammered; his throat felt dry. He knew what fear was. And anger, too.

Two uniformed cops piled out of the prowl car, one taking the front of the store, the other moving into the alley with a flashlight that stabbed toward the small window Guy had smashed to get in. Guy ducked back as the flashlight beam played past the rubbish pile and searched beyond him. The police officer moved on deeper into the alley, and Guy suddenly stirred, shoved the sack of groceries deep among the tilted trash cans. He heard people collecting in front of the market now, talking excitedly, interested in this break in the grinding monotony of their lives. He raised his head and peeked, saw the familiar, chunky figure of Tim Benson, a schoolmate. Tim was a bully, but to Guy's mind, one kid standing among the crowd could easily become two. . . .

Without hesitation, he slid from his hiding place and, in a few steps, mingled with the other spectators, hands innocently in his pockets, an expression of curiosity on his face. Timmy gave him a startled look and frowned, started to say something, then sidled closer to Guy among the crowding, pushing onlookers.

"It's the third time this month the store's been robbed," someone said over Guy's head. "That's why old Jorge put in the alarm."

"Fat lot of good it did. The cops couldn't 've got here any sooner, anyway. Less'n a minute since that there bell started clanging."

At that moment, the police officer inside the car cut the circuit and the brazen bell was stilled. Guy and Timmy Benson exchanged cool, inimical looks. Guy decided to take the offensive.

"What's goin' on?" he asked casually.

"As if you don't know, smart guy!" Timmy muttered.

"Nobody asked you," Guy said.

The policemen started asking the onlookers if anybody had seen someone break in. They had no hope of a useful reply, although all the adults, Guy remembered, began talking at once. Nobody saw anything, he learned with relief, but they all had opinions.

An aged woman, staring spitefully at Guy, sniffed and said: "I can remember when this was a *nice* neighborhood. No hoodlums around here then."

The second officer came up and reported the safe as being untouched. "Looks like only merchandise was taken, Charlie."

The first cop stared at Guy and Tim Benson. "What

are you kids doing out at this time of night? Go on—beat it."

He started to turn away, his duty to the old woman done, but Timmy made a razzing, contemptuous sound. As the cop snapped back, Guy pulled out his empty pants pockets and grinned. The officer, growing angry, grabbed Guy by the arm.

"What're you doin' here, kid? Where do you live?"

"On Sadler," Guy said quickly. "Number 5463. Leggo me!"

He jerked free and started away, suddenly inwardly afraid, despite his cocky walk. The cop did not follow. At the corner, he turned and looked back and saw Tim Benson talking to the cop, who had taken out his notebook. Guy hesitated, bit his lip. But there was nothing to do but hurry on. . . .

Hours later, Guy returned to the alley and retrieved the sack of stolen groceries from behind the trash can.

Yes, Guy thought, that was the night the fear began. And the day after was when his life took that strange double-turn, dividing him in two inside, opening up loyalties and devotions, vistas of compassion and gratitude that today, in the inferno off Saipan and Red Beach 2, made him cower and sweat and want to die . . .

He remembered the way the school he went to, when he was twelve, had a lot of Japanese boys, sons of Nisei families. He remembered the tall, gangling athletic counselor, Kaz Une, in his late teens. Kaz was brother to George Une, who somehow had become Guy's special pal in school. Why had it happened that way? he wondered. Was it because of his own loneliness, his own problem of being set apart somehow from all the others. Pa was dead, and Ma—well, it was better not to think of how Ma was.

Come to think of it, the only friends he had in those days was George Une, and Freddy, a fat Japanese boy. He was with George and Freddy the next day, on the school athletic field, after he had swiped the groceries from the supermarket. He had told George about Tim Benson, and they had paused on the fringes of a basketball game being supervized by Kaz, discussing the situation.

"I gotta fight him," Guy said. "I just gotta, to shut him up."

Fat Freddy looked doleful. "You're crazy, Guy. He's too big. You'll get murdered!"

"Is Timmy the reason you had t'go to the Principal's office?" George asked solicitously. He was small and wiry and utterly sympathetic. "Guy, you in trouble in again?"

Guy hadn't replied. They were on the sidewalk now, and when Guy looked across the street, he saw Tim Benson and a group of Tim's cronies waiting and watching Guy as he stood with the two Japanese boys.

There was no escaping it. Guy set his jaw and started across the street, with George Une following and muttering dire and unhappy predictions. From the athletic field came the shrill blast of Kaz Une's referee whistle at the basketball game. Guy walked on.

Tim Benson was solid, big for his age, two years older than Guy. He looked from Guy to the two Japanese boys lingering behind him and his mouth curled in a jeer.

"Got your Jap friends with you, hey, Guy?"

One of Tim's pals said: "Want us to take him, Tim?"

"Nah. Leave the baby alone."

Guy went livid. "You stink, Tim! Blabbing to the cops!"

"Me?" Tim was all innocence. "Me tell the law you were the peon who broke into Jorge's Market? Just to steal a few lousy potatoes? Why, that kinda action ain't worth talkin' to nobody about, Guy." He put his fists on his hips and grinned sardonically. "Anyway, how'd it go in the Principal's office for ya, Guy?"

Guy's temper exploded. Somewhat to his own surprise, he belted Timmy in the mouth hard enough to draw a quick spurt of blood. Instantly the fight was on. Tim Benson, much heavier and older, dominated the melee. Guy felt a barrage of hard-knuckled cruel fists rain on his head, slam into his belly. He went down to the sidewalk, gasping, scrambled up and waded in again. Timmy knocked him down again, dancing with cruel cockiness around him. Dimly, through a roaring in his ears, Guy heard the shrill alarm of Kaz Une's whistle in the background. But he fought on, committed now to shut Tim Benson's mouth or be hammered into the pavement, trying. He found himself on his back, with Benson astraddle him, smashing at his head while he vainly tried to fend off the blows, when Timmy was abruptly yanked off him. Relieved of the pin, Guy scrambled up and waded blindly

in again, only to feel a much stronger arm block his way.

"Quit it!" Kaz Une yelled. "Cut it out!" The tall Japanese boy, only nineteen but infinitely more adult than the struggling youngsters, looked down at them from his slim, authoritative height. "What's the matter with you two?" He shoved Tim Benson away. "Go, beat it—all of you!"

Tim moved back, wiping blood from his split lip, and mumbling resentment. Kaz Une glared at his younger brother George. "Why did you let your pal get into a deal like this, George?"

"Me? I didn't do nothin' at all," George Une objected. "I warned him he'd get clobbered."

"Go on, then. You get along home, too."

"Holy cow!" George objected. "It wasn't *my* fault!"

But he and Freddy obeyed Kaz' orders without more demur. Guy drew a deep breath, felt the stinging pain of a swollen ear with cautious fingers, sniffed, and tried to break free of Kaz' grip. But Kaz Une held him tightly.

"Take it easy, Guy. I want to talk to you."

"Let me go," Guy muttered. "I've got nothin' to talk about."

To his surprise, Kaz pulled a clean white handkerchief from the back pocket of his khaki slacks and handed it to him, smiling. "Here, wipe the blood off your face. You're coming with me while I change my clothes; then I'll drive you home."

"I don't need a lift home," Guy snapped.

"Okay," Kaz said. "I'll give you a choice—it's home for you, or Juvenile Hall. I've been watching you, Guy. I know all about you from my brother George and from Freddy. You're heading the wrong way, all the way, and it's time somebody did something about you. You can make the choice yourself now."

"I've seen Juvenile Hall," Guy said defiantly. "It don't scare me!"

"It's a good start toward something that can, though," Kaz said. He caught Guy's quick frown. "I'm talking about San Quentin, Guy. Now, come on. Pick up your books, too. Don't leave them on the sidewalk like that. They're city property."

"Big deal!" Guy sneered.

Kaz was quietly firm. "I said, pick them up!"

"You can't tell me what to do!" Guy yelled.

"Pick them up," Kaz said again.

For a moment, Guy stared up in defiance at the tall young Japanese. Kaz' dark eyes were steady and quiet. Something in them finally made Guy drop his gaze. He did not know why. He stooped and picked up the books in silence and followed Kaz Une's long, thin figure down the street to Kaz' Model-A Ford.

FIVE

GUY was disturbed, and kept to himself, squeezed in the seat of Kaz Une's jalopy. It wasn't that he didn't like the tall Japanese athletic director. It was just that he had grown to mistrust everyone and everything in the jungle world in which he lived, lately. He was like a small animal, grown wary and suspicious of anything new and unknown, cautious of unexpected cuffs and kicks. He did not know what kindness could be. He did not expect understanding or sympathy. And he knew that the best course to take when unsure of himself was to be aggressively non-communicative.

"What's the trouble, Guy?" Kaz asked, at length. He paused, and added: "You're fighting all the time, it seems to me—and lately I've heard some worse things about you."

"I don't care what you heard," Guy rapped, staring straight ahead. "I don't care what anybody heard."

"These are rough times for a lot of people, though," Kaz went on. It was almost as if he were talking to himself. "There aren't enough jobs to go around, lots of families are on relief through no fault of their own—everybody's got problems, it seems." He glanced at Guy now. "Is that why you broke into Jorge's Market last night? Are things so bad that you have to steal?"

"I didn't say I stole. If Timmy Benson says—"

"Don't lie to me, Guy," Kaz said quietly.

"Then don't ask stupid questions."

Kaz turned the corner into a blighted, residential section of East Los Angeles. The street was narrow and shabby with small, rundown houses exhibiting the heavy hand of crushing poverty everywhere. Kaz stopped his Ford in front of a particularly rundown frame house, with a

weedgrown yard and sagging porch. It looked dreary and uninhabited, but Guy nodded and got out promptly as the car stopped.

"This is it. Thanks for the ride," he said sarcastically.

He was not prepared for what followed next.

Kaz got out of the car, too.

Instantly, Guy felt a quick and panic alarm. "Hey, what are you doing? I don't want you to go in with me!"

"Well, I'm going in, whether you like it or not. I never met your folks." Kaz spoke quietly, and looked down at the smaller boy in gentle sympathy. "Look, Guy, I won't embarrass you. You don't have to act so frantic about it. I won't tell 'em anything about Jorge's Market." He took Guy's arm. "Come on."

Guy struggled to break free. "No! You stay out of my house, hear me?"

But Kaz, made even more curious now by Guy's desperation, only took a firmer grip on Guy and led him toward the sagging, dilapidated house. All at once Guy could no longer contain himself and his voice broke as he sobbed: "Please, Kaz—please, listen—don't go in!"

Kaz found the front door unlocked. He opened it and gently pushed Guy inside ahead of him. And now that it was too late to struggle any more, Guy moved directly in.

The living room was gray with shadows, sparsely furnished, small and shabby. It looked as if it hadn't been cleaned in a month. Nobody greeted them. No footfall came to question their entrance. The house simply breathed a tired, silent air of disuse and neglect, a gray pall of defeat and utter poverty. Kaz paused, taken aback by the disarray, and then crossed to the kitchen door and looked in. The kitchen was a shambles of unwashed pots and pans, empty tin cans heaped in the sink. Kaz' mouth drooped in quick distaste. Flies buzzed over the sink, and water dripped monotonously from the old-fasioned leaky faucet. Kaz turned to look at Guy. The smaller boy stood still, unable to meet his eye. There was a mixture of shame and inner pride in Guy that made his face wry with an expression unlike anything Kaz had ever seen in him before.

"Guy, listen, I'm sorry, but—"

"All right, you busted in, you looked around, you've seen everything, right?" Guy said in a low voice. "So now get out, huh?"

"Where is your mother?" Kaz Une asked.

"In the hospital," Guy said sullenly.
"How long has she been there?"
"They took her away last Wednesday."
Kaz frowned. "And your father?"
"I got no Pa. He's been dead a long time."
"You mean you've been living here *alone*?" Kaz asked.
Guy looked defiant. "I get along okay! I can take care of myself!"

Kaz started to speak again, then came to a sudden decision. The tall Japanese young man suddenly squatted down to Guy's level so their eyes met and locked—Kaz Une's dark and grave, Guy's bright with shame and defiance.

"Listen, Guy, you're my brother's friend, and George says you're okay. That makes you okay in my book, too, understand? Now you can't go living like this forever—roaming around loose, on your own, stealing your food, running from the cops, fighting with bullies like Tim Benson. It's no good, Guy. And don't tell me you can." Kaz shook him a little, but gently, in his strong hands. "So go pack some clothes, kiddo, and don't forget your pajamas and toothbrush. You can bunk with George for a few days. Okay?"

Guy looked up in startled amazement. Nobody had ever offered him anything like this before. Never in his life had anyone ever invited him to go anywhere, to live away from this hovel he had always known as home. Yet he felt he must cling to his pride.

"I'm not takin' anything from anybody," he muttered.

"You won't be *taking* anything, Guy," Kaz said, with gentle understanding. "At least, nothing that my family doesn't want to give you."

The Une home in Los Angeles' Japanese colony was a neat bungalow with an immaculate lawn and swept driveway, on a quiet street that seemed incredibly peaceful and serene after the jungle atmosphere of Guy's home. George Une, who had been playing on the bungalow porch, came running to greet Kaz' car as they turned into the drive. Guy tried not to be caught staring at everything, and studied his surroundings as surreptitiously as possible. He had never been a guest before, and he was overwhelmed by a thousand unexpected things he knew nothing about, and could not cope with. He had packed his meager belongings in the same paper sack

that had held his stolen groceries, and he held this tightly to him as George Une ran over to him.

"Hi!" George said, and looked questioningly up at his older brother. Kaz said quickly: "Guy's mother is in the County Hospital. Until she is well, he'll stay with us."

Immediately, George beamed. "Hey, that's swell! Can he bunk in my room?"

"That's the general idea," Kaz said drily. "Although you might express sympathy about Guy's mother."

George was immediately contrite. "Gee, yeah. I'm real sorry about that part of it, Guy." He threw his arm around Guy's shoulder and impulsively led him into the house.

Guy paused on the threshold. The room inside was immaculate. The furnishings were Occidental, nothing unusual, except for a few Japanese vases, a small and delicate table. Guy felt some surprise, having expected something quite different and alien—something totally Oriental. George pulled the paper bag of clothing from him and moved away toward his room while Kaz said, "This way, Guy. My mother is in the kitchen, and I want you to meet her."

Mother Une was a serene, comforting woman, wearing a print American housedress. She was at the sink, rinsing some clothes. She turned questioningly, smiling at Kaz, as Kaz led the small American boy into the kitchen. Kaz indicated Guy and spoke in rapid Japanese.

"Kareno hahaoya wa byoki de byōin ni irushi mata kare no chichi oya mo shindan desu dakara kare ga hitoridachi surumade, Kokoni sundemo iidesho?" He turned back to Guy and explained: "I have told my mother that your mother is sick in the hospital and that your father is dead and I have asked if you may live here until you have a true home again, Guy."

Mother Une smiled at Guy, and spoke haltingly. "You have—come here well." She nodded to Kaz. *"Watashitachi no monowa kare no mono desu.* What we have is his."

Kaz grinned. "My mother means you're welcome here, Guy."

Mother Une laughed. "Yesss. Well-come!"

Guy said awkwardly. "Thank you, Missus Une."

The Japanese woman smiled again and turned back to her laundering with an air of having made a decision

that required no further discussion. Kaz put his arm around Guy's shoulder.

"Our parents don't speak much English, you see. Guess you'll have to start learning Japanese, Guy."

"Heck, I'm just about getting through in seventh grade English," Guy returned.

It was a new and totally unexpected world that Guy found himself abruptly a part of; a clean, serene world of astonishing security and friendship. In his surprise, he was unable at once to shed his suspicion. There had to be a gimmick in it somewhere, he thought. People didn't do things like this just for nothing!

But it was true, he learned. He slept that night on a single bed in George's small, neat bedroom, with fresh air blowing in through the screened windows. For long hours he lay awake, staring into the darkness, listening to the small sounds George Une made in his dreams. He found tears sliding down his cheek in the dark, and did not understand why: there was no reason to cry. But there was no one to see what he thought was a weakness.

In the morning, he felt totally disoriented when he awakened in this strange place. George was sleepily pulling on his shoes when the door opened and Mother Une, in a crisp, starched dress different from yesterday's, looked in and smiled at the two boys, her own Japanese son and the American waif.

She spoke in Japanese. "Hurry, or you will be late for school," she said to George. Then she smiled broadly at Guy. *"Gohanno yōiga dekimashita yō Ohayō! Bōya!"*

She closed the door, and Guy looked uneasily at George. "What did she say, George?"

George grinned. "Hurry up—breakfast is ready. And she said, 'Good morning, Little One.' "

"Oh?" Guy felt at a loss. "What do you usually have for breakfast? I mean, do Japanese eat—?"

George shrugged casually, tying his shoe laces. "Oh, we usually have raw fish and rice, or chilled pigeon eggs."

Guy gulped. "Raw—?"

George looked dreamily at the ceiling. "Yesterday it was octopus. If we're lucky, there'll be some left." He smacked his lips in relish. "It was delicious. 'Specially with that sauce made from fish eyes."

Guy turned pale. His appetite abruptly fled.

But when he followed George uncertainly into the kitchen, he saw Mother Une putting hot toast on the

table. He was almost afraid to look further. Then, as he sat down, he saw two bowls filled with cereal from a large breakfast-food box; a sugar bowl; and the heavily buttered toast. His relief was overwhelming, and so obvious that George burst into uncontrolled peals of giggling laughter.

"Hey, what did you think we ate around here, anyway? Even if Mom and Pop aren't citizens, Kaz and I are. We're Americans, all of us!"

"Yeah," Guy admitted, abashed. "And not as dumb as me."

And then he received his first lesson in Japanese when Mother Une offered him the sugar bowl and smiled and pointed at it, saying: *"Satō."* When George stared blankly, not immediately understanding, she smiled in encouragement and repeated the word. *"Satō,* Guy. *Satō."*

"Oh! Sugar is *satō*."

Mother Une bobbed her head and held up the milk. *"Miruku."*

"Miruku," Guy repeated. "Milk."

She smiled approval. Guy grinned in sudden happiness. Then she pointed to the cereal box and humorously flexed her right biceps. *"Anatao hontō no America-jin ni shimashō."*

Guy looked to George for help, who grinned. " 'Make you All-America boy,' she says."

Impulsively, Guy rolled up his shirtsleeve and flexed his muscle, too, showing Mother Une his right arm. Last year, playing hookey from school, he had had tattooed on his biceps the U.S. Marine emblem and the word "Leatherneck." Mrs. Une pretended to be vastly impressed, and thus encouraged, Guy rolled up his left sleeve and showed another tattoo, this one of a skull and crossbones with his name underneath.

Mother Une clucked in feigned admiration and shook her head vigorously. "You already All-American boy. No need cereal!"

Guy, suddenly touched by the warm humor in her eyes, felt affected by a quick and betraying lump in his throat. He looked down at his plate. "George, tell your mother I like this kind of cereal best of all, will you?"

George repeated his remark in rapid Japanese, and Mrs. Une smiled her pleasure. While the boys ate, Father Une, with his hat on, came into the kitchen, ready to leave for work. It was the first time Guy had met Mr.

Une. He was a small, affable man with the same warm, dark eyes and quick, friendly smile he had met in Kaz and George and Mother Une. Mr. Une bobbed his head toward Guy and said something that George quickly translated.

"Father says he hopes you slept okay."

Guy grinned, suddenly happily by courtesies and solicitudes he had never known before.

"Yes, sir, I did," he replied. "I slept just fine."

Mother Une handed her husband a lunch box and they spoke to each other in Japanese. Guy listened with interest to the strange language, not understanding what was being said, but somehow feeling comforted by the quick rise and fall of the warm voices. . . .

SIX

IN THE DAYS that followed, Guy pushed ahead stubbornly with his language lessons at every opportunity. Walking to and from school, he would point to various objects and have George or Freddy name them in Japanese. He learned that "*jidōsha*" meant automobile, but the word for taxi was *takushii*. A mailbox was called a *yūbinbako*. It was fun for George, who happily took on the role of teacher, while Guy absorbed the new language with a facility that surprised himself. And with each new word added to his vocabulary, he felt himself become more deeply and firmly a part of the life of the Une family.

By the end of that week, on the way home, Freddy said admiringly: "Guy, you're doin' real good. You're *yoroshii*."

"What's that?" Guy asked.

"That means you're okay," George said, grinning. "*Yoroshii*. Okay. I like that."

For the first time in his life, Guy felt an impulse to give something in return. Everything he had ever had up until these last few days had been torn and wrested from a hostile, angry world. The gifts of the Une family were new and confusing to him, and from being the wary, hostile stranger in a squalid world, Guy slowly changed as new and unsuspected impulses moved into him. He

had nothing to give in return, he felt, for all these new doors that were opened so freely to him. But on the last day of that week, he suddenly found a way, however small, to do something in return.

He was helping Mother Une with the sweeping chores, and the Japanese woman, as usual, took every opportunity to add to his growing vocabulary of Japanese words. She had a broom in her hand while Guy held the carpet sweeper, and she held up her broom to exhibit it.

"Hoki," she said.

"Hoki," Guy repeated. He worked briefly with the manual carpet-sweeper and said: "A vacuum cleaner would be easier than this thing."

Mrs. Une looked at him, puzzled. He pointed to the carpet sweeper and said: "This is a carpet sweeper, Mother Une."

She repeated it in Japanese.

"I know what it is in Japanese," he returned. "Look, you say it in English, understand? Car-pet sweep-er."

"Car-pet sweep-er?" Mother Une asked haltingly.

"Good!"

She laughed, covering her mouth with her hand.

"Now," Guy went on, feeling a sudden enthusiasm for their reversed roles, "now, if it had a motor—a *motā?*—" She nodded. "Then it'd be a vacuum cleaner."

Mother Une struggled with the unfamiliar sounds. "Vac-u-um clean?"

"Er-er," Guy corrected. "Clean-er."

"Cleaner," Mother Une said. "Vac-um clean-er."

"Keerect," Guy said, grinning. He touched her broom. "Now this is a *hōki* in Japanese, but in English it's a 'broom'."

"A broom," Mother Une repeated, and then laughed in astonishment. "You teach *me!*"

"Why not?" Guy said, and they laughed together, suddenly struck by mutual amusement. He touched the window. "This is a *mado* but in English it's a 'window'."

"Win-dow!" Mrs. Une cried.

At that moment George came in, carrying a bag of groceries, and Guy turned on him with pretended resentment. "Listen, George, why didn't you ever help your mother learn English?"

"Gosh," George said, baffled. "I don't know . . ."

"Well, that's my job from now on," Guy decided.

And Mother Une cried triumphantly to George: "This is a—a *broom!*"

Unknown to Guy, however, Kaz Une had gone to the County Hospital the night before to learn what he could about Guy's mother. In his solicitude for the boy he had taken under his wing, Kaz felt there was nothing too much that could be done for Guy. But what he heard from the resident physician at the hospital had been grim and sobering.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Une," the doctor had said. "How long it may be, we can't tell. Perhaps only a matter of hours. But it is very doubtful that she will ever leave here alive."

Kaz had said: "And you think it's better for the boy not to see her—like this?"

"Quite right. In the first place, I don't believe she would recognize him or even know he was here. And it could upset him rather severely, psychologically. A visit really wouldn't help either one of them. But if you prepare the boy for what will inevitably happen soon . . ."

"I see," Kaz had said. "Thank you, Doctor." . . .

It was happening even sooner than the doctor's prognosis indicated. At the moment when George, Guy and Mother Une were laughing over her attempts to learn English from Guy, Kaz drove soberly into the driveway and came into the house. One glance at her older son's face, and Mrs. Une guessed what had happened. Her eyes swung in quick, broken sympathy to Guy's laughing face, and she said something in rapid Japanese to George, who looked startled for a moment. Then, understanding, George asked Guy to go outside with him for basketball practice. A little bewildered, Guy went, leaving Kaz with his mother.

Mrs. Une watched her son and Guy playing in the drive for a moment before she turned to Kaz. Her voice was softer than usual. "It is his mother?"

"She is dying," Kaz said, nodding.

"You will tell him?"

"I must think of the right words, Mother."

She said quietly: *"Shokutaku no yōi tetsudatsute kudasaru.* Help me set the table. Then go out to him."

"Will this be his home?" Kaz asked, his hands on Guy's chair at the table.

Mrs. Une nodded. "His home. Yes."

Kaz gave a small sigh of relief, even of contentment,

gave Guy's chair an instinctive pat, and squared his shoulders to go out and tell Guy the sorrowful news.

That night Guy sat silently at the window of the living room, staring out into the night. He felt numb, puzzled, rebellious against his lack of understanding. His mother, who was so unlike Mrs. Une, was still all he had ever known in the way of a family, until these past few days in this Japanese house. And nothing in former years had even remotely resembled the sort of home he had found here. Yet he could not control his sorrow. His sense of loneliness was enormous, as wide as the slowly turning earth. He wondered if there was something wrong, even monstrous, about him because he could not cry.

It was quiet in the Une house that evening. Mother Une sat on the sofa, mending. In a far corner of the room, Kaz helped George with his homework. From time to time, Mother Une glanced at the boy at the window and finally, with a small sound, she arose and crossed to the silent, tearless Guy.

She took his hands in hers, but he remained bottled up, refusing to cry; and she led him to the sofa.

Speaking in her heavily broken English, she said: "I tell you story . . . very old . . . uh . . . it is story of people. . ." She paused, looked at Kaz.

"Ancient legend," Kaz prompted gently.

"Yes. Ancient legend . . . all Japanese boys know. Now you . . . Guy Gabaldon . . . you learn legend . . . too." She paused. "Once upon a time . . . old woman go to river . . . wash clothes. In . . . river, large peach comes floaring. Woman take peach home. And peach open up in two pieces and . . . out jump . . . beautiful boy." She looked at Guy. "You . . . understand?"

"Yes, Mother Une," Guy whispered. George quietly came over to sit at his mother's feet and listen, too.

"Old woman . . . and husband . . . name boy Peachboy."

"Peachboy? That's sure a crazy name," Guy blurted.

"Well . . . soon . . . Peachboy grow big and strong . . . He wants to . . . to . . . *onigashima o seibatsu.*" She halted, looked to Kaz for a translation.

"Peachboy wants to conquer Devil's Island," Kaz said.

Guy became interested. "Is there really such a place?"

Kaz shrugged. "So the legend goes."

"Peachboy leave home," Mother Une went on. "Go

to *Onigashima*. Peachboy fight big chief there . . . and kill him . . . They all very scared. . . . give up . . . and then Peachboy have all treasure there and he take it home . . . And he make old woman—old man—very happy."

"What was the treasure that made them so happy?" Guy asked.

"*Ai*," Mother Une said quietly.

"*Ai?* Love?"

She nodded and smiled at the boy's look. "Yes, love."

All at once, with the woman's words, Guy felt as if a dam had suddenly burst inside him. His grief, that he had bottled up so tightly ever since Kaz had talked to him that afternoon, came welling up in a vast, overwhelming tide of tears and sobs, and he found himself clinging tightly to the little Japanese woman, hearing only vaguely her words of comfort.

"I do love you, Mamma-san!" he sobbed. "I love you very much!"

And across the room, George shook his head and whispered to Kaz: "I'll bet I listened to that Peachboy story a hundred times, and never heard before what the treasure was."

"Because, my brother," Kaz said gravely, "you have always had it. . . ."

SEVEN

LOVE, Guy thought bitterly, was something the world had forgotten lately. He kept his face impassive as he listened to Captain John Schwabe's briefing. The big Marine captain, with his broken nose and harsh face, looked the epitome of the killer, the fighting man with only one goal and one objective—to reach the enemy and destroy him.

Maybe that was the way you could get through this, Guy thought; maybe if you kept things simple, on a kill-or-be-killed basis, you wouldn't think about anything else, about Mamma-san Une and Kaz and George, and everything that went with them. Maybe then you could survive the next few hours.

His breakfast sat uneasily in his stomach. The unit had eaten in the dark hours before dawn, and it was still a few minutes before official sunrise, here in the LST briefing room. The hull of the big landing ship, loaded with its amphtracs, seemed to shudder under the recoil concussion of the ferocious bombardment of Saipan, and the sound of the hellish racket wove a pattern through and around Captain Schwabe's cold, businesslike words, as the skipper tapped a chart of Red Beach Two with his stick.

"Saipan is only 1500 miles from Tokyo, and it's the principal Japanese fortress guarding the southern approaches to Japan. This is going to be a real rough one, no use kidding ourselves. The Nips will be fighting in their own back yard for the first time. They've been tough to crack all the way—and this time they'll be twice as tough."

Guy swallowed a harsh dryness in his throat. He kept his face blank. Nobody in the hot, crowded briefing room said anything.

"In a few hours we hit Red Beach Two—right here, north of Afetna Point," Schwabe continued. "Naval Intelligence reports that the beaches throughout the landing area are well organized with strong pillboxes. We've gone in against that sort of thing before—and won through. The trick is to keep going, don't stop for anything, make ground inland no matter what you have to by-pass. Understand?" His eyes were harsh, sweeping the flat, expressionless faces before him. He went on: "You'll also find about 30,000 first-class troops ready to throw everything they've got against us—and that includes artillery lined up in depth, zeroed in on every square inch of the beachheads we're assigned to secure. We go in with the third wave—and once ashore, we set up an OP as fast as we can."

He tapped the map. "Additional information—this is the village of Charan Kanoa. The biggest town, Garapan, is three miles north, and it's the headquarters of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo—the Japanese Commander-in-Chief of the Central Pacific area." Schwabe paused and looked at the harsh, sweating faces in the crowded briefing room. "Nagumo is the officer who led the enemy attack on Pearl Harbor, by the way. It would be nice to get him." Abruptly he tapped the map. "Study this—learn every square inch of it—and," he said casually, "if you've got

any problems, see the Chaplain before dawn. You won't have time afterwards."

D-Day of the Battle of Saipan saw the sun rise over the Mariana Islands in a burst of gold under a cloudless blue sky. Saipan and Tinian caught the first rays of light and loomed up out of a calm, shining sea against the low sun. It was a cool daybreak for the tropics, growing steadily brighter, with a tradewind springing up with the dawn that just ruffled the surface swells.

Breakfast for the Marine assault battalions was at 0445, in the opening minutes of the naval bombardment. At 0630 the air strikes on the beaches began, the planes screaming over the massed armada of assault transports, LCT's, DE's, Elsie-Eye gunboats, and larger battlewagons rolling under clouds of belching smoke from their heavy rifles, aimed at the Charan Kanoa beaches. Somebody had turned on a radio as Guy and Bill and Pete Lewis stood at the rail to watch the bombardment. In the dawning light, their faces were illuminated by the flashes from the big guns. Semperi and Sullivan and Sergeant Leonard stood nearby, listening to crackling scraps of jazz and Tokyo Rose's comments.

"Hello, U.S. Marines!" came her silky voice. *"Have you all said your prayers? We are waiting for you, fellows. We know all about your pitiful landing attempts this morning! We welcome you with open arms and promise each and every one of you a quick death and a burial at sea. Happy good morning to each and every one!"*

"Jesus, how come she knows so much about us?" Semperi said.

"We're in plain sight, ain't we?" Sullivan returned.

Semperi leaned forward to watch the white phosphorus shells burst in the coconut groves beyond the beach. "Well, I sure hope the sailor-boys knock down somethin' besides a few coconuts today!"

The loudspeaker suddenly squawked and a harsh voice said: "Now hear this! Admiral Turner's order is: 'Land the Landing Force.' All troops assigned to Tractor Group Able—man your debark stations!"

Immediately the Marines all around Guy began to move in orderly, well-rehearsed patterns to their positions—except Guy, who heard the loudspeaker's words as if from far away, without understanding. He heard

the chaplain offer a last-minute prayer and blessing over the intercom. Amphtracs loaded with troops poured from the gaping jaws of the LST's, while other Marines clambered down nets into waiting boats. From where Guy stood, glued to the rail, he could see the shoreline across the shining water, a narrow sandy beach, a few dunes, low scrubby trees and an occasional palm grove. Splashes of red showed where flamboyant trees were in blossom, sheltering Japanese-style houses visible through his binoculars. The land rose in terraced heights to Mount Topatchau. Closer inshore was the Charan Kanoa airstrip, and the thin, persistent pencil of the Charan Kanoa sugar mill chimney, which somehow defied the naval gunners and remained miraculously standing. Closer at hand was Mount Fina Susu, on the edge of the Marines' O-L objective line for the first day. The land seemed to reel and rock under the shocking impact of the stepped-up bombardment. Smoke and flame gouted everywhere while the first wave began plowing toward shore.

Marines jostled Guy and left him unmoved. He could not tear his eyes from the scene. A dry helplessness filled him. There were 64 LST's, eight to a beach, each loaded with amphtracs manned by assault troops, preceded by gunboats delivering close-support fire with 40-mm guns. As he watched, he saw one boat suffer a direct hit from return enemy fire. Gouts of water sprang up from near misses—

"Guy! Guy!" he heard Bill Hazen call.

Guy started, looked down. The amphtrac commanded by Schwabe was almost completely loaded. They were waiting for him. He didn't understand. He couldn't go with them, he thought. He couldn't kill and kill—

The boundary-marking patrol craft had taken up their station, and the LST's, LCI's and LCC's each flew a gay, fluttering pennant indicating their beachhead—white background with red, blue or green vertical stripes. The banners gave a falsely gay, regatta air to the insane scene, Guy thought. It was all false, though, everything was—

"Come on, Mac, *move!*"

Someone abruptly shoved Guy forward. He stumbled, looked around, saw a Marine's angry, impatient face. He looked down, saw Bill Hazen waiting. He jumped into the amphtrac, aware of a few curious looks thrown his way because of his tardiness. No matter. He felt secure

now, crowded in with the sweating man. The jaws of the LST opened up ahead, the machinery screeching in the shadowed, echoing hold. The first amphtracs lumbered out, splashed down the ramp into the water with plumes of spray, and plunged toward the bright, flashing beach. Under his feet, Guy felt the engine rumble. They hit the water with a lurch, rocked, dipped the blunt bow of the vessel, and started forward.

The sun felt hot on the back of his neck. His stomach felt tight, queasy. He gripped his M-1 in a slippery, sweaty hand, and looked neither at the man to his right nor to his left. The boat lurched, plunged through the swells. The bombardment was deafening. When he looked at the beach, he was astonished at how rapidly they were approaching. The first two waves were already ashore. There was a wrecked LVT, another, a third burning as it hung up on the reef where it had been caught by enemy artillery as it attempted to cross into the lagoon. Guy began to shake. A few shells landed in the water nearby. Everybody ducked. He heard the whine of angry metal fragments overhead. He didn't want to look any more. . . .

Captain Schwabe kept his field glasses at his eyes. The preparatory naval bombardment wasn't doing the job, he thought grimly. Which wasn't any surprise. The Japanese had returned to their prepared artillery defenses on the forward and reverse slopes of the inland hills, and their 75's and 105-mm field pieces, well-sited and concealed, were registering brutally on the reefs and beaches. Mortars and machine-gun nests were between the field artillery and the beaches, too—and God only knew how many pillboxes and camouflaged trenches there were on Afetna Point. Artillery and mortar shells began dropping among the LVT's of the second wave now, and machine-gun fire came in a thin, distant roll from the direction of the Charan Kanoa sugar mill. The reef was a curtain of spray now, and for a moment Captain Schwabe thought the barrier must be mined. But somehow the second wave got through, and he could see Marines racing up the beach, falling, rising, running, falling . . .

Schwabe lifted his glasses again to survey the smoke-shrouded hills. His job was intelligence, but he knew damned little about the actual enemy dispositions.

Aerial reconnaissance was limited, and no Americans had been on these islands for years.

Somewhere up there in those hills was his opposite number among the Japanese, he thought—and judging from Tokyo Rose, the enemy knew quite a lot about Operation Forager being implemented today. It wasn't going to be easy. His unit had its jobs to do, and a lot of it might depend on Guy Gabaldon, who was acting mighty strangely, even for a boot who was tasting his first few minutes of battle. Schwabe sighed, scanned the hills of Saipan again. He wished he knew what the enemy was thinking at this moment. . . .

EIGHT

LIEUTENANT GENERAL YUGI MATSUI was a handsome man in his fifties, and in his every nuance of bearing, movement and command, reflected in every inch a shining symbol of the Imperial Japanese Army. His mind was quick, alert, responsive to the events of this dawn. It had been coming for some time, and he was ready for it. And he was confident about the outcome.

True, much of the defenses had been improvised because of recent reverses, due to bad luck or poor timing or worse planning. But it would not matter in the end. The commander's plan of defense was simple and brilliant. The order of the day was: *"Destroy the enemy on the beach!"*

Matsui's face was without expression as he studied the fantastic, panoramic scene spread out like a motion picture below him. From his headquarters post on Hill 500, he could see the American fleet, and he noted that the naval bombardment had lifted, shifting so as not to hit their own men who were debouching on the beaches. Matsui's inner satisfaction was great, however, as he saw how his 105-mm field pieces were zeroed in on the barrier reef. The enemy landing vessels were being hit, one after the other. Several were burning, some were smashed and sunk in the lagoon. Bodies dotted the beaches now. The order of defense would be carried out.

In Matsui's neat, orderly mind, the entire pattern of Japanese defense for Saipan was tightly arranged. They had received little reinforcement here after April, because the American mastery of the sea, so inconceivably grown of late, prevented even reinforcements from nearby Tinian island. Still, there were 32,000 troops available, in the newly organized Thirty-First Imperial Army, even if they were not all armed and equipped. Aside from the 43rd Division, there was the 47th Independent Mixed Brigade under Colonal Oka, and eight hundred of the famous Special Landing Forces that the enemy likened to their own Marines. Even if many of the trenches and artillery emplacements were not yet completed, the victory could be won today. The bombardments of the last three days had done little damage.

Matsui stood virtually unprotected as he surveyed the battle scene below, his eyes darkly considering the oncoming waves of boats. Beside him, Major Hayashi watched with equal intenteness.

"Here on this island the war can be decided," Hayashi murmured. *"Taisho, sodewa arimaseka?* Is it not so, General?"

Matsui nodded. He looked austere, confident. All along the length of the beaches, the battle was being joined. The rattle of small-arms fire was increasing. More LVT's were hit and burning. The first few to reach shore were being methodically blasted. Matsui felt a surge of fierce, grim confidence.

"We will push the arrogant Yankees into the sea," he said. "Not one shall remain among us. They will not defeat us. *Tondemonai!* Never!"

"They are suffering heavy casualties already."

"We shall destroy them," Matsui said. "None shall remain. *Fune mo heitai, mo inainda.* No boat. No man."

He wondered suddenly, however, if Major Hayashi realized how isolated they were. Imperial Headquarters had ordered the 29th and 52nd Divisions on Guam and Truk to reinforce Saipan—but there was no sea transport, and Matsui knew better than to expect them. No, the victory would be all the greater, for having to achieve it alone and unaided.

Matsui was not a vindictive man. He was a professional soldier, devoted to the Emperor, to Nippon, and to his destiny as a soldier fighting for the Imperial glory. He had a wife and family. His two sons were both in military

service, of course—one in the army, Teru, and the other, Okiwa, with the Mobile Fleet, massing even now at Tawi Tawi for a decisive Battle of the Philippines that would finally destroy the American Naval power. Any day the issue would be joined, and Okiwa, the oldest son, would find his share of glory there. And then these arrogant ships that despoiled the shining sea before him would be sent to the bottom, one and all.

But Teru, he thought, *Teru, my youngest son. . . .*

Matsui could not push down the deep, dark welling of grief inside him when he thought of the boy. One should be content that one had a son to give to the Imperial cause. And yet—and yet—

He remembered Teru as a baby, fat and laughing and gurgling, pudgy fingers extended to greet him when he came home to the quiet little house and garden in the outskirts of Tokyo. Teru had a laughing personality that gained him friends and made life an easy, pleasant path for all of his brief years.

Two weeks ago, Lieutenant Teru Matsui had been aboard the 6900-ton transport *Katsukawa Maru* carrying Colonel Ito's 118th Infantry, weapons, ammunition and gear, when a submarine sent that ship and four others of a reinforcing convoy of seven to the bottom on their way to Saipan from Japan. Some of the survivors had been picked up and reformed into miscellaneous companies and battalions. But they had lost all their weapons and tanks and thousands of tons of construction equipment for defense lines.

Matsui had not been able to resist going down to the pier at Magicienne Bay to see the survivors landed—haggard, half-naked, some of them, dull-eyed, defeated by the enemy and the sea. His son, Teru, had not been among them. Teru, the laughing baby, the one with the smile and the pudgy hands outstretched always for love, was gone down to a watery grave.

Matsui drew a deep breath. It was the will of heaven that one such son be sacrificed for the Imperial House of Japan. Perhaps Teru's gay and friendly personality was a weakness, after all. One had to be hard, firm, cruel, to survive in this world. Okiwa, his older son, a senior lieutenant with the Mobile Fleet, was the cold one, the intellectual, the one on whom the hopes of all the Matsui family hinged.

General Matsui suppressed a sigh and lifted his glasses

again to survey, from the height of Hill 500, the attempts of the hated American Marines to set foot on the Imperial Japanese island of Saipan.

NINE

"LOAD AND LOCK!" Captain Schwabe yelled.

As one man, the Marines in the LVT pulled back the slides on their M-l's and locked the piece. Guy, looking increasingly pale, did the same as the others. But he moved as though in a dream, struggling through a nightmare unreality.

Enemy shells were exploding all around the LVT as it lurched and jolted over the barrier reef, then splashed on into the lagoon. Everyone crouched. You felt as if you wanted to crawl into a hole and pull the hole in after you. A near-miss drenched everyone with warm salt spray, blinding them for a moment. The thud of mortar shells and the high, spiteful rat-a-tat of Japanese machine-guns from the beaches made a cacaphony of noise. Planes screamed overhead, the low morning sun shining on their wings. Guy thought he heard someone screaming, the human voice like a bright, wriggling red thread woven through the tapestry of sound. He looked up and saw Captain Schwabe standing up forward near the driver of the amphtrac, looking anxiously ahead. How much longer? Guy thought. Between enemy field artillery and mortar fire on Afetna Point at Red Beach Two, there was heavy attrition among the LVT's. Guy could see them burning, wrecked, sunk in the lagoon as they churned past, going in with the third wave. Some of the first and second wave vessels were already retracting, heading back. The enemy's barrage caught some of these on the reef, too. And yet Guy could see several LST's disgorging Marine tanks that rumbled up over the beach and into the scrub beyond. Smoke obscured his vision next. And in the following moment there came a burst of sound, the whip-crack of concussion, an ugly grinding noise. The amphtrac lurched, slewed about, shuddered and beached itself. The tracks ground into sand. The driver began to curse in a high, shrill voice,

and Schwabe gestured ahead. Somehow, the vehicle pulled itself up out of the water and started to trundle across the sand.

The second mortar shell burst directly in front of it. The driver threw up his hands and fell over backward, dead. The amphtrac halted.

"Come on, Marines!"

Schwabe threw a leg over the steel side of the vehicle and waved to his men to follow. For a moment his big frame was silhouetted against the smoky sky. Then he dropped from sight. There followed a surge of movement from the Marines inside the amphtrac as they jumped over to the beach. Guy paused. Mortars were dropping all around. A Jap machine-gun yammered nearby, stitching lethal holes through the air. A thin, stringy Marine with the long face of a hillbilly suddenly made a grunting noise and looked astonished. A black hole had appeared in his forehead. Without another sound, the Marine next to Guy crumpled at his feet. Guy suddenly felt a panic impulse to hide, to dig in—and leaped forward, scaled the side of the amphtrac, and dropped to the solid soil below.

He fell flat, burying his face in the hot sand. An inferno of fire was greeting Schwabe's unit. There were two more mortar concussions, then another shell hit the LVT, and it began to burn. Guy got up, running blindly from it, thinking of the gasoline that would explode. He heard Schwabe yelling.

"Dig in! Dig in!"

He could see nothing. He ran blindly, hanging onto his M-1 through sheer instinct. There was the loom of shattered trees ahead, a small field, the stumps of coconut palms. Bursts of sand showered him from exploding shells. He ran harder, not knowing where he was going. Then suddenly he stumbled over a dead Marine sprawled on the sand and he fell headlong into a shell hole beyond. Fear and anxiety choked him as machine-gun bullets blasted bursts of sand over him. The sand stung his face, burned his eyes. He wriggled farther and deeper into the depression, felt something soft and yielding; his fingers grabbed at uniform cloth and he gasped, came up against a body and twisted around in the bottom of the shell hole.

It was a dead Japanese soldier.

He thought the man was Kaz Une.

He looked like Kaz. Except that the top of his head was a bloody mess of gray brains and dark flesh and white bone splinters.

Something began to break up in earnest inside Guy. He could not tear his gaze away from the dead Japanese soldier who looked so much like Kaz. Bullets whined overhead, above the shell hole. He felt paralyzed. Then someone came tumbling into the depression, all arms and legs for a moment, and he turned with a cry of alarm choking his throat. But it was Bill Hazen.

"Hi," Bill gasped. "You okay?"

Guy didn't answer. Bill scrambled around, shoving the dead Jap soldier unceremoniously aside. This was a different Bill from the laughing, careless buddy on shore leave. He was a machine, a ruthless and vindictive killer, every instinct, every reflex, every nerve and muscle honed to a fine and murderous edge. He scrambled up to the forward lip of the shell hole and peered ahead.

"There they are, the bastards. It's a reinforced pillbox," he muttered. "Maybe fifty yards beyond. They've got a couple of light machine-guns in there, and at least one heavy." He turned and looked at Guy. "Gabby? You okay?"

"What?"

"Take a look at that pillbox. All that naval shelling and aerial bombing—and it still leaves the dirty jobs for us slobs on the ground." Bill Hazen slid down from the lip of the hole and looked carefully at Guy. "Gabby, did you get hit?"

"No, I—no."

To Guy's own horror, he felt his lips tremble and go out of control, while tears welled up in his eyes. He saw Bill Hazen through a watery haze, and a sob choked him. He saw a look of contempt and anger twist Bill's usually friendly face. It looked like the face of an enemy.

"Gabby, I'm going to need your help with that pillbox," Bill snapped.

"I—I can't!"

"It's cutting down our men, can't you see? Or have you been hiding here without taking a look around!"

"Bill, I—"

Guy's sobs came up in a sudden well of tears and Bill Hazen rasped: "Who're you cryin' for, you son of a bitch! Is it your Jap friend here—" and Bill kicked the dead enemy soldier who occupied the shell hole with

them— "or our own buddies out there getting slaughtered?"

Without warning, Bill jerked Guy up to his feet in the shell hole and hit him hard on the mouth. Guy did not resist. The blow was hard, ruthless, knocking Guy over on his back. Sand showered him, ran down over his leg from the lip of the hole. The machine-guns of the enemy stitched a vicious, whining pattern overhead. Guy stared at Bill Hazen, who crouched over him with a wild, manical look on his face.

"You're not the first boot who ever cracked up hitting the beach, Gabby. We're all scared—but damn it, remember, we're still Marines!"

Guy sat up. The earth shook and trembled under him. He stared blindly at his friend. He could see the water's edge behind him, with more LVT's coming in, some burning, some crumpled and twisted into murderous metal. The Marine dead were piling up on the beach behind them now, victims of the pillbox's fire.

"We've got to get that lousy gun!" Bill grated. "Give 'em something to remember for Pearl Harbor! Or doesn't that mean anything to you, Gabby?"

"Bill, listen, I'm sorry—you don't understand—"

"Will you cover me or not?" Bill yelled.

"I can't kill—I thought this Jap was Kaz Une—"

"I don't give a damn about your personal problems. We stay here, we get killed. We stay here, and a lot of other men get killed behind us. Which is it?"

"I remember Pearl Harbor Day . . ." Guy said thinly.

And he did. It came back to him all at once, in every detail, and yet it happened all in a few seconds, like a nightmare dream that seems to take forever while you sleep, but in which time itself is compressed and occupies only a moment or two on the face of the clock.

He remembered everything. . . .

TEN

PEARL HARBOR!

Yes, Guy thought bitterly, he remembered that day. How could he ever forget what had happened to him

then? Or to all the people he loved, to the only real family he had ever known?

Pearl Harbor Day was another key to unlock this puzzle, to answer the questions that had to be answered before this day ended—before life itself ended.

It wasn't really fear, then, that kept him where he was, but an enormous reluctance to become a part of the bloody hell that roared and screamed and snapped and whined and struck all around him. He felt as if he were caught between two enormous, irresistible forces that pulled him first one way, then the other, shouting curses and whispering pleas in alternate fashion until he felt he could stand it no more without being torn completely apart.

Maybe that was the way, after all. Stand up and let the bullets come, let them slam and crash into this body from either direction—it didn't matter if it was a Japanese bullet or one fired by a Marine buddy. It would end everything. It would solve everything.

Would it? he wondered then.

He remembered Pearl Harbor, a day of similar confusion. Not so long back as the day when that little Guy Gabaldon was taken in hand by Kaz Une and made a part of the Une family. Not so far away that he couldn't remember every miserable, stinking detail of it.

It began, he remembered, in the driveway of the Une house, where he was trying to wire fast a loose section of rear bumper on George's car. His mind jumped violently away then, to the close of that day, and he deliberately forced it back. That was the only way to get things straight. And for Guy, somehow, he knew it was a matter of life and death, of sheer survival in these few hours of assault, to get things clear in his mind, once and for all.

All right, he told himself. Pearl Harbor Day. It was hot and clear. You were working on the car with George, on a peaceful Sunday morning. It was an important day, but not in the way it was going to become important. It was important for George, and Guy was enjoying amusement at George's expense.

Because of Ester, he remembered. Ester was the Japanese girl who had moved next door shortly after Guy became a permanent member of the Une family. She had moved next door and right into poor George Une's heart ever after.

The trouble was, George was never able to express his feelings to the petite Japanese girl who obviously waited only for a word from him to say yes. Guy's relationship with Ester was one of free and easy camaraderie, dating back to their first meeting when he had been introduced by the awkward George and he had responded by speaking in Japanese. *"Dozo yoroshiku,"* he had said. "Pleased to meet you."

Ester had been delighted. *"Arigatō.* Thank you! It is so unusual to find someone—a boy like you—who understands Japanese!"

Guy had laughed. "I've still got a lot to learn."

On that morning when he was fixing the car bumper, Guy called for help from George, and George appeared on the rear porch. Guy was impatient.

"This thing is still loose, you know. You'll have to stop at the filling station and ask Mike to—" He paused and straightened, staring at George, who was still in his shirt sleeves. "Hey, why aren't you dressed? You'll be late."

"Well, we'll skip the coffee," George said diffidently, "if we have to."

"But I thought this was such an important morning for you, George."

"It is, but—" George became intensely interested in the loose bumper, testing it and failing to meet Guy's stare. "But darn it, Guy, I'm afraid Ester will say no, when I ask her."

"Are you nuts? All anybody has to do is to look at her when you're around. One look at the way she watches your every move, and it tells the whole story."

"I wish I were that sure," George said ruefully.

"Look, all you're going to do is ask Ester to go steady with you, right?"

George nodded. In the ten years that followed Guy's adoption by the Une family, he had grown into a tall, slender young man, not unlike his older brother, Kaz. And Guy had developed into a solidly muscled maturity, quite unlike the stripling he had been. Yet between the two young men, Japanese and American, nothing had been changed by the last ten years, except to develop a deeper and closer affection that always had to remain unspoken. Now George appealed simply to Guy.

"I know it sounds simple to you, about Ester and me—but I just can't get it out," he said. "I've tried to tell

her how I feel a hundred times, Guy—and the words just stick in my throat. So I'm shy, when I'm with her. I just can't help it. Maybe it's dumb of me, but that—that's the way it happens, every time we go out and I try to talk to her about it." He looked up at Guy quickly. "Will you do me a favor?"

"You don't have to ask," Guy replied. "If you want me to take the car around to Mike's while you and Ester—"

"No, no, not that," George blurted. "I—I'd like for you to take Ester to coffee and then to church. Find out how I really stand with her." He looked down, apparently intensely absorbed with the loose bumper. "Will you do that for me, Guy?"

Guy grinned. "Buddy boy, I might not bring her back. I might take Ester to the preacher myself."

George looked up in quick alarm, then laughed sheepishly as he saw Guy's grin. "Thanks, pal." He indicated the car bumper. "I'll put some wire around this while you change your clothes—And you'd better take a fast shave, too."

"Natch!" Guy returned. "My ol' buddy mustn't lose out because the guy batting for him has nine o'clock shadow, huh?"

He hadn't minded the mission. He enjoyed Ester's company, and he suspected Ester knew exactly why he had showed up to call for her that Sunday morning, instead of George. He took her to a local Drive-In, parking beside a fancy convertible that contained two grim-looking men. The three female carhops in their tight, sateen slacks were clustered in a group inside the drive-in shack, listening intently alongside the cook to a small radio. Guy did not notice that the two men in the next convertible had forgotten their breakfast trays hooked to the car doors and were also listening to their car radio. His mind was on George's problem, on his role as substitute suitor. In some ways, he envied George. Ester was beautiful, small and delicate and immaculate, and he knew the sort of devoted, unselfish, gentle wife she would make for George, if they ever married. Her black hair glistened healthily in the Sunday sunshine, and her cotton frock was crisp and cool-looking. Yes, George Une would be lucky, getting a Japanese girl like Ester as his wife.

Guy concluded his brief exposition of George's suit with a quick smile. "So now you know why I called for

you, and not George. He doesn't have a headache. It's something worse. Something not quite so temporary."

Ester's dark eyes were teasing.

"And you want my answer?"

Guy turned and honked the horn, with a jarring note in the quiet Sunday air, trying to get service from the girl carhops. "George is waiting, hanging by his thumbnails, until I get back with it."

"But George is a big boy now," Ester objected. "Why can't he speak for himself?"

Guy honked the horn again. "All right, if you want to play hard to get, maybe church will soften you, Ester. I'll ask you again after services. Want some breakfast? You can have anything up to—oh, say, forty cents."

Ester laughed. "You're a real big spender."

"That date of mine cleaned me out last night."

"Then suffer," Ester said. "For going out with that kind of girl."

Guy suddenly turned and leaned his head out of the car window, aware of the long wait they had had for service. He shouted to the carhops, "Hey, how about it over here, kids?"

He blasted the horn again, and this time, one of the carhops, clustered with her friends and the cook, lifted her head from her intent listening pose and looked at Guy and Ester. The carhop nudged another, and in a moment the three gaudily-clad girls and the long-faced cook were staring hard at them. This puzzled and annoyed Guy, who leaned out again and yelled:

"Yeah, that was me honkin'! How about some service?"

"Hey!" one of the men in the next car called.

Guy turned and stared at the convertible. The two men in it were flashily dressed in sport shirts and jackets. One was tubby, with thinning sandy hair and a round face and pale eyes that looked at Guy and then at Ester's daintiness with a sudden harsh cruelty. The second man was thin and horse-faced, with a drooping mouth and small, black eyes like agates.

"Hey," the fat one called again, softly. "Hey, Jap lover!"

The thinner one said quickly: "Look, John, don't start nothin' now—"

But John yelled again. "How's it feel bein' out with the enemy, Jap-lover!"

Guy stared in complete astonishment at the two men. Ester's gentle smile faded. All at once, something seemed to have gone out of the peaceful, warm Sunday morning. All at once, the world seemed jarred by a harsh, cruel note that Guy did not understand. He looked at Ester and saw her pink mouth tremble, and then he turned back to the fat man in the next car.

"You talking to *us?*" he demanded.

The thin one said quickly: "Leave 'em alone, Johnny."

"Leave 'em alone?" the fat man shouted. "Why, that broad is a Jap!" He swung back to Guy, his round face congested with dark and bitter fury. "What're you doin', punk? What're you doin' out with a Jap broad?"

Guy reacted with an anger equal to the fat man's. Without thinking, he elbowed open the car door and started out. Ester clutched at his arm.

"No, Guy, please! Please! Don't let them start anything—it's not important—let's just go someplace else—"

But he jerked loose from her and headed purposefully for the convertible. Not since the time when Timmy Benson had bullied him about swiping that food at Jorge's Market had Guy known such bitter, impulsive anger. He saw the fat man trying to unhook the door-tray and get out of the convertible as Guy approached. Guy obliged by yanking the door open, and the tray clattered to the ground. From behind him, he heard one of the carhops yell shrilly at the mess. But he only had eyes for the face of hatred and bigotry before him. Reaching in, he yanked the fat man out of the car and belted him twice, without mercy. The fat man went down sprawling, but he wasn't out. Blood dribbled from his cut lip. He was older, heavier, more solidly muscled than Guy. But Guy didn't care. He was ashamed, ashamed of the fat man and the way he had spoken about Ester, who was as fine and decent—

"You punk," the man grated. "You wait, punk!"

Ester cried softly: "Guy—no! Stop it! Guy—"

The cook came running out of the shack toward them, a long knife in his hand. But the thin man in the convertible got out from behind the wheel and came around fast, too.

The fat man was quicker than all of them, his size deceptive. He was up and on his feet and hit Guy savagely, all of his massive weight behind the blow. Guy went reeling backward, slammed into the cook, and felt the

cook wrap an arm around him and tried to tie up his fists. But Guy jerked loose desperately and lunged at the fat man again. The cook and the fat man's friend managed to pull them, panting and gasping, apart. Guy still struggled to be free. His last blow, a deep left that had hooked hard into his opponent's belly, had really struck home. The fat man, hurt, leaned against his car and held his stomach and looked sick.

"Let me go!" Guy yelled. "Let me finish him!"

The fat man looked at him with virulent hatred. "Lousy Japs . . ." he whispered.

"Let go!" Guy yelled, struggling.

"Listen, fella, simmer down, huh?" gasped the fat man's friend. "I can't hold you like this forever. You want to get hurt real bad, you keep it up."

"Simmer down?" Guy exclaimed. "Did you hear what your pal said?"

"What d'you expect, after what's happened?"

"That's what I'm saying," Guy snapped. "What do you expect—this bum sitting there and starting trouble by makin' cracks at her for no reason at all."

"No reason?" the thin man said. "Haven't you heard what's been on the radio, pal?"

Guy looked blank. "The radio?"

"You haven't heard?"

"No, what—"

The thin man reached into his car and turned up the volume knob on his car radio. The desperate, shocked voice of the radio announcer boomed and smashed through the parking lot around the drive-in, collapsing a world around Guy's shocked ears.

". . . at least two thousand Americans have been killed today by Japan's sneak attack on Hawaii! Never in history has any nation been attacked with such treachery, with such cruel and murderous intent. The great fear of the moment is that more Jap bombers may even now be winging on their way to again rain death on Pearl Harbor. One moment, please—there is another bulletin coming in. Stand by, please!"

Guy stared in blank horror at the thin man. He could not believe what he had just heard. It was impossible. But he saw by the faces of those around him that it was no gag, no radio story, no mistake. It was true. The Japanese had pulled a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor—wherever that was, Guy thought dazedly.

The thin man nodded toward Ester. "You got any sense, fella, you'll get that girl off the streets and outa sight, real quick. Savvy?"

"Huh?" Guy whispered. He nodded slow comprehension. "Oh, yeah. Yeah, you're right . . ."

He turned, starting back toward the car, then paused as he saw that the three carhops, in their spangled, sateen slacks, had collected around the car. One of the carhops was leaning in and screaming insults at Ester, her face convulsed, while the slim little Japanese girl sat with her face covered with her hands. The enraged carhop reached through the car window and pushed violently at her.

"You dirty, dirty sneak!" she shrieked.

The carhop spit in Ester's face.

Guy ran to the car, jerked the girl angrily away from the car, and sent her reeling back. The other two carhops yielded a step or two, but only grudgingly. Ester was weeping hysterically, as Guy jumped in, fear working in him now, a fear for Ester that went beyond all rationality.

"What happened, Guy?" she cried. "What happened? What's it all about?"

The car stalled in Guy's haste to get it started. As he tramped in savage impatience on the starter again, he saw the three carhops converging toward them once more. They had been, until a few minutes ago, just three pretty, sassy girls in tight slacks, working out their Sunday morning shift in slow boredom. He saw them now as something quite different, transformed by their own private fears and resentments and rage into spitting, clawing animals.

The last he remembered was the hard, heavy crash of a malted glass hurled by one of the girls as it smashed against the windshield when he backed out. And the girls' thin, shrill voices, chanting a hymn of hatred—

"Jap lover! Dirty Jap lover!"

ELEVEN

He tried to cling to that hateful moment of memory, his mind hanging onto it and surrounding it as if it were a life-preserver in a stormy sea. But he could not. The reality of the moment, these desperate minutes pinned on the beaches of Saipan, came pressing back on him with a rush, together with the pain and jolt of the blow Bill Hazen had given him.

Guy shook his head, stared dazedly. Sand spurted from the lip of the shell-hole. A man screamed nearby. And all the insane noises of battle came rushing back to his consciousness, tearing aside the fabric of his memory. There was no help for him in the past, he thought. Not back there, where he had just been, anyway.

"Guy, I'm sorry," he heard Bill Hazen say. "Listen, Guy, can you hear me? Are you okay?"

"Yeah. I'm just dandy," he said, and grinned.

"We've gotta get that lousy gun up ahead!" Bill rasped.

Guy pulled himself up to a sitting position in the shell hole. The sun made sharp, angular shadows under the helmet of the dead Japanese soldier in the hole with him. He saw now that the dead man didn't look at all like Kaz Une. How could he have thought so? Slowly, he dared to take a look over the shell hole's perimeter. A dead Marine partly obscured his view. But when he looked back toward the water, he saw more dead men, men he had known and laughed and joked with, and the burning amphtracs and the whole motionless fleet of transports and battlewagons hanging out there on the horizon, as if waiting, waiting—

For what? he thought. For him?

He knew it wasn't so, that to the south the rest of the Second Marine Division and the Fourth were assaulting Agingan Point and other beaches. But here, at this moment, the illusion persisted. Nothing would be advanced unless that deadly pillbox up ahead was wiped out.

Suddenly he was aware of being alone. Bill Hazen had risen from the sand, raced forward, pancaked into the

sand again, and then began to snake forward toward the concrete pillbox spewing death at them. Guy moistened dry, cracked lips. He was sweating. The heat of the sun in the shell hole seemed intolerable, and his vision blurred. He brushed a sleeve across his eyes and looked forward again.

The firing slit of the pillbox, fifty yards up the beach amid a grove of blasted coconut palms, was ablaze with muzzle flashes. Here and there were Marine dead sprawled grotesquely in front of the guns—men who had tried to knock out the enemy strong point. Just then there was a brief lull in the machine-gun fire—and without thinking, Guy darted up and out of the hole and raced forward, gripping his M-1 tightly. He saw a protective dune at once, ahead and to his left, where other Marines had crouched for shelter, and in a series of crouching runs and hard, breath-jolting falls, Guy zigzagged toward it, not thinking at all now, reacting as a result of the months of training.

A moment later he flung himself down alongside Bill Hazen. Bill turned his head sharply, regarding him with hard, dark eyes, and then grinned.

"Good to see you, Gabby."

Guy looked at the other Marines. Sullivan and Pete Lewis and Sergeant Leonard were here, and some others he didn't know. Leonard hurled a grenade at the pillbox ahead of them and they all waited for the burst. Its sharp crack made the earth jump under them. Then Guy lifted his head for a look.

No damage had been done to the enemy. The guns continued to fire, enfilading the beach, pinning down the advance in the whole sector.

"We need a satchel charge," Leonard gasped. The older man's face looked haggard. "Maybe a bangalore torpedo."

Pete said: "We gotta get close enough to those babies to use it first, Len."

Somebody else came thudding to a drop behind the dune with them. It was Captain Schwabe. He looked harsh, sweaty, dirty. His mouth was angry and bitter. Guy looked away, toward the pillbox. Something stirred in him, moved with indecision, almost lifted him from his shelter behind the sand dune. A mortar burst that sent stinging sand and whining, murderous bits of metal screaming overhead made him cringe down again.

Schwabe's voice rapped hard over the noise of battle. "That gun is holding up the entire advance! Lewis!"

Young Pete Lewis, closest to him, said, "Yes, sir."

"Let's knock out that pillbox. All set?"

Pete nodded shortly. Schwabe looked at Leonard. "Cover us, sergeant!"

Immediately, the captain and Pete Lewis darted up and over the crest of the dune, were silhouetted against the bright Pacific sky for an instant, then vanished. Leonard made his M-1 hammer, and the others followed with more covering fire. Without thinking, almost as though without volition, Guy suddenly gathered himself and flung himself over the crest of the dune and rolled over and over down the other side. On his feet like a cat, he zig-zagged forward toward a reedy patch of vegetation and a few shattered coconut palms to his left, nearer the pillbox. He saw the enemy machine-gun muzzle swing and threw himself flat. Bullets hammered the air overhead. He found himself in thick reeds beside Schwabe and Pete Lewis, who had pancaked behind a charred, fallen tree. Guy crawled up beside him. They had gone halfway to the pillbox.

Schwabe turned an angry face toward Guy.

"What the hell you doing out here, Gabaldon!"

"I—think I can help," Guy gasped. "I think I've—got to!"

And before Schwabe could snap out a restraining order, Guy jumped up and dashed forward again, rifle held low, his body crouching as he zig-zagged through the wrecked coconut palm toward the pillbox. From behind him came Schwabe's angry: "You crazy son of a—" and then the words were drowned out in the hammer-blows of Schwabe's and Pete Lewis' covering fire. Guy darted on. Something slapped the air near his head, puffs of dust and dirt sprang up at his feet. He could not stop himself. And then he made it beyond the angle of the pillbox's guns and threw himself flat, breathing hard, his face covered with sweat and battle grime. Peering ahead, he started crawling, on knees and elbows, the M-1 cradled in his arms. He could see the loom of the concrete strongpoint overhead in a moment. The smashing echo of the enemy machine-guns seemed to be directly overhead. Smoke drifted over him, choked him for a moment. He strangled the cough in desperation. A series of bullets spattered the slot around the nearest

machine-gun in the pillbox and forced the Jap gunner inside to duck for cover. Guy knew it was Schwabe and Pete, covering him.

His heart hammered crazily, and then he crawled around through broken splinters of lumber, an abandoned spool of barbed wire, and unidentified trash to the rear of the pillbox. He reached into his belt, loosened a grenade, held it in his hand. Footsteps pounded, and he turned his head, saw Schwabe and Pete making it out of the pillbox's line of fire, to throw themselves down beside him.

"Gabby, you crazy—"

Guy didn't look at them. He knew if he stopped now, he would never go on again. There was a steel door in the back of the pillbox. Guy looked around for immediate danger, but none of the enemy was in sight. He stood up, grenade in hand, and flattened against the concrete wall of the structure and pressed on the door. It did not yield. It was locked. Guy crossed two fingers in a signal to Schwabe, grinned tightly, and abruptly pulled the pin on the grenade. A strange look came over Captain Schwabe's face. Then, holding the clip on the grenade down, Guy suddenly banged on the pillbox door.

At first there was no reaction.

He banged again, and a muffled voice called out: "*Sokoni iruno wa dareka?* Who is there?"

"*Soto Taisha!*" Gabby called angrily. "*Hayaku aketekudasai!*"

There was a pause. Then Guy heard a bolt being slammed back and the steel door opened slightly, groaning on its hinges. Instantly, the moment he could, Guy grabbed the edge of the door and pulled it farther open and flipped the grenade inside the pillbox. Then he slammed the door shut, spun around, and threw himself flat. He heard a babble of confused Japanese voices, muffled by steel and concrete—and then the earth lifted under him slightly with the concussion as the grenade exploded inside the pillbox.

The machine-guns stopped firing. Guy lifted his head, saw that the explosion had knocked the steel door slightly askew on its hinges. He sprang up, M-1 in hand, and sprayed the dark interior of the pillbox with savage, hammering fire just to make sure.

Pete Lewis came running over, a grin as wide as his face greeting Guy. "Scratch one pillbox, pal!"

Captain Schwabe stood erect and waved in a signal for his men to move forward. All along the beach behind them, Marines stood up warily, watching the pillbox. But there was no more murderous fire from the silent machine-guns. They trotted forward, moving inland off the beaches where they had been exposed to the slaughtering fire. Captain Schwabe trotted toward Guy.

"What did you call in to them, to make them open up like that, Gabaldon?"

Guy shrugged. "I said I was Major Soto. I told them to open at once—quickly—that I brought new orders."

Schwabe turned and faced inland. His smile was grim. "Well, they understood you just fine, Marine."

Guy gave the skipper a shaky smile and fell into the long, wary scouting line of Marines heading in from the beaches of Saipan. It was just forty minutes from the time the first wave of assault troops hit the beach.

Part Two

THE BATTLE

ONE

NOTHING ever goes strictly according to plan, and Captain Schwabe, with his intelligence unit temporarily fighting as assault troops, knew this better than most.

Nothing went according to plan once the troops were ashore on D-Day. The beachheads to be seized were very broad, to allow quick deployment and a gain in depth with the help of amphtracs and Marine tanks and massed artillery. It was expected that the first few assault waves would continue to the O-L line by nightfall, roughly the 100-foot contour of the foothills about a mile inland, including Mount Fina Susu. But the skill of the enemy artillery and mortar fire crimped that plan quickly. Afetna Point had to be taken in the face of brutal and murderous enfilading fire, even after the battleships offshore were called upon to concentrate bombardment on it and two strafing-bombing attacks from the air were added to the plastering. The Marines still had to take the point with hand grenade, flamethrower and bayonet. Liaison with Naval counterbattery fire was difficult to establish, with the shore fire-control parties pinned to the beaches. Some units landed on the wrong beaches; others were stopped by swamp, machine-

gun fire and artillery. The boat passage through the reef was a gauntlet of fire all day long. Total casualties rapidly passed over two thousand men, and the wounded had to be evacuated to LST's offshore because field hospitals could not be set up on the narrow beachhead. And as the hot, smoky, grim day waned and dusk cast long shadows over the battle, Captain Schwabe knew that the worst was yet to come.

Nothing is as fearsome as the first night on an enemy beach. Your units are off-balance, dug in precariously, with poor communications and confused organization. The terrain ahead is unfamiliar. The enemy has pulled back only in order to mass for a terrible assault in the darkness that may well slaughter you and drive the survivors back into the sea. The shadows deepen, the heat of the sun wanes, and a prickly chill comes with the darkness. . . .

At dusk an OP had been established on the security side of rising ground near the swamp above Charan Kanoa. Guy was dug in, with Bill Hazen and Pete Lewis. Pete had the watch, scanning the terrain ahead with binoculars while Guy and Bill finished eating their rations. To the south, where the Fourth Marines were having trouble, came the irregular blast of mortar and naval shells, the occasional stitching of a machine-gun, the thinner, dry crackle of rifle fire sounding sporadically in the cooling air.

The sun set as a huge, smoky ball swallowed by the sea. Guy sat near the field telephone, watching Bill, his best friend, and wondering how to put what he felt into words. Finally he said awkwardly: "Bill, look, I—I'm sorry about this morning."

"Forget it," Bill said, grinning. His dark hair looped over his forehead, and his handsome face showed signs of fatigue that lightened when he glanced up, with that peculiar lowering look. "You can fight on my side any time, Gabby."

"I don't know what happened to me. This may sound crazy, but I—I don't really know what I was scared about. I used to think I was never afraid of anything in my life, and I don't think I've ever been—for myself, that is."

"The intelligent man damned well gets scared for himself, Gabby."

"No, it isn't that," Guy said. "I just kept thinking about the Une family—you know, the people who took me in when Ma died, and raised me like one of their own kids."

"You had a big problem to solve," Bill said soberly.

"I wonder, Bill," Guy nodded. "Is it solved? All of it? I finally realized that it comes down to a simple law out here—kill or be killed—but even so—"

"Just keep remembering that, Guy," Bill cut in. "Don't ever forget it. Those Japs out there are out to kill you. Don't think of them as people you used to know. Just remember—they want to kill you. And they will, unless you kill them first."

Pete Lewis came sliding down from his observation post and passed the binoculars to Guy. Pete's young, untouched face looked strained and vulnerable.

"Your turn to play spy, Gabby," he said. "It's damned eerie out there, getting dark like this."

"See anything?" Bill asked.

"Not yet. And this sector is too damned quiet." Pete sighed, his eyes swinging in dependence from Bill to Guy. "I got a funny feeling it's going to be a rough night, and that's no crap."

"As Semperi would say," Bill said drily, "it's a fuggup, it's a fuggup."

They all grinned, and Guy crawled up the slope into position and began to study the terrain ahead while Pete fumbled for his ration and opened it and started to eat. The shadows of the evening were long and unnatural in the shelltorn area ahead of Guy's observation post. Long streamers of brilliant color made plumes through the darkening sky overhead. The wind felt cool, riffling the sweaty shirt on his back. Guy settled down with the glasses. Pete was right, he thought. It was too quiet here. And for the moment, the sounds of battle to the south had faded, too.

He felt better now. He hoped the worst was over. In the quiet lull, a bird suddenly sang, chattered, and then fell silent again. He swept the shattered trees, looking for it. But there was nothing to see. Ahead was the swamp, with a glimmer of water from the lake beyond, and then the rising slopes of the mountain. A grenade burst came from the direction of Charan Kanoa, where the sugar mill had been smashed except for the chimney sticking up like a lonely finger against the sky.

The first stars came out.

Slowly, a kind of peace began to fill him. Down the slope below him, the OP radio made a soft, faint crackling sound. And all at once he remembered the old-fashioned table radio in the Une house on the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the way they had all gathered, so long ago, in such sober tension, and heard President Roosevelt speaking to Congress:

". . . *the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory. We will not only defend ourselves not only to the uttermost, but will make sure that this form of treachery will never again endanger us. We will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God. . . .*"

Guy remembered the tableau back there in the Une house as if it were yesterday. Father and Mother Une had listened with faces drawn and worried as Kaz, kneeling between them, whispered a rapid translation of the President's words. George and Freddy, though sober, still reflected an inner excitement that news of a war always seems to stir in the young. Ester, hurt and bewildered by the drive-in incident, seemed to sit unseeing and unhearing, until George got up and sat beside her and linked his fingers in hers. Even then, Ester's eyes had sought out Guy and seemed to ask: *Why did you fight for me? You are not truly one of us. Why did you help me?*

"It is the most terrible thing," Father Une said slowly, "that could happen for all of us."

"Terrible," Kaz said.

Freddy, who had been sitting quietly with his buddy George and Ester, said bluntly: "We're at war for sure, men. So what are we going to do about it?"

George had said promptly: "I think we ought to join the Army as fast as we can."

Guy had stared in disbelief. "Are you fellows crazy?"

"What d'ya mean, crazy!" Freddy snapped. "Didn't you hear the President?"

"Sure, I heard him." Guy felt incredulous. "So what? Enlisting in the Army is nuts! You'd be fighting our own kind of people!"

Kaz said quietly: "Guy, they're not 'our' kind of people. Who knows? They might be coming right here to Los Angeles next—to sneak up on us and bomb and kill us just like they've done at Pearl Harbor!"

Guy had slumped back in his chair, regarding them morosely. He remembered then that his confusion of loyalties began in that moment. Even though it seemed clear enough to Kaz and George Une, and even happy-go-lucky Freddy seemed to have no doubts as to the right course of action, he could not understand it. He had known only love and kindness at the hands of the Japanese. How could he go to war against them? How could the Une family be so confident and sure that it was the right thing to do?

Remembering that afternoon, Guy also remembered wryly the fiasco of their attempt to enlist. He had gone along with Freddy and George's enthusiasm, when they decided to join up at Fort MacArthur. Ester had been silent, her eyes locking with George's in an eloquent and anguished expression of unspoken love that needed no further emissary missions from Guy. The last few hours had brought everything that was important into sharp focus for them.

At Fort MacArthur there were changes, too. The Guard force had been tripled, each sentry carrying a weapon and aware of a new meaning to the word "security." And when George's topless jalopy came down Alma Street, and blandly through the gate, the corporal did a double-take as he saw George and Freddy and pulled his sidearm in an angry order for them to halt.

The rest was confusion, humiliation, and dismay. They were ordered to dismount from the car, a sergeant was hastily summoned, they were kept standing there at gunpoint while the sergeant demanded to know George Une's nationality.

"Nationality?" George asked, bewildered. "We're Americans."

"You know what I mean," the sergeant snapped. "What's your race?"

"Unless you're blind," Guy interrupted heatedly, "you can see they're Japanese. But they're Americans—just like you."

The sergeant only gave Guy a cold, contemptuous look. Other Guardsmen were searching the jalopy as if expecting a bomb. Guy's anger flared higher and he snapped to the sergeant: "Listen, Boy Scout, we drove down here to enlist, but if this is your way of greeting volunteers, you can damned well shove it! Come on, George—Freddy. Let's haul outa here."

But they were surrounded by grim bayonets until a lieutenant was summoned. The O.D. scanned the trio impassively while the sergeant reported he had intercepted the Japs trying to drive into the post, and had checked the vehicle for explosives. At this, Guy had burst into angry words again.

"Explosives! Are you fatheads off your rockers?"

The lieutenant had looked at him coldly. "What's your nationality, fella?"

"Me, I'm sort of a mixed breed," Guy answered cockily. "What's yours, General?"

But the lieutenant only snapped: "Hold this man in the guard room, sergeant. And take the Japanese to security for interrogation."

"Just don't waste too much of our time," Guy jeered. "We've got to go spy on the Navy, next!"

But it was long hours before Freddy and George Une were released, and Guy waited in increasing humiliation and resentment. But when it was over and they returned to the jalopy, George only said mildly: "What are you so hot about, Guy? Nobody hurt us."

"If fellows like them make up the army," Guy muttered, "we'll never win the war. A free country—hah!"

But this was only the beginning. A few days later, Guy watched in indignant pity as the sad exodus of Nisei began. U.S. soldiers with holstered sidearms herded Japanese families from the apartment building on the corner, where Ester lived with her family. Men, women and children, carrying whatever they had been able to pack, were formed into long lines to get into waiting Army trucks, and other soldiers with ready rifles blocked the sidewalks in the background. Guy stood with George and Ester near a rattletrap bus that had been commandeered by the army for the caravan.

"It stinks," Guy whispered. "It *stinks!*"

"Oh, Guy," Ester murmured. "Don't, please, don't blame them. They're just doing what they've been ordered to do. Besides, we're only being taken to Santa Anita—the assembly center. Then we go to a relocation camp."

"Concentration camp is what you mean," Guy snapped.

"Whatever or wherever it is, we'll all be the same

there," Ester said quietly. She looked prettier than ever, Guy thought, even though her eyes showed signs of private tears last night. "If somebody throws a rock through a window or screams a dirty name there, it won't be because I happen to have been born a Japanese."

"Because you're not," Guy insisted. "You're American."

"Other Americans don't seem to know that," Ester said.

She kissed Guy lightly on the cheek in parting, then turned with eloquent eyes to George. Guy moved away a little, to allow them a few moments of relative privacy for their farewell. His anger had to find some outlet, and he swung toward the nearest sentry.

"You must feel real proud, huh? Real patriotic job you got—shipping Americans off to a concentration camp! Who's your boss—Hitler?"

"Don't tee off on me, Mac," the soldier returned calmly. "I didn't bomb Pearl Harbor."

"Neither did they!" Guy snapped angrily.

Within another few days—moving with terrible efficiency—the orders came in turn for the Une family to be relocated. Frustration and despair were mirrored in Guy's eyes as he helped with the final packing, and he felt a special hatred for the assigned numeral tags that had to be attached to each piece of baggage the Unes were permitted to take with them. A FOR RENT sign was tacked to the house outside.

It was a difficult parting. Guy did not know what to say. He felt a sense of guilt, as if part of the tragedy that had come to the Unes was his fault. They were the only family he had really known; they had given him everything, saved him from a tragedy of his own long ago. They were gentle, unassuming, hard-working—he could not understand why they should be punished. He felt ashamed of his own country. And in the anguish of having everything dear and warm torn from him, his bitterness deepened and hardened into an iron inflexibility.

Shaking hands with Kaz, he said: "If the big wheels running this war have to needle everybody who maybe once came from someplace else—then why not all the Germans and Italians in America, too?"

But Kaz was patient, his eyes solemn.

"I can't answer that, Guy. But right or wrong, the

Government is doing what it thinks best. No one bats a thousand."

They had rumpled each other's hair affectionately then, and Guy went out to help lash the baggage on the car. When he looked up, he saw Mother Une on the threshold of the bungalow, and he hurried to help her with her parcels.

"Let me carry it for you, Mamma-san."

"No—I carry it," she smiled.

But he took the parcels from her nevertheless. Pausing, the little Japanese woman turned for a last look at her house.

"I will—miss my home," she whispered.

"I'll miss it, too," Guy said harshly.

Turning, she sighed and checked the lock on the door, and then smiled at Guy. "All-America boy, you very good son to me."

All at once Guy felt as if his heart would break. He took the fragile little woman in his arms.

"Mamma-san, mamma-san," he whispered softly. "How can I thank you for all you've done for me?"

"It was not for thanks, Peachboy," she murmured.

"I know, Mamma-san, but—"

"We will go now. *Sayonara,* my son."

The next few months passed in a kind of nightmare daze for Guy. He moved into a cheap rooming house, drifted from one job to another, too impatient and quick-tempered these days to last very long in one place. His memories of those days were filled with bars, slums, cheap cafes. He was lonely, unhappy, lost.

When he found his "greetings" from the draft board in his mailbox in the boarding house vestibule, he felt relieved, his destiny taken from his hands. But at the medical examination he watched the doctor stamp in red letters NOT ACCEPTED on his file.

He had a perforated eardrum.

The days became cold and wet and windy. Wherever he went now, it seemed as if he was the only man his age not in uniform. He read the war news and shrugged. It did not concern him any more.

TWO

IN TIME, Guy learned that his family—for he thought of the Unes as his family, and no other way—had been removed to Camp Jerome in Arkansas, halfway across the country. Bitter and resentful, unhappy and alone, Guy's life became that of a shiftless wanderer. Since he'd been rejected for military service because of a perforated eardrum, he told himself, he was glad it was all over—for him. The dilemma buried inside himself need never be faced now. He would not be sent to the Pacific to fight. And his family was safe. He, too, was safe. His days would be filled with waiting—until they could all be together again.

Or so he thought, until he learned about the activation of the all-Nisei 442nd Infantry Regiment on orders of the War Department a year later. His letters from George first caused him deep puzzlement, since he could not understand the motives of George and Kaz in promptly volunteering, and then the news that Kaz had been appointed a first lieutenant and George made a private in the 442nd filled him with deep unease, not only for them, but for his own course of action.

He remembered a letter he received from George shortly afterward that only served to renew his confusion.

"Dear Buddy: By the time you read this, Kaz and I will be on our way to Fort Meade and overseas. Address: APO 449 N.Y. Kaz and I spent a couple of days with the folks before being shipped. They miss you very much, Guy. Because of Pop's health, the authorities are transferring them to Camp Manzanar in California. Everybody's on the move, huh? Write, you bum! We want to hear that everything's okay with you. Your pal. George."

And then George's inevitable postscript: *"Phoned Ester to say goodbye. I started to propose to her over the phone, but got cold feet."*

Two days later, Guy went to Camp Manzanar to see Pop and Mom Une. His first impression of the place

was ugly and repelling. There was a sense of barren isolation in the surrounding terrain, and the high barbed wire fence, the sentry watchtowers and searchlights, all made him think of a prison enclosure. He took a taxi there, and for the occasion pulled himself together to get his dark blue suit cleaned and bought a fresh white shirt and necktie.

He expected some comment from the guard when he turned in his pass marked, "Visiting parents—Shinta and Natsuyo Une." But the guard only gave him a sharp, puzzled look, shrugged, and passed him on inside.

"Two blocks straight ahead, buddy, then right to the second barracks."

"Thanks," Guy said.

He had sent a wire telling the Unes he was coming, and he had tried to imagine what the past year had done to them. He felt oddly nervous, his mouth dry, and there was a strange, constricted feeling about his heart as he walked up to the tarpaper barracks, and opened the screened door. Even here, he saw at once, Mother Une had attempted to make this place a home. There were two Army cots, a pot-bellied stove, and a few remembered pieces of the Une furniture from the bungalow. Several handsome photographs of George and Kaz in uniform held a conspicuous place on one wall. Army blankets covered the cots. He felt appalled by the Spartan atmosphere of the place, and tried to keep a smile on his face as he saw Mother Une, as small and frail-looking as ever, turn and greet him with a broad smile. She had been patting a cushion in place, touching a thin, sleazy curtain, adjusting her dress just so, when he opened the screened door.

"Mamma-san . . ." he said softly.

She turned quickly, and he crossed the barren little room with a quick, impatient stride and hugged her.

"I am so very glad to see you again, my son," she smiled. Her eyes were filled with quick tears that she brushed aside with the back of her hand. "It has been such a long, long time!"

"I'm glad to be here," Guy said. He held her at arm's length. "You look wonderful, Mamma-san. And Papa? Is the California sun helping him?"

"Oh, very much. He work in vegetable fields now. Soon be here. You see camp?"

"What I saw of it looks better than I expected," Guy said. "I notice you've got gardens everyplace."

"Not so nice at first," Mother Une grimaced ruefully. "All dirt—mud—no flowers." She studied him with sudden gravity. "We worried long time—not hear from you—not know what you doing in the world alone. We wait and wait. We hope for visit, for letter."

"I was traveling around," he said awkwardly. "Here and there. But now that you're not so far away any more—" He paused and turned to the photographs of Kaz and George and grinned. "Hey, are those two heroes anybody I know?"

Mother Une looked proud. "They fight in Italy. But they okay—last we hear."

"I wish to God it was over," Guy whispered. "I wish it was over so they'd be safe."

"Is son Guy safe?" Mother Une asked quietly.

"Yeah. You must miss Kaz and George very much, Mamma-san."

The little Japanese woman was solemn. "The heart cries at night, but—it must be. To help straighten out—mess. Son Guy teach me that word, remember? Is good word?"

"It sure is a mess," Guy said grimly.

"But soon many—all-America boys—end mess. No more mess, ever. Then we live happy again."

"Happy?" he asked, and his bitterness came through under his words. "Everything you and Pop worked for is gone."

"Maybe. But most important is not gone. You and Kaz and George not gone. Mother—father—of Une family work hard all lives, to leave sons good—good—foundation? Yes, foundation for future. Not enough years for old people to build again. So sons must build. Must build family again—you and George and Kaz. Must build world again. Must end—mess. Many papas, many mamma-sans all over world—pray for this." She looked at him directly, troubled for him. "This you believe, Guy?"

He had not expected so direct and incisive an approach to his own troubles. He did not know what to say to her. He stood up and walked to the screened door. "What difference does it make what one man believes—or does?"

"One man must believe!" Mother Une said sharply. She crossed the room to join him at the door. A group of

Japanese came down the street between the barracks, laughing and chattering. "It *must* make a difference! Why else is Kaz, George, go so far away—to cross ocean. To kill men who look—like brother—they love? Men who look—like you, my son?"

Guy turned toward the small woman, feeling as if her words had unlocked the chains of a heavy burden he had been carrying inside himself for all these long, dreary months. Over and over again he had tried to make sense out of his position; he had felt isolated, apart from everyone and everything, in his refusal to recognize the war. But as Mamma-san said, if it was all right for Kaz and George to do what they were doing—if, as Americans, they felt that their course was the right one—well, then, it would be all right if he, too, somehow found a way to add his own small bit of effort to help shorten these months of anguish and bring things back to normal again.

He drew a deep breath and looked down at the little Japanese woman who was, in almost every sense, his true mother.

"Mamma-san, do you mean you think it would be all right for me to—to, say, go to the Marines—offer what I can do—"

"Of course. It has taken too long, already," she said.

THREE

IT WAS as if he were awakening from a bad dream, when he went the next day to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. All at once he knew exactly what he could do, and how the country might make use of what he knew, despite his punctured eardrum. It was as if he had known this all along, but it had taken Mamma Une's sober words of encouragement to snap him out of the year-long depression he had suffered. Suddenly he was disgusted with himself, with the long dreary months behind him of cheap rooming-houses, dull jobs, friendless days and nights. He wanted to belong again, to be a part of the vast, dynamic effort being made all over the country.

The answer was simple.

He offered his services to the Marines as a Japanese interpreter. And he was promptly accepted.

He had only one moment of qualms in the recruiting office, while he waited for the interview, and that was when he studied a fighting-Marine poster. But, he thought, with his knowledge of Japanese, he wouldn't be used as an assault soldier, he wouldn't have to kill—

Events, moving with dizzying speed, rapidly disillusioned him. Within a week he was at Camp Pendleton, marching in a platoon under the scorching sun, staggering to and fro under the command of Drill Instructor Bill Hazen, a Stanford graduate, combat veteran of Guadalcanal and Tarawa. Bill was a dedicated Marine, a tough, intelligent, devil-may-care man who apparently was merciless in his efforts to whip his platoon of boots into shape. It seemed to Guy that Hazen promptly fixed on him as a patsy for his confused commands. Marching back and forth on the same dusty field that saw other platoons, one of them under Pfc Pete Lewis, also fumbling their way through basic command techniques, Guy began to reel with dizzyness. The last year of drifting in and out of bars and jobs hadn't done him much good. He was drenched with sweat, and only his determination to stand up as well as Sullivan and Semperi, who flanked him, kept him going. Even then, his mind dazed, he heard Bill Hazen's voice only as a distant shout as the drill-sergeant bawled:

"To the rear—*'arch*! To the rear—*'arch*!"

Guy groaned to Sullivan: "Doesn't that character know any other orders?"

"Right oblique—*'arch!*"

But Guy, in his fatigue, was caught in the rhythm of "to the rear" and executed it again—walking smack into the oncoming file. The semblance of military order in the platoon became a stumbling, confused shambles.

"Gabaldon!" Bill yelled. "Can't you get it through your head what 'oblique' means?"

In his resentment, Guy snapped: "I was hired to *talk* with the enemy, Sarge—not foot-trade them."

Bill Hazen approached very deliberately. He was a handsome man, with thick black hair and a deep, amused twinkle in his eyes. His voice was not tough; it contained infinite, weary patience.

"Let me go over this just once more, Boot. In the Marine Corps, it is *Sergeant*, not Sarge." His voice lifted

as he fixed the rest of the platoon with a quick glare. "Never! Got it? In the Marines you fight! F-I-G-H-T! I don't care whether you're a cook or a typist or an interpreter, Gabaldon! You can have a busted back or a—a busted eardrum. But take my word for it, Boot—you'll fight. Have I made myself clear?"

Guy did not answer. He felt a quick surge of panic in the pit of his stomach, and then it passed. He told himself that the Drill Sergeant couldn't know everything. An interpreter didn't have to fight, he was sure of that. And as long as things stayed that way, he wouldn't have to resolve any inner problems. . . .

And yet—

There was the afternoon on the training field when Bill Hazen introduced them to jiu-jitsu. Guy, who had long-ago learned the art from Kaz and George, kept his mouth shut as he sat on the ground, cross-legged, with the other platoon members and Pfc Pete Lewis, listening to the drill instructor's preliminary lecture. Beside Guy and Pete were Tony Semperi and Roy Sullivan, paying earnest attention. But to Guy, the whole thing seemed academic when Bill Hazen said:

"There will be times when your hands are your only weapons, and you'll be grateful for knowing how to use 'em to kill your enemy. Now, if I can have a volunteer, I'll demonstrate the first jiu-jitsu hold."

All at once, Guy saw the chance to take Sergeant Hazen down a peg or two. He whispered out of the side of his mouth: "Is the big shot ever gonna be surprised!" and then he stood up and said, in an innocent manner, "I'll volunteer, *Sergeant.*"

"Good. Come on out on the mat."

Guy stepped out confidently, ready to go. Bill had a habitual quirk to his eyebrows when he regarded Guy. Then the drill instructor assumed his stance.

"Now this," he said, "is the first basic position—"

Guy stepped in, and with a single, practiced effort the moment they came to grips, flipped Bill Hazen to the mat. The drill sergeant landed with a flat thud, sprawled heavily, and lay there for a dazed second, staring up at Guy's grin. Guy turned and winked at the boots circling the mat, who roared with delighted laughter. Then Bill got to his feet slowly, his face blank, and dusted his pants.

"Now, for the second position—" he began.

He was prepared for Guy this time. And for all of Kaz Une's lessons, Guy's amateur knowledge of jiu-jitsu couldn't cope with Bill Hazen's expert, murderous technique. In a flash, Guy felt himself lifted and hurled through the air. A strangled yell of surprise came to him, then he landed with a sickening thud in front of Pete Lewis. The sky rotated crazily before his blurred gaze. He saw Pete Lewis' young, non-committal face, saw the grins that Semperi and Sullivan gave him. Their fuzzy features cleared as Guy shook his head. Now the boots were laughing at him, he saw; but Pete was emotionless, waiting to see which way Guy, as a fresh boot, would go.

Guy raised himself to a full sitting position while the roars of laughter from the platoon washed around him. For an instant his anger gushed up, threatened to explode. Then he grinned sheepishly at Bill Hazen.

"I guess I asked for that one, Sergeant."

Bill Hazen nodded, his mouth twitching in a brief smile of approval at Guy's acceptance of the situation. . . .

And again, there was the day in the grenade pit. Guy no longer made any overt objections to battle training, and bent his efforts to achieving efficiency in every field, whatever his reservations about the future might be. He admired Bill Hazen, and felt that the friendship forming between them was something of extraordinary value; and this friendship soon included young Pete Lewis, the other combat veteran in charge of the boot platoons.

The grenade practice was relatively simple. Bill handed a grenade to a boot who pulled the pin and threw it at a target circle, then took cover as the practice grenade exploded. When it was Guy's turn, he jumped readily into the pit and Bill handed him a grenade. Guy flipped it cockily in his hand.

"They don't weigh much, do they?"

Bill Hazen said: "Hell can come in little packages, Boot. You know what to do?"

"Very simple," Guy returned. "All you've got to do is make like with a shotput—toss it in a high arc so she lands smack on the target. Right, Sergeant?"

"That's it, Gabaldon. Let's see you do it."

Guy threw his grenade. It described a perfect path in

the air and landed in the middle of the chalked target circle as Guy hit the dirt and covered up. But the grenade just lay there. There was no burst. After a moment Guy looked up and saw Bill Hazen still standing calmly erect, smiling grimly. The drill instructor stepped into the pit and tapped his shoulder.

"Not bad, Boot. Not bad at all." Then Bill's voice hardened. "Go on, pick it up! And next time, chump, *pull the pin! Remember, the idea is to kill Japs!*"

His words jolted Guy into the start of an angry denial, then he abruptly shut up. But it was too late to hide the expression on his face from Bill Hazen, who looked at him with curious interest.

"What's the matter? Did I say something wrong, Boot?"

"No," Guy muttered. "No, I—just don't feel good."

And he hurried away before Hazen could ask more probing questions.

It seemed to Guy that the endless, grinding, exhausting days of boot training would last forever; but finally there came a day when they were packing their sea bags, with scuttlebutt fairly unanimous that they were being shipped out to Hawaii as replacements. They had been given overnight passes the night before, and as they finished stowing gear in their seabags, Semperi, Sullivan and Pete Lewis were gathered near Guy's bunk when he came back from shaving.

Semperi, with his chunky frame and swarthy, good-natured face and Brooklyn accent, was bemoaning the night just spent.

"T'ree days with this babe, and I get no place. This filly fin'ly tells me she won't go to the post without a slip from the preacher. How d'you like them apples?"

Sullivan nodded in commiseration. "I tell this babe I'm being shipped overseas, see, figuring I get some sympathy and then I'll make out, y'know? So all she says is she'll keep it safe, just for me. She can keep it in the deep freeze, for alla me!"

Pete looked quizzically at Guy. "How did you do, Gabby?"

"Mission accomplished," Guy grinned. "Did you make out, Hero?"

Pete's young, pink face beamed, and he spoke with just a touch too much flamboyance. "Are you kid-

ding? Every night it's something different." He snapped his fingers. "Good thing the Corps keeps me in shape, or I'd be up for another Purple Heart."

"Next time," Semperi grunted, "I'm takin' my liberty with you, buddy."

Guy looked with sudden understanding at the young Pfc. "That's how it is," he said, shaking his head in mock awe. "Some men got it, and some men don't."

Later, he walked out with Pete for a cigarette and a few minutes in the waning sunshine. He felt good. It was fine to have the grueling weeks of boot training behind him at last. Now maybe there would come some sense to his enlistment in the Marine Corps as an interpreter. At least, he could be of some use there. He had no doubt that his special knowledge would be made use of, rather than lost in the grim mass numerals of an assault team. And Bill Hazen's latest word on their destination helped boost this hope.

"We're going out as replacements in an Intelligence Section—2nd Marines, 2nd Division."

"Is that a good-going bunch to be with?" Guy asked.

Pete said quickly: "The Second is one of the bleed-in'est." He grinned at the drill sergeant. "That's your old outfit, isn't it, Bill?"

"From the beginning," Bill nodded.

"From the 'Canal beginning?" Guy pressed.

"From Guadalcanal until I got it at Tarawa."

Guy turned to Lewis. "Where did you get it, Pete?"

Pete grinned. "An eager boot like you got a little excited, Gabby. He thought I was a Jap, and stuck his bayonet into me."

Bill laughed softly. "That's the running gag, Gabby. The truth of it is, Junior here got it from a sniper on New Britain."

"Where that bee-bee hit," Pete said ruefully, "I don't think it'll ever stop itching."

"Where did it hit?" Guy asked curiously.

Pete rubbed his butt in mock anguish. "Where the hell do you think you've got to get it, in order to rate the Purple Heart?"

They all laughed, but under it Guy felt a sudden rush of well-being, a sense of seriousness and sober warmth. He suddenly realized he felt better than he could ever remember.

"Well, I'm glad to finally belong to something," he

said, "even if it's your old outfit, Bill." And then impulsively, as they walked toward the canteen, he put an arm around the shoulders of each man. "Even if it's an outfit with a couple of tin heroes like you two!"

FOUR

DUSK made the shadows long and heavy on Saipan on the evening of D-Day. A silence fell over the Marine beachhead, a quiet that was too thick, that whispered of pain and blood and death to come. It was a quiet designed to work with effect on the nerves of men who had not been battle-tested before. To the others, the veterans of Guadalcanal and Tarawa and New Britain, it meant a brief respite to be seized for rest, in which to snatch a quick ration of food, to check the M-1 and replenish grenades.

Pete Lewis had been through this before. And having handed the binoculars to Guy, he slid down the slope of the security side of the hill and promptly began to eat, alongside of Bill Hazen. Now and then, a distant mortar shell only served to punctuate the quiet.

"You'll be through before they come, Junior," Bill said quietly. "Take it easy."

"You think they'll hit us soon?" Pete asked.

"They're massing right now for a banzai attack—sucking up the saki while their officers wave their swords and give 'em a pep talk." Bill Hazen looked up at where Guy was on lookout for the OP. "Guy will let us know, I reckon."

Darkness came suddenly over the sea behind them. The reassuring sight of the battle fleet was blotted from sight by a pall of smoky black spread like a blanket over the Pacific. Pete was grateful for the illusion of quiet. He was thinking about a letter he had received from his Aunt Minnie, full of tart admonitions to behave, to be careful, to brush his teeth regularly. As if he was still a kid, Pete thought. But this time his reaction was without resentment. He felt rueful, and a little sad, thinking of her written plans for the farm, her big idea to build up a tourist inn for trippers to the White Mountains, after

the war. She wrote as if there was no question but that Pete was the same meek and innocent little nephew bending to her iron will. But he had no intention of running errands for a bunch of demanding, loud-mouthed, arrogant tourists, knuckling under for a tip and a handout. And he had no intention of letting Aunt Minnie run his life any more. She had kept blinders on him for all these years, Pete thought, and it wasn't until the war came along—even until that 48-hour pass in Hawaii—that he woke up to the reality of things and learned that he had to fashion his way of life for himself, whatever Aunt Minnie thought.

He was still eating when he heard a low call from Guy, on the slope above him with the binoculars.

"I see something, Pete!"

"Please," Pete groaned. "Not while I'm eating!"

But he got up with Bill, when Bill nodded, and joined Guy at the lookout post to have a look.

In the gathering darkness they could see the Japanese troops plainly, massing at the edge of the distant swamp. The view was dim and indistinct, but Pete could make out a few Japanese officers, waving their swords just as Bill predicted—no doubt heated up on saki and inciting the defenders to a banzai attack. Then Pete heard the distant rumble of tanks froom the swamp ahead, and he uttered a quick exclamation and slid back to the OP field telephone and cracked it rapidly.

"Nelly Bly," the phone voice said. "Go ahead."

"Pass the word to the Skipper," Pete said quickly. "They're coming on now—at the edge of the swamp, maybe four hundred yards due east. So far we've counted four tanks."

"Got it," the phone said laconically. "Out."

Pete snatched up his M-1 and rejoined Bill and Pete.

Bill said: "They're really whipping it up over there. It's a banzai for sure—aimed to push us right back into the sea."

Guy wet his lips. "How drunk are they? You said they got fired up on saki."

"Drunk, mean and murderous," Bill said tightly. "Watch it, that's all."

The tanks came rumbling up, moving like prehistoric monsters through the shattered brush and broken trees up ahead. In the fading light, they seemed to lose shape by the moment. Bugles began to blow, screaming with a

strange fiendish noise that made Guy shiver. His hands sweated, and he dried them on his thigh, then took a fresh grip on his M-1. Mortar fire began on their right flank, cracking sharply, then moved like rain toward them, thudding and smashing and blasting the darkness all around. Then came the heavier blasts of enemy artillery fire. Dirt pelted them from a shell that burst nearby.

"How are we going to see them?" Guy complained. "It's too dark to make 'em out now!"

As if in direct answer, a star shell burst silently overhead, shedding a bright, magnesium radiance over the scene. Another popped, and another, and another. The sky turned milky white. In the blazing luminescence, Guy saw the enemy tanks lumber nearer, surrounded by the chunky, crouching, helmeted forms of enemy troops advancing toward them. Bill Hazen's M-1 cracked, cracked again, followed by Pete Lewis' careful firing. Guy looked at his two friends; they were watching the enemy approach, their faces drawn and haggard oddly in the starshell light. He didn't hesitate again. He raised his M-1 automatically and began sighting and firing and sighting and firing in practice-range rhythm, not thinking about the small, man-like objects out there who dropped before his fire.

As the starshells burst overhead, lighting the field before them, Pete paused a moment to grin and shake his head.

"I tell you, Gabby, that Navy thinks of everything. We got absolutely nothing to worry about."

But after that, everything was a confused, ugly melee of combat. The suicidal banzai attack went on under the eerie light of the starshells as if the numbers of the enemy were endless. They seemed unaware of the withering, devastating fire poured into them from the Marine perimeter. Men fell, screaming, and were replaced by other men. Guy fired clip after clip. His M-1 became almost too hot to hold. Pete paused long enough to fix his bayonet, and Guy followed his example. Bill Hazen was already set for it.

Somebody got the enemy lead tank with a grenade that set it blazing, shooting up thick, greasy black smoke in spurting fingers. Pete began to curse the smoke, since it shielded the enemy's approach to their OP. The night was hideous with noise. Everything in the arsenal on both sides was thrown into the battle—from enemy

howitzers to battlewagon sixteen-inch rifles, from rifles to Samurai swords, tank artillery to bazookas. Now Pete could hear the shrill yelling of the enemy, hurling a ululating chant as they jogged forward against their fire. He saw something move ahead, pulled the pin on a grenade, and threw it. It burst against a small knot of Japanese soldiers, and Pete glimpsed them falling, arms wide, legs buckling. Then Guy threw his grenades, and Bill. But a sense of panic began to move in Pete. This was a banzai attack of a sort he had never experienced before. He thought he was battlewise in all the ways of the enemy; but he had never seen them attack like this.

A dark figure hurtled over the crest of their slope, tried to bayonet Guy, who clubbed the Japanese with his rifle. Then another, and Bill used his bayonet, and the man fell screaming while Bill cursed and tugged to get his weapon free of the man's body. Pete stood up to see better. Smoke stung his eyes from the burning tank. Something struck his left leg a glancing blow, but he paid no attention. An angry, maddened Japanese face loomed before him, and he smashed at it and saw blood spurt and he swung around and fell, astonished, when his leg failed to take his shifting weight.

Bugles blared, screaming eerily in the night. Pete gasped, turned his head, afraid to look at his leg now. Somebody ran toward him, stepped on him with a hard, hob-nailed boot in his groin. He screamed involuntarily with the pain and tried to twist around. The Japanese ducked, swung back to him, grinned, made a jabbing motion. Pete saw that his leg was dark with blood in the pale light of the starshells. He saw something shine, reflecting the light between himself and the Jap. The enemy shouted something, grinning, and Pete felt a quick, jolting pressure in his belly, a ripping, tearing sensation that oddly gave him no pain.

The starshells seemed to burst inside his own body then, inside his brain and behind his eyes. He knew he was hurt, but he did not know how bad it might be. The enemy soldier had fallen across his legs, shot by Guy, who loomed over him and hurled one grenade after another at the ranks of the charging Japanese. Pete tried to shove the dead man away from him, but he couldn't move at all, and after a moment he gave it up, because it didn't seem important, anyway.

The bugles blared louder in his ears, and there came

a heavy concussion, a sharp crack, another heavy blast and then a rumbling of giant tracks as a Marine tank moved up the beach to help hold the beachhead perimeter. All of the Japanese tanks were burning now, Pete saw dimly. They were like bonfires in a hayfield, he thought, and this suddenly reminded him of Aunt Minnie's letter and her plans to make an inn out of the old farm after the war.

Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad deal, after all, Pete thought hazily.

Now that he knew what the score was, maybe he could handle things back home a little better. Aunt Minnie meant to do what was best. She was only a maiden lady, and how could she expect to understand a growing boy? He would have to be patient with her, when he got home, Pete thought. Maybe they'd get along better then, if he helped her to understand him. He could find a girl back home, too, who might be willing to work at the inn from scratch and help build it up into a good business. Aunt Minnie was smart, thinking of how things would be after the war. He felt impatient all at once to be back there in the cool mountains of New Hampshire, to feel the wind against his face and listen to the peaceful stillness of the granite hills . . .

All at once, then, the pain hit him and he screamed and felt as if there could not possibly exist such anguish in the world that he knew at that moment. And in his agony, young Pfc Lewis sat up although one foot was blown off, and he looked down at his belly to see what the dead Jap had done to him with his bayonet, and what he saw was nothing recognizable of the young, hard body he had lived with for nineteen years, because the Jap's knife had ripped him open from groin to rib cage and he could look inside himself, at the bleeding mass of dark organs. He rejected what he saw with a low, whispering groan, and he thought of Aunt Minnie and the way she had always hurried to bandage the slightest cut on his finger with iodine or mercurochrome and crisp white surgical gauze, and he was thinking of the concern on her tired, seamed old face when he died. . . .

A few minutes later the enemy banzai attack was broken.

Guy felt as if he were coming to the surface after a long, hard underwater plunge in which his lungs had almost burst from the strain. Here and there in the weird

light of naval starshells he saw a fleeing, staggering enemy. But the harsh bugles no longer blew, and the screams of desperate Japanese urged on by saber-slashing officers who knew no mercy either for their own men or for the enemy, began to fade and die in the agonized night. It seemed to Guy as if the struggle had gone on endlessly, but he knew it was only for a few minutes. And now it was over. The last of the enemy ran into the darkness of the swamp, leaving only the litter of their dead tangled with the bodies of the Marine dead behind them.

Guy leaned in exhaustion on his gun and spoke to Bill. "You see, you were wrong," he said quietly. "They don't all want to die, banzai attack or not. They're as human as we are, Bill. Some have sense enough to run away." He looked around for Bill Hazen and said: "Bill? You listening?"

But the black-haired sergeant was bending over the twisted body of Pete Lewis, rolling the boy over and brushing back Pete's hair from his sweaty face on which a look of distant surprise still existed. Gently Bill closed Pete's eyes.

"Corpsman!" Guy cried, stunned. "Corpsman!"

"Take it easy, Gabby." Bill's voice was hard. "Nothing can help the kid now."

"But he—"

"He's dead. He's been gutted."

"Not Pete—"

"It happens," Bill said grimly. He attached the bayonet to Pete's fallen rifle and thrust the M-1 into the ground with a hard, savage gesture, marking the casualty for the corpsmen who were moving up in the fading light of the starshells. "It happens to the best of us, Gabby. And Pete was one of the best."

"Is—is that all there is to it?" Guy said quietly. "Your gun stuck in the ground?"

"That's all," Bill told him. "And every night we're on this stinking island, you and every other man with you is going to pray that it won't be his before the day is over."

FIVE

AT NIGHT of the first day, the transports and tractor groups, escorted by some of the fire ships, withdrew from shore to escape possible air attack. During the night, the 25th Regiment of Marines on the Yellow Beaches suffered a strong attack in which the Japanese used civilians, herded ahead of them, as shields. The attack was broken up by 105-mm howitzers, but at 0530 some Japanese came down the gap between the 2nd and 4th Division areas and took the Charan Kanoa pier for a time before they were repelled. The pier was damaged badly, which made supply difficult when a moderate sea prevented LVTs from crossing the reef and forced sole use of the boat passage to the lagoon.

At dawn, somehow, Guy found himself still alive, still on the beachhead. All the next day, the 16th, the landing beaches were interdicted by heavy enemy artillery fire which prevented landing of supplies and additional equipment until past noon. But by 1800 Afetna Point was secured and most of the Marine artillery was ashore. Only small advances were gained. Guy found himself occupied solely with mopping up parties that worked to consolidate the preliminary beachhead.

There was a second counterattack that night, in which the Japanese deployed over forty tanks. Fire-control called again for starshells from the Navy, and Guy's platoon again fought with bazookas, 37-mm gunfire and hand grenades. Losses were heavy. There was no chance to camouflage or maneuver, and the sharp eyes of Japanese observers seemed to aim artillery down the throats of the Marine units clinging to the shore.

Guy had no time to think about Pete Lewis or any of his personal problems during these hours. It was enough just to fight and stay alive, to snatch a few hours' exhausted, dreamless sleep when the rare chance came, to bolt a food ration, grab a new handful of ammo clips and grenades, and go on. The first day and the first fears, however, were behind him for good. He changed slowly, with each hour, gaining confidence in himself and his job,

although he felt as if his talents were being bitterly and tragically wasted. No prisoners were taken, especially during the repeated banzai counterattacks. There was no one for him to help interrogate for Captain Schwabe.

On the second night the enemy sent over Jill torpedo-bombers, Zekes and Judys, but no damage was done before the Wildcats from the fire-support group knocked them down. The enemy yielded up Aslito airfield and pulled back to a line running roughly from Garapan to the summit of Mount Tapotchau. It was clear now that the Marines had come to stay.

From a SeaBee, Guy picked up a long-billed baseball cap which he wore constantly, in the feeling that it helped his pitching arm when the time came to throw grenades. He traded a Samurai sword for a .32 pistol and shoulder holster, and kept the gun inside his blouse. Operations, even the insane maneuvering of early beachhead days, quickly became routine. He became accustomed to the sight of dead Japanese soldiers mingled with their shielding victims, the Saipan natives driven ahead of them during their attacks. He became accustomed to losing buddies from the platoon. You can accept anything, after a time. Or almost anything.

He kept feeling a certain nagging unease inside him self, however, as if there was something he ought to be doing. But he couldn't think what it was. He learned the answer on the third day.

The unit was dug in on the lower slopes of Mount Tapotchau that afternoon, and Guy was on OP duty, waiting to be relieved by Sullivan. He was dug into a shallow shell-hole atop a rocky spur of the mountain, looking down an equally rocky, barren valley below, with further levels of the mountain rising beyond. Nothing moved within the scope of his binoculars. The hills of Saipan looked hot and empty in the afternoon sunlight, and strange angular shadows were cast by the boulders and cliffsides. To the south came a brief spatter of machine-gun fire, then silence. A rumbling bombardment sounded from Tinian Channel, out of sight. Except for that, the sky was empty and the trade winds cool from over the Pacific.

When Sullivan dropped into the shell-hole, Guy started, then handed him the binoculars.

"I thought I saw some movement about ten minutes ago, Roy. On that hillside," he said, pointing. "But I'm

not sure. I've been getting glassy-eyed looking through these things." And as Sullivan took up the observation post, Guy cranked the field phone and spoke into it. "This is Gabaldon. I've been relieved by Sullivan and I'm coming in."

"Hold it, Bird's Nest," said the phone.

"What is it?"

"We got a recon squad on Hill 202 to your north. Take another look, huh? They saw three Japs infiltrating Sector 4."

"That's out of my range of vision," Guy said.

"I know, but they're headed your way."

Just then Sullivan said: "Guy? Three Nippos just scooted into a cave over there."

"Roger," Guy said, and turned back to the phone. "Bird's Nest reporting enemy infiltration in Sector 4."

The radioman on the other end said: "Keep 'em located, Gabby. The Skipper and Sergeant Leonard are coming up with some men."

Guy hung up. Sullivan kept the binoculars glued to his eyes while they waited for Captain Schwabe and his men. Enemy activity at the OP just when he was relieved was a nuisance, but he didn't mind hanging around. He asked Sullivan to point out the cave mouth and watched it, too, until the little squad of Marines arrived with Captain Schwabe and Leonard. Schwabe had two ammo belts and a BAR. He looked rugged and tough. Leonard was his usual placid, plodding self.

"You can hit the back trail, Gabaldon," Schwabe said. "You've been on watch long enough."

"Just as soon go with you, Captain. You might need somebody to yak with them."

Schwabe looked dubious. "They aren't in a surrender mood, and you'd better not push your luck too far, Gabaldon."

"Just the same, I feel if I could only get a chance to talk with 'em, Skipper—"

"Yeah. You think they'll listen?"

"I don't know, but— I want to try."

"All right, let's move out."

It took fifteen minutes to work their way up the valley toward the hillside where the three Jap soldiers had been seen. The limestone caves in the cliffs looked to be all sizes and shapes, dark holes that might be hiding anything, Guy thought.

Machine-gun fire suddenly rattled down at them, and the Marines dropped automatically, digging in. Guy caught a glimpse of the two cave holes on the slope above where the enemy was located.

"Leonard!" Schwabe called.

The master sergeant crawled rapidly to the captain's side. "Yeah, I see 'em."

Schwabe pointed. "Can you get in grenade range of that one?"

"I think so. Tony!"

Semperi crawled over and joined Leonard and the two of them moved out together. At a hand signal from Schwabe, Bill Hazen started for the other cave hole. On impulse, Guy scrambled up to join him. Bill paused, looked back quizzically, and grinned.

"For a guy who wanted nothing to do with combat, pal, you're a glutton for punishment."

"It's just—when I saw them driving helpless women and old men in front of them to give them cover for their banzai attacks—" Guy said. He grunted angrily. "Well, it started me thinking. There's a difference between their Army people and the ordinary folks."

"Is there?" Bill asked. "I don't see 'em giving up any faster than their troops."

Guy had no answer for that one. He worked quickly and efficiently with Bill, with deadly speed, scrambling up the slope behind rocky cover while Schwabe and the men behind them pumped a heavy fire at the cave mouths, using grenades, the BAR, and rifle and rapid-fire. From behind a boulder, Guy could see the dim shape of a Japanese soldier operating a machine-gun in the cave mouth, while another used a rifle. But before Guy could rise, Bill Hazen stood up, grinning, and lobbed a grenade upward at the cave. The burst hurled the Japs violently against the cave wall. Almost at the same moment, another grenade explosion signalled the fact that Leonard and Semperi had done their work equally well.

The enemy fire was stilled. No more shots came at them.

Everything was curiously silent, as the echoes of the two grenade blasts faded away. The hot sun shone down without mercy on the rocky, airless little valley. Smoke filtered out of the cave mouths. Guy and Bill waited. Below them, Schwabe and his men waited. The silence seemed tangible, heavy, pressing down on them.

Then, through the silence, came a child's whimpering cry.

Guy lifted his head sharply.

"Did you hear that?"

"It came from the cave we just blasted," Bill whispered.

The whimpering call of pain came again. Guy sucked in a sharp breath, started to rise, then sank down again as Bill put a quick hand on his arm. "Are you nuts?"

"Where is she?" Guy asked fiercely. "It's only a kid!"

"Here she comes."

A small Japanese girl, unkempt, dirty, with straight hair straggling down her round face and eyes huge with terror and fear, suddenly appeared in the sunlit opening of the cave mouth. The smoke of the grenade had blown away now, and Guy saw her clearly. Her cheap cotton dress was torn, and she looked wounded, one arm and side bloody and dirty.

Guy started to his feet again.

"Gabby, hold it!" Bill rapped. "She might be a decoy!"

"I don't think so, but—"

Guy hesitated. But the little Japanese girl had heard their voices. She turned her head tear-stained face sharply toward them and then uttered a whimpering cry and started to stumble across the rocky hillside in their direction. Guy moved toward her, M-1 ready for a trick.

"Watakushi no te, ashi!" she called tremulously. "My arm! My leg!"

"Are there any more of you inside?" Guy returned in Japanese.

Her eyes went round with wonder and relief at hearing him speak her tongue. *"Hai.* My mother and brother, and others. *"Nan-nin ka shinjaysuta.* Some are dead."

Guy turned to Bill. "She says there are more civilians in that cave. Some children, too. Find her a medic, Bill —I'm going in there and pry them out."

He turned the child gently over to Bill and started to the cave; but Bill squinted dubiously up at the dark cave hole in the limestone cliff. "I don't know, Gabby. It might be a trap."

"I don't care," Guy snapped. "They're civilians and I can help them."

He plunged upward and disappeared into the shadows of the cave. Bill Hazen picked up the little girl in his arms and carried her down the mountain slope toward

Schwabe and Leonard, who were coming cautiously up toward the scene. Suddenly a series of muffled shots sounded from inside the cave. Everyone froze. Bill made a tight sound in his throat, and suddenly there were dark lines of strain around his eyes.

"I knew the crazy fool would get it," he whispered. "I knew it!"

Then, slowly, they realized the shooting from the cave had not been at them, but that all of it had come from inside. Captain Schwabe rose slowly to his face. He looked grim.

"All right. Move in and blast 'em all out."

Their combat boots made little grating sounds on the rock rubble as they moved in toward the cave mouth again. The sun shone down in hot silence. And then, as Schwabe raised his BAR and looked at the others in the unit before nodding, there came a small swirl of dust from inside the dark cavemouth and Guy Gabaldon stood there, in his baseball cap, and he was grinning, holding a little Japanese boy in his arm.

"Hold it, Skipper."

Schwabe cursed explosively. "I thought you—"

"I've got some prisoners for you, Captain," Guy went on. Turning his head, he shouted into the cave in rapid Japanese. Slowly, fearfully, the others inside came out, blinking in the sharp sunlight. There were five men, dressed as farmers, two women, and two gaunt-looking enemy soldiers. All of them had their hands raised, and all looked as if they expected instant and merciless execution.

Guy spoke to them again, but their eyes instinctively watched for Captain Schwabe's reaction. The skipper looked nonplussed for a moment, then smiled grimly.

"Well, it looks as if we've got some prisoners, at last. Now maybe we'll learn something about how things are going on the other side. It'll be a help. Leonard, take 'em to Interrogation on the beach."

"Captain," Guy interposed. "These people are sick and starving. They've been holed up in this cave for three days, ever since we made our landing. They haven't had any food or water in all that time."

Schwabe looked surprised for a moment. "Am I supposed to feel sorry for 'em, Gabaldon? After what they did to our men on the beach?"

"They're civilians," Guy said stubbornly. "They fled

from their farm because they knew about the military plan to use them as shields for the banzai attacks. These two soldiers claim they haven't done any fighting at all."

Schwabe looked curiously at Guy, then nodded to Leonard. "All right, Sergeant. Feed them first, then take 'em to Interrogation. I'll be along to talk to 'em, with Gabaldon, later on." He looked at Gabby again and shook his head. "What were those shots all about?"

"I had to let one of them have it—he's still inside the cave, along with the machine-gunner we got with our grenade in the beginning. He almost blew my head off when I went inside." Guy paused. "He was an Imperial Marine—the first one I've seen. I hear they don't ever give up."

"That's right, Gabaldon."

"Anyway, I got him first. Where is the little girl, Captain?"

Schwabe pointed to where a Corpsman and Bill Hazen stood over a stretcher where the little Japanese girl rested. The corpsman was attending to her wounded arm and leg, and had rigged up a blood plasma transfusion. Bill looked up at Guy and grinned.

"Boy, I sure sweated it out for you in that cave."

"Thanks, pal," Guy said. "It's a funny thing, but for once I really wasn't scared." He looked at the child. "How is she?"

The corpsman nodded, indicating that she was going to be all right. Guy knelt beside her and gently ruffled her hair. She smiled weakly back at him, and Bill Hazen looked at the Japanese girl in curiosity.

"You're going to be all right, little girl," Guy told her in Japanese. "You're going to be just fine."

He stood up, feeling a new and sudden inner excitement that could not be contained. Bill saw something of it on his face and started to speak, but Guy turned away, walking toward Captain Schwabe, who was emerging from the cave.

It seemed to Guy in that moment that he had just turned one of the most important corners of his life. Nothing was the same as it had been five minutes ago.

The way the little Japanese girl had looked at him, with beseeching gratitude, and the way the other civilians had reacted to his speech inside the cave, made something warm spring up and grow inside him. He had saved some lives, instead of going on with the endless killing

involved in taking the island of Saipan from the Japanese. He had done something positive, he thought, bringing in the first prisoners whose information might help shorten the battle in some way. And if it had worked in this one instance, why not again? Why not in other caves and shelters where helpless people cowered, caught between the warring forces. They were people like Papa Une and Mama-san, harmless, gentle. There was no need for them to die, if he could convince them that they could save themselves!

His excitement grew as he faced Captain Schwabe. Quickly, the words tumbling out of him, Guy told the tough Marine skipper what he wanted to do.

"There must be a lot of soldiers and civilians in these hills, Captain, including women and children, and some of them must be starving. Do you think maybe I could talk some more of them into giving up?"

Schwabe shook his head in bafflement. "Gabaldon, are you out of your mind? You must be anxious to get your head blown off."

"No, sir, I don't think that will happen. If I can get close enough to talk to them, I think I can convince them to surrender."

"I doubt it."

"I'd still like to try it, sir," Guy said stubbornly.

"These people are ordered not to surrender, don't you know that?"

"Yes, sir. But they're human beings. They want to live, too."

Schwabe pursed his mouth in a dubious manner, and Guy went on quickly: "All I want is permission to try, sir. To take a couple of men with me to cover me and go out and see how many Japanese I can round up. I feel—I think it would be helpful, sir. And I—I want to do it. I hate to think of them all starving or dying of thirst because they're too confused or afraid to give up."

Schwabe looked at him again, then shrugged, as if to say he could not command him not to try it. "We need prisoners, no question about that. All right, Gabaldon. But—be careful!"

SIX

BEFORE the afternoon was over, Guy, moving with a flush of dedicated enthusiasm, brought in sixteen more prisoners—in a battle that, in three days, had failed to yield up a single case of surrender to this point.

Immediately after his success at the first cave, he went ahead with Bill and Semperi, crossing the rocky mountain valley until they came upon a shattered, bombed-out farm hut, standing in the middle of a churned-up vegetable garden. Guy, going ahead of his two cover men, slid up behind a boulder and shouted in Japanese to the occupants. At first he thought he had drawn a blank.

"Come out!" he called again. "You will be honorably treated! No harm will come to you!"

There was a moment's pause, and then three Japanese men, half-naked, emerged from the hut with their hands raised and locked behind their heads. Their fear made them look like wild animals. Bill Hazen sucked in his breath and called: "For God's sake, Gabby, make sure they've got no knives!"

"It's all right," Guy returned. "They're not soldiers."

"How do you know? '

"They say they are brothers who own this vegetable farm."

"And you believe 'em?" Bill asked.

"Yes," Guy said simply. "I do."

For an hour after they had turned the three farmers over to an interrogation team, Guy ranged up the valley, moving with caution. He knew that what he was doing was completely against all the rules of fighting against the Japs. There was always the chance that a sniper would be waiting just ahead of his cautious approach, or that a shot would be fired in panic before he could call out in Japanese and convince his quarry that surrender did not mean instant death for them. But he pushed aside the thought of danger. He felt excited by his success, and by the knowledge that he was saving lives instead of destroying them. Yet he did not entirely lose his caution in

his enthusiasm. There was always the chance that he could run into a die-hard Imperial Marine, as had happened in the first cave. There was no chance of talking any of them into surrender, he knew. In such cases, he would just have to trust to his own speed of reflex in getting in the first shot when they met.

His biggest haul came in a second cave up at the head of the valley. Marine units had gone on beyond this area, by-passing it, to be mopped up later with flamethrowers and grenades, asking no quarter. And Guy was anxious to do what he could before the mop-up squads went to work.

At the second cave, Guy slid up to the entrance along the edge of the limestone cliff until he was close beside the hole. Then he shouted into it and threw a handful of rations on the ground just outside the cave mouth. Looking back, he saw Bill Hazen's anxious face as Bill and Semperi covered him.

There came a sudden scurrying patter of footsteps and two civilians ran out of the cave and fell to their knees to snatch at the meager food. Guy stepped forward with his rifle leveled at them.

"I won't kill you," he said, in Japanese.

But their faces convulsed with terror and they clasped their hands in a plea for their lives and begged for mercy.

"Go back into the cave and tell the others to come out," Guy directed them. "Tell them they will receive food and medical care."

"We—we will not be shot?" one of the Japanese whispered.

"No. I promise you."

"Go, Akito. Tell them."

In a moment, the emaciated men were joined by eight more civilians, including three women. Last to emerge were three soldiers in dirty, mud-stained uniforms. Two of the civilians, older men, turned and bowed politely to Guy. Guy bowed in return.

"I have promised you food and medicine. You will be taken care of. Go this way," he said, and gestured toward Bill, who dug into a gunny-sack and handed out rations to the prisoners as they filed past.

By morning, when Guy returned from a new expedition, herding over thirty unresisting PW's with a BAR held on them, the word got all through the regiment and division.

And with the resiliency of most men, even under the trying conditions of battle, it was not long before an enterprising Marine organized a pool to gamble on the number of prisoners Guy would bring in after each foray.

It seemed to Guy that every moment was precious, to be used only for his private campaign on Saipan. And he was grateful to Captain Schwabe, who took him off his regular duty tour and gave him and his squad a relatively free hand to work as he saw fit.

The day after his first capture, he brought in over thirty-four civilians, including both Japanese and Okinawans. The interrogation center was kept working overtime, prying for information on the disposition of enemy forces. For the moment, the Marine attack awaited the advance of the Army's 27th Division, which was in the process of landing to lend support against the stubborn defense line drawn across the island by Lieutenant General Matsui in command of the sector facing Guy's unit.

But the first major break in military defection came when the pool on the number of Guy's captives had reached highly organized proportions, three days after Guy's personal campaign was launched. Up to that point, his major objectives had been detached groups of civilians hiding from the Japanese Army personnel, and the small knots of Jap army men, never counting more than two at a time, who had lost weapons and all hope of rejoining their comrades.

On the afternoon of this day, Guy's unit was still bogged down on the slopes of Mount Tapotchau. Against another of the steep, rocky escarpments, Captain Schwabe and about twenty men found themselves unable either to advance or retreat when a hidden cave mouth suddenly erupted with a blast of heavy machine-gun fire that cut off all hope of movement. They were effectively pinned down behind rocks and scrub, waiting for darkness, which was hours away, to elude the Japanese trap, and Schwabe was in a brutally angry mood of humiliation when Guy and Bill suddenly dashed across a small open patch of land and flung themselves down beside the Skipper.

Their brief revealment brought a murderous, hammering burst of fire from the cave mouth ahead and above them that did not abate for several minutes. When at last the spurts of gravel and vicious hum of ricochets

ended, Schwabe lifted a dour, tired face and said: "Well, Gabby, satisfied?"

"No, sir. I want to take a crack at them."

"Those aren't farmers and civilians, Gabaldon. Don't be a fool. We counted at least forty regular Jap army men up there in those caves. They won't surrender like the others."

"I'd like to try to talk them into it, sir," Guy insisted. "I think I can do it."

Schwabe grinned. "You'll throw the pool into a hell of a mess, bringing in that many Japs today."

Guy said: "All I need is a chance to get close enough so they can hear me. I want to toss some rations and cigarettes outside the cave mouth, too. The opening on the left looks like a good bet."

"Interrogation tells us those caves are all connected back inside the cliff. You won't be dealing with an isolated pocket that way, Gabaldon."

"I know, sir, I just—I just want to try it."

Schwabe looked at him curiously, his eyes probing Guy's earnest face. "You haven't been sparing yourself lately, have you?"

"I want to take in as many as I can."

"Why, Gabaldon? We've got plenty of prisoners to question now, thanks to your efforts these last two days."

"I want to save their lives, sir," Guy said simply.

Schwabe waited another moment. Whatever he looked for in Guy's face, and whatever he found, made him shrug and he spoke again in a different tone of voice. "It's your funeral, Gabby. Do you want Sergeant Hazen with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. We'll do our best to cover you until you get up there."

"Thank you, sir," Guy said.

It took twenty painful, dangerous minutes to make his way up the cliffside toward the nearest of the cave openings. Every Marine pinned in the trap set up a deadly fire concentrating on the enemy machine-guns, giving Guy and Bill a chance every other moment or two of gaining a few paces upward. Now and then the enemy lobbed a grenade in their direction, but the steepness of the slope made the explosives burst far below them. Guy didn't know if they were actually seen or not.

He hoped the Japanese were not aware of him yet. But his heart hammered when rock chips flew and bullets screamed overhead from the enemy machine-gun, swiveling his way. His mouth went dry as he considered what he was trying to do. Nobody had yet talked a well-fortified unit of Japanese soldiers into yielding. He didn't know if he could do it, or not. Maybe he'd bitten off more than he could chew, he thought. Fear moved in him, and he glanced sidewise at Bill Hazen.

"Bill?"

"Go on, Gabby. I'm high man in the pool today," Bill grinned. His reckless eyes were encouraging. "You can take 'em, boy."

"Thanks, Bill," he whispered gratefully.

In a moment or two more Guy was close enough to the cave mouth for his shout to be heard.

"Hold your fire! *Kiite kure!* Listen to me!"

A grenade was thrown from the cave. Guy threw himself flat, hugging the ground as it burst and showered him with dirt. He looked quickly at Bill. "You okay?"

"I'm counting on you, Gabby. They know we're here now. If you can't talk your way out of this, we're finished."

"I'll try," Guy said, and then he raised his voice and shouted in Japanese: "Hold your fire! If you do not like what I say, then you may continue with the war!"

There was a moment's silence. Bill shook his head. "The men in the unit think you're a psycho, Gabby. A nut, if they ever saw one."

"What do *you* think?" Guy whispered.

"You're my buddy-boy, my pal. Keep talking to 'em, Gabby!" All at once Bill's voice tensed. "Hold it."

A bedraggled, vicious-looking Japanese soldier suddenly peered with care out of the mouth of the cave. The man's uniform was ragged, ill-fitting, dirty. He looked as if he hadn't eaten in days—which was probably true, Guy thought. When there was no fire, and the hillside was still—Schwabe was quick to sense a critical moment and lifted his hand to end the covering fire—the Japanese stepped all the way out of the cave and looked about, searching for Guy. He had a samurai sword in his hand, but no other weapon. Guy stood up abruptly. The other soldier started, sucked in his breath with a hissing sound. Guy lit a cigarette, then quickly tossed the pack to the Japanese, who caught it instinctively. About

twenty paces separated them. They eyed each other closely, and Guy spoke first.

"Bring your comrades out of the cave. They will not be harmed. I promise you this."

The enemy's eyes were slitted with suspicion. "You speak our language well—for a Yankee."

"I speak it as well as you. Or better," Guy snapped. "Now do what I tell you."

"You are an officer?"

"I speak for my commanding officer. He gives his word."

"Yankees have no honor, but I—I have seen others —from a distance—surrender. You—you are the one in the baseball cap. You gave them food, those others."

"Are you hungry?"

"We all are."

"There is food for you with us," Guy said. "Now hurry."

The Japanese soldier suddenly nodded, started to smile, thought better of it, and ducked down out of sight, into the cave again. Bill Hazen drew a deep breath. He waited, his BAR ready, covering the cave mouth. Guy stood up in plain sight. He let the significance of the enemy's remark seep slowly through him, warming him with a glow that made everything worth while—the long years of the past, the months of anguished indecision, the dangers of every day here on Saipan. The enemy knew him. They had watched him talk others into surrendering from afar. So it would go on, he thought. And all at once, he felt a great humility that everything in his life up to this moment should have shaped itself to save even one man's life here on Saipan.

He was not surprised when, one by one, hands clasped behind their heads, the enemy soldiers came out of the cave in surrender.

SEVEN

THAT night there was mail waiting for the Marines of Schwabe's unit when they turned to for their first hot meal since hitting the beaches. Guy was surprised to find

a letter for him from Sheila Lincoln. He hadn't thought of her for a long time, he realized—not since the fleet had sallied out of Eniwetok for the thousand-mile sail to Saipan. He felt a stab of guilt over this, and grinned at himself. Sheila was an episode in the past, and he had no illusions about the future, when peace came, if he lived to see that day. Not that he was ungrateful to her. He had never met anyone like her, and he owed her a lot. He had been in a bad way that night, when he and Bill and Pete Lewis were given liberty in Hawaii during the training period a month ago. He needed someone to talk to, someone to hold in his arms, someone to make him forget. . . .

Now, all at once, he remembered.

He did not read her letter at once. He knew the sort of thing Sheila would say. He noticed the postmark was Brisbane, in Australia, and this did not surprise him, either. Sheila was not the sort of girl to stay in on place for long; she would never be pinned down, now or in the future. In many ways, she was like him—going through life with a chip on the shoulder because of things that had happened to her when she was a kid. Only thing with Sheila was that she hadn't been lucky, Guy thought, like himself. She hadn't been plucked out of trouble and misery by the scruff of the neck and taken in by Mamma Une and Kaz and George, to be taught another viewpoint on life.

Funny how Sheila Lincoln had gone completely out of his thoughts, Guy considered, and yet for a couple of weeks back there in Hawaii, she had meant everything to him, beginning with the very day he first reported for duty to Captain Schwabe's unit and was greeted with a forty-eight hour pass, the last he was to enjoy for many, many days.

He remembered bouncing along under the Hawaiian sun in a Marine Corps weapons carrier on a rugged, dusty road, clinging to the rail in back along with Bill and Pete, Sullivan and Semperi and all their gear and weapons. He remembered how they had all looked at the bivouac area with disbelief when the vehicle braked to a halt at last and the driver pointed.

"This is it, fellows. Pretty soft for you guys, too."

"Shaddup," Semperi said. He looked suspicious. "It must be a fuggin' trick of some kind."

"No trick," the driver insisted. "You belong here."

"You must've taken a wrong turn on the fuggin' road, then," Semperi insisted.

"You sure this is the right beach?" Guy joined in. "It looks like a country club."

"It was. Those men you see belong to a club, all right," the driver grinned. "Very exclusive. The members have visited every island in the Pacific, Mac. Free ride, courtesy of Uncle Sam."

"Let's go," Bill said.

There was a small bivouac of pup tents on a lovely curving stretch of beach, shaded by coconut palms. One pyramidal tent dominated the others, with a jeep parked nearby. All the men in sight wore swim trunks, and some were in the surf, swimming, or riding surf boards, while others sun bathed or played volley ball. Guy and his friends unloaded their gear and weapons from the carrier, which promptly wheeled around and tooled off, leaving them to lug their seabags and weapons toward the nearest group of men playing volley ball.

This was the first time Guy met Master-Sergeant Leonard. The older, burly man halted the game and approached the quintet of replacements.

"You must be our replacements. Some fresh meat, and some aged. Three boots, right? And two old men. Hi, Bill. Pete."

The veterans, Bill and Pete Lewis, grinned and shook hands with Leonard, who gestured toward the idyllic scene and grunted. "Don't get the wrong ideas about this place from the way it looks. We earn our pay. Come on—I'll take you to the Skipper."

Captain John Schwabe was working at a blackboard, on which he had chalked what looked like a military problem that did not please him, when Leonard announced the arrival of the replacements. Guy stepped into the pyramidal tent curiously, aware at once of the strength of Schwabe's commanding personality. He had heard a lot about the intelligence unit captain from Bill and Pete.

The tent's sides were smartly rolled up, and everything was immaculately shipshape. There was a field table, some folding chairs, and a cot. Schwabe dropped a canvas over the blackboard he had been studying when Leonard entered and the five replacements came to attention, saluted, and gave their names. Schwabe nodded at each one in turn, touching their personnel record folders on his table. It was clear at once that he knew

everything important that he wanted to know about each of them.

"At ease. Glad to have you aboard," he said quietly. Then he turned to Bill, his sharp eyes twinkling slightly. "Welcome back to the 2nd Division, Hazen. How was the vacation?"

"The quiet got on my nerves, sir. Glad to be here."

Schwabe nodded and turned to Pete, still smiling slightly. "Lewis. How is it going? It says here—" he tapped the personnel file folders—"that you were shot in the ashcan."

"Not bad, sir," Pete said promptly. "Good thing it wasn't a howitzer."

None of them could refrain from smiling. But Guy felt the jolt of Schwabe's strong personality as the captain turned to him. "You're Gabaldon. You speak Japanese, do you?"

"Taii, watashi yoku hanashi-masu," Guy said. "I speak it just fine, Captain."

"I get only part of that," Schwabe nodded. "But my Japanese is just so-so. Where did you learn the language?"

Guy hesitated only a moment, but he knew Schwabe had not missed his pause. "I picked it up from friends in L.A., and from my family later, Captain."

"When you were a kid?"

"Yes, sir."

"Still in touch with those people?"

"Yes, sir."

"I see. All right." Schwabe addressed them all generally. "You men all have fine records, and I don't mind admitting I need all the good men I can get. Officially, we're part of Regimental Headquarters—R-2, on the organization charts. Our job is gather intelligence by any means available—and this means that in action we're always so far out in front that we don't really have much contact with HQ itself. That means each and every man in the unit has to be several different kinds of specialists including the one that helps you to kill Japs."

Fortunately, Schwabe's eyes were on Semperi at that moment, and so he missed Guy's small smart of dismay. He went on: "Anyway, I make it loud and clear that I've got the best and toughest collection of specialists in the whole Corps. Make sure you don't let anybody think differently about us. Any questions?"

No one spoke.

"Check, then. Sergeant Leonard will fix you up with forty-eight hour passes—since you've just been crammed in the hold of a troopship. Enjoy yourselves and get acquainted with the islands. It may be your last liberty for a long, long time!"

That night, after several hours in Honolulu, Guy, Pete and Bill were ready to turn in their passes in discouragement. Every street and sidewalk in the city was jammed with servicemen. Women, young or old, were rare—and those who were visible were escorted by swarming clouds of uniforms. Each girl had her own stag line. And noisy, packed bars seemed to be the only business enterprises open on the streets.

"That," Pete Lewis said wearily, when they came out for air after twenty minutes in the last bar, "is positively the cruddiest slop chute I've ever been in. Worse than the last three we hit."

"A buck a drink," Bill agreed, "and I can't feel a thing. Even had an extra slug, trying to build up a glow."

"Let's find some place to get a bottle," Guy suggested. "I need it."

Bill looked intent for a moment, "The Skipper's little lecture get you, Gabby?"

"Some," Guy admitted.

"You're going to have to settle that business with yourself pretty damned soon, Gabby."

"I know, but—"

He tried to shake off his feeling and get into the liberty mood Pete was enjoying as the young Pfc stared markedly all around the sidewalk. "Where're all the dames? There's got to be at least three left on this island looking for a ball!" He held out his arms in a comic, farmer's gesture, wriggling money between his fingers and calling out coaxingly: "Here, chick-chick! Here, chick, chick, chick!"

They all laughed. "No takers, Pete," Guy said. "There must be ten fellows for every girl in Honolulu."

"Wait a minute, fellas. Look at this," Bill said.

He was eyeing a poster that advertised: VISIT A GENUINE, AUTHENTIC HAWAIIAN VILLAGE. A bus schedule under the headline, with prices and photos of a group of idyllic grass huts, and a luau followed the come-on ad, but dominating the poster was an airbrush rendering of a curvaceous hula girl in a grass skirt, full-bosomed,

round-hipped, smiling. Pete brightened and patted the drawing.

"Now *that's* what old Dad's lookin' for," he grinned. "C'mon, honey, shake it! Shake it!"

There was no bus scheduled for an hour, and Guy suggested a taxi. Pete at once whistled shrilly through two fingers and summoned a cab. As they got in, he rubbed his hands in anticipation. "Get into your grass skirts, all you beautiful dolls. Here comes Lover Boy Lewis." He made a motion as if parting curtains and peering between the fronds of the grass skirt and they all laughed, except Guy.

Bill said: "What's with you, Gabby? Something eating you?"

"I need a drink," Guy said. "A real one, a belt of the old McCoy."

The driver, a slow-talking man with a hoarse voice, turned his head: "Whiskey's hard to come by, Mac."

"Maybe we can make a deal," Guy said.

"Yeah? Maybe."

In a few more minutes, the con game was on. Pete and Bill pretended to be asleep, while Guy, being very wary, reached inside his blouse and hitched at his belt as if toting a pistol there. His whisper was conspiratorial.

"I got a brand-new .45—stole it off the Base this morning. You can get plenty for it. Still has the cosmoline and wax paper around it. I'll swap it for three quarts of good stuff."

The driver glanced quickly in his rear view mirror. Bill snored slightly, and for a moment Guy thought he was overdoing it. But the driver nodded greedily and the deal was on.

It wasn't, Guy thought later, that he was so anxious to tie one on. But his sense of disturbance that began with Captain Schwabe's brief speech to them at the bivouac still lingered in him. And just for once—tonight, he thought—he wanted to forget everything and just have a good time. He wanted good liquor and he wanted a woman.

When the sedan-taxi parked near an alley, Guy saw that the end of the dismally lighted street was the "Hawaiian Village." It was nothing but a tourist trap with a few grass huts—and it was closed. Pete and Bill remained in pretended sleep in the back seat when Guy got out and stared at the darkened huts. The driver came

around the car. "Look—you wait up there, and I'll see what I can do."

"Is that the genuine Hawaiian village?" Guy asked.

"Yeah. You want that whiskey, or don't you?"

"Sure thing."

The driver hurried away up the street. Pete and Bill, chuckling, got out of the taxi the moment the man was gone.

"Is that the place?" Pete asked in dismay. "Where're all the hula dolls, swingin' their gazoombas? We been took, boot."

"Watch your language when you talk to Gabaldon. He's a *bright* boot," Bill laughed.

Guy was alone in the alley when the cab-driver came back, bottles clinking in a paper sack. The man sounded breathless when he handed the sack to Guy.

"Bonded, just like in the officers' clubs. Okay? Now, let's have the pistol."

Guy stalled for time, fumbling in his blouse, and then pretended to be startled when Bill suddenly stepped into the alley and said sharply: "Hold it, both of you. You're under arrest. As for you, Private, you had a warning before—"

Pete entered the alley, too, all businesslike as he flashed a card and snapped: "C.I.D.—Criminal Investigation Division." He turned and spoke with a snarl to Guy. "We've finally got you with the goods, smart guy!"

Bill picked up the sack of liquor bottles and rapped to the driver: "Trading liquor for stolen U.S. Government property, huh? You know what civilians get for dealing in contraband, Mac? Years and years—if they don't shoot you!" He jerked a thumb at Guy. "His kind we hang!"

The driver looked terrified. "I didn't steal nothin' and I—honest! I got a wife and two kids! I didn't—"

"You the head of that crime ring receiving stolen weapons?" Bill went on relentlessly.

"No!" the cabbie shouted desperately. "I got no crime ring. I just drive a cab." He swung pleadingly to Guy. "Tell 'em! Tell 'em it was your idea!"

Guy shrugged. "Ah, let him go. The jerk doesn't know anything about it. What more do you want?"

Bill weighed the sack of liquor bottles. "Well, I don't know. We'll keep this for evidence."

"Please let me go!" the driver begged.

"Okay, shove off," Bill snapped.

The three Marines watched the driver run for his cab and drive away with a wild clashing of gears. The next moment they doubled up with laughter as they plucked a bottle for each of them out of the sack. Bill uncorked his and took a swig, then grinned at Guy.

"Gabby, you are not only a fine buddy, you are an A-number-one con man. A rare and valuable combination indeed." He took another long drink from his bottle. "And now that we have the wine, fellas—let's find the women."

Ten minutes later, Guy met Sheila Lincoln.

EIGHT

THE TROPICAL BAR was a sleazy joint not far from the Hawaiian Village, jammed to the rafters with servicemen and a thin scattering of girls. Harried waitresses served the crowded tables. Guy, Pete and Bill, standing just inside the doorway, were discouraged by the lean pickings, but when a table was vacated, they rushed for it, beating out a trio of sailors by a step. The noise and smoke and smells of cheap perfume, sweat, and spilled beer and liquor surrounded them like an all-encompassing fog.

Pete gave Bill a mock salute and took out his bottle. "Beachhead established, sir. Here's looking at—"

His elbow was joggled by the tightly sheathed buttocks of a very pretty Japanese waitress who tried to squeeze by the table carrying a tray of glasses. Pete reacted to the sight with a howl of joy, grabbed her arm and swung her around to face him.

"Hi-ya, Madame Butterfly," he grinned. "How'd you like to—" He did a finger-snap, a gesture that was invitation, challenge and query, all in one, leading up to only one purpose. The waitress pulled her arm free with a tired smile that told Pete she was used to these passes and wasn't buying anything. "Sorry—no speak English," she murmured.

She started to get by, when Guy, who was suddenly

struck by her resemblance to Ester, back in L.A., spoke up in Japanese.

"*Konbanwa!*" he said. "Good evening. It is a pleasure to look on one so beautiful as you."

The waitress smiled. "*Arigato! Anatano okoe kikuna hontoni ureshii desuwa!*"

"Hey, wha'd she say?" Pete cried.

"She said it's a pleasure to hear someone speak as I do," Guy replied.

"Well, don't let her get away."

Guy spoke to the girl again, who reacted to his command of Japanese with evident pleasure. Her name was Sono, she told him, and her air of aloofness melted when he told her rapidly about George Une and Ester. The tight tension in him began to melt immediately with the easy familiarity of Japanese, and Sono recognized his pleasure in talking with her. He got up and followed her to the bar.

Bill Hazen, meanwhile, was staring in blunt astonishment at a table across the room, not listening to Pete Lewis' clucks of admiration for Guy's technique.

"Holy Cow, it's the Iron Petticoat herself," Bill murmured.

"Who? What?" Pete asked.

"Over there," Bill said. "That's Sheila Lincoln."

She was cool, haughty, and gorgeous. She reflected a serene pride in herself, an aloofness that extended to the war correspondent, a chunky gray-haired man talking earnestly to her with his arm around the back of her chair. Sheila Lincoln was blonde and lushly built, and completely detached from the ordinary surroundings of the bar she was visiting. Her body was primly erect, and her green eyes reflected contempt for her companion and only tolerance for the clamoring, noisy, smoky and half-drunk crowd of servicemen in the place.

But Pete Lewis thought she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. His mouth fell open.

"You know her, Bill?"

"Anybody who ever passed through this island knows the Iron Petticoat," Bill said grimly.

"Well, I'm passing through, and I don't. Introduce me."

"Junior, remember the football game we played against Navy back in Pendleton? Nothing to nothing? No score at all, right?" Bill paused to make his point. "Well, it's

the same story with Sheila. She's a correspondent for some bleeding hearts magazine back in the States, and she writes how everybody should give their all to our fighting men. Only thing is, Sheila doesn't practice what she preaches."

Pete still stared hungrily. "What a waste."

"Forget it. Half the guys in the Corps got Purple Hearts from banging their heads against the Iron Petticoat. I'm not wasting a perfectly good liberty on Operation Iceberg."

"Then get her for *me*," Pete insisted. "Old Dad has a technique that'll cut through that iron like it was tissue paper."

Bill eyed the youngster with wry humor. He looked for Guy, saw that Guy was still talking to the Japanese waitress, and stood up. "Okay, Old Dad. You asked for it. . . ."

Bill knew Wally Breck, the gray-haired correspondent, who was with Sheila. It was rumored that Wally, a well-meaning but bumbling man, was slated to inherit millions some day from his newspaper-owner father. But just now Wally Breck was a dignified, complete drunk, while Sheila Lincoln looked cold and mean and sober. She was speaking in precise, cutting tones as Bill Hazen approached their table.

"For the last time, Walter, will you please keep your clammy hands to yourself? Put them on *top* of the table, please!"

She looked up as Bill paused and cleared his throat self-consciously, but in her eyes there was only frigid hostility, with no flicker of recognition.

"Hi, Sheila," Bill said. "I'm Bill Hazen. Remember? You did a story on me about a year ago—and after that we went dancing."

Wally grinned loosely. "And if I know our gorgeous Sheila, Marine, that's all you did."

Sheila threw him a bitter look and regarded Bill with utter apathy. Her voice was languid. "Of course I remember you, Sergeant. Please ignore Mr. Breck. He's quite, quite drunk."

Wally stood up with a lurch that shook the table. His grin was full of sympathy.

"Sergeant Hazen," he announced, "I suppose you've come over to try to steal my date." He waved a hand

to cut off Bill's reply. "Well, I'm not going to let you. I'm going to *give* her to you, as a gift!"

Sheila went pale with anger. "Walter Breck, you can't treat me as if I were some kind of chattel, to be given away—"

"Temper, temper!" Wally said, wagging an admonitory finger with drunken dignity. He looked at Bill with sad humility. "I am an utter cad, doing this to one of our brave fighting men. You deserve much better than the Iron Petticoat, Sergeant. I am thoroughly, thoroughly ashamed of myself."

And Wally Breck, war correspondent, walked away with drunken dignity.

Meanwhile Guy, helping Sono, the waitress, with the dishes in the kitchen, had made rapid progress. He returned to the table where Pete watched Bill take over with Sheila, across the room, in open-mouthed admiration, and announced that Sono got through with her work in the bar in half an hour.

"You and Bill will have to flip for Sono's roommate."

Pete hesitated, watching Sheila talking to Bill. "What's with the roommate?"

"Sounds great," Guy said. "She was a dancer in San Francisco. We're going to meet at their apartment."

"Well, it looks like Bill is set, anyway," Pete conceded.

"Go on over and tell him the deal. Sono told me where I can pick up more liquor." Guy grinned tightly. "I think we're going to need it."

Pete hesitated a moment, then, as Bill waved him over, he crossed the crowded barroom reluctantly, although Bill made the introductions with relief. Sheila considered Pete with haughty apathy.

"You've heard me talk about Sheila, Pete," Bill said quickly. "She was just telling me her magazine is sending her to Australia, of all places."

"If I ever get a seat on the plane," Sheila said flatly. "I have a very low priority."

From somewhere, Pete got the courage to look at the full, firm contours of her breasts, and he grinned. "Oh, I wouldn't say that."

She chilled him with a glance, and Pete went on: "Look, Bill, Guy rounded up a couple of gorgeous Japanese

chicks for tonight. We're going over to their apartment, so I'll be seeing you later, pal."

Bill looked panic-stricken at the prospect of being stuck with the Iron Petticoat. "Hey, wait a minute, Junior!" He turned to Sheila. "Why don't we go along, too? It'll be more fun than some bar or restaurant."

"What kind of fun can you have in an apartment?" Sheila asked coldly.

"Are you serious?" Pete interjected.

"Look, Sheila, maybe you can pick up some local color for a story, Bill said eagerly. He gestured to Pete. "I can see it now, in headlines—'A Sheila Lincoln Exclusive! I Saw Our Fighting Men in Action!' "

For just a moment, the frigid beauty of Sheila Lincoln's face yielded to a brief smile. Then she shrugged her beautiful shoulders.

"One place is as good as another, I suppose."

NINE

THE apartment that Sono shared with her friend Famika had tall glass doors opening onto a private patio, and beyond the patio was a stretch of moonlit beach and the silver Pacific. There was a kitchen and a well-stocked refrigerator off one side of the living room, a bedroom off the other side, a perfectly equipped bar, comfortable furniture and a good record player that seemed to keep going continuously. In a very short time, Guy, Pete and Bill felt at home; Sono served them sandwiches, brushing their protests aside, and Famika, who turned out to be a well-stacked Japanese girl who seemed unable to keep her backside from gyrating as she walked and danced, mixed the drinks and took over young Pete Lewis with a proprietary air. Pete seemed quite contented. Bill Hazen, however, seemed stuck with the icy Sheila Lincoln, who sat in aloofness watching the dancing and drinking. Yet Sheila matched them all drink for drink. There was a grim purpose in her drinking, however, that was unlike the mood of the others. Guy watched her belt down whiskey neat, again and again, without the slightest change of expression on her

serenely supercilious, beautiful face. He played gin rummy absently with Sono, whose pleasant, easy good nature made it easy to talk to her.

"We'll never run out of ice as long as that Lincoln babe is here." He gave a mock shudder and Sono laughed. "I don't get her. She has all the standard equipment—all the extras, as a matter of fact—but she came off the assembly line without a motor."

"Oh," Sono said, her eyes wise, "she's got the motor, Guy. It's just that the man with the right key hasn't shown up yet."

"What do you suppose the key is?"

"Money," Sono said promptly. "Respectability. She doesn't think she's got it yet."

"With these looks? And that body?"

"She's looking for something, just like you are. And just like you, she hasn't found the answer yet, Guy."

He gave the Japanese girl a quick, appreciative look and shook his head, grinning. "You're a mighty smart little gal."

"I try to be. Do you think I'm right?"

"About Sheila? Maybe." He looked at the frozen blonde again. "I wouldn't be trying to find out if I had the right key, though."

Sono made a mock face of dismay. "You'd leave little old Sono?"

"Of course not. I wouldn't want a hari-kari on my conscience."

Sono accepted him with the same easy, friendly kidding manner he gave her. "Don't flatter yourself, Guy. After all the trays I carried tonight, I want someone as tired as me." She pointed to Pete Lewis, who had just been dancing with the gyrating Famika. Pete fell back into a chair with a huge sigh as the record music stopped. "I need somebody as tired as that one."

Across the room, Famika began urging Pete to his feet again, but Pete shook his head wearily. Famika, who seemed to have endless energy in her firm, rhythmic body, turned on another record and began doing a solo dance, swinging her hips in a Hawaiian rhythm that caught the attention of all the men. Famika's long, dark eyes sparkled with amusement as they watched her. Their interest only spurred her on to greater seductive efforts. In a moment they were all urging her on, including Bill, who seized the chance to desert Sheila. Sheila

remained herself, perched primly on the arm of an overstuffed chair, her eyes cool and disdainful of the proceedings. But Guy, from the corner of his eye, caught her swallowing another belt of whiskey almost with an air of desperation, when she thought none of the others was watching.

He turned back to Bill, who was clapping his hands rhythmically to Famika's hip-swinging steps. "*That's* what we're fighting for, Bill—not Ma's apple pie."

"She's sensational," Bill said, staring.

"She should be," Sono put in. "She was the best stripper in San Francisco."

At this bombshell, the men were really impressed. Even Pete revived and sat up straight in the wicker Bombay chair he had collapsed in.

"Hey, baby, is that right?"

Famika did not pause in her solo dance. "Impressed?"

"I sure am," Pete said.

Famika swung toward him and gave a provocative bump. "I'm *so* glad!"

Pete pretended to fall off the chair. "She got me!"

"Give us a show, Famika," Bill urged.

Famika shook her head. "Down, boy, this is my night off." She eyed Sheila's stiffly disapproving figure. "Besides, Bill, it might offend your lady friend."

"Offend her?" Bill turned to Sheila. "You wouldn't mind, would you?"

Sheila's glance was cool and remote, telling him absolutely nothing. Famika laughed and went to the record player to change the record. Pete lurched to his feet and made an announcement, toasting Famika with his glass.

"And now—here she is! The queen of burlesque—Fa-mi-ka! Famika will shake it from the tip of her toes to the top of her tiny tassel! She—"

He fell silent as Famika began her professional dance. There was nothing inhibited about her performance, and a subtle sense of heat came into the room, changing the atmosphere slowly but steadily as the dance progressed. Her body possessed a lively awareness of what pleased men, and she used her knowledge to the utmost, a small smile of indulgence on her red lips emphasizing her offering. Her body shook, trembled, vibrated. Then, casually, easily, she unzipped her dress and stepped out of it without losing a single beat of the hot music.

"Now that," Bill said, "is what I call art."

Sheila made a sniffing sound. "I've seen better."

"Have you? I guess I just haven't been around as much as you," Bill said, suddenly fed up with her iciness. "If anybody asks, I went thataway."

Sheila gave an uncaring shrug and splashed more whiskey into her glass and drank it down without pause, her eyes watching Famika's dance with critical hostility. Bill went over to join Pete, and spoke to him without taking his eyes off Famika's gyrations.

"You're girl's getting lonesome," Bill said. "I think you ought to go sit with Sheila."

"What?" Pete cried, aggrieved. "That's *my* girl," he said, pointing to the undulating Famika. "Over there, catching cold."

"You're confused, Junior," Bill said grimly. "Remember? 'Get her for me,' you said. 'Old Dad's got a technique that'll cut through the Iron Petticoat like it was tissue paper.' "

"Aw, I was only kidding."

"Well, I'm not," Bill said. "You asked for it. Now you've got it."

Groaning, Pete went to sit beside the stiff, remote Sheila Lincoln. Guy did not miss any of this, even though he did not take his eyes off Famika's dance. The room felt warm suddenly, a confused and smoky den that echoed with the beat of the music, the smell of the girls' perfume, cigarette smoke and whiskey. He felt his pulses quicken and desire move in him. But then he looked at Sheila Lincoln. He felt puzzled by the blonde girl's frigid rejection of warm friendship. It was as if she was almost afraid to let herself go and act like a human being—as if she had been hurt sometime, long ago, perhaps, and was determined not to leave herself open for a damaging blow again. It was as if she had lost faith in herself as a human being, along with a suspicion of everyone else in the world.

Famika was dancing in her underthings now, playing it up for Bill and Pete in particular. The beat of the music suddenly had the dark mystery of a jungle rhythm as she moved in gliding steps around the room. Pete and Bill were chanting, "Go, go, go!" as she smiled at them and unhooked her bra. Her long legs flashed, bent, her hips swayed, and the lacy black brassiere went sailing across the room. Her breasts were small, firm, alive with

the responsive movements of her body. Guy sucked in a deep, sharp breath. He felt a desperate need for release suddenly, but it was not Famika who drew him. He looked again at Sheila Lincoln and then got up abruptly, leaving Sono, and walked over to her, just as the music ended with a long, rippling, stomach-shaking beat and Famika's almost-naked figure dashed for the bedroom door.

"Did you like the show?" Guy asked Sheila.

She turned to give him a coldly appraising look. He stared right back at her, searching for the key to unlock the frozen puzzle behind her eyes. For a moment their glances locked, then the blonde girl abruptly poured herself another drink and swallowed it with quick bravado. Her voice was contemptuous.

"It wasn't much."

"She did it just to please the fellows."

"It still wasn't much. Famika isn't that good."

"Could you put on a better show?" Guy challenged.

She glared at him in anger, then abruptly stood up. "You want a show? Start the music," she snapped.

For a moment Guy felt that he had gone too far with her. He thought she was drunk. But there was a cold fury in her that changed his mind about that. Smiling, she stood up.

"Come on," she said, and she did an undulating, stripper's walk to the center of the room, oblivious to everyone's startled stare. "Go ahead, Guy, start the music!"

He did so, watching her carefully. From the corner of his eye he saw Bill watching the Iron Petticoat in utter amazement as Sheila lifted her arms and began to sway in tempo. Guy moved back to sit with Sono as the dance begun. Sheila was great. Liquor, jealousy, some inner torment that he could not understand, had finally yielded to a total loss of inhibitions. There was a grim abandon in the way Sheila Lincoln danced that made something shiver inside Guy. With a graceful gesture, she unhooked her skirt and flung it aside. She wore only black lacy panties underneath. Next came her blouse. Her full, taut breasts strained against the delicate confines of more black lace. Her long legs flashed, bent, dipped, arced. Her hips gyrated. Her breasts quivered.

The music came faster and faster, but she did not lose for an instant her graceful postures. Sudden silence, except for the primitive beat of music, had come over

the room. Whereas there had been raucous cheers of encouragement for Famika's performance, which had been done in the spirit of teasing fun, a healthy and blatant exhibition of a healthy, unabashed body and personality, Sheila's dance was grim and purposeful, and Guy suddenly knew that she was going to go all out to make Famika's effort look like something out of a kindergarten pageant. He wasn't sure he wanted this to happen to her. Yet he could not interrupt her, and he could not stop watching her.

"Hey, Marine," Sono whispered. "Your mouth is open. Watering, too." When Guy shrugged impatiently, she went on: "Want some advice from an old campaigner?"

He did not reply. Sono, smiling, took him gently by the shoulders and turned him back to the table where they had been playing gin. "Deal the cards," Sono said.

He looked at her abruptly. "You're kidding."

Sono moved her head toward Sheila's dancing, tantalizing figure. "You want that, don't you? Don't con me, Marine. I can tell. It's in the air, like something electric, between you and her, even though you haven't said more than two words to her since you came in here. Am I right?"

Guy nodded slowly. "Yeah. There's something about her—"

"I don't know if I like it or not," Sono interrupted, "but I think she's for you, if you play your cards right."

"Cards?"

"Turn around and deal. Listen, Marine, Sheila Lincoln can get anything and anyone she wants—and so she doesn't have any yen for them, understand? What she wants is something she can't get: Under all that ice, she's a gal in lots of trouble, all bottled up inside. You know it, you feel it. Look at her. Is she drunk?"

"No," Guy nodded.

"All right, that's enough. She wants you to watch her. She's annoyed at you because you've hardly spoken to her all night. Maybe she feels you're something like she is. Are you?"

"I don't know."

"I think so. The only way you can get to her is to show her she can't have you. Do you get it?"

Guy looked at the pretty Japanese girl and nodded. His mouth felt dry. "All right. We'll try it. You're an ace, Sono."

"I'm only trying to help. Deal the cards."

Deliberately, he tore his gaze away from Sheila's dance and began to play cards. His fingers felt clumsy and slippery. The beat of the music echoed and pounded in his veins. The room and everything in it seemed unreal, and only the gyrating shadow of Sheila Lincoln, in all her sexual abandonment of the dance, existed for him.

Then Sono pressed Guy's arm on the table and whispered.

"*Kanojo yatte kuruwa,* Guy. She's coming, Remember, ignore her."

"I'll try," he nodded.

She looked at him curiously. "You've got it real bad for her, haven't you?"

"Yeah," he murmured.

And then she was there, before him. She tapped him on the shoulder and he turned around slowly, aware of her slowly moving hip, the soft scent of her, the long length of firm leg and curving thigh under the black lace underthings.

"What's the matter, Guy?" Sheila said angrily. "Is my dance too much for you, little boy?"

He forced himself to look her up and down insolently, then turned back to Sono. "Whose play is it?"

Immediately, Sheila yanked him around again. A livid fury touched her blue eyes. "Nobody turns their back on Sheila!"

"Why don't you go finish your minuet?" Guy said. "I'm busy, can't you see?"

He started to turn back to the card table again, but Sheila snatched up his whiskey glass from the table and abruptly splashed it in his face. The room was suddenly still, except for the muted beat of jungle rhythm from the record player. Nobody moved. Sheila's face was white and uncontrolled.

"What a waste of good whiskey," Guy finally said. He reached over for Sono's glass and, without warning, returned Sheila's compliment by dashing the liquor in her face in return. Then he turned his back on Sheila's uncontrolled rage.

"Why, you dirty—!"

The haughty, frozen beauty was gone, abruptly and completely. It was as if an entirely new person, long buried and stifled under the public image she had created

of an arrogant, autocratic Sheila Lincoln, had come to life with all its lusty realism, all its earthy, pulsing rages of flesh and blood.

In that moment, as she sprang at him, Guy found the key to Sheila Lincoln. He suddenly knew her for what she was.

She twisted both hands in his thick hair and pulled him angrily from his chair. Taken by surprise, he hit the floor with a thud and a yell of pain. For the next few moments, he could think only of defending himself against Sheila's violent feminine fury. She was surprisingly strong, versed in too many ways to maim and injure a man, and for several seconds, as her weight twisted and writhed above him, he was hard put to it to defend himself. He was dimly aware of the others gathering around to shout words of advice and amused encouragement. But there was nothing funny about their struggle. Her breath panted in his face, and he saw tears of anger in her blazing eyes. He caught her wrist and twisted her arm aside as she tried to claw at his face. He drew up his leg just in time to avoid the thrust of her knee upward to cripple him. He could not understand the fury of her hatred for him. Perhaps it was because she, too, realized they were alike, and resented his unspoken but instinctive reaction to her.

All at once, Guy felt her hot, smooth body relax and he twisted quickly, turning the tables on her, and fought to gain control. Pinning her back to the floor, he raised himself and straddled her stomach without mercy or sympathy. Her breasts lifted, heaved, trembling with her effort to catch her breath. He stared down at her, spent by the sudden exertion. He had her wrists pinned to the floor at her sides. Slowly, deliberately, he leaned down and kissed her hard and lingeringly on her open mouth.

The shock of the contact went through her half-naked body under him like an electric current. For an instant she stiffened, resisting from a sense of habitual control and retreat from any offering. His mouth crushed down cruelly on hers. He felt her hips move under his thighs, felt her draw a deep, strangling breath.

From somewhere in a world high and remote above him, he heard Pete attempt a jocular return to normalcy.

"The winner—and new champeen—Private Guy Gabaldon—"

He didn't hear the rest. Neither did Sheila. They were in their own world as he straightened up slowly from the kiss. Their eyes were locked in mutual probing and seeking of each other, and he saw that her breath came differently. She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue and started to say something. He shook his head. Again they stared at each other, and he saw all the private anguish she had suffered through unknown conflicts and long years. And she read something in himself that few people had ever seen. He leaned down again, and this time the kiss was not given and taken in savage struggle or antagonism, but in long, slow, sweet communion.

When he released her wrists, she raised her arms slowly until they encircled his back and her hands came to his neck. Putting his hands under her smooth, warm shoulders, he raised her up and slowly lifted her to her feet. He still held the kiss. He became aware of the soft, smooth beat of the record player, still giving out its undulating rhythm. He began to dance with Sheila, slowly, their bodies moving with a single motion, a simple desire. . . .

Guy was not sure how long they danced like that, clasping each other in close harmony. But finally Sheila murmured: "Guy. Guy, darling. The music . . ."

"What?"

"It's over. Everybody's gone, too."

He felt like a swimmer coming back to the surface after a long, cool dive into azure seas. He looked around and saw the needle-arm on the record player rocking back and forth in the end grooves, hissing futilely. He danced slowly by and shut it off. Then he saw Bill and Sono going into the bedroom, arms around each other. Pete and Famika were in close embrace on the patio beyond the tall glass windows.

"It looks like two down," Guy murmured, "and only you and me to go."

"You seem very sure of yourself, Guy," Sheila said.

"Aren't you?"

"I don't understand what's happening to me tonight. I feel as if I—as if I were somebody else—"

"You mean you're just being yourself, for a change. Isn't that closer to the truth?"

"How do you know so much about me?"

"Because you're like I am—parading around in a world different from the kind of place we started in."

She looked startled. "You don't know anything about me!"

"I can guess," he said.

She turned away abruptly, and they both became conscious of her black lace panties and bra. They looked at each other and Sheila said: "I'm going out. Please don't—I need some air—something to help me forget what I just did—"

Turning, she ran from the room, out the doorway to the palm-studded beach beyond. Guy moved purposefully after her. He saw the flash of her long pale legs, moving in the shadows of the coconut palms, and he heard a thunder, like that of the nearby surf, in his ears. He turned toward Sheila and she began to run, after casting a quick glance his way; her eyes were frightened; she ran as if the devil himself were after her.

Guy sprinted. The silent, relentless pursuit took only a moment. In the darkness of the coconut grove, near where the sea crashed on the cool sand, he caught up to her, grabbed at her arm, turned her toward him with a violence that snapped the hooks on her bra. She stood in rich pride before him.

"Don't, Guy. Please. I'm—I don't dare—"

"Why not?"

"I've got to be—I must be respected. There was a time once—when I was hungry and discouraged, back East—I came from a little coal mining town in Pennsylvania; you don't know what it was like—when I did things just for money, to have a bed to sleep in after I—after the men who had money used me—"

"I don't want to hear about that," Guy said angrily. "I only know what you are now."

"And I don't want to lose that!" she cried. "I don't dare! Some day I'll find someone—maybe Wally Breck, when he inherits his family money—and he'll marry me and I'll have the answers to everything, all I want. But until then, Guy, a man like you—"

"You need me tonight," Guy said roughly. "Just like I need you."

"No, I don't dare—"

"You want me, don't you?"

"Yes, I—I want to be myself, I want—I want—!"

"That's good enough for me," he said hoarsely.

He caught her to him. She resisted for a moment, her body stiff against him. He slid his hand down the cool smoothness of her back, caught his finger inside the top of her panty, tugged it down. She moaned, tried to bite him. Her weight sagged against his shoulders. Then all at once he felt her moving, writhing, struggling to get free of all encumbrances, while her hands unbuttoned his shirt, seeking, hungering—

They sank down together in the dark shadows under the palm trees. Nearby, the moon cast a silver sheen on the sand and the crashing surf of the Pacific. He took her roughly, with barbarous harshness, at first, because she wanted him to, she needed it that way, and her response was as swift and wild as his own involuntary cry of need for her when they found the unexpected harmony of mutual crisis in each other's arms that night. . . .

TEN

THE SOUND of the surf blended with the roar of a Marine patrol plane going over the beachhead bivouac area, and Guy abruptly returned to the realities of the present. Hawaii was lost in the past, over and done with. All that was left of Sheila Lincoln was this letter in his hand that had caused him to remember every detail of his encounter with her.

He regretted nothing. He was grateful to her for the hours they had shared. They understood each other; they were two of a kind, each having found a way to adjust in the world according to their personal needs.

The sun was warm. He fingered the letter and wondered whether to read it or not. Maybe it would be best to leave things like this, the memory untouched, a complete episode without dangling strings or threads. He closed his eyes, opened them again, watched the few Marines lolling about. Captain Schwabe's unit had a bombed-out native farmhouse on the beach, a cook tent, and a few pup tents. It was relative luxury, after the first few days of hard fighting on the beach. He watched Semperi walking toward him and then quickly made a decision and opened Sheila Lincoln's letter and read it.

"Dear Guy: Just a word to say 'hello, there!' from way down under. Do hope you are safe and well, wherever you are—and I can make a darned good educated guess! Last month seems so far away! It's as if it happened to another person. Do you understand, darling? I'm here with Wally Breck, covering the hospital bases in Australia. Wally's dad died and left him oodles and oodles. We're being married in San Francisco, as soon as we can get priority to go home. . . . Will always think of you with deep affection. I am very happy, Guy, and want you to be happy for me. This marriage is something I have always wanted, and I am going to try to make Wally very, very happy. I think I can do it. . . .

Guy read no more. He grinned wryly, thinking of Sheila's life-long ambition being realized by marrying Wally Breck. He wished her luck. He felt no regrets, no twinge of jealousy as he tore up her letter. It was over and done with, as he had decided before. They each wanted different things, and what Sheila needed was not for him.

Semperi came over and sat down beside him, grumbling, and flipped another letter to him. "Here's one for you that got lost in the shuffle, Gabby. What're you grinnin' about?"

"Nothing," Guy said. "Everything."

Semperi waved his own mail about. "Girls're nuts, you know? Imagine—Gloria asks if I been true to her!" The Brooklyn Marine looked around with disgust. "How can I be anythin' else, huh? Nothin' but lousy palm trees, Gyrenes and Japs around me!"

Guy quickly scanned the second letter he had received. It was from Kaz. It was brief, but warm with affection, and he shook his head in silent admiration.

"What a man," he murmured.

"Who?" Semperi asked. "Me? What I do?"

"No, I'm talking about George, my buddy. You think he'd write me about it himself? Oh, no—Kaz has to do it."

"Kaz? George?"

"George made corporal, finally," Guy went on. "Knocked out a tank and found 1500 cases of wine in a cellar." He laughed. "I'll bet the whole 442nd went on a binge at that!"

Semperi looked astonished. "You got buddies in *that* outfit?"

"Don't knock it, jarhead," Guy returned. "Those Nisei

will wind up this war with more medals than any outfit in the service—"

He broke off abruptly and jumped to his feet as he saw Sullivan come running out of the woods into the clearing. Instantly the leisurely, sunny atmosphere of the bivouac air changed with Sullivan's appearance. Sullivan was running hard, heading for Captain Schwabe's tent, and his face was white under the streaks of mud and dirt under his helmet. Semperi jumped to his feet with Guy as Guy said: "Come on!"

Others raced toward the captain's tent to join Sullivan. Schwabe stepped out of his tent as the Marine runner came to a halt, breathing hard.

"Skipper—"

"Take it easy, Roy. What is it?"

"Our patrol got jumped," Sullivan gasped. His eyes were wild. There was blood on his arm. "We got jumped good, Captain. The Japs split us up—we got three wounded—and Bill Hazen is bottled up in a shell-hole. Leonard and Andrews are trying to keep a mess of Japs off his back. I ran like hell—we need help—"

Everyone started racing for their weapons and helmets. In less than two minutes, Schwabe led a patrol of six Marines, including Guy and Semperi, moving like cats through the dense jungle growth where Sullivan led the way. They moved fast, but carefully. Tension filled them all. Up ahead, beyond a rise of ground covered with twisted jungle growth, Guy heard the sound of rather heavy, sporadic firing. He wanted to move faster, to burst out of the patrol formation and ease his impatience. But discipline kept him in place. Bill was all right, he told himself. Sullivan had said so. They'd get there in time. They had to!

In less than ten minutes, they reached the patrol area where Bill, Leonard and Andrews had been trapped. It was at the edge of the jungle growth, and evidently they had been caught after leaving the protection of the foliage. There was a small field, once a vegetable garden, and in the distance a narrow road and the bombed-out wreckage of a Japanese farmer's hut. Across the field were rock formations that gave the enemy cover, and they were pouring heavy, concentrated fire on a shell-hole in the middle of the clearing ahead. Two wounded Marines lay flat, caught out in the open, hugging the rough ground as bullets cut the air inches over their

heads. They did not dare move. From the shell-hole in the middle of the field came a thin return fire, when Bill cut loose with his BAR to keep the Japs at a distance.

Guy groaned softly as he took in the situation. Leonard and Andrews had not been able to keep the enemy from closing in dangerously near to Bill's shell-hole. Judging from the weight of enemy fire, there must be at least thirty or forty of the Japs in the cover of the rocks. And there was no way to reach Bill across the open, churned-up field where the two wounded Marines lay, except by making a wide flanking detour. At the same time, the Japs were able to close in with short, quick rushes that still gave them the cover of the jumbled rocks on the other side of the field.

Schwabe and Guy threw themselves flat at the jungle's edge beside Sergeant Leonard. Leonard looked at them with grateful relief.

"Am I glad to see you!"

"How did this happen?" Schwabe rapped.

"We were jumped as we were heading to investigate that hut. No sign of Japs until then, Skipper. They were waiting for us, though. I figure about forty of them. Bill got hit and made the shell-hole. Masters and Johnson are out there—I don't know how bad off they are. Andrews and I were lucky. We got back to the jungle here and Sullivan, who was rear-guard, took off for help."

Guy scanned the scene with narrowed eyes. "How bad was Bill hit?"

"Can't be too rough, Gabby," Leonard said. "He's still firing back. But he must be running low on ammo by now. And when he does run out—"

"We'll get him out first," Schwabe said. "Come on, Gabaldon."

They got up and raced half a dozen steps along the jungle edge and hit the dirt hard as the Japs swung their field of fire toward them to pin them down. Guy saw a group of about ten of the enemy dash forward from rock to rock, tightening around Bill's shell-hole. From Bill's position came the brief hammering of his BAR, but it was not enough to halt the enemy maneuver. Guy bit his lip.

"We'll have to circle around," Schwabe muttered. "Try to set up a crossfire. That might give Bill a chance."

"We've got to get to him first, Skipper!"

Schwabe gave him a hard, sharp look. "Take it easy, Gabaldon."

"Bill's my friend," Guy said desperately. "I've got to help him!"

"He's my friend, too. Come on, let's go."

They gained another few feet before the Jap fire forced them flat again. Another covering burst cam from Bill's BAR. But the firing was too brief to do much good.

Guy suddenly hurled his voice across the flat terrain of the open field.

"Bill? Bill! You okay?"

Bill's voice came back, strangely muffled. "Gabby?"

"Yeah. Are you hurt?"

"Took one in the leg."

"Hang on, Bill. We're coming for you."

"I don't—"

The Japanese gunfire suddenly hammered viciously across the clearing, cutting off the sound of Bill's voice. Guy returned the fire, but the Japanese were simply momentary shadows flitting from rock to rock. They were dangerously close to Bill now. Not more than a dozen yards, at one point. Guy bit his lip. Sweat stung his eyes, blurred his vision for a moment. At that instant a tall Jap stood up and lunged for Bill's shellhole. Guy squeezed the trigger desperately. He missed. But Schwabe's gun hammered at the same time and the big Jap fell. At the same moment, others flung themselves closer to Bill's position by taking advantage of their momentary distraction on the other flank.

"Gabby—I'm almost out of ammo!" came Bill's voice.

"Try to hang on, Bill!" Guy shouted.

All at once, the enemy made a concerted rush toward Bill's hole. They were almost on him. Guy fired and fired again, aware of Schwabe's gun hammering, and of Leonard's supporting fire from farther down the edge of the field. Several of the Japanese fell. Bill's BAR hammered away and then suddenly went silent with an awful abruptness. One of the Japs made it to the shellhole and sprayed the inside without mercy, his gun hammering. Guy fired, and the man dropped. But three others came on, leaped into the hole upon Bill.

"Gabby . . . !"

It was Bill's voice, a thin high cry of despair.

"Bill! Bill!"

A Jap officer had gained the hole now. Nothing could be seen of the inside except the Samurai sword as it arced high in the sunlit air, then came hacking down.

Bill screamed.

"Oh, my God . . ." Guy whispered. "No . . . no!"

The sword hacked down again—and again. Bill's screams rang out hideously across the field.

"You bastards!" Guy shouted. "You filthy rats!"

A kind of madness took him, lifted him to his feet. Schwabe grabbed at him to hold him back, but Guy wrenched free angrily with a cry like a man in excrutiating agony. He sprinted off across the field toward Bill.

It was insane; it was suicidal. He ran like a mad open-field runner, zig-zagging across the terrain toward Bill. Bullets smacked the air around him from the Jap fire. The heavier sound of the Marine fire from Leonard and the others trying to give him cover was like a counterpoint to the enemy guns. Guy had no thought for himself. A red lust for revenge had seized him. In less than ten seconds, he reached the rim of the shell hole and opened fire with the BAR.

The Japanese who had jumped Bill in there crumpled under the point-blank blaze of his gun. Guy kept his finger on the trigger for what seemed an eternity. The Japanese fell, staggering, their bodies jerking hideously under the impact of the heavy slugs. And still Guy could not stop. It was as if he wanted to stamp them completely out of existence, hammer them into the earth itself.

Guy's charge had inspired the others in the unit to follow. In the face of the reckless advance, the Japanese force melted back, overwhelmed by the insane fury of Schwabe's men. Guy was in the van, running, firing, running and firing. He dropped two more, a third, a fourth. He wanted to kill and kill and kill. . . .

Something caught him, tripped him, threw him to the earth. He started to fight back, then saw it was Schwabe.

"Hold it, Gabby! *Hold it!*"

"I can't—"

"It's over. Come on back."

He got up, numbed, dazed, and strode back to the shell-hole and stood staring down at what was left of Bill. He had a taut, almost maniacal expression, as if he were in the grip of some ugly trance.

Bill Hazen was dead.

He had not died quickly or easily.

Staring at the mangled form, Guy felt something yield and break inside him. He wanted to throw up. It had all happened too suddenly, without any warning—

Somehow, he had thought of Bill and himself as going on forever . . .

Only moments ago, Bill had called for his help, and he had been unable to give it to him.

The Japs could have given him a chance, Guy thought dimly.

They could have asked him to surrender.

He felt the yielding, breaking sensation slowly end inside. Something closed, hardened, grew icy cold and rigid in his mind. He stared at Schwabe and Leonard and Semperi with unseeing eyes, aware that they were lifting Bill's body gently from the shell-hole. And as they turned away, Guy Gabaldon turned with them, moving out of the sunlight and the satisfaction of everything he had been doing until this moment. He moved out of sunlight into a dark red, bleak world that acknowledged only one aim and one goal.

Revenge.

Part Three

THE VICTORY

ONE

HE TOOK no more prisoners.

He felt in himself only a red lust for vengeance.

He spoke to no one. And when others spoke to him, he did not seem to hear. For Guy, everything that he had so painfully struggled to achieve now seemed only a bitter, cruel jest. The goal that had caused him so much agony of spirit to achieve now seemed to turn into poison in his heart.

The only good Japs were dead Japs.

And thinking this, believing this, and thinking of nothing else, he went out on patrol the next day alone, grimly rejecting Semperi's tentative, clumsy effort to console him.

"I'm goin' wit' you anyway," said Tony. "It ain't right for you to go out alone."

"I'll be fine," Guy said.

"Yeah. You look fine. Like a fuggin' ghost."

"I'm all right, Tony."

"You need somebody to cover you, don't you?" Semperi tried to chuckle. "I got number eighteen in the pool, on you today, Gabby. If you can hit eighteen prisoners on the nose, I make it to be over four hundred bucks. Hey," Semperi said, a sudden conspirator,

"how about we work it together, and make sure it's only eighteen prisoners today, Gabby. I'll split the fuggin' loot with ya."

"There won't be any."

"I tell ya, there's over four hundred bucks in the pool! Nobody hit the right number for six days!"

"There won't be any prisoners, Tony," Guy said.

"Aw, now look, you never failed us yet, since you started the fuggin' technique of talkin' 'em home, Gabby," Semperi protested.

"I'm not talking any more," Guy said grimly. He slapped his BAR. "This is going to do all the talking for me, from now on."

"Ah, listen—"

"I'm going out alone," Guy said.

He was followed, anyway. He couldn't do anything to stop Semperi and Sullivan and Sergeant Leonard from trailing along after him. He knew they meant well. He knew they were worried about him. But there wasn't anything they could do to fill the dark black void inside him. Nobody could know what Bill Hazen's life had meant to him. He'd never had a friend like Bill before—George and Kaz Une being more like brothers than buddies. All night long he had tried to shut out the awful image of the Jap soldiers hacking and smashing the life out of Bill in that shell-hole. He could see their faces, brutalized and desperate, enjoying their bloody work, while Bill screamed that one awful scream and died. He squeezed his eyes shut, and all he could see was Bill Hazen's blood, dancing and running and wriggling red behind his eyelids. He tried to cry, but there was a harsh, salt dryness in him that prevented the relief of tears. No, he knew what he had to do.

No more prisoners.

Kill as many as you can, he told himself. Kill and kill, lure them out and shoot them down, and the world will be a better place for each of them that dies.

For Bill, he thought.

And Pete Lewis, too.

His face looked as hard as his heart when he found a likely-looking cave in the hills. He used his old technique, calling in a coaxing tone, assuring the men inside of safe-conduct and fair treatment. When no one appeared, he threw a grenade inside and waited while the concussion boomed and smoke gushed out.

A wounded Japanese staggered out into the air through the smoke, and when he saw Guy he jabbered in terror and raised his hands.

Guy squeezed the trigger and cut him in half.

He found another cave, circled above it, threw a rock down at the cave mouth. When a Japanese soldier appeared, rifle in hand, peering about for the source of the noise, Guy lobbed a grenade at him. He was already on his feet, moving toward his next target, as the grenade exploded below and tore the man apart.

He found a hut where he used the ration technique, throwing a can inside, through the doorway. He waited then, BAR in hand, until a thin, starved-looking Japanese soldier scurried out and snatched up the ration. Then, instead of running back into the hut, the Jap looked around and smiled and bowed, although he could not see Guy.

Guy stood up from behind the shattered tree-trunk and said: "Tell your friends to come out and surrender."

"Hai! Hai!" the man grinned, bobbing his shaved head. "We know you, Yankee. You friend of Japanese who speaks our tongue and gives us safe promises and medicine."

"That's right. Get your friends," Guy said flatly.

Four men Japanese came out, two of them obviously wounded and in pain. "Is that all of you?" Guy asked.

"Hai. All of us. We give up, eh, Yankee? You take good care of us!"

"You bet," Guy said. "Like you took care of Bill."

He squeezed the trigger of the BAR and saw the men jerk and fall from the impact of the heavy slugs. He kept firing and walking closer and firing until the clip was empty. Then he turned away and looked for more game.

TWO

FOUR days later, he was called to Captain Schwabe's tent at noon. If the Skipper was startled by the change in Guy's appearance and demeanor, he said nothing. The pyramidal tent looked exactly like the one Guy had

first seen back in the Hawaii training center, when he first reported to Schwabe for duty. There was the same immaculate neatness, the carefully made-up cot, field desk, stowed equipment and blackboard. The sector map on the board showed the new battle-lines. Mount Tapotchau had been taken. Half of the island was in Marine hands. Guy glanced at the map without curiosity, his face grim, his eyes dark, burning holes in his pale face.

"You wanted to see me, Captain?"

"Yes. Sit down, Gabby," Schwabe said easily, without formality. And as Guy hesitated, Schwabe said easily: "Cigarette?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"Okay. Light up your own brand, if you wish. Sit down and relax. We'll dispense with formality for the moment, Gabby. I want to talk to you both as your Skipper and your friend."

Guy said nothing. He sat down and waited.

"Gabby," Schwabe said, "you're a damned good Marine."

"Thank you, sir."

"I'm not going to say that what you've been doing lately is wrong. But you know that we have plenty of men around here who can kill Japs."

"That's the general idea, isn't it?" Guy asked flatly. "To kill them?"

"That's true." Schwabe leaned forward earnestly. "But you're the exception, Gabby. You made yourself an exception, all on your own, when you began your private campaign of taking prisoners. I have no doubt that the campaign here on Saipan has been considerably shortened through your own private and individual efforts in bringing in those prisoners of yours."

Guy sat stiffly, saying nothing. His eyes seemed to look beyond the captain, at something that made Schwabe, accustomed as he was to men in battle, shiver a little.

"Is that all, Captain?" Guy asked finally.

Schwabe's voice hardened. "No, that's not all, Gabaldon. I know what's eating you. We all know it. But you can't help Hazen. Bill is dead. But there are a lot of live Marines here, and you can help them stay that way."

Guy said nothing.

"I've been told how you've been luring them out on promises of fair treatment if they surrender, Gabaldon."

"I didn't know I was being spied on."

"It isn't that. It's—"

"The Japs don't hesitate to lure our men out into the open, do they? They use every trick in the bag to cut 'em down," Guy went on. "Are you going to stop me, Captain?"

Schwabe took a long moment before replying, studying Guy's face.

He shook his head slightly. "All right, Gabaldon. That's all."

Guy stood up, saluted, about-faced stiffly, and reached for the tent flap when the Skipper spoke his name again and he turned.

"Believe me, Gabby," Schwabe said, his voice curiously soft. "Every man who is killed in action leaves behind him a friend like you. A man who grieves without being ashamed of his grief. A man who will remember him forever."

Captain Schwabe nodded dismissal and turned his attention back to his desk. Guy went out.

For a long time after he sat on the edge of the bivouac area, using an empty ammo box for a seat and bracing his back against a tree. He stared at nothing. His mind seemed cloudy, and he could not bring himself to think clearly. He heard the captain's words echoing in the back of his head and shook himself impatiently. All during the last few days after Bill's death, he had been pulling himself farther and farther away from everything else around him. He ate and slept when he had to, and when he was off duty, he sat as if dead. Only when he went out on his lonely, deadly patrols, did he find a spark of life in himself, a sense of dedication and enthusiasm.

And yet—and yet. . . .

Something stirred in him, brought to renewed life by Schwabe's words. He didn't want to weaken. He liked being the way he was. Everything was simple, this way. You killed, and tried to make up for the way Bill died, and that was all there was to it. Nothing else mattered.

And yet . . .

He felt lonelier than he had ever been in his life. Sheila Lincoln was gone; her world was not his; it would never have worked out for them, anyway. They were too much alike, in some ways, ever to be able to accommodate to each other. Anyway, she had what she wanted. . . .

Pete was gone, too. And Bill.

He was all alone—

"Hey, Gabaldon!"

He looked up, startled. Mail call had sounded, and the Marine in charge of the mail sack flipped a letter at him in annoyance.

"It's only V-mail, chum—not special delivery."

"Oh," Guy said. "Thanks."

He looked at the letter without comprehension for a moment, his eyes blank. It was postmarked California. The writing was unfamiliar, a round, childish script with careful lettering. For a moment it did not touch him with any meaning at all, and he held it in his hands without interest. Then all at once he wondered if it could possibly be—

It was. It was a letter from Mother Une.

He could hear her soft voice speaking to him in the words of the letter, her accent careful, difficult.

"Dear All-American Boy: Here you see I write English now. Papa is fine. Still work in camp fields. Son George being sent home now for healing honourable wound. He be well soon and marry Ester. They engaged by mail! This make me much happiness. Son Kaz stay yet in Italy and be hero. You hero, too. We guess where you are and we pray for you. Newspapers talk of Japanese people living in caves. To live in cave much worse than camp—not so? Let everyone pray soon all war be over and we be happy together again and laughing with sons giving many grandchildren. Nobody enemy any more. I now hug All-American Boy with love. Mamma-san."

Guy folded the letter with meticulous care. His vision blurred for a moment. What would Mother Une think of him if she knew the truth now? he wondered. He had written to her about the little girl he had saved from the cave, and how it had started him on his campaign of taking prisoners. But if she could see him now, an inexorable, pitiless, hunting machine—

"Gabaldon!"

For a second time in minutes, Guy was pulled from a

reverie with a jolt. Looking up, he saw Captain Schwabe in a jeep nearby, with Sergeant Leonard at the wheel. Guy picked up his BAR and pocketed the letter as he went to the jeep.

"Yes, sir?"

"News from home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your family?"

Guy hesitated. "Yes, sir."

Schwabe studied him for a moment with an expression that Guy could not understand, as if he were debating something. Then he nodded at a seat in the jeep. "Get in, Gabby. I want to show you something."

Guy climbed in the back and Leonard took off at once. Bulldozers had leveled a road from the bivouac area near the beach to the rising land to the north, close to the shore, where the limestone cliffs of Saipan rose jaggedly directly from the sea. The battle lines were fluid here, since the terrain was cut up into curious plateaus and gullies and ravines, so that you could look from one field to another with a deep gorge between, where the sea ran and smashed on coral rock below. Yet there was no way to get from one field to the next except by a long detour inland.

Leonard stopped the jeep where the road ended and they all got out, and Captain Schwabe led the way across a burned-out sugar-cane field to the edge of a cliff. Looking down, Guy saw jagged rocks and coral and then a small arm of the sea. A U.S. PT boat floated some yards offshore, engine idling. A Japanese voice, amplified by a loud-speaker, came from the American boat, pleading for the Japanese in the caves nearby to surrender and come over to the Americans for food and shelter and medical help, rather than commit suicide.

"Is—is that what they're doing here?" Guy asked uncertainly.

Schwabe nodded. "The Japanese know it's only a matter of time before we mop up the whole island. Somewhere, maybe from the Army, the civilians got the idea we're going to kill them all. So rather than be massacred, they choose what they consider an honorable death. They're killing themselves by jumping to their death on the rocks down there. Take another look, Gabby. A good look."

Guy studied the sunlit scene. Now he made out the

bodies of a number of people, lying in crushed heaps on the cruel rocks, or floating in the slight surf of the cove. Even as he watched, something flickered and he turned his head and saw a man and a body jumping from a cave in the distant cliffs over there. They struck the rocks without sound, and Schwabe, watching Guy's face, saw no change of expression there.

"That's a PW talking from the boat," Schwabe said. "One of their own, that you brought in. But they won't listen. They're scared stiff. It's been hammered into them that we'll torture and butcher them and they believe it. So they're killing themselves in wholesale lots. It's the worst thing I've seen in the whole Pacific campaign—the worst thing I've seen in my life."

Still Guy looked at the scene with remorseless, blank eyes. Schwabe hesitated, not knowing what to say next. Then he spotted something in the field some distance away from them and he nudged Guy and pointed. Trudging with stolid, fatalistic determination across the burned-out stubble of sugar cane, angling away from the three Marines to reach the edge of the cliff, was a Japanese woman in traditional dress and hair-do, walking hand in hand with a small boy. The woman looked neither to right nor left as she stumbled along on her determined path across the field.

"There go two more of 'em," Schwabe said. "Nice, huh?"

Guy frowned. "Not—not the kid, too?"

"Want to bet?" Schwabe said harshly. "They're all doing it. And there doesn't seem to be anything we can do to stop 'em."

Guy felt a twist of pain as he watched the distant figures trudging pitifully toward the edge of the cliff. His eyes widened in disbelief. There was something familiar about the woman, something he knew about the way the little boy so trustingly held on to her hand—

She could be Mother Une and George, years ago.

He felt cold sweat start out all over him. His throat went dry and he wet his lips. It *was* Mother Une and George!

All at once an anguished shout ripped from his throat. "No—wait! *Chotto matsute!* Mamma-san, wait!"

The Japanese woman stopped abruptly at the sound of his voice. The little boy stood holding her hand trustingly. Then, as she saw the three Marines for the first time,

her face twisted in terror and she began to run, dragging the boy with her. Without thinking, Guy unholstered his .32 pistol and aimed at the woman. But he felt a sharp jolt on his gun arm as Schwabe slapped the barrel down.

"I just wanted to wing her!" Guy gasped. "I've got to stop her!"

"We don't shoot civilians," Schwabe said harshly.

Guy's voice lifted to a shout. "I can't let her do that!" All at once he broke away from Schwabe and Leonard and began running across the rough stubble of the sugar-cane field. The woman was a long way off. Her figure was slight, clumsy in the traditional kimona she wore. And yet she was so close to the edge of the cliff, he could not hope to catch up to her in time. "Wait!" he cried in Japanese. "Mamma-san, wait, please! I want to talk to you!"

The frightened woman had reached the edge of the cliff. For an instant, Guy could see her look back at him as he ran toward her, shouting. He heard the little boy's sudden wail of fear as she grabbed his shoulders and struggled with the child. Her face was convulsed with terror. And then, all in a moment, she hurled the little boy over the cliff.

Guy sprinted, his lungs bursting with the effort—but he was still ten paces away when the woman jumped, vanishing over the edge of the world as if someone had simply erased her from sight. He heard a brief, thin wailing sound and then there was nothing but the fatal boom and crash of the surf far below.

Guy walked slowly to the edge of the cliff and sank to his knees and stared at the sight below. His eyes burned. He felt as if a giant hand had reached inside his belly and squeezed and twisted with torturing cruelty. He wanted to be sick, to throw up. He wanted an answer, a reason for the woman to have thrown herself to her death in fear of him. He wanted to weep.

Schwabe stood beside him quietly for a moment. They could see the woman's body, pitiful, looking as if every bone had been broken, like a tiny rag doll flung to the foam-spewed rocks below. The little boy was not in sight. Evidently the surf had taken him away.

"I could have stopped that," Guy said in whispered anguish. "I could've stopped it."

"Maybe," Schwabe said grimly. "But not with a gun."

THREE

HE FELT numb and bewildered for the rest of the day. At night, when he slept in the bivouac area, his sleep was shot through with terrible nightmares. In the morning, he had not come to a decision.

The campaign was making steady, grueling progress, pushing the defeated Japanese steadily northward up the hilly spine of Saipan. Resistance was stubborn, suicidal, even maniacal. The enemy was weak, starving, but there was no sign of surrender. The civilian population had become a major morale problem.

By 19 June, the Army's 27th Division had pushed beyond Aslito Airfield and isolated enemy forces at Cape Nafutan. General Holland Smith's 4th Marines overran a pleateau north of Aslito field and established a line north of Beach Red 1 across the island to Magicienne Bay. Hill 500, headquarters of the enemy, was taken.

Rumors ran through the slogging Marine units that told of another giant sea battle taking place in the Philippine Sea. They said the enemy had gathered together a vast fleet, equal to the Fifth, and a carrier battle with Admiral Ozawa's naval divisions was going on that might spell victory or defeat for the Marines ashore on Saipan. For days, it seemed, the issue was in doubt. It was true, Task Force 58 was conspicuous by its absence offshore of Saipan. More than one Marine worried about being stranded on the island without Naval support to take them off if things went wrong. Some of the Marines, seeing the naval vessels retire in the beginning, felt abandoned, and remembered how Admiral Turner had been forced to leave them for a short time on 'Canal for the Battle of Savo Island.

The fighting went on, tough and bloody. Air strikes and fire-support ships offshore were added to the Marines' own batteries of 75-mm pack howitzers and 155-mm cannon. The enemy was stubborn and yielded ground only after they had been drenched in suicidal blood. Even so, there was still an occasional and usually futile

air strike by Bettys or Zekes from Guam, which the Japanese still held.

On the morning after Guy failed to save the Japanese woman and child, Leonard came over to him and asked if he wanted him to go on patrol. Guy had been ranging off alone for the past few days; but now all at once, for the first time since Bill was killed, he wanted someone with him. He nodded gratefully for the older man's suggestion and they went off together toward the hills of the interior.

The sector they chose that day was jungled lowland at the foot of a small range of plateaulike hills. The terrain was rough, thickly wooded, and as yet had not been flattened clean by artillery bombardment, for the most part. Visibility was confined to only a few yards in any direction, and they had to proceed with care. Leonard was reminded of the 'Canal campaign, but they talked very little. The sun was hot, and the highlands to the west cut off any chance of the ocean breeze reaching them.

They patrolled all day, slept out in the jungle, and were awake at dawn of the next day. It was as if the enemy had suddenly and mysteriously vanished from the earth—at least, in their sector, since there was still an occasional sound of howitzer or naval rifle fire on either flank. Insects hummed and sang around their heads and they started off again in the dim gray light. Guy turned at once toward the north, where the Japanese lines might be found, but Sergeant Leonard paused.

"Hold it, Gabby. We've been out almost twenty-four hours and seen nothing. What do you make of it?"

"They're up ahead," Guy said. "We'll find some Japs soon."

"I think we ought to get back to the Skipper and let him know about this area. You got an exact idea of where we are?"

"Some," Guy admitted. "I'm not too sure."

"We've been roaming these hills all night. No prisoners—nothing. In an hour it will be clear dawn again."

"Let's keep going until then," Guy insisted.

He started off, carrying the BAR at the ready, parting the jungle foliage with its muzzle. In five minutes, his persistence was rewarded. A small clearing appeared ahead, a cup-like depression surrounded by a vine-grown, rocky outcropping. Guy stopped short.

"Len, look at that," he whispered. "Jap rations and ammo!"

There were several dozen tins and small cases of enemy supplies stacked in the open clearing. Nothing stirred in the mottled sunshine ahead. Leonard, his eyes narrowed with suspicion, looked carefully in all directions, his hand in a warning gesture on Guy's arm. The career sergeant's seamed, weathered face was troubled.

"I don't get it, Gabby," he whispered warily. "With things going so bad for them, they wouldn't just abandon stuff like this here in the middle of—"

His words were cut off by the abrupt, high, spiteful crack of a rifle. The bullet clipped the air between Guy and Leonard. Instinctively, both men hit the dirt, hugging the moist, cool earth under the ground-cover foliage.

"Sniper!" Guy whispered.

Another shot rang out, and a leaf drifted down in the cool morning mist, grazing Guy's cheek.

"That sounded close to the ground," Leonard whispered.

Guy nodded. "A spider pit, guarding the supplies."

He lifted his head for an instant to see the clearing better. He was just in time to see the pit cover quickly closing. Spider pits were a new Japanese jungle technique, discovered for the first time by the Marines on Saipan. It consisted of a deep hole dug into the ground, in which a man or two men could stand upright, and a cover of wood on which the sod and brush was carefully replaced so that the trap-door blended with the rest of the terrain. The sniper, concealed in the ground, lifted the trap, fired, and ducked back into his pit much like a ground spider.

Guy nudged Leonard, pointed to the spot, and the sergeant nodded. They needed no debate as to their next moves. Guy went to the left, the big sergeant to the right, moving up and behind the sniper hole. In five minutes they had reached it. Mist moved in thin streamers across the clearing where the Japanese supplies were stacked. Leonard took out his revolver and nodded to Guy, who leaned carefully forward and grasped the edge of the wooden lid to the spider pit. At another nod from Leonard, Guy quickly flipped the lid up as Leonard fired three swift shots into the dark hole.

"That was your eviction notice, buddy," Guy grinned. He opened the cover and peered inside, nodded, and

climbed down a short, crude ladder into the pit. "Give me a hand, Len. We'll hide him in the brush. This sniper's had it, all right." Leonard reached down and pulled up the body as Guy handed it to him and dragged the dead Japanese off into the brush. When Leonard came back, Guy said: "Come on into my parlor, Len. It stinks, but there's room enough for both of us."

"Phew!" Leonard grimaced. "It smells like a bunch of sick mackerel crawled in here and died. You want to wait around, Gabby?"

"They won't abandon those supplies; they'll be coming back for 'em," Guy said. "Maybe we can pick up something."

Leonard grunted and scratched his armpit. "I already have."

It was a tight squeeze, but thre was room enough for two in the spider pit. Guy pulled down the trap-door, leaving only a narrow slit of light from which he could survey the clearing.

The minutes passed. Now and then Len yawned and scratched. The mists lifted and the dawn brightened, but Guy's watch still showed the time to be before five in the morning. The spider hole felt damp and clammy and he shivered, gripping his rifle uncomfortably. He thought of Bill Hazen for the first time without the dull, anguished lust for vengeance that he had endured for so many days since Bill died. He did not know why, for certain, he felt better. Maybe it was the way Captain Schwabe had talked to him; or maybe it was Mother Une's V-mail letter and her news of George and Kaz. It didn't matter. Something had finally yielded in the iron grief that had kept him chained. He grinned at Leonard's gray head as the sergeant dozed standing on his feet in the cramped spider hole.

The light was still pale and uncertain when he heard Japanese voices approaching. Guy nudged Leonard awake and they watched two soldiers and a lieutenant enter the area, talking seriously. Through the foliage, Guy saw the lieutenant order something of one of the soldiers, and the private came toward the sniper pit and tapped the door with his rifle butt.

"Was there any activity while we were gone?" the man called.

Guy saw Leonard swallow. If they were discovered like this, they wouldn't have a chance to save them-

selves. They would be as defenseless as the sniper Guy had killed had been, caught helplessly in this hole in the ground that would turn into their grave.

Guy drew a deep breath and called back in Japanese. *"Eyah, nandemonai!* There has been nothing."

The soldier laughed. "You sound hoarse, comrade. General Matsui is holding a staff meeting here shortly —be sharp of eye, do you understand?"

"Hai," Guy said.

The soldier laughed again and walked off. Leonard let out his breath in a long, slow, careful exhalation of relief. Guy whispered to him what the soldier had said about the staff meeting. "Isn't General Matsui the commanding general for this whole sector?"

"Right," Leonard said grimly. "Let's stick it out."

They did not have long to wait. Nor was there any question about Matsui's identity when he strode into the clearing accompanied by six officers of various ranks and some guard soldiers. They paused about thirty yards from the sniper pit, and Matsui's dominant bearing, his handsome carriage and dark, tragic eyes, made his identity plain as he surveyed the other officers drawn up at attention. With a quick move of his hand, Matsui indicated they should be seated. There was a moment's hesitation, and then they chose seats on the ammo and supply cases in the clearing. Matsui turned and looked at the sky as an Avenger screamed through the air overhead on dawn patrol. Long streaks of orange and gold flame showed where the sun was ready to rise up out of the horizon of the Pacific, but here in the jungle clearing the mists still clung to the vegetation and the light was grayish.

When Matsui began to speak, in a low voice, Guy gave Leonard a quick translation of the gist of the general's speech as he went along. There was no question about the importance of the meeting, to judge by the sober attention given to Matsui by his aides.

"Gentlemen, I am sure it is no secret to you that Radio Tokyo has changed its tone of comment concerning the great battle in the Philippine Sea between the Imperial Naval Forces under Admiral Ozaka and the Yankee fleet. The victory has not been ours. Our high hopes of trapping the Marines here on Saipan, without sea power, must be considered ended. Our losses have been painful."

A thin, moustached major said: "Your son, General?"

"My second son is dead. He died honorably."

The major bowed. The face of the Japanese general was expressionless as Matsui went on: "Here on Saipan it is also no secret to any of you that our ammunition is low, our food is gone. Our soldiers are starving. They eat roots, lizards—whatever they can find. We will all die—waiting. Waiting for our ships that now lie at the bottom of the sea."

Matsui suddenly lifted his voice and his stature, sweeping his assembled aides with a fierce, piercing stare.

"But must we die—like this? Waiting? Helpless? No! I say we can die proudly, if we must. Only in death is honor left to us. We can cause American blood to flow like a vast river. We can march—and fight—one against one. One of their lives for one of ours! We must attack! While we still have the strength, we can do it. *Kogeki!* Attack!"

There was a stir of agreement among the assembled Japanese officers. Matsui drew a sharp breath and spoke to them again.

"Those of you who agree to give me your life—and the lives of your men—raise your hands!"

Instantly every hand among the officers shot up, with exclamations of excitement and dedication. Matsui's eyes thanked them, softened for a moment, and then he made a sign to his aide. The major handed him a map, which he passed around to his subordinates. Then Matsui considered his watch and the dawning light in the sky.

"The attack will start at 0600 hours, then. In one hour. We will group at the point marked on the map you have before you."

There was a moment when Guy heard only low murmurings from the assembled enemy officers, and he took the opportunity of relaying Matsui's last words to Leonard. The gray-haired sergeant looked grim.

"I'd sure like to get my hands on that map, Gabby."

In a moment the officers had gleaned the necessary information they wanted from the map. It was rolled up and returned to General Matsui, who stood regarding them with pride and a touch of regret on his handsome, harsh face. His gaze moved slowly over each of them, as if taking his farewell in that moment.

"And now—*banzai,*" he said softly.

Instantly the officers shot to their feet. Matsui turned

his body in the direction of Japan, and the officers followed suit. Their mingled voices sounded harsh, unnatural, and frightening in their determination as their shout rang through the misty jungle.

"Banzai! . . . Banzai! . . . Banzai!"

FOUR

GUY and Leonard scarcely breathed as most of the officers drifted past the spider hole on their way out of the clearing. Matsui remained to answer the questions of an Imperial Marine captain, a giant of a man with fierce black moustaches and the bright black eyes of a fanatic.

"The civilians, General? Do we use them again?"

"If we must lose Saipan," Matsui said slowly, "we will yield up to the Yankees only a charnel house of dead bodies—those of us who are fortunately killed in battle, and those who must die by their own hands to preserve their honor. Is that clear?"

"*Hai,* General. Everyone dies."

"Including the Yankees."

"*Hai,* General."

The Imperial Marine and Matsui moved away from the clearing, accompanied by a single guard. Silence and emptiness returned to the gray, misty jungle. Guy carefully lifted the trap-door of the spider pit to enable him to watch Matsui climb a path among the rocks at the far end of the small jungle valley. In the dimness, he suddenly saw a movement that brought a startled exclamation to his lips.

"Len, look hard—up there!" he whispered. "See it?"

Matsui had flung back the camouflaged covering to a small cave up on the hillside above the jungle growth. The Marine captain ducked his giant form to enter after the stiff figure of Matsui vanished inside. The single soldier who had accompanied them dropped the camouflaged covering over the cave mouth and took up his sentry duty outside.

Leonard shifted desperately in the tight confinement of the spider pit. "Gabby, we've got to get this information back to HQ. We need that map. The way our peo-

ple are strung out these last few days, nobody expects an all-out *banzai* attack at this stage. And if they get the civilian population to commit mass suicide—" The sergeant looked appalled. "Anyway, a sudden attack now would wipe out hundreds of our men before they knew what hit 'em."

Guy's desperation equalled Leonard's as he nodded and looked out. The guard on duty at the cave mouth, perhaps two hundred yards away, was turned partly in their direction. Guy and Leonard waited for what seemed like an eternity. The guard seemed in no hurry to turn his gaze away from the clearing, where the spider trap, if opened, would be clearly visible to him. They were caught here, it seemed, forever.

And then the guard shifted his position slightly, away from their line of vision—and held it.

"Now. . . !" Guy whispered.

He flipped open the pit cover and lunged out, with Leonard at his heels. In a matter of seconds, they raced across the open clearing and threw themselves flat in the brush below the slope and the path that led up to the cave. Then they started snaking upward through the jungle. The light seemed to be brighter now. A morning breeze, heralding the true dawn, stirred among the treetops. Suddenly a twig snapped under Guy's weight, with a sound that echoed sharply. Guy and Leonard froze, not breathing. But apparently the guard at the cave mouth had heard nothing. They moved upward alongside the path until they came to the jungle edge, twenty paces from where the sentry stood.

Something had finally alerted the man. Sensing a sound, or movement, he turned suddenly and stared sharply down toward the clearing. Guy turned his head with care and looked back and groaned inwardly. He hadn't closed the cover to the sniper pit, and the hole stood wide open, plainly visible now.

The guard, in panic, rifle leveled, looked everywhere, not actually seeing Guy or Len.

"Halt!" he called in Japanese. "Who goes there!"

Guy and Len, flattened out, didn't dare breathe. The sentry took several cautious steps, approaching them. All at once his eyes widened and his mouth opened to shout an alarm as he spotted Guy. But as the Japanese raised his rifle again, Len squeezed the trigger and cut him down with a sharp, echoing burst of his BAR.

"Come on!"

Len scrambled to his feet and raced across the open area toward the cave. General Matsui and the Imperial Marine captain were just coming out to investigate the sound of shooting when Guy and Len smashed into them. The element of surprise was completely on the side of the two Marines. But the big moustached Japanese still tried to draw his pistol in a fanatical last-minute attempt at resistance. Guy fired once, efficiently and accurately, and the giant toppled to the ground.

Instantly, Guy covered General Matsui.

"Hold it, General," he said in Japanese.

"I understand English, Yankee," said Matsui. He looked shocked, but not frightened. His eyes searched for the guard, saw he was dead, and he nodded acceptance of the situation. "You must be mad," he said harshly. "You will never escape from this place alive. All I have to do is raise my voice and call for help—"

"There won't be any, General," Guy said flatly. "We killed the sentry and your Imperial Marine. If anybody else heard the shots, they'd be here by now."

Matsui's eyes glittered. "What do you want?"

"We want the map, General," Leonard snapped. "Where is it?"

Matsui's eyes flickered involuntarily toward the table in the back of the cave. The cardboard tube that held the rolled-up chart was there. Leonard strode to the table picked it up, and stepped carefully out of the cave, looking in all directions for any source of danger. He turned his head and nodded.

"All clear, Gabby. Grab the Imperial Peacock and let's make tracks."

Guy gestured with the gun. "Let's go, General."

But Matsui stood straight and proud, and did not move.

"I shall not go with you, American."

"No?" Len said angrily. "Then we'll blast you right here!"

"What purpose would that serve you, Marine?" Matsui said sharply. "Good soldiers are prepared for any contingency." He looked at Leonard's BAR. "The order has been given. Choose death to capture. I can do no less than what I ask of my men."

"Listen, you—" Leonard began angrily.

"Hold it, Len," Guy said. "He means it. It's a standoff."

"Correct," Matsui said flatly. "If you decide to kill me, I am prepared for death. I have nothing more to lose, except my honor; and this I shall never yield. On the other hand, you wish to warn your comrades of the attack. I shall not go with you."

"Well, there are two of us," Guy said. "We won't let you go, either." He swung to Leonard. "We're wasting time with all this talk, and that's what Matsui wants. Get going with that map, Len. Take it to the Skipper fast. I'll take care of the General."

"What will you do with him?" Leonard asked.

"I don't know yet," Guy said slowly. But in the back of his mind a fantastic thought had taken seed and began to grow. It was to nebulous to form a distinct pattern as yet, but he felt a quick stirring of excitement, quickly stifled and hidden from the sharp eyes of the Japanese general, as he spoke. "But you'd better take off, Len. Bring back enough Marines pronto, and we'll wrap up the whole Saipan campaign right here and now."

Leonard hesitated, scratched his grizzled head, and looked from Matsui to Guy. "I'll get hell if I let you stay here, Gabby—but I guess you know what you're doing. Good luck, fella."

"Len—" Guy said. Leonard turned at the cave exit. Guy grinned tight. "Don't forget. Make it before 0600, or it all goes up in smoke—including me, buddy!"

"I'll make it," Leonard promised.

He pushed aside the tarpaulin cover over the cave mouth and was gone.

For a moment there was a strangely awkward silence in the cave, as the Japanese general and the Marine Pfc eyed each other. Guy's stance with the BAR at his hip exhibited a lot more confidence than he actually felt. There was nothing in the book, he reflected, to cover a situation like this. Matsui, who was older and wiser, spoke in a calm voice.

"You are young and inexperienced, are you not? You are really only a boy, I can see now. The uniform and the weapons make devils out of you; but you are not older than either of my two sons, who are dead now. I would suggest that you are either a very brave man, or you are mad. In either case, you are dead, too, if you insist on waiting here for your comrades to return."

"I think not, General," Guy said. "As a matter of fact,

staying right here is not a bad idea. I don't think anybody will come to this cave until 0600—the time you set for the attack. Your officers will be too busy rounding up enough men with strength to stand up and charge —right?" Guy saw that his words had struck home and he tried to make himself relax. "So we'll stay right here and wait for my men to arrive—which shouldn't be too long."

Matsui said impatiently: "Marine, whenever I choose to leave, I shall do so."

"Just try it," Guy rapped, "and I'll put a bullet through your head. You don't fool me, General. It's one thing for you, as a Samurai, to die in battle, sure—even in a crazy, suicidal *banzai* charge. But—" he tapped his BAR—"to be shot to death in a lousy cave by a Marine private—there's no honor and damned little glory in an execution like that."

Matsui's eyes widened in shock as the truth of Guy's words struck home.

Guy finished easily: "So take a seat and sweat it out, General. There's nothing else you can do."

Matsui paused a moment, his eyes tigerish. But Guy did not relax his vigilance with the BAR, and stood in a position where he covered both Matsui and the cave entrance. At last Matsui sank down heavily in a canvas camp chair.

"You will permit me to smoke?"

Guy nodded. Matsui took a package of cigarettes from his tunic and offered it to Guy. Guy refused. Matsui lit his cigarette with a perfectly steady hand and inhaled calmly.

Guy shook his head in wonderment, watching him.

"How does a human being plan to do what you're all set to do, General?" he asked quietly. "How can you have it on your conscience?"

Matsui only looked at him contemptuously.

Guy went on: "You know there will be plenty of tanks, heavy artillery, howitzers and naval support planes and thousands of Marines waiting to smash your suicide attack. You know the Japanese fleet was practically destroyed off the Philippines a few days ago. You and your people don't have a chance!"

"If but one American loses his life," Matsui said with cold cruelty, "then the effort and the cost will prove worth it."

"One American life for hundreds of Japanese? Don't you think your own people are human? They want to live, too! They have husbands, wives, children, hopes, happiness, sorrow—they're not automatons, General, or statistical figures! Isn't what you're doing a terrible, inhuman, senseless *waste?*"

"Marine," Matsui said coldly, "surely you know our code of war."

"That's not war, General," Guy snapped. "It's plain slaughter. And not just of your troops, who expect to fight and take their chances with death. You're ordering the suicide of hundreds and hundreds of helpless civilians —ordinary people, little people, farmers and workmen, their families—for what? You're ordering the death of little people who can't help themselves at all!"

General Matsui made no answer. He snuffed out his cigarette stub with a careful, deliberate gesture, watching his hands, and then he sat up straighter in an attitude of patience that implied he could wait out Guy forever. His eyes, when Guy studied him, seemed to be staring at nothing at all. And Guy wondered if General Matsui had heard his words from the very beginning.

It was hopeless.

FIVE

M/SGT. LEONARD was an old hand at jungle fighting. He had been on Guadalcanal and New Britain and several smaller, more remote islands, and for all of his blunt, bulky size, he could move in utter silence through any sort of foliage. He had survived several vicious campaigns, had had some narrow brushes with instant death, and he was here again, and would be here tomorrow, too, he told himself.

You either have luck, or you don't, he thought. He had seen some men with little or no fighting ability, frightened just as the best of them were frightened, and they would come through the most hair-raising situations without a scratch. Just luck. They would live through anything, and probably die of old age in their beds fifty years from now, Leonard thought. On the other hand,

there were men like Bill Hazen, wonderful fellows, great human beings—smart, capable, strong, quick-witted—and they had no luck. Or their luck ran out, all at once, without warning. And they died, senselessly, through no fault of their own, with as much chance of survival as a fly under a swatter.

Leonard believed he had luck. He had come through some pretty tight situations in the past—although none with the pressure of responsibility as great upon him as this one. He would come through again. There wouldn't be any trouble, he told himself. Hadn't he and Gabby gotten through this area yesterday, searching all day long for targets, and not finding a single Jap in the sector? There wasn't anything to stop him. Nothing could. He couldn't allow it to happen to him now—not when so many lives of so many fine, unsuspecting men were at stake. He couldn't let them down—or Gabby, either. Gabby was counting on him to bring back help.

No, Lennie, he told himself, you may be an old fogey to some of these kids, with your thirty-seven years and hash-marks and pension coming up—but you know your way around the jungle. Besides, there was one more reason to make this trip successfully, aside from Gabby and Captain Schwabe's need of the map he carried.

There was Sarah, and his daughter Cissie, and Ma, who lived with them, counting on his pay-check, all of them, to keep things going back home. Someday he'd get back there for good, Leonard thought, and get to work on that rose garden behind the house in earnest. He was an expert on roses—something he never mentioned or discussed with the men. His specialty was moss roses, the old-fashioned variety, and he had quite a few going in that bed behind the house. Later, when his twenty years were up, and the damned war was over, he'd go home to Sarah and Ma and the kids and the roses, and take things easy, once and for all.

He moved on through the jungle, heading toward the beach bivouac area, holding the rolled-up map carefully out of the way of thorns and tearing branches. He had to hurry, he told himself. They had come a longer way then he'd realized, Gabby and he, on yesterday's patrol. The light was brighter, and it was definitely past sun-up now. The sky had that milky blueness that preceded the full light of day.

He did not see the sniper in the tree to his right when

he moved through the jungle toward a bull-dozed path the Seabees had been working on a couple of days ago.

The Jap was tied to the tree, and had been there for two days without food and water. His orders were to save his effort for a valuable target, an officer of the Yankee Marines, at least, or a tank commander. But the sniper knew he could not last more than an hour or two more, after the sun came up. He had suffered delirious moments during the long night, and his mouth and tongue were swollen by thirst, and his uniform was filthy and malodorous with the stench of his own excrement. He knew that if he was to achieve anything at all for his fatal hours of torment, he had to take anything that came along now.

It was M/Sgt. Leonard, thinking of his moss roses under his thoughts of hurrying to deliver the map to Captain Schwabe, with his warning of the *banzai* attack, who came along.

The sniper was very careful. He took his time, aiming, aware of his weakness that made his arms tremble and his vision blur. He was afraid he would not be able to make it. But he had medals for his marksmanship; he knew he could do it if he was careful.

Slowly, carefully, he lined up his cross-hair sight and let Leonard go past under him until his sights split the Marine's back.

Then he pulled the trigger.

Leonard did not hear the sharp, spiteful crack of the enemy carbine. He felt a thump between his shoulders, as if somebody had struck him with a heavy fist, and he stumbled and fell to his knees, his heavy face reflected complete astonishment.

He knew at once what had happened.

He tried to get up, to keep moving.

He cried out in anguish of his mind and soul, because he had the map and Gabby was waiting for him to come back with help, and all the men on the beach would die if he didn't get to the Skipper, who trusted him and counted on him.

Get up! he screamed silently to himself. *Get up and keep going!*

He got to his feet again.

And then he felt three more blows in his back as the sniper fired three more times before his weakness forced

him to drop the rifle and he sagged in a faint in the ropes that tied him to his perch in the tree.

Leonard fell forward on the soft, cool moss of the jungle floor. The map spilled and unrolled from his outstretched hand. He smelled the cold mossy smell of the jungle growth, and he thought of the roses behind his house, just once more, before he died.

SIX

IT WAS 0540 hours. In the Japanese headquarters cave, Guy smoked a cigarette to hide his growing concern. He tried to calculate how long it would take Len to reach the bivouac area and warn Captain Schwabe. Twenty minutes, maybe. Twenty-five, at the outside. Allow ten minutes for the alert to be spread everywhere. Then the first air recon planes, together with the Avengers to strafe any visible enemy concentrations, should be screaming overhead in the dawn sky even now.

But everything was quiet. And there was only twenty minutes left before Matsui's 0600 assault hour.

As if to verify his deepening worry, Matsui suddenly lifted his wrist, considered his watch, and rose deliberately to his feet. His eyes were hooded as he looked at Guy.

"It is time for me to go to my men," he said quietly.

"Sit down!" Guy snapped.

"My army will be ready now, massed for attack. We shall strike, I think, even before the appointed hour. I have decided this."

Guy lifted his gun threateningly. "Sit down, damn you!"

Matsui looked unafraid. His eyes were dark, calm, resigned. "You see, Marine, you believe that you have captured me. But it is not so. The truth of the matter is, even with that gun in your hand—it is you who have been captured, not I. And I have a further advantage. I am not afraid to die. I do not expect to live to see the end of this day, whatever happens. But you of the West place a different value on life. You will not shoot me now, and bring my men to this cave to find what

caused the shots, because it will mean certain death for you. And you cannot accept such a useless fate."

Guy paused, knowing his tension was far greater than Matsui's. Standing there, weighing each other, Guy knew his position was untenable. Killing Matsui would really achieve nothing. And the expected help had not arrived. Something had happened to Len. He was sure of this suddenly, with a sudden surge of panic that almost overcame his control. He was on his own. Len was either dead, or desperately wounded. Certainly he had failed to get through.

And this put the burden of everything squarely on Guy's shoulders. It was up to him. Somehow, he had to stop the *banzai* attack. His gun was no good. As a weapon, it was useless in this predicament. And he had nothing else, he thought hopelessly. He was just one man.

As if the Japanese general could read his thoughts, Matsui said: "It is over, Marine. Your sergeant failed to get through with his warning. You have lost, you see, after all. But because you are a man of great courage, and because you remind me, somehow, of my two lost sons, I respect you, and I will let you live—for now. You may stay here if you wish. I go to my troops and—"

At that moment Guy heard the sound of approaching footsteps outside the cave entrance. His reaction was a reflex, instinctive and swift. Whirling, Guy shoved Matsui forward and away from him with one quick thrust, just as the general's aide, the staff major, and a short, bandy-legged lieutenant appeared through the cave entrance. Guy had them covered before they could reach for their pistols.

Startled exclamations came from the two Jap officers. Their eyes were wide, considering Guy, then swinging to Matsui. A spate of questions burst from them, interrupted by Guy's rasping words.

"Tell them, General, that they will not be shot. Order them to face the wall and put their hands behind their heads. Understand?"

Matsui nodded and smiled grimly. He looked every inch the proud commanding officer as he addressed the two confused newcomers in the cave. His Japanese was swift, deliberate, icy cold.

"This Yankee Marine has been holding me a prisoner, Yoshiwa. I have been waiting for your return. Now—when I turn to speak to him—you must kill him."

Guy was not surprised by the General's attemt to double-cross him by speaking in Japanese. Matsui wasn't sure whether Guy's knowledge of Japanese was fragmentary or not, and he had taken the chance that his rapid-fire speech would not be understood.

The two officers understood very well. They stiffened and looked from Guy to the dead Imperial Marine captain still sprawled on the cave floor.

"Don't—" Guy began.

But the two officers knew how to obey. Both the major and the lieutenant went for their pistols—and Guy had no choice. The BAR hammered loudly in his grip, the slugs ripping and slamming into both men. The stench of cordite was strangling in the dim cave. The clamor and echo of the shots were deafening. The two Japanese fell, without a chance to survive. Almost in the same motion, Guy swung the BAR to cover Matsui. His fingers jerked, wanting to pull the trigger in his anger. He felt frustrated, shocked, filled with momentary hate for the proud general who had condemned his friends and forced him to kill unnecessarily. In his anger, Guy grabbed Matsui by the slack of his tunic and slammed him hard against the cave wall. Matsui's eyes went wide as Guy jammed the muzzle of the BAR under his chin.

He spoke in Japanese to the General. "Listen," Guy rasped hoarsely, "I understood your double-crossing speech. And those men are now dead for no reason at all. Did it serve your purpose to kill them? To force them to suicide? I did not want to kill them. But because of their fanatic loyalty to you, they tried to do the impossible. *You* killed them." Guy drew a deep, sharp breath. He was shaking with anger, and the muzzle of the BAR scraped hard under Matsui's jaw. The Japanese stood rigid, his eyes reflecting an expectation of instant death at the hands of the enraged Marine. "Your code of war killed your friends," Guy whispered harshly. "All right! You want to go to your beaten army? I'll let you go—"

He lowered the BAR and spun Matsui around, stumbling, toward the cave entrance.

"But I'm going with you, Matsui. Just to keep you honest. Because you're going to announce to them that the war on this island is over, or I'll cut you in half in plain sight of them."

Guy glared at Matsui's hard face as if he were about

to smash his fist into the general's stare. For the first time, Matsui seemed to quail, showing some uncertainty in the face of Guy's anger. He started to speak, then closed his mouth in a harsh line. He looked at the sprawled, bloody figures of his dead aides and shook his head, as if to clear it of uncertainty.

Guy shoved him without ceremony toward the cave entrance.

"Let's go!" he snapped.

The sky was bright with the new day as they climbed a path to a nearby rocky ridge that overlooked an inland valley behind the Japanese lines. It had taken only a few moments to reach the rendezvous point from Matsui's headquarters cave. Guy, urging the general on ahead at the point of his gun, did not lose his ingrained caution. He was aware of the enormous risks he was taking. But he had no choice. He was fatally committed to the course of action he had chosen; and there was no turning back.

It was broad daylight now. The sun was up, slanting through the trees, and a cool trade wind had begun to blow, touching Guy's taut face as he urged Matsui up to the crest of the ridge.

They paused there, looking down into the valley, and Guy sucked in a breath of pure dismay.

"God, what a pathetic sight!" he murmured.

In the valley there were several hundred Japanese soldiers milling about, trying to form into some sort of military formations. Their faces were gaunt, their uniforms were in tatters, and some were armed only with clubs, or sticks with bayonets attached. Their faces were dull with hunger, but among them were their officers, exhorting them to the *banzai* attack. The sharp, fanatical voices of the officers rang out above the dulled mob of men, and here and there a response flickered, catching fire from the exhortations, and a beginning was made of organization. Beyond the small knots of milling, disorganized men, however, were civilians, silent, motionless, resigned, watching the preparations with dulled faces and hopeless eyes.

"It's pitiful," Guy murmured, looking down on the scene.

Matsui spoke harshly, but with not quite his previous bravado. "There is much strength left in my men. They

will fight. We will pursue our attack to the very end."

"And if you give the order to attack, General," Guy said grimly, "you'll be dead before you get two words out."

"My order has already been given," Matsui said. "Even if I was dead, they will obey that order just the same as they will if I stand here to review them. Shoot me if you will—I will never tell my men to surrender!"

The man's adamancy suddenly infuriated Guy all over again. They were standing on a ledge overlooking the slope below, with a small screen of brush concealing them from the murmuring crowds of soldiers and civilians in the valley. Guy grabbed Matsui by the coat collar and slammed him around to throw him back against a tree. Sweat streaked the faces of both men now. Their eyes met, clashed in a battle of wills, and Guy's voice came in a slow, determined whisper.

"I'm going to give it to you straight—man to man. Not as a Marine Pfc talking to a Japanese general, Matsui. Just as one human being to another. Understand?"

Matsui nodded slowly. His hooded hawk's eyes were wary.

"You know this island is secured," Guy went on. "Saipan is lost to Japan. And with Saipan, the war is lost for Japan. Take another look at your men! Look at your sick, starving army, your unhappy civilians! Look at the women and children throwing themselves into the sea! Is this what your great, honorable Samurai code is for—to throw away precious human lives without purpose? I ask you as a man, Matsui—these people can stay alive, to be fruitful and productive in future years. Do you really want to destroy them?"

Matsui's hooded eyes slid away from Guy's direct gaze. But Guy could not tell, beyond that slight reaction, what was going on in the general's tormented mind. He went on:

"Your soldiers and those people want to live as much as I do. The decision is yours now. I give my solemn promise that they will be well treated—and you know that all your propaganda about our torturing and murdering captives is a pack of lies. So it's up to you. Order them to surrender! Tell them to lay down their arms! Give them a chance to go home again, when this is all over."

Guy stepped away from the general. He was not at all sure that he had made his point. He could not read the decision in Matsui's face.

"It's your move," he said quietly.

Matsui nodded, took a step toward the clearing beyond the brush, and paused. Guy felt a cold sweat break out all over him. What would the Japanese general do? He understood Matsui's code—death was preferable to dishonor, in all cases. There were no exceptions that Guy knew of. And yet—Matsui was a man, a human being, and surely some of the things Guy had spoken of must have struck home to him. Or was Matsui so encased in the rigid armor of his military code that he was beyond reach of any words or appeals? Guy did not know.

He could only hope.

SEVEN

GENERAL MATSUI moved slowly to the edge of the shelf of rock beyond the underbrush. As he stepped out into the open, one of the officers saw him and shouted a sharp command. The milling crowd of raggedly armed Japanese turned to stare up at their general. Matsui stood quietly in stiff, straight pride. His face told Guy nothing, for the first moment. And then a spasm, as if of physical pain, went across Matsui's face, and Guy knew he had come to a decision.

When the Japanese below were silent, Matsui spoke.

"The enemy," he said slowly, and then paused, to begin again. "The enemy has learned of our plans for attack."

A murmur came, like the breaking of surf on a shore. Matsui held up his hand.

"I therefore order you to—lay down your arms—and surrender."

There was stunned silence.

Then, from the groups of civilians in the background, came a woman's thin cry. A soldier shouted angrily, negating Matsui's words. At once a mumble of confusion came from the massed troops, as some argued vehemently against the order, and others wanted to accept it. Matsui

looked down at the confusion with impassive, dark eyes. Guy drew a deep breath and held it for interminable moments. Matsui stood at rigid attention, proud, straight, tall. But Guy saw the way the corners of his mouth began to twitch, and the way his body seemed to sag, ever so imperceptibly, in his uniform.

It was not easy, Guy thought, to watch the disintegration of a once-proud army.

Matsui spoke softly to him.

"This is not a pretty sight for me to see."

"Neither was Pearl Harbor," Guy returned. "In fact, it was pretty ugly in Los Angeles that morning, too."

Matsui nodded. "You are the Marine I have heard rumors about—the one who risks his life to talk my people into surrender."

Guy said nothing. Matsui studied him for a moment, then swung sharply back to the ledge and held up his hand in a command for silence. The babble of confusion was lulled for a moment.

"There is nothing left for you to die for!" Matsui cried. "We have been defeated honorably, through no fault of our own. We have fought in the hope that help was coming from the Imperial fleet—but the Emperor's ships are at the bottom of the sea. Therefore, you will lay down your arms now. You will surrender!"

Guy could see the faces below—some surprised, some bewildered, some bitter and unsure. Matsui stood rigidly, awaiting obedience to his command. For an ugly moment, the issue was in doubt.

Then one of the soldiers, half-naked in his tattered uniform, shouted and threw down his rifle. Another did the same. And another. Hands went up in the air, empty of weapons, indicating surrender.

Guy stepped forward where they all could see him and spoke to Matsui.

"Tell them they will be taken to food and water and will be treated humanely."

Matsui nodded and his voice rang out in confident command. "You will be taken to food, you will be fed, you will receive medical attention. This man assures me of that, and I believe him." Matsui paused, staring at his sad remnants of an army. Then he stiffened and his voice rang out.

"Attention!"

Slowly, the Japanese soldiers straightened and obeyed. All of them had thrown down their arms now.

"The march," Matsui ordered, "will begin!"

What happened next came too quick for Guy to prevent. With every eye upon him, General Matsui drew a small, ivory-handled *hari-kari* knife from the undersleeve of his uniform tunic. The blade flashed in the morning sunlight as he held it stiffly outward from him at arm's length. And then, even as Guy started forward with a cry on his lips, Matsui plunged the knife into his stomach.

He did not crumple at once. He remained stiffly, proudly upright, holding his stomach. Nothing changed in his face. And only his iron will kept him standing long enough to give his final command. His voice rang out harshly, beyond contradiction.

"March!"

Slowly the Japanese soldiers formed into two impromptu two-abreast lines and, with an officer leading the way, they began to move toward the perimeter lines along the beachhead. The shuffling of hundreds of feet only accented the silence as Matsui continued to stand watching them for a moment, almost as if they were passing in a dress-parade review before him.

Then he crumpled.

For an instant, Guy stood frozen, not knowing what to do. The civilians were moving by now, and a few of the women carried sticks to which they had tied pieces of their white underclothing in a token of surrender. But there was a wavering in the ranks of the marching troops when they saw their general collapse. Guy stood over the dead Matsui, hesitating. What should he do? He had to get going, to guide the long ranks of PW's.

Quickly, then, he remembered what Bill had done with young Pete Lewis, and remembering, he knew it was the only right thing and acceptable thing to do.

He took his bayonet and plunged it into the ground and hung the general's cap on it, as a token of honor.

Then he took a final look at Matsui's dead body—a look that was completely devoid of hostility. The next moment he came scrambling down from the ledge to take up a position on the flank of the lines of marching PW's, holding his BAR at the ready. But there was no need for it. He called out an order in Japanese, directing the surrendered soldiers toward the beachhead, and they obeyed.

And there were more.

As the lines marched across the valley, additional military personnel and civilians from Saipan joined the original marchers. One by one, in couples and small groups, they made their appearance to join in the silent ranks. They came from trees and caves—they seemed to rise up out of the very earth. Soldiers, men, women, children, the infirm and the sick and the very old. Except for the women who carried their surrender sticks, the prisoners marched with hands behind their heads, and the small children aped their elders.

The trickle of captives grew to a small stream, a river, a torrent, all slogging along in that strange, humble silence that came with the golden dawn over Saipan that morning. . . .

It was Semperi who first saw them coming. He was on a scouting party with Captain Schwabe and half a dozen other members of the unit when they topped a low ridge and saw the stream of surrendered Japanese moving toward them. Their first reaction was one of complete disbelief. Sullivan swore softly to himself. Semperi stood with mouth agape and then called:

"I'll be a fuggin' jackass—it's Gabby! He's out-done himself this time, Skipper. Will you *look* at that!"

The long line of prisoners, herded by the single Marine figure with a BAR slung under his arm, shouting an occasional order in Japanese, was a sight that Schwabe had never expected to see. He had known about Leonard's death for ten minutes—a patrol had stumbled across his old friend's body—and he had given up Gabaldon for dead, too. He still felt numb with the pain of losing Leonard, who had been with him for more years than he liked to remember. But like the Marine he was, he had gone on with his job, pushing aside personal grief to take care of the immediate work at hand.

Now, as he saw the dusty column of prisoners and the solitary figure of Guy Gabaldon urging them forward, he smiled grimly.

"I asked for some prisoners," Schwabe whispered. "And he brings in the whole damned island!"

But it was Semperi who summed it up with an awed whisper.

"Geez!" he said. "The Pied Piper of Saipan!"

Guy saw the little group of Marines around Schwabe

waiting for him and felt a vast surge of relief. He was hot, tired, dusty, uncertain of how long he could remain in control, however apathetic his prisoners seemed to be. After all, he was alone in command of hundreds of them, and there was no telling when some hotheaded fanatic among the marching columns might suddenly change his mind and turn on him.

He waved gratefully to Schwabe and saw them come forward more quickly and then he turned his attention back to the column again.

He became aware of someone marching along beside him, a small, bedraggled, tattered boy of about twelve. When Guy looked down at him, the boy looked uncertain and shy. Guy made a gesture for the youngster to straighten up and walk proudly in step with him. At once the boy responded, and was rewarded with a smile from Guy.

The youngster started to smile in return and reached out a tentative hand for Guy. Guy took it and they marched on together.

The sun felt pleasantly warm on his back. As he walked, he remembered all the years of the past, when he was a boy of twelve, and his hand was taken by Kaz Une and he was led into a new world of affection and love. Everything that had happened since that time, all the anguish and uncertainty of the years between, had had a purpose, he thought. There was a meaning in the fact that he had learned a strange tongue, and lived with people who were not strangers now. Pete and Bill and Leonard hadn't died for nothing. He knew they would have approved of the bargain, in all the lives he was saving this morning.

And this would not be the end.

It was not the last island that would have to be fought for, before the war was over. There were Tinian and Guam and Okinawa still ahead. . . .

Smiling, knowing what he would do so long as the breath and strength of life remained in him, Guy tightened his grip on the hand of the Japanese boy and marched on.

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