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Sands of Iwo Jima

By Harry Brown

This is the story of a squad of marines,
a rifle squad.

I'm Corporal Robert Dunne,
a member of that squad.

We were at Guadalcanal,
and when it was secure
we were pulled out for rest, refitting,
replacements and retraining.

The Marine Corps is long on training
and retraining...

Let that go.

After the canal, we were sent to
Camp Paekakariki in New Zealand.
Here we received our replacements,
marines from Stateside,
a long way from Stateside, 8,000 miles.

I can see you're a man
who knows how to live.

- Solid comfort.
- Solid malaria.
- Malaria, huh? Contagious?
- No, not this week. You can stay.

Nice place you got here.

Regazzi's my name, Benny Regazzi.

Bob Dunne. I'm duty NCO today.

Great. Meet my friends. This big guy
is "Handsome" Dan Shipley.

- Hi.
- What a physique!

The girls see him and faint. He comes
through this, I'll make him a movie star!

Those two guys, Flynnns.

That's Eddie and that's Frank.

- Hi, Eddie.
- Hello, Bob.

They don't drink. I got their beer ration.

- And Georgie Hellenopolis, an Irishman.
- Hello, sport.
- Where did you get those cards?
- Off your sack on the ship. Why?
- They're mine, that's why.
- I've seen lots in those bags that aren't.
- Come on, give me.
- "Semper fi", Mac.

- Hey!

- Leave them. It happens 20 times a day.
You know where those guys come from?
Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love.

- By the way, who's the squad leader?

- Sergeant Stryker.

- What's he like?

- You'll find out.

I've been in New Zealand two hours
and already they're clamming up on me.

- I hope he knows his stuff.

- Maybe we'll get liberty.

- We ain't replacements any more.

- Where is he? Where's the sergeant?

He's here.

- Well, what do you know? Stryker.

- Hello, Thomas.

- Thought you were in the First.

- I was. Sit down.

Just sit down, Thomas, anywhere.
My name is Stryker,
Sergeant John M Stryker.
You're gonna be my squad, a rifle squad.
Three of us have seen action: Corporal
Dunne, Charlie Bass and myself.
You'll learn from us. In boot camp
you learned out of a book.
Here you gotta remember the book and
learn things that haven't been printed.
You gotta learn right and fast.
Any man that doesn't want to cooperate,
I'll make him wish he hadn't been born.
Before I'm through with you, you're
gonna move and think like one man.
If you don't, you'll be dead.
You guys have had a nice easy day.
I hope you enjoyed it because
it's the last one you'll get for a long time.
You joined the Marines to fight and
you'll get your chance. I'll show you how.
If I can't teach you one way, I'll teach you
another. But I'll get the job done.
The skipper of this outfit
is Captain Joyce.

Platoon leader is Lieutenant Baker.
Platoon sergeant is Sergeant Wright.
Any questions?
That's all.
10,000 sergeants in this corps
and I draw Stryker!
You knew this guy before?
Yeah. We were stationed
together in China.
Twice he kept me from promotion.
Turned me in once.
30 days I got.
He was a sergeant major then.
Must have done something to get busted
to three stripes.
What did he turn you in for?
For... That's not important!
What's important is that he turned me in!
Maybe he didn't write the manual, but
you can bet he can recite it backwards!
- It's probably tattooed on his chest.
- Front and back, Mac.
- Say, isn't your name Al Thomas?
- Yeah.
- Weren't you a fighter?
- Just in the Marines.
- Runner-up in the heavyweight division.
- Tell him who you were runner-up to.
Stryker. Lucky punch.
Meet your new manager.
Tell him why you lost your stripes.
My natural dislike for you is
gradually developing into a great hate.
Don't let this guy do your thinking.
You'll get a square deal from Stryker.
You bet. Square deal.
I'm looking forward to the first time
he and I come head to head off duty.
Hey, take it easy
with that hand, champ!
Saddle up!
- All right, take a break.
- Take a break.
- How does your squad look?

- See me in about six months. Conway!
I was checking the records.
Your father was Colonel Sam Conway.

- What if he was?
- I was with him ten months ago.
He was my CO before he got killed.
One of the best officers and finest men
I ever served under.

- I thought if you...
- Thanks. I'll keep it in mind.
- For that, you sleep with your rifle.
- It was an accident.
- Nobody in this outfit drops their rifle.
- Fall in!

All right, saddle up. Pick it up.
Sometimes I don't know
which I hate worse, him or the Nips.

- Your father was a good marine.
- Until ten months ago.
- You shipped in when he was killed.
- I shipped in because I was expected to.

In war the men of my family
join the Marines.
I'm the last Conway, so here I am.
He'd be proud that
you're carrying on the tradition.
Not my father. He'd have expected me
to find some soft duty somewhere.

- In fact, he told me so.
- I don't get it.
I embarrassed my father. I wasn't
tough enough for him. Too soft.
"No guts" was the phrase he used.
He wanted me to be like Stryker.
"The finest man I ever served under."
I bet they got along just fine.
Both with ramrods strapped on their
backs. I'm a civilian, not a marine.
They're not going to strap one on mine.
I'm in here strictly for tradition.

- That the only reason?
- Yeah. Why?
Nothing... Stryker knows his business.
So did Jack the Ripper.

Knock off the skylarking.
You're in the wrong column.
Left foot close in there.
Look alive!
Choynski, you're all left feet!
Choynski! What do you think
you're doing?
- Running the bayonet course, sir.
- Not in this league.
Yes, sir.
Your men are pretty ragged, Stryker.
Yes, sir.
That ought to take some starch
out of Stryker. His boys didn't do so well.
Hanging him up between those poles,
we'd do a lot better.
Choynski!
OK, so I'm left-handed.
- On guard. Give me your rifle.
- What is this?
You can't learn the easy way, you'll learn
the hard way. Make a thrust.
- Without a scabbard?
- You heard me.
- You mean this way?
- Yeah, like this!
You get the idea? Corpsman!
All right, saddle up.
We'll do it again. Pick it up.
You're the only unkissable guy in camp.
This thing hurts. It ain't funny. No dame's
going to come near a mouth like this.
Don't worry, I got the scoop.
No liberty for three months. You got time.
- Three months? How did you get that?
- I got spies everywhere.
They ought to throw the book at Stryker
for doing this.
They won't. They'll give him a citation
for teaching us to be good marines.
Choynski!
They tell me you're going to live.
You were lucky today.
Someone had been instructing you that

didn't like you, you might not have been.
You better put in a little homework
on that bayonet course.
Somebody who didn't like me? I wonder
what he does to the guys he hates.
365 days in a year and
I gotta pick this one to nick myself!
You need a blow torch on your stubble.
Look who's putting out the scuttlebutt.
No liberty, he says!
Somebody made a mistake.
You got no kick coming.
You have, so don't go turning your back.
Will we take Hollywood
with them physiques!
- First Platoon!
- That's for me!
- Here, Wright, any mail for Stryker?
- No.
It's going to be rugged again tonight.
He won't solve his problems
with whiskey.
What would you do
if your wife left with your kid?
- After five years I'd forget it.
- Stryker's not much on forgetting.
- Sorry, no letter for you.
- I know it.
You know ten-year-olds. There could be
a thousand reasons why he didn't write.
- A million.
- Cut it out.
- Cut what out?
- Brushing me. The kid's all right.
- Maybe Mary influenced him not to.
- That she wouldn't do.
Of course not.
Stryker, you're a very unusual character.
- Can this be love?
- You know what I mean.
A lot of guys wouldn't see that a woman
needs a husband who's not always away.
A woman wants a home and a guy
to come in and out on time every day.

- You can tell me to shut up.
- If you can't talk to me, who can?
- Don't do it, just for once, don't do it.
- Do what?

Don't start out to get blind, staggering,
stinking, falling down drunk.

Nobody starts out to get blind,
staggering, stinking, falling down drunk.

Some do. Why not leave
half your dough with me?

You got an old maid's failings. You worry.
Don't try to follow me tonight or I'll put
a dent in that ugly head of yours.

- Ready?
- Just a minute.
- What's up?
- Nothing.

Benny didn't strip his M1 fast enough
for Stryker, so he turned him in.

They cancelled his liberty.

Perhaps our sergeant hasn't got a heart
of gold after all, but he certainly is...

You talk too much. You think I restricted
Flynn for my own amusement?

The punishment's unreasonable,
to cancel his liberty for a minor mistake.

I'm gonna tell you something, Conway.

I'm gonna tell all of you.

I'm gonna make it simple
so you'll all understand it.

They handed me you guys as a present,
a regular Easter basket.

They told me to get you into shape
so you can handle a piece of this war.

That's what I'm gonna do and that means
I'm gonna tell you what to do every day,

how to button your buttons
and when to blow your noses.

If you do something I don't like I'm gonna
jump and when I land it'll hurt.

I'll ride you until you can't stand up.

When you do, you'll be marines.

Flynn stays here.

Extra-hard product of a hard school.

Tough luck, Flynn.

- If my brother doesn't go, I'm not going.

- Shut up!

- Who are you telling to shut up?

- You!

Let's go before we all lose our liberty.

I wanna see those Wellington babes.

- How do you feel, boy?

- Like a little bird with feathers on it.

- Don't fly away, little bird.

- I can't. I'm still in the egg.

Beautiful, beautiful! I wanna dance.

You're gonna sit down.

Yes, ma'am, Tennessee,

that's where I come from.

The greatest state in the Union.

They call it the volunteer state.

Right there is where I'm from.

Smithville, Tennessee, what a town!

These are all my cousins on my mama's

side and these are on my papa's side.

We got the best tobacco there is, too.

More fertiliser comes from Tennessee

than any other place in the world.

Listen to that band! Zombies!

They're all dead.

- Maybe they like music that way here.

- Or don't know any other kind.

- I'm talking these boys into a session.

- Maybe they don't have it in them.

After I'm through, they will.

They're breaking my heart.

Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful!

- There is a happy man.

- Wait until tomorrow.

- Don't be a killjoy, dance. I'll watch him.

- I'm not much on dancing.

- You might try just this once.

- No, thanks.

- Pete's my name, Pete Conway.

- Allison.

- Hello, Allison.

- Hello, Pete.

- You're warm. Want to sit down?

- No. I don't want to lose you.

- Cutting in.

- Shove off, Mac.

What would you say if I suggested
we get some air?

I'd say I'm not supposed to leave the club
with servicemen, but to you I'd say yes.

Now what?

We know all about each other.

- You'll be missing your train.

- I'll float back on thin air.

Don't do that. You might catch cold.

Funny, I've just met you and I feel

I've known you all my life.

I feel that way, too.

- Ten thousand miles away.

- Not now.

I wanna see you again,
every time I get liberty.

I'll be here.

- Allison...

- Yes?

...I'm glad I met you tonight.

- The train...

- I know.

I'll walk you to the station.

I can get a taxi from there.

- No, I'll walk you home.

- No.

You might miss your train.

I might not see you again for a long time.

Any time I get liberty, she says, just call
her up. Man, what a barmaid!

- I'll finish the war right here.

- Drink any more and you probably will!

New Zealand ain't got rats because
they killed them all with that whiskey!

We'll drink worse before we get through.

They may bury me at sea tomorrow,
but tonight I got that nice, warm feeling.

I got a great future
for the next two hours.

You're bleeding!

Lipstick!

- Hey, fellas, look what I found!

- Hey, sports...

...look.

- Boy, he's really carrying a load!

- Gyrene!

Hey, Mac, you're a little off your course.

- Well, what do you know! Stryker.

- He's sure a mess.

Now I know what happened

to those stripes. Come on.

Shore Patrol.

- That's what it is. Give me a hand.

- You're going to help him?

If he cut my mother's throat five minutes ago, I wouldn't let them get him.

What a break! He's all set to drop two stripes and Shore Patrol shows up.

- But look what he done to me!

- Don't tell me he kissed you.

That's a great one!

Did I tell you about the guy on a train and the funniest thing happened...

- I don't know why you're helping him.

- I'll take care of it.

- Where did you come from?

- Never mind. He don't need you guys.

- How do you like that?

- He must follow Stryker like a little dog.

What do you care?

At least he took him off our hands.

A day after our leave, we drew a 22-mile hike over terrain carefully selected.

All uphill, and it was a weary bunch of marines who pitched tents that night and gratefully folded themselves inside.

Do you believe in love at first sight?

All kinds.

I never did before but I sure do now.

- Why do you have to tell me now?

- Because I'm thinking about it now.

- I'm gonna marry that girl.

- What girl?

- The girl I met last night.

- You'll feel better in the morning.

I couldn't feel any better
than I do right now.

I've been thinking, why do men
get married during a war?

- Don't know.

- It's the worst time.

I fooled around

but I never thought about marriage.

I know a lot of girls

back in the States but...

...I think it's because when you get
out here you're close to things.

You realise way down inside, no matter
how much you try not to think about it,
that maybe something's
got your number on...

...and you want to leave
a bit of yourself behind.

Doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl,
just so long as you won't be forgotten.

There'll be someone who'd never
have lived if it hadn't been for you.

Am I right?

I think I'm right.

- Hey, Conway, got a pass?

- I have.

All right, hop in. I'll give you a lift.

- I hear you got a girl in town.

- What if I have?

- They say she's a very nice girl.

- They talk too much.

Are you serious about her?

With things the way they are, this is no
time to start getting serious with a girl.

Don't know how long you're gonna

be here or when you'll be back again.

Don't even know how long you'll live.

If it's in the line of duty, you can tell me
to do something and I'll do it.

As for my personal life,

keep your hands off.

- Your father would've said it.

- I wouldn't have listened.

- You never did.

- How do you know?

- He told me.

- What did he say?

I'll tell you. He said

I was a disappointment, right?

He said I wouldn't be able
to stand up for myself, right?

- You're doing the talking.

- No, my father is.

Every time you open your mouth, he's
talking. Every thought you think is his.

It's as though he's at my shoulder.

But he didn't always say
or think the right thing.

You're gonna find that out when the
time comes. Until then leave me alone.

- You want a lift or not?

- Yeah, sure.

- What's the matter?

- Nothing. Why?

- You've hardly said a word.

- You're right. I've been thinking.

- About us?

- Myself.

That's selfish.

Honey, do you think I'm a brave man?

- What a funny question to ask.

- Well, do you?

I don't know. Why?

- I've got to prove something to someone.

- Who?

You don't know him. He's dead now.

Yes, Pete, I think you're brave.

That helps. You don't know
how much that helps.

Let's not talk about it any more.

We should have been talking about
ourselves all this time,
what's going to happen to us.

- What do you want to happen?

- I want to marry you.

I want that, too.

Funny, we barely know each other.

We see each other for what seems

only moments. And yet...

I know what you mean.

- Choynski, not going to the wedding?

- No.

I'd better get a transfer. I can't learn this bayonet business. I'm all thumbs.

- On guard.

- No, Sarge, not again!

- I'm not well from the last time.

- On guard!

- Play that thing again. You lead.

- What?

You lead!

Shift your weight.

Left, left!

There. Keep it up.

You'll get the knack of it.

Practise that

about a half an hour every day.

Hey, Sarge! I got it!

I haven't been in church since I was 14.

- Kissing the bride's a great invention.

- Sure makes me homesick.

- What's the matter?

- He looks the same.

- How do you expect him to look?

- Married, wrinkled, worried, like me.

- 44 hours and 34 minutes left. Go!

- Excuse me, sports.

Here's your wedding present

from the gang.

You've all been wonderful.

- Are you sure you've got the right guy?

- I'm sure.

Come on, get going!

- "Sempre felice", Mac!

- Keep the situation well in hand, Pete!

We got 44 hours and 33 minutes.

What are we gonna do?

Al, if I was a girl, I'd marry you.

Knock it off! I've had a hard day.

What am I doing?

44 hours and 32 minutes.

That isn't very long, is it?

No, not long at all.

I wonder how many other people
have had 44 hours and 32 minutes.

Lots I guess.

- We'll make it seem a long time.

- Years.

- Shall I open it?

- Sure, go ahead.

They're in a hurry!

Others were in a hurry.

The order said move out
and the Marines moved out.

11 days at sea. Destination?

Only the top brass knew.

Though, of course, scuttlebutt knew the
answer, a hundred answers, all wrong.

Boat Squad... halt, one, two!

Dismissed!

Too bad you couldn't see her again.

You didn't get long.

We knew it might happen.

I'll be back. I've got to believe that.

- Sure. We'll all be back.

- Gangway!

That's no way to carry a flag, Regazzi.

I've got to teach you everything.

Now watch this...

What are you gonna do with this, Benny?

I'm gonna put that up in Tokyo,
right in the middle of Times Square.

- There isn't any Times Square in Tokyo.

- There will be when I get there.

Now that's the way to fold a flag,
with the blue field showing.

What do you know!

- You got my shirt!

- It's my shirt!

- I'm telling you, it's my shirt!

- It's my shirt!

Here, fellas. You'd better
quit fighting so much.

If you don't, one of you's apt to get hurt.

Corpsman! Corpsman!

- What's that?

- Relax. It's the Navy clearing its throat.
Sure don't sound like no squirrel gun.
I hope they practise real good. What
island do you think we're aiming at?
We'll get word.

- Here it is.

- It looks like a pork chop.

- What's its name?

- Tarawa.

Never heard of it. It's the wrong place.

It's part of an atoll called Tarawa Atoll.

This particular island is called Betio.

Don't ask me how you spell it.

You'll have to stick your faces into it
but you don't have to spell it.

- This is Red Beach Three. That's us.

- What have they got there?

Everything. This island's held
by a special naval landing force.

That means Japanese marines.

They're dug in and they're mean.

They'd just as soon die as stick a nickel
in a jukebox, but that's all right.

Let the other guy die for his country.

You'll live for yours.

- What's the matter?

- Nothing.

- Get over there.

- I can hear him.

Get over there. I don't want anybody
hurt because you didn't listen.

- Schoolteacher, do me some homework.

- What's your problem, son?

Put down 5,000. Scuttlebutt says
that's how many Nips are on that rock.

- The Navy fired 1,000 tons of shells.

- Don't forget the fly-fly boys.

Those B-24s have really
been working them over.

Now add the tons of explosives, divide it
by the Nips and get the answer.

- Maybe we'll be back for noon chow.

- Don't figure that way.

The Navy and the fly-fly boys unloaded

plenty on the canal before we went in.
When we got ashore there were still a lot
of those lemon-coloured guys waiting.
Only way that island was taken
was by putting marines on the beach.
You've heard the naval foray's a waste
of time and metal. Stryker knows better.

- Who cut you in on this conversation?
- You say when I can and can't talk?
- Just when you can't talk to me.
- Knock it off, Conway.

I've had enough of your "hardbitten
sergeant" attitude.
You're so big everybody's been afraid
to take a punch at you. I'm not!
Cool off!
Forget that pencil and paper routine and
worry about staying alive on that beach.

- Don't expect any soft touch!
- "Now hear this"!

All troops report
to your debarking stations!
All right, men, sound off
when your name's called.
Now hear this,
there'll be no movies tonight!
The place is opened up for business.

- Missed!
- Maybe they're firing blanks.
- Maybe a two-headed kid's aiming.
- Maybe this is just manoeuvres.

Get out now. We're crossing the line
of departure. Lock and load!

- Good luck, Sarge!
- Charlie, give me a hand here!
Lieutenant, hit the deck! How is it?
I got hit!
Corpsman! You'll be all right.
They got us pinned down!
We can't get over these logs!

- I'm going while I can!
- Stay here, kid!

We're gonna be killed here.
I'd like to get at them!

Why rush? This is a nice place.
- They got the lieutenant!
- They'll get all of us if we don't move.
We are like fish in a barrel lying here.
- Did we train to take it lying down?
- Sarge, do something about it!
Stay where you are until I tell you.
You gotta get us out of here!
If you're nervous count your toes.
I'll do the masterminding around here.
- Where's Lieutenant Baker?
- Machine-gunned.
- Is your squad all right?
- All but one. What's holding us down?
That bunker, an old power plant. All
these bombs and they're still killing us.
- Smoke, sir?
- Thanks.
I've sent for flame-throwers to assist.
Your squad will support. Follow me!
You heard! Move out and stay down!
We've gotta silence that bunker!
Request naval gunfire
be lifted on target areas, coordinates...
...two-four-six-zero-sugar-tare. Over.
Roger and out.
Flame-throwers out! Demolition in!
Demolition out!
Shipley!
Give me a hand with this pack.
Throw it!
Move out!
Get him out of there!
- There goes one of your nine.
- Now we got tanks.
Better late than never.
Come on!
Corpsman! Corpsman! This way!
Don't wait. They'll find me.
Keep going. Hit 'em for me.
Find Stryker. Stick with him.
He's good people.
Tell him I...
I'd like to know

where the rest of the squad went.

- What's this place?

- Whatever it is it ain't healthy!

Let's go!

That was close.

Next time don't be in such a hurry.

- You're across, ain't you?

- Across what? To where?

- I'm running low on ammo.

- I am too.

Forgot about that.

We gotta get some more.

- I'll go.

- Wait! Pick a number from one to six.

- Two.

- Five.

You're both wrong.

That guy kills me.

Thomas better hurry!

- How about some bandoliers, Mac?

- Help yourself.

- How are things going up front?

- Pretty rough.

- Keep it coming.

- Good luck.

- Is that coffee?

- It sure is. Do you want some?

Do I want some, he says!

I haven't had any joe

since we left the ship.

You mortarmen sure live

the life of Riley here.

Here you are.

Beautiful!

- Where's Thomas?

- Probably dead.

No, not that guy. Let's get out of here!

- Can I have some for my buddies?

- Sure. Break out your canteen.

Tell me, how's everything been going?

Couldn't be better, Mac.

Oh, this is the life!

Come and get it, you guys!

Ammo and fresh hot joe!

Hellenopolis!

Bass!

Hey, Greek!

Hey, Greek!

- What keeps you, Thomas?

- Where's Bass?

Gutted.

No ammo.

What kept you, sports?

Major Crowe, sir.

- Jim? How you doing?

- "It's tough going, Dave".

I've committed every man.

We're dug in and staying.

Good. I've been getting reports all day
that the Nips are slipping in to your front.

If it's "banzai" tonight,
target area 2-41 is a hot spot.

What outfit have you got there?

Joyce and Stryker.

Pass the word they gotta dig in
and stay put.

No noise or movement.

Don't risk anybody unless you have to.

Hold on until we get more men there.

Yes, sir.

Major Crowe says the Nips have been
filtering into these tank traps.

Disperse your squad along this section.

Tell your men there's to be no smoking,
no moving or unnecessary talking.

If they find out how thin we are,
they can get to the beach.

That's a platoon area. All I got's
a beat-up squad, short three men.

- Couldn't you...?

- Can I give you three men?

The battalion can't give the whole
company three replacements.

Your squad is covering
the hottest spot in the line.

If it's an attack tonight they'll strike you
first. They want to know our disposition.

I repeat, your men are not to move.

- Aye, aye, sir.
- Stryker, we're going to hold this line.
- Aye, aye, sir.
- Good luck.

All right, saddle up. Follow me.

Everybody go!

Drop off at intervals, two-man foxholes.

We're gonna be spread out thin tonight.

Don't give away your position or strength.

You Flynns stay here, and no quarrels.

Dunne and Smith, drop out here.

No gab tonight!

You and Harris here! Come on, Conway.

Corpsman!

Listen.

- Corpsman!
- That's a marine.

Corpsman!

- Stryker!
- Get down and stay down!
- You had your orders!
- Somebody's wounded!
- Quiet.
- Let's get him!

Stay down! It may be an old Jap trick.

They pulled it on the canal.

- It doesn't sound like a Jap to me.
- I don't care. You'll tip our position.

Stryker!

It's Bass!

How many Japs know your name?

- You know his voice.
- Shut up.

Aren't you human at all?

A friend of yours may be dying!

Knock it off!

This is what my father taught you.

Be a great marine, be tough.

Sit here if you want. I'm getting him.

The only way you'll stop me is to kill me.

That's just what I'll do!

Stryker!

Stryker!

Sarge!

Stryker!

Please, Sarge!

Tarawa was officially declared secure
at 13.30 on the fourth day of battle.

The replacements came ashore,
our wounded were cared for
and the assault troops were relieved.

- How am I doing, Chaplain?

- God has been good to you.

You're going home.

Per istam Sanctam Uctionem,

et suam piisimam,

indulgeat tibi Dominus

"quidquid deliquisti. Amen".

Somebody beat me to it.

Skipper gave out some news.

Part of it's good, part of it's bad.

- They found Hellenopolis. He's dead.

- He was a good Greek.

Choynski, Soames and Bass are on
a hospital ship Stateside-bound.

- I wish I was with them.

- Let's get cleaned up.

Wash out those dungarees
and let's look like marines.

You too, Thomas.

- Dunne.

- Yeah?

I got a couple of bottles of sake
in my gear. Give it to the squad.

- Right.

- Tell them you got it off a dead Nip.

Why don't you break down a little?

You got it off a dead Nip.

Aye, aye.

- What's eating you?

- Know what Stryker plans tomorrow?

Another squad problem

and I'm so tired of problems!

I'm tired of Stryker!

I'm also tired of beautiful Hawaii.

Me, too.

Hey, champ, what do you think
of beautiful Hawaii?

- I don't want to talk about it.
- Clamming up again, ever since Tarawa.
- Why the silence?
- Knock it off!
- Hi! You got room for me?
- What do you know!
- You got time off for good behaviour?
- Yeah.
- Where were you? Pearl Harbor?
- Yeah, nice place. Pretty nurses.

I'll give somebody \$5
to shoot me in the foot.

- I'll do it for \$2.50.
- You're too willing!

Some replacements out here
assigned to our squad.

We build up the joint
and they come and live in it.

This is Stein and Fowler and McHugh.
He's Fowler. Mike McHugh, from Cedar
Rapids to see this war's over in a hurry.

- How old are you?
- Nineteen.
- How old?
- Well, eighteen... going on eighteen.

We heard that the squad leader's tough.

- There are rumours to that effect.
 - Tough sergeants roll off my knife!
- You're gonna find your first few days
with Sergeant Stryker very interesting.
You new men come with me.

- Attention!
- Charlie! How are you?
- Certified fit for duty, so the medics say.
- Good.

The replacements came up with me.

They get younger all the time.

- Or we're getting older.
- Or both.
- I can stand having you back.
- I can stand being back.

What happened to the squad, besides
the Greek, Shipley and Thomas?
Choynski...

Thomas? He never got a scratch.

- I was sure he got it.

- Why?

When we got stuck in a trench he went back to get ammo. Never came back.

How long between the time he went back and you got overrun?

About 40 minutes.

40 minutes?

Stay here.

Thomas!

- Yeah?

- Outside.

- What's that about?

- Don't ask me. I haven't any spies.

- That's far enough.

- What's this about?

Just that I hate your guts!

Get up.

You doped off and got one of my men killed and one of them bayoneted!

- You haven't had enough. Get up!

- Stryker...

Attention! All right, break it up.

- What's your name?

- Sergeant Stryker. Able Company, sir.

And you?

Pfc Thomas. Able Company, sir.

This may take some explaining before a court martial. Help that man up.

- You'll need medical attention.

- I'll be OK, sir.

That's debatable. You know it's not permissible for an NCO to strike a man?

- Yes, sir.

- Who struck the first blow?

Colonel, there wasn't any first blow struck exactly.

A simultaneous explosion perhaps?

Judo, sir. The sergeant was showing me how to break a judo hold.

No more judo exhibitions.

Understand, Sergeant?

Aye, aye, sir.

At least you're no stool pigeon.
Wait a minute, Stryker.
I'm wrong, dead wrong. I know it.
I doped off for some coffee,
but I didn't think a few minutes mattered.
- It did!
- I know that now, but I didn't then.
It's killing me. I can't sleep.
A hundred times I wanted to tell you,
tell somebody. I...
I liked that Greek...
I'd do anything for him.
If I could I'd change him
for me right now.
I think you would.
Guys make mistakes but every one
we make, a stack of chips goes with it.
We make a mistake
and some guy don't walk away!
For evermore he don't walk away.
I guess all we can do is just take it...
...and hope we don't make
the same mistake again.
I won't.
Let's get back.
Mail call! First Platoon.
A letter from my wife after 18 months.
Know where she is?
In England, entertaining troops.
Entertaining troops? Why isn't she here
entertaining me? I'm a troop.
"They're all such nice boys. There's
a lieutenant here..." A lieutenant!
When I get back she'll need standing
up for a month! I put on muscle lately!
Darling, this is a funny way for a man
to find out he's a father, but you are.
It happened the day before yesterday,
just in time for breakfast.
He's a boy and looks beautiful like me
and intelligent like you.
I should have told you it was going to
happen, but I didn't want to worry you.
I don't know what to call him.

We never discussed that.

- I'm a father! Hey, I'm a father!

- Let's see!

- I'm a father!

- All right, let's fall in!

Come on!

Finally we got our leave.

Ten days in Honolulu.

All of us were out on the town.

All except Stryker.

He was still the same.

- Lonesome?

- Drift.

- Whiskey.

- Two?

- Please.

- OK.

Thanks. A drink'll be good. I'm tired.

It's been a rough day...

Knock it off!

I'm sorry, Sergeant.

- Right.

- Thanks.

65 cents for a drink. It's too much.

They cheat servicemen.

We could drink cheaper at my house.

Don't throw your arm out of joint.

Thanks for the drink. I didn't mean
to make too much buzzing in your ear.

It's all right, finish your drink.

- I didn't mean to sound so tough.

- I know. You're just unhappy.

Me, too.

My name's Mary.

The long arm of coincidence,
or something.

Her name, too.

That invitation still hold?

Make yourself comfortable.

I'll fix us a drink.

Oh, dear!

Well, I can get us some more in a jiffy.

I see.

Will a sawbuck do it?

Go on, take it. It's only paper.

Well, I'll be right back.

- I hope this is your brand.

- Any brand is mine.

- She says she's hungry.

- He.

Advise him against joining the Marines.

Mummy's fixing you something. Her
boy'll be quiet while she has company.

Knock it off...

Where's his father?

Gone.

Well, I guess into each life
a little rain must fall.

There are a lot tougher ways
of making a living than going to war.

You know about babies.

Yeah, I know about babies.

So long, Mac.

- Wait!

- I can't spend it on a coral reef.

- You're a very good man.

- You'll get odds on that in the Marines.

So long.

So long, Sergeant. I'll pray for you.

Let's not get religion.

- I'll pray for you, Sergeant!

- Good luck.

You got a lot of bloodhound in you,
Charlie, but you can call off the dogs.

I'm smarter than I was 30 minutes ago.

Catch me feeling sorry for myself again
and you got my permission
to belt me in the nose!

- Buy you a drink?

- Lock and load, boy!

- Thanks!

- Two bourbon and ice.

- A baby's a big event.

- Conway!

- Treating the boys?

- Crack open the hatch!

That's great. A fellow always gets
more kick out of a boy, I guess.

I got a kid. Sam, I named him...
...after your old man.
Wait till he gets to be ten and doesn't
write. You'll be mad enough to hit him.
No, I won't, Stryker, because he won't
have to write. I'll be where he is.
And I won't insist that he be tough.
I'll try to make him intelligent.
And I won't insist that he read the Marine
Corps manual. I'll get him Shakespeare.
I don't want him to be a Colonel Conway
or Sergeant Stryker.
I want him to be intelligent, considerate,
cultured and a gentleman.
- You're out of line, kid.
- Let him be. He has a right to dislike me.
Thanks, and I intend
to exercise that right.
- I don't like you, Stryker.
- Let's talk sense for a minute, Conway.
I can't have friction in the squad.
I've tried every approach to you that I
know. Got nowhere. You're intelligent...
Don't patronise me. Your opinion of
my IQ doesn't interest me in the least.
Let's get this straight.
On duty I jump when you holler.
Off duty I exercise my God-given rights
under a democracy
and dislike whom I please.
Do we understand each other?
- Beat it.
- Come on, you guys, let's go.
I don't understand
why you don't belt him.
- Mellow in my old age, I guess.
- Too bad.
"Screaming Sam"
couldn't be proud of him.
He could. There's something inside
a guy, always proud of a kid.
- Two more?
- Not for me.
- I'll sail again. One.

- OK.
- Maybe you can steer me home?
- Charge!
Pull pins!
Prepare to throw!
Throw!
- All right, fifth relay!
- What an arm!
Pick it up!
Right in the groove!
- Look, boy, this is a live grenade.
- Gee!
- You know what they can do?
- Yes, sir.
Right hand. Wait for the order
to pull pin and pitch grenade.
- Got it?
- Yes, sir.
Ready?
Pull pin!
Prepare to throw!
Throw!
Grenade! Hit the deck!
When will you wake up? You wanna see
her again, keep your mind on your work!
- What happened here?
- Little accident, sir.
You're wounded. Corpsman!
- Yes, sir.
- Take care of the sergeant.
Come right over here, Sergeant.
You may not know it,
but you just got your life saved.
You'll get a medal.
Again the word came
and the Marines moved out.
Again scuttlebutt knew a hundred
destinations, all wrong.
This time we were a sound fighting unit,
blooded and trained.
Tarawa had blooded us.
Stryker had trained us.
- Now, I'll show you something.
- What you got there?

- What does it look like?
- A flag.
- What are you gonna do with it?
- Occupy this island in the USA's name.
- You think we'll have an easy time?
- You got me with you.
- Maybe we need two of you.
- One was enough in Tarawa.

Stick with me.

I'm a battle-hardened veteran.

Know how many Japs I knocked off in Tarawa? 32. Did I get anything for it?

I got enemies in Washington.

If the Marines didn't have me, they'd never have made it.

Now, this is how you fold a flag!

Do you believe in intuition?

Yeah... in women. Why?

It's hard to explain. I've a feeling

I'm not coming out of this operation.

Don't talk that way.

- I can't help it. It's the way I feel.

- Why?

I don't know. It's like a voice in my ear.

I can't shake the feeling off.

Take my advice, shake it off.

No dice. When things like that get in you, it's no use trying to fight them.

If a marine waits long enough he gets the word.

Our sealed orders came aboard after five days at sea.

This island is volcanic and sandy.

It's five and a half miles long and two and a half miles wide.

This mountain here

is a dead volcano. It's called Suribachi.

There's nothing on the island except three airfields and about 20,000 Japs.

The Army Air Corps B-24s have been bombing this place for 62 days.

- Maybe it'll be an easy operation then.

- We can't be sure.

Every yard is covered

by some kind of fire.
There are two possible landing beaches,
one on the east side, one on the west.
The rest of the coastline is cliffs.
They'll try and keep us off the beaches.
If they don't, they'll try and catch us
at this first airfield,
between the heights of Suribachi
and these high rocky ridges in the north.
They'll shell us from both sides. Nobody
knows what they've got on this island.
But they've had 40 years to put it there.
Saipan was our last stop.
The men who were going to hit
the beach first transferred to LS Ts.
A few more days at sea
and the time for landing came.
Saddle up!
Skip along and into the amtracs.
Anyway, it's a good day for it.
- It's cold.
- Stick around, it'll get warm.
Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of.
Hey, look!
- Driver, you the joker that wrote that?
- "Semper fi", Mac!
We should take you in along with us.
Hey, McHugh's going in with his pocket
full of books! Five books he's got!
So? The kid's a reader.
That shouldn't worry a dope like you.
When we're through with this operation,
I'm gonna break both your legs!
- I feel sick.
- I know. I felt the same way at Tarawa.
Hey, Stein, "Shalom aleychem".
Aleychem shalom.
- Sarge, I'm scared.
- So am I.
- Not you!
- Fowler, I'm always scared.
Line of departure! Get down!
Lock and load! Drop those lifebelts
when we hit the beach!

All right, hit the beach!
It ain't Brooklyn!
If this place was a blanket
I'd pull it over my head!
This is the poorest soil I ever saw. What
does anyone want an island like this for?
- That's war.
- What's war?
Trading real estate for men.
When God made the world, he must
have put all the rubbish left over here.
Corpsman! Corpsman! Take it easy.
Doggone it, almost the same place
they got me before!
Getting shot for this!
They're sure pouring it into Suribachi.
Not enough. Those Nips
are shooting right down our throats.
- Stryker!
- Yo!
- Lieutenant Shrier wants to see you.
- Lieutenant Shrier?
Stand fast.
- Stryker reporting, sir.
- I know.
Your platoon's been hit hard.
What's left has been assigned to me.
- Yes, sir.
- Naval gunfire lifts at 1100. Stand by.
Aye, aye.
Move out!
Keep your distance!
- Go on, go on!
- Corpsman! Corpsman! Corpsman!
Spread out! Dig in!
- Dunne, where's my brother?
- Back there. He's hit.
Flynn!
That's enough!
I told you you'd need this bad
some day. Thanks, Marine.
Flynn! Get down!
- You ain't got the sense of a rabbit!
- You can still be a hero crawling!

- Corpsman!
- Ma'll dust me off if I don't get him back!
Harris!
Well, I'll get a good night's sleep tonight.
Corpsman!
He won't need him.
- Pillbox too big to handle with these.
- A bazooka?
- If we had one.
- I got nothing to do. I'll go pick one up.
Regazzi didn't make it.
You never know what's happening.
Listen.
- It's a tank.
- Yeah, but whose?
Ours!
It's Regazzi.
Pillbox at 2 o'clock.
OK, give 'em a hot foot!
Thanks, Mac.
- I couldn't find a bazooka.
- You did all right. Saddle up!
No one had ever seen anything like it.
No one would have believed it possible.
That smoking, miserable, bloody island.
After three days and three nights,
and at the end of that time,
we'd barely reached the foot of
Suribachi, where we were the first day.
- We'll sack here for the night.
- Best news today.
Pair off and one man awake at all times.
Keep alert. Let's go.
It'll start getting rough tomorrow
against Suribachi.
It started getting rough
when you put on that uniform.
You wanna see a good-looking kid?
Husky little boot. What's his name?
We're gonna name him Sam,
Sam Conway.
A name that's been awarded the Navy
Cross is good enough for any kid.
There's something I've been trying

to say but... I can't find the words.
Two universities and you can't find
the words to say you were out of line?

- OK, I'm out of line.

- No, you were. There's a difference.

We'd better get some sack time.

Wanna sleep first or watch?

- I'll watch.

- OK.

Everybody gets out of line
once in a while.

Thanks, gyrene.

Where's Sergeant Stryker?

- Stryker?

- Right there.

- What do you want?

- Lieutenant Shrier wants to see you.

- Stryker, sir.

- Yes, sir.

I'm taking a patrol up Suribachi.

Get your men squared away

and be ready at 0700.

- The rendezvous is that Nip tank there.

- Aye, aye, sir, 0700.

That little voice whispering
in your ear again?

Don't worry. I've known
a million guys that have heard it.
Most of them make it. A few don't.

The percentage is on your side.

- Did you ever hear it?

- No.

- Don't you ever worry about it?

- What good would it do?

- You're indestructible.

- Stick close. It might rub off!

I'll do that.

Banner Three, this is Easy Five. Patrol is
ready to move. Request supporting fire.

Ow!

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai elohenu...

Adonai echad.

Amen.

Radio!

Banner Three, this is Easy Five. Over.

This is Easy Five. Cease fire,
we're preparing to move over the top.

- Roger and out. Stryker!

- Yes, sir.

Colonel's ordered that we put up this flag
when the top's secure. Get it there.

Aye, aye, sir.

What is this?

Put yours away.

This is the one we're gonna use.

First squad. Find something we can use
as a standard and we'll put this up.

- Conway, you made it.

- I guess that little voice was wrong.

- I feel better.

- I feel better, too.

I never felt so good in my life.

How about a cigarette?

- Is he...?

- Yeah.

If he had to get it
it's the way he'd have wanted.

It's a letter to his kid.

"Dear son, I guess none of my letters
have reached you.

"I thought I'd try again as I'm feeling
"that this may be the last
time I can write you.

"For a long time

I've wanted to tell you many things.

"Now that you're a big boy, I will.

"If we'd been together even for a while,

"I could've explained many things
much better than writing them.

"You've gotta take care of your mother,
and love her and make her happy.

"Never hurt her or anyone as I did.

"Always do what your heart
tells you is right.

"Maybe someone will write you some day
and tell you about me.

"I want you to be like me in some
things, but not like me in others.

"When you grow older and get to know
more about me, you'll see I've failed...

"...in many ways.

"This isn't what I wanted
but things just turned out that way.

"If there was only more time I..."

Guess he never finished it.

I'll finish it for him.

There she goes.

All right, saddle up!

Let's get back in the war!