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A Town Like Alice

By W.P. Lipscomb

[RANK GONG]

[DRAMATIC THEME MUSIC]

[TRAFFIC NOISE]

[CLOCK CHIMES]

But Miss Paget, d'you
want to go back to Malaya?

After what happened there?

It's because of what
happened there.

But what good will it do you?

Won't you be only torturing yourself?

No.

Now I've come into this
money, I've...

...thought of all the things I can
do with it, but...

...there's only one thing I
really want to do.

And I must do it.

I'm going back to the village in
Malaya, where they took us in.

Where we lived for
three years of the war.

Those people rusked everything
they had to protect us.

Now, at last, something I
can do to pay them back.

Yes, but there's no need to
go there un person.

I could transmit a sum of
money to them.

Oh, no, I don't want
to do it like that.

I want to go back there myself...

...and give them the one thing
I know they really need.

I want to go back to dig a well.

[INNOCENT MUSIC AND BIRDSONG]

[EXCITED SHOUTING]

- Jean!

- Oh, Fatuma!

[JEAN LAUGHS]

Jean.

You've come back to us at last.

- It works!

- Of course it works.

When I dug a well it
always works.

Let me try.

[CROWD EXCLAIMS IN WONDER]

[CHATTER AND LAUGHTER]

[MUSIC]

- Jean.

- Oh.

Well, it's finished.

Yes, ut's finished.

And now you will leave us again.

What wull you do, Jean?

Oh. I don't know.

- Perhaps you will get married?

- No.

No.

No, I shan't get married.

I shall never get married,
not now.

Not after all that's happened, since
the day that changed my whole life.

That day in Kuala Lumpur
un 1942.

And uf the telephone hadn't rung,
uf only I hadn't stopped to pick it up.

[KEYS CLACKING]

Pay attention, everybody, please.

I've got something to say to you.

You've all been told what to do
un a state of emergency.

Well, thus is ut. You're to get on the
first traun you can to Sungapore.

When you get there,
report to head office.

Passages have been arranged
for England.

[MURMURING]

Please be quiet. The Japanese are at
Tanjong Malum, fifty miles from here.

Specual trains have been arranged
for evacuees. so, get out quuck.

That's all. Goodbye.

[MURMURING]

You too, Jean, just drop
everything and get out.

How are you going to get
Mrs Holland and the children away?

- We'll be all right.

- I thought the car was in dock?

I'm going to get it. Listen, Jean,
get on the first train you can.

Fight your way on if necessary.

See you in Singapore.

Good luck and goodbye.

Goodbye, Mr Holland.

[PHONE RINGS]

- Phone.

- Oh, don't bother about the phone now.

Come on!

Oh, I'll catch you up.

- Hello, who's that?

- Oh, come on!

- [WOMAN ON PHONE] Hello? Hello?

- Oh, you go on, I won't be a minute.

- Hello?

- Oh, Mrs Holland, he's just gone.

I've been trying to get the office
for ten minutes, where is he?

He's just gone to get the car.

[BABY CRYING] The servants have
all gone and I've got no help at all.

Oh, Jane, please go along...

...you're making too much trouble.

- Mummy, the baby's crying!

I know, dear!

Now, get your things. Go on,

Freddie, go on, Jane.

Oh, it's the children.

I can't manage them on my own.

We'll be packing at the same time.

What?

[CLICK, BUZZ]

Hello?

Hello?

Hello.

[ENGINE TURNING OVER]

Here, let me have a try.

[ENGINE FAILS TO START AGAIN]

Haven't you got a
car I could hire?

- All cars gone.

- Haven't you anything at all?

- All gone.

- Here.

[CONTINUES TRYING TO
START ENGINE]

[AEROPLANE NOISE]

Oh, I wish he'd come,
I wish he'd come.

Can I take my rocking horse?

No, darling, we can only take
what we can carry.

- Here, take--- take Bunty.

- No, I want my rocking horse.

I don't want Bunty, I want
my rocking horse.

Mrs Holland, I'll put the baby's
things in this suitcase here.

Oh, Jean, what could've
happened to him?

He couldn't be so long
getting the car.

Oh, I expect it'd be difficult
getting repairs done today.

Yes, but he's been hours.

Oh, something must've happened.

[BABY CRIES]

[NOISE OF ARTILLERY FIRE
IN THE DISTANCE]

Did you hear that?

It was guns.

They must be blowing up
the bridges.

[CAR HORN BEEPING URGENTLY]

DADDY!

MR HOLLAND:

You ready, darling?

What are you doing here, Jean?

Oh, I came to give your wife

a hand, Mr Holland. But...
...now you're back I can go
and get the train.
No, you won't, you can't.
There's no transport running.
- I'll get a lift somewhere.
- No, you're in with us - sink or swim.
All set, Eileen?
- Yes, I'll be ready in a minute.
- You're ready whether you like it or not.
Just drop everything and come
along. One suitcase each.
[BABY SOBS]
Come on, darling.
Come on, Jane.
- Quick, Jane.
- Come on.
[ENGINE STUTTERS]
Pheew.
[KNOCKING SOUND]
[ENGINE DIES]
[CLICKING]
That blasted mechanic.
Shall I start it, Dad?
I'll give you the word.
Try her now.
[ENGINE TURNS BU DOESN'T CATCH]
Try her again.
[ENGINE TURNS BU DOESN'T CATCH]
[CLICKING]
[DISTANT MACHINE-GUN FIRE]
Well, that's not
blowing up bridges.
You'd better get out.
Freddie, try her again.
[ENGINE TURNS AND CHILD MURMURS]
- How far have we come?
- About five or six miles.
But Penang's fifty, isn't it?
- Just about.
[SOUND OF VEHICLE
APPROACHING]
- In the ditch, quick! Come on, Freddie.
- Freddie.

- Daddy?

- Shush.

[BABY CRIES AS

VEHICLE SLOWS]

[DOOR SLAMS]

[FOOTSTEPS]

Stopped for a picnic?

- Our car's broken down.

- It's a fine time for that. Come on.

- We're making for Penang.

- You're in luck then, hop in.

You'll have to move up inside. Hurry,
please, there's five more to come in.

Look, there's my teacher,

Miss Horsefall.

Hello, Freddie. Here,

Mrs Holland.

- Oh, take the baby.

- Hello, Freddie, you'll find Timothy in there.

[BABY CRIES]

Sorry, sir, but the Japs mustn't
get your car. I'll have to burn it.

Driver, pull up fifty yards.

I've got thirty-five for you, sir. Sixteen
women, twelve men, seven children.

- Thirty-five?

- Yeah.

Shove them in the
accounts office, please.

Right, sir.

Driver, take 'em round
the accounts office.

And tell 'em not to wander about.

I can get them away in
fishing boats.

What about the launch, sir? The Osprey,
she's due back this evening.

She won't be back here
again, not now.

- Mmm.

- It's fishing boats or nothing.

[CROWD MURMURS]

[BABY CRIES]

That's the accounts office,

in there.

Dad, can we go in the
garden, please?

You can play with the other children
but don't make too much noise.

Hmm.

- Oh, Jean.

- Yes?

Can I have something
to wipe his face?

- Oh, yes, could you pass me---

- This one?

[CROWD MURMURS]

I, er, suppose you haven't got such
a thing as a cigarette, have you?

[BABY CRIES]

Oh, come on, Arthur, don't let
everyone push you around.

I beg your pardon.

That is not a camp stool.

Old bag.

- I wish I hadn't brought so many things.

- Oh, you're lucky.

I had to leave everything behind.

- Oh, did you?

- Hm.

[KISSING SOUNDS]

Who da babba, den?

[BABY LAUGHS]

Miss Horsefall, excuse me.

But, you see, I'm a sick woman---

I'm sorry, Mrs Frith.

I'll come back later.

Oh.

- Yow! Yow!

- [MAKES MACHINE GUN NOISES]

Bang, bang, bang,

bang, bang, bang!

Well, that's that.

Fishing boats put to sea.

No boats.

[TELEPHONE RINGS]

DO's office. Who?

The lighthouse keeper?

Yes, he's here.

For you, sir.

- Hello?

- Johnson here, sir.

- The Osprey's just passed the lighthouse.

Thank you, Johnson, that's fine.

They've sent the Osprey back,
it's just past the lighthouse.

- Get your party ready.

- Right, sir.

- Yooww! Yooww!

- [MAKES MACHINE GUN NOISE]

- Bang! Bang, bang, bang, bang!

- Yooww!

All right, get ready, please.

The launch is coming back, and
we can get you down to Singapore.

Now, be as quick as you
can, please.

[BOAT ENGINE NOISE AND
CHILDREN'S VOICES]

[CHILDREN CHATTER]

[BABY GIGGLES AND CRIES]

- I'll take these for you.

-Thank you.

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

[FIRING CONTINUES]

Bang, bang, bang, bang.

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

Sergeant, save your truss.

Save your truss---

[GUNFIRE]

GET BACK, MAN! GE BACK, GET BACK.

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

Bang!

[MACHINE GUN FIRE]

[SOLDIERS' FOOTSTEPS]

Bang!

[CHUCKLES]

Michael?

- Bang!

- Michael!
[SCREAMS]
Michael!
MICH--!
Michael!
[HE SOBS AND WAILS]
[SCREAMS]
Michael!
[CRYING]
[BABY CRIES]
Everybody stand up.
Men, stand.
Against the wall, with hands
raised. Like that.
There. There.
Women stand, in line.
Facing men.
Come on, hurry up.
We take all money.
Watches.
Jewellery. And you get
the receipt.
[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
All turn round, now.
When Japanese officer
comes, all bow.
[SERGEANT ANNOUNCES
IN JAPANESE]
[APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS]
[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
You are prisoners now.
You do good things, you
get good from Japanese.
You do bad things, you
get shot very quick.
So do good things always, please.
Men must go to prison camp now.
Women and children stay here.
You say goodbye now.
Please may we know what will
happen to the women and children?
Imperial Japanese soldiers always
kind to women and children.

You say farewell now.
Truck waiting.
Thank you.
[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
- [SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
- You stay. [BABY CRIES]
[SUBDUED VOICES]
Men outside, please.
Oh, no.
[BABY CRIES]
Quick.
Quick, please.
Goodbye, Daddy.
[SHE SOBS]
[BABY CRIES]
- [BACKGROUND] Goodbye, Jean.
- Goodbye.
[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]
You will send me a
postcard, won't you?
Hurry, please.
Goodbye, you old
stick in the mud.
[CRYING]
[BABY CRIES]
Don't leave me, please, please don't
leave me. No, don't leave me.
[BABY AND EILEEN CRY]
- NO! OH.
- You.
You come now, very quick.
No, don't go. PLEASE.
[BABY CRIES]
- Oh, God. Oh, don't go.
[EILEEN AND BABY CRY]
[SOMBRE MUSIC]
[SWORD UNSHEATHED]
[JAPANESE SALUTE]
[SYMBOLIC MUSIC]
[HE SALUTES]
[ORDER GIVEN IN JAPANESE]
Everybody stand up.
When Japanese officer
comes, all bow.

Ladies.

Orders come.

You go back Kuala Lumpur.

Then to Singapore, perhaps.

Prisoners' camp there

for women and children.

It will be very happy.

- Back to Kuala Lumpur?

- Yes.

You start now.

Captain.

You speak to Japanese officer.

You bow, always.

- Captain, may I speak, please?

- Yes.

Where is the truck?

- The truck?

- Truck for women?

No, you walk.

Walk? But it's fifty miles.

You go one bit each day.

Impossible. We can't walk
in this heat.

English women have

grand thoughts always.

Japanese women not mind walk.

- Now you walk.

- We're not Japanese women.

No.

You are the arrogant English.

You will apologise and bow.

Apologise, I say.

[WEAPONS COCKED]

- APOLOGISE!

- OH, NO!

Don't--- shoot.

It is hard to be prisoner.

We will try to do good things.

Very good thoughts.

You march now.

In line, please.

Kowtowing to a Jap.

Disgusting.

No, she's quite right.

We are prisoners.
They can shoot us if
they want to.
You can shoot me if I
ever kowtow to a Jap.
You march now.
In line, please.
[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]
[STOICAL MUSIC]
OKAY. JUST A MINUTE.
YES.
YES, YES.
[MOSQUITOES BUZZING]
[BABY CRIES]
I'll take him.
- Are you all right, Mum?
- Yes, dear, I'm all right.
[BABY CRIES]
Oh..!
Quinine - who's got some quinine?
Here.
Thank you.
Jean, damp this for me.
Tell Mrs Knowles not
to drink that water.
Oh, I shouldn't drink that water
if I were you, Mrs Knowles.
We'll get some fresh in
the next village.
[MOSQUITOES BUZZ CLOSE BY]
[SHOUTS]
WE GO.
[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]
Come on everybody,
on your feet.
[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]
Oh, we can't take all this stuff.
Shall I just take enough for the baby,
and things for Freddie and Jane?
How far have we come?
We're doing fine.
A good seven miles.
- But it's forty miles to Kuala Lumpur.
- Forty miles!

[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]

[SOMBRE MUSIC]

[BIRD CALLING]

[ORDERS SHOUTED IN JAPANESE]

- Eye drops.
- Thank you.
- Chloradine.
- Thank you, dear.
- Two aspirins.
- Thank you.

Thank you.

- Quinine.
- Thank you, dear.

Sorry, I haven't got any.

How lucky you are not to have
to bother with silly medicines.

Oh, not this one--- oh, no,
that's for after meals.

And this is to stimulate
my appetite.

I'll take this for the children
and come back for mine.

- Jean.
- Hm?

Do something for me.

Speak to Mrs Frith. She mustn't
get away with it.

I know what you want. But I'm a sick
woman, I'm under doctor's orders.

It's a miracle I've
got as far as this.

Come on, Mrs Frith, we
must share our medicines.

You can keep your special ones.

- I'll just take the quinine and the codeine.
- May God forgive you.

You'll be all right.

You'll be sorry when I'm dead.

Timothy.

Come here.

You can look after poor Timothy.

Well, I'd like to.

I'm so sorry, I simply
haven't the strength.

You can look after each other.

Why you not march?

Very bad thing.

Can we please have a
truck to Kuala Lumpur?

You not go Kuala Lumpur.

No railroad.

British destroy bridges.

You go Port Swettenham,
that way.

Then ship take you Singapore.

But it's nearly fifty
miles to Port Swettenham.

How're we going to get there?

- Walk?

- Yes, walk.

One bit each day.

You get there very quick.

Then ship to Singapore.

[BABY CRIES]

Come on. Shush.

Jean, goodness.

Mrs Holland.

Come on, now.

Jean.

Let me see him.

[SOMBRE MUSIC]

Oh, Robin's really taken to you.

Poor boy.

I had such a bad time with him.

I haven't been strong since.

You'll be all right.

Freddie.

Jane.

They're in God's hands now.

And yours.

[MUSIC SWELLS]

[BABY CRIES]

Oh, why don't you eat your
supper, Freddie?

[HE SOBS]

[CHILDREN CHATTERING]

[BABY CRIES]

Very sorry, no good.

Well, you can have these too.

- You have money?

- No.

- Cigarette?

- No.

- Anything else?

- Nothing.

Look, I must have some
milk for the baby.

Tinned milk or powdered
milk, anything.

Milk is for orphanage.

Well, haven't you any tins
of soup or vegetables?

Very sorry, all finished.

[BABY CRIES]

[SHE SPEAKS IN MALAY]

[TALKING HEATEDLY]

[PROTESTING]

Oh..!

Thank you.

Thank you.

This the last one until
end of the road.

Thank you very much.

[SPEAKS IN MALAY]

[BABY CONTINUES TO CRY]

[CHILDREN CHATTER]

- Isn't it nice?

- Yes, it's lovely.

It's smart.

Goodbye.

Goodbye.

Thank you very much.

Come on, children.

Isn't it smart?

They gave it to me.

My dear, there's such a thing as
keeping up appearances.

[COMEDIC MUSIC]

[CHILDREN LAUGH]

[SHE SCOLDS THEM]

[MAN WHISTLING A TUNE]

[SINGS] "Oh, all of you

Dukes and you Duchesses...

- Give us the adjustable, will you, Ben?

- Yep.

..."Be careful of things
that you touches-es.

"Because all of you light-fingered
gentlemen... [TAP TAP TAP]

..."We'll meet you in Botany---"

- Hey, Ben?

Get those ruddy Nips to get those ruddy
women out the way...

...I can't ruddy well see
what I'm doing.

- Are we in the way?

- Who said that?

- I did.

I am English.

- [BANG] Ooh!

- Ooh!

- Hey?

[NERVOUS LAUGH]

I'm sorry, I thought you were
a boong.

G'day!

[ALL GREET HIM]

- Oh, hey, what--?

- But you're English!

No fear, we're Australians - we're
driving this thing for the Japs...

...we're taking it up to

Port Swettenham.

G'day!

[EXCITED CHATTER]

- How are you.

- We're walking to Port Swettenham.

You're walking?

Where from?

- From Kuala Lumpur.

- Hey, d'you hear that, Ben?

Yeah, it's a pretty rough deal. How d'you
get on for tuck if you've no camp?

We get a pint offish stew a day.

And we beg from the Malays.

And they give us food if

they've got some themselves.

What happens when you're sick?

Well, we get well or we die.

We've run out of medicine.

If you had such a thing as a cigarette,

I'd throw my arms about you.

I'll settle for that.

Here we are.

- Here you are.

- Thank you.

- Would you like one?

- Oh, please.

Here you are.

Light it for ya.

- Hello, Colonal.

- Hum.

- Thanks, Ben.

- Ah, you're pretty quick on the uptake.

- She's quick on anything.

- [ALL LAUGH]

- I'm sorry I haven't got a cigarette, I---

- That's all right.

- I'll get one tonight.

- Oh, are you staying here tonight?

Well, if you're staying, Mrs Boong,

we are too. [LAUGHTER]

[SHOUTING]

HEY. GET BACK TO WORK.

- Ah, drop dead.

- Oh.

- You'd better beat, it, ladies, go on.

- Yeah.

- Okay.

- See ya later.

- Bye. Thanks very much.

- Bye.

- Hey.

- Yes.

- What sort of medicine do you want?

- Oh, quinine...

something for the children's

skin troubles...

...dysentery, anything at all,

anything.

You got any money?

- No, I haven't.

- Well, I'll fix something.

Hey, I didn't think the first time
I talked to an English lady...

...she'd look like you.

Oh, you're quite an
oil painting yourself.

[GUARD SHOUTS]

YOU HEAR WHAT I SAY?!

Beat it.

How do we fix a
breakdown, Ben?

Oh, take a dekkko at the hub, pull out
the half shaft from the differentials...

...strip away the crown and pinion.

Throw away the carburettor.

- Throw away the truck.

- Ha, ha.

Hey, how're you gonna get the
medicine if you haven't any money?

[CLANKING AND TAPPING]

- Yeah, the old truck looks pretty bad to me.

- Yeah, looks pretty crook.

[CLANKING AND TAPPING]

[POURING SOUND]

We can sell it in the village.

[TALKING IN JAPANESE]

- [EXCLAIMS IN MALAY]

- Shut up.

Shut up.

Okay.

Look, friend.

You want some petrol?

[MAKES NOISES]

[CLICK]

- Petrol.

- Okay.

Two. You give me some quinine.

- Petrol.

- No, that's not it.

Two petrol, you me...

- Quinine.

- Petrol, yes.

Look...

- ...you want some petrol?

- Yeah, petrol.

Me want some quinine.

[INSECTS BUZZING,

ANIMALS CALLING]

[HE WHISTLES]

[HE WHISTLES TWICE]

[FIVE QUICK WHISTLES]

[FOUR QUICK WHISTLES]

There's your quinine.

This is the stuff the Chinese
take for dysentery.

It's all written in Chinese,
but it means...

...take three of these leaves
every four hours.

Now, I've got some sambong for
the skin diseases.

I could never pay you
for all this.

The Japs are paying.

Only they don't know it.

- Oh, thank you.

- Joe Harman.

- My name's Jean, Jean Paget.

- Sorry I called you Mrs Boong. G'day.

- Good day. Oh, thank you.

- G'day.

Don't go.

What about the guards?

I'll watch 'em for yer.

- Okay?

- Okay.

Want a fag?

Oh.

It's a Jappo.

Ta.

[LOUD BIRD CALLS]

Good night.

Ah-ha.

No, I don't come from Sydney.

I work in the Northern Territory.

A place called Willstown.

The the east of the Alice.

- I'm a stockman.

- Alice?

Yeah. Alice Springs.

It's a town dead in the centre,
between Darwin and Adelaide.

Oh, I thought the middle of Australia...
...was all desert.

- My word, no.

No, Alice is beaut, you get three meals
a day there every day. You'd like it.

Would I?

[BOTH LAUGH]

But, er, your place, is it a
sheep farm or something?

No, it's too hot for sheep.

Cattle, about eighteen thousand
a head.

- Sounds a big place.

- Hm, two thousand seven hundred.

- Acres?

No, square miles!

- Oh, one farm?!

- Well, a station, you call it.

- How many men do you take to run it?

- About three, and about nine boongs.

- What is this "boong"?

- It's a Aussie word, boong.

It means Gyppo, Abo, black fella.

- Oh.

- You can't get white fellas to work there.

It's about sixty miles to the
nearest homestead.

- Must be lonely.

- Yes, it is.

For women, huh.

I s'pose you've gotta be
born to it.

But you'd like the Alice.

[SOFT, TENDER MUSIC]

It's beaut there, it's--- Well, er, country's
all red, and the mountains are red.

And then, in the evenings sometimes,
it all goes kind of purple, and...

... 'course, after the wet it's green.

And it's all right.

Ah, I suppose everybody likes their own place, and the Alice is my place.

[GENTLE, LILTING MUSIC]

Where does he come

from, this Joe?

He talked about a town called Alice.

[MUSIC SWELLS]

He made it sound---

all right.

[STOICAL MUSIC]

[CROWD NOISE]

No ship for you here.

You go Port Dickson, that way.

[THUNDERING]

[MILITARY DRUMROLL]

So sorry. No food for persons here.

You must go Tampin.

That way.

[SHOUTING IN JAPANESE]

[DRAMATIC MUSIC]

- We've got one of these at home.

- So have we.

So have we, too.

Oh! Ah..!

[SIGHS]

I found it first!

My dear, I'd already seen it from the corridor.

Well, I got here first and I'm staying here.

- I'm tired and I'm fed up.

- We're all tired, aren't we?

I'm as tired as you are.

In any case, I'm older.

Huh! I wouldn't dispute that!

- Oh, one of these days!

- What is it?

Nothing.

I was just wondering how long one can go on, that's all.

[FROM OUTSIDE]

Come here, everybody, come here!

Quick! Quick! Quick!

Down the corridor,
come on, hurry.

You'll never believe it,
it works! It's working!

They left it behind and
it's working.

Come on! Hurry, hurry!

I can't believe it.

[BABY CRIES]

I just turned on the tap and
it worked!

[EXCLAMATIONS OF DELIGHT]

Come on!

[THUD]

Oh!

[SHRIEKS OF DELIGHT]

Now we can have a bath, girls!

[MORE SHRIEKS]

[COMEDIC MUSIC]

[LAUGHTER]

[BABY CRIES]

Thank you.

Soap, please.

Now, darling, don't cry, come on.

There we are, now.

Come on, lie down. Lie down, there's
a good boy. Be back in a minute.

Stop it, Timothy.

Stop it!

Ah!

[CHILDREN SHRIEKING]

[HOPEFUL MUSIC]

Wait for me, wait for
me, I'm coming!

Ah.

Oh..!

Ooorh!

YEARRH--YOWWW!

Look, Milesey. Bananas.

NER-YOW.

[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]

[ADMONISHES IN JAPANESE]

[THREATENING MUSIC]

Gunso!

Gunso!

[PANICKED CRIES]

[CRYING]

[FREDDIE SCREAMING]

[CRYING WEAKLY]

Mummy.

Mummy. Mummy.

Mummy.

Freddie what is it?

What's happened?

Freddie, what is it? What is it?

What's the matter?

- [SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

- What is it, what's that?

- [REPEATS IN JAPANESE]

- I can't understand! Freddie, what is it?

- [REPEATS IN JAPANESE]

- Snake!

- Ya, snake.

[FREDDIE CRYING]

[CRYING]

- Come along, dear, we'll go for a walk.

[SOBBING]

[WEAK, SHALLOW BREATHING]

[BREATHING STOPS]

Freddie!

Freddie.

[POIGNANT MUSIC]

[WEEPING]

I'm sorry, I can't have you here.

I have no facilities for

women prisoners.

No rations.

Tonight you will stay in school.

Tomorrow you must go elsewhere.

[BABY CRYING]

But, what's going

to become of us?

You've got to understand.

We've been walking for four months.

Four months, this way and that way.

Nobody taking any
responsibility for us.
Nobody caring.
Four of us have died already.
Now this little boy.
We must get to Singapore or
we shall all die.
Haven't you any ships?
- Yes, we have ships.
- For Singapore?
Well, the ships go to
Singapore, yes.
Oh, thank God.
When can you send us?
Tomorrow?
- Can we go tomorrow?
- You stay tonight, in the school house.
Tomorrow, we see.
You come here.
No you.
You got very nice baby.
He's not mine, his mother's dead.
I'm taking him to Singapore.
I have a order. No more
prisoners go to Singapore.
Strict order. Very sorry.
- What can we do? Can we stay here?
- You stay tonight, yes.
- But no longer?
- Sorry, many children need this school.
Well, can we build our own camp?
We won't ask you for anything.
Except food. No
food here for prisoners.
No, you go to prison camp.
[QUIETLY]
Oh.
You go to prison camp at Kuantan.
Kuantan?
But that's on the East Coast.
That's on the other side of Malaya,
nearly two hundred miles!
Okay, two hundred miles.
But how do we get there?

By rail, by truck?
Walk, is that it? We walk?
Women and children, two hundred
miles. We walk until the rest of us die.
That's what you want, isn't it?
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE THE
COURAGE TO SHOOT US ALL?
GO ON, SHOOT US. SHOOT US.
WOMEN AND BABIES, SHOOT! SHOOT!
- SHOOT!
- No.
All right, Captain.
We'll walk to Kuantan.
Come here,
come here, please.
Two hundred miles. Yes, that
is very far with a baby.
I make an arrangement.
- You could send us by truck.
- No, you stay here.
I make good arrangement.
You stay good house.
English house.
All of us, you mean?
Others walk Kuantan, you stay.
You keep baby if you want.
Japanese solider very
kind to women.
You will be very happy.
COME BACK.
COME BACK.
You, come here.
Kuantan.
Two hundred miles.
We'll never get over
the mountains.
Oh, yes we will.
[CAR STARTS]
[ENGINE REVVING]
- Ah, I think it's the carb.
- Yeah, it must be.
Thank you.
Jean!
Jean!

Jean!

[BABY GURGLES]

Jean, where've you been?

I thought you were going to
Port Swettenham.

We've been looking everywhere
for you. Where've you been?

Oh, Joe, they keep moving us on.

They won't let us stop.

They say there's no camp for us,
there's no camp anywhere.

[SHOUTING IN JAPANESE]

- Joe, go back.

- JOE!

- [SHOUTING IN JAPANESE]

- Can I get anything for you?

Can I get anything for the kids?

Them stinking Japs, they
mean business, Joe.

- Joe, go back. We'll be all right.

- COME ON, JOE!

Please go! You'll be killed!

- Come on, Joe.

- Where are you bound for?

- Kuantan.

- **JOE:**

We're up and down
that road every week.

I'LL FIND YOU!

[GUARDS SHOUTING]

[BABY CRIES]

I can't. I can't.

MISS HORSEFALL:

MRS FROST:

[QUIET SOBBING]

Come along, dear.

Come along.

- Can't.

- Come on, now - try, try.

[MOANING WEAKLY]

Come along.

Come along.
Jean, you've been giving
Jane quinine.
I want some for Brenda.
You know there's been
none for a week.
I saw you giving it to her!
Does she look like it?
We must go on, we must
get out of the swamps.
How is she, Mrs Frost?
She can't go any further.
We'll rest here, till daylight.
There, darling.
Have a little rest.
Isn't there any drinking water?
Not till we boil some.
Jean.
Poor little Jane.
[WEEPS]
[SINGS] "There's a friend
for little children
Above the bright blue sky."
"A friend who never changes
Whose love will never die."
"Our earthly friends may fail us
[BABY CRIES]
"And change with changing years.
This friend is always worthy
[BABY CRIES]
"of that dear name he bears."
[STRING REFRAIN]
- Hey, look.
- Huh?
Look.
It's them.
How many?
One, two.
- Three, four, five, six.
- There she is, the one with the baby.
[ENGINE NOISE]
[BEEPS HORN]
Okay for operation breakdown?
Yeah.

"Dear Mrs Boong."

Who's Mrs Boong?

[HORN BEEPS]

[GENTLE MUSIC]

Well, what's it like?

- What, Southampton?

- Yeah.

Full of docks and ships.

The countryside's green and cool.

I've had enough of heat and
sun and fever.

You're not kidding!

There's an ice rink there.

I used to skate a lot.

I could waltz.

- What, on ice?

- Mm.

- I'd like to have seen that.

- Hm.

What d'you do in Kuala Lumpur?

- Oh, just secretary, nothing special.

- Oh.

Look, ah, your feed tomorrow,
what d'you get?

We may be lucky tomorrow.

Oh, we'll be all right when we get to
Kuantan, to a real prison camp.

- In Kuantan?

- Yes, there's one there, isn't there?

Oh, sure, yes. Well, I wouldn't know.

Yeah, yeah, you'll be all right there.

I can get a couple of
chickens and...

...drop 'em off when we
come back up country.

Oh, Joe, I wouldn't like you
to do that.

Now, look, you attend to your business,
Mrs Boong, and I'll attend to mine.

Take everything you can get.

Prisoners' motto.

- And mine.

- Please don't take risks for us.

Look, anyone can run rings round the Japs

as long as you know how to scrounge.

All clear.

Just a minute.

Okay.

Oh, one other thing.

Mr Boong, did he get away?

There's no Mr Boong, Joe.

Oh.

- Here.

- Thanks.

Thanks mate.

[ENGINE NOISE]

[SINGING] "Wrap me up with
my stockwhip and blanket

"And bury me deep down below.

"Where the dingoes and crows
can't molest me

"Way down where the
coolibah grows.

"Way down where the
coolibah grows."

"If I had---

[BRAKES SQUEAL]

- "far over the---

- Hey, you stop!

For once I agree with him,
take it easy!

Okay, sweetie.

Goes for you two, Colonel.

All right, then.

How do we celebrate?

- Feed 'em chicken and champagne?

- Just chicken.

Just chicken. Just chicken?

I see. Know any?

[BOTH] "If I had the flight of
the bronzewing

"Far over these plains I would fly.

"And I'd fly to the arms of
my loved one

"And there I'd be willing to die.

"And there I'd be willing to die."

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

[ADMONISHES HIM]

- "Oh, dinkie darlin, dinkie dar---"

- Look out.

All right.

Captain Sugaya's got some chickens, hasn't he?

No Joe, don't try anything.

Not with Sugaya.

[SINGS] "Dinkie die, Dinkie die..."

[CHICKEN CLUCKS]

[TANGO MUSIC PLAYS]

[CHICKEN CLUCKS]

[COUGHING]

[CHICKEN GRUMBLES]

[CHICKEN CLUCKS IN ALARM]

[CHILDREN SHOUTING

IN MALAY]

[LAUGHTER]

More wood?

I doubt my stomach will stand up to all this rich food.

Perhaps you'd better give it away.

Oh, no!

How many's that now, Timothy?

Three hundred and thirty-three.

[LAUGHTER]

Three hundred and thirty-four.

[LAUGHTER]

Don't suck your fingers, Timothy.

[LAUGHTER]

[ENGINE NOISE]

The Sergeant's coming.

[WHISPERED] Be careful.

For you, Gunso.

Thank you.

I know one of you men stole my chicken.

- Who was it?

- We haven't seen your chickens.

You searched our camp, didn't you?

- How many men away?

- None.

- You.

- One.

When did he go?

Yesterday, but he couldn't have
taken your chickens.

[TALKS IN JAPANESE]

[ANSWERS IN JAPANESE.]

- Oh, I've enjoyed it so much.

- Here we come, second helpings!

[MORE EXCLAMATIONS OF JOY]

Oh, nearly full!

Your stomach seems to be standing
up to it all right, Mrs Frith.

I got the wish bone!

Hold that. There.

Pull it. Pull, pull, pull, pull!

Oh!

Which one?

Oh!

Wish?

What did you wish for?

I couldn't think of a single thing.

[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]

[GENERAL CHATTER]

[TALKS IN JAPANESE]

[TALKS IN JAPANESE]

Where you get chicken?

We buy.

Where you get money?

We sell ring.

You don't speak truth.

Australian soldier stole.

Give you.

We haven't seen Australian
soldiers for three days.

We buy.

You lying.

Australian soldier steal,
give you.

Look at that.

We buy. We steal wedding ring
off dead woman.

You come here.

[CRYING WITH FEAR]

TELL THE TRUTH!

[SHOUTS IN JAPANESE]
[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]
[THANKS HIM IN JAPANESE]

Hm.

[WITHIN]

Come on! Tell me. Tell me.

[ENGINE NOISE, HORN BEEPING]

[TALKS IN JAPANESE]

You get in.

Tell the truth!

[CRYING]

[HE SHOUTS]

JOE:

- **JOE:**

- You stole chicken, give her one.

YOU DID, YOU DID.

- We bought it for--- Argh!

- [HE SHOUTS]

Leave her alone. I stole your bloody chickens and I gave them to her.

- No, Joe! No, Joe!

- [SHOUTS]

JOE:

DON'T KILL HIM!

Don't kill him. Don't kill him.

Don't kill him!

Please don't kill him.

Not yet.

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

- Hup, hup.

- Oh, Joe.

Joe!

Joe.

Joe.

Joe.

[SOBBING] Joe.

[HAMMERING]

[GIVES ORDER IN JAPANESE]

[REPEATS ORDER

IN JAPANESE]

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

[KNOCKING]

[KNOCKING]

[ORDERS IN JAPANESE]

[ORDERS IN JAPANESE]

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

[MUTED, OMINOUS DRUMBEAT]

No. Please, God, no.

Please, God.

[DRUMS POUNDING]

[MRS FRITH PRAYS SOFTLY]

Our Father, which art in Heaven...

...Hallowed be thy name.

Thy will be done, on

Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our

daily bread....

...and forgive us our trespasses...

...as we forgive those who

trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation...

...but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom...

...the power and the glory...

...for ever and ever. Amen.

[DOGS YELPING AND HOWLING]

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

[GIVES ORDERS IN JAPANESE]

You very bad people.

You do bad things.

Australian man die.

You be very sorry.

Your Japanese sergeant.

You make disgrace for him.

Now I punish sergeant, too.

I take other soldier away.

Your sergeant feel bad shame...

...alone, with women prisoners.

[GIVE ORDERS IN JAPANESE]

[SPEAKS IN JAPANESE]

No prison camp here for you.

I send you to Kota Bharu.

You walk now.

Go!

Go.

PRISONERS, ATTENTION!

This prisoner executed.

Not for stealing, but for
striking Japanese guard.

But Japanese chivalry
permit honour to soldier.
Japanese bushido is like
European law of chivalry.

[ORDERS IN JAPANESE]

You now die.

I offer you last wish.

What you want?

To die on my feet,
throttling the life out of you.

You little ba---

All right.

You can have him.

[GENTLE FLUTE MUSIC]

Robin?

Robin.

Don't touch him! Don't dare touch
him! Don't touch him!

DON'T YOU DARE, KEEP YOUR
HANDS OFF HIM. DON'T TOUCH HIM.

- Don't touch him, don't touch him.

- Jean...

- ...don't, the man's done no harm.

- He's a Jap, isn't that enough?

I hate him, I hate him,

I hate him.

[CRYING] I hate him,

I hate him.

[BABY TALKS]

- I hate him.

[DARK MUSIC]

[CHILDREN SHOUTING]

[SPEAKS IN MALAY]

[HE MURMURS]

[SHALLOW BREATHING]

[HE MURMURS]

[HE MURMURS]

[HE MURMURS]

Your children, Gunso.

[HE CRIES QUIETLY]
Poor Sergeant.
You can't really hate people,
can you?
That's a wonderful thing
to find out.
You're thinking of Joe.
I was thinking of the
first time I saw him.
When he crawled out
from under the truck.
His face when he heard
me speak English.
The times when
we talked together...
...and shared a cigarette.
And the time when he talked
about a town called Alice.
Mat Amin bin Taib.
As there is no man
to speak for us...
...forgive me if I ask you to talk
business with a woman.
To do.
What do you want?
We have walked for many
hundreds of miles.
And no Japanese
officer will take us in...
...or feed us, or look after
us when we're sick.
So for months we've marched
from town to town.
And in that time more than
half of us have died.
Now our guard is dead.
If we go on till we find another
Japanese officer...
...he won't want us either.
He'll send us on again.
And we shall grow ill
and we shall all die.
It is written that the Angels said;
"Every soul shall taste of death."

Is it not also written...

"If you be kind towards women, God is well acquainted with what you do."

Where is that written?

In the Fourth Surah.

Are you of the faith?

No.

But wise words are well in any faith.

Tell me what you want.

To stay here in your village.

To work in the rice fields as your women do.

To work just for our food and somewhere to sleep.

White women have never worked in the rice field.

White women have never marched till they died.

We have little food.

Little water.

Our young men have been taken to work for the Japanese.

We will grow more food, for everyone.

If I let you stay here, the Japanese might be angry.

But they might punish us, kill us.

If you say we must go, we must go.

We are in your hands.

[TENSE MUSIC]

[BRISK, PERCUSSIVE MUSIC]

Oh, this'll be bad for my rheumatism.

I won't last long like this.

You're the toughest of us all, Mrs Frith.

You've lasted this far, you'll last forever.

- Too much? Too heavy?

- I've told you before.

If the Malay can do it, I can do it.

Come on, load me up.
It isn't the first time
I've been called horsey.
[COUNTS IN MALAY]
[CHILDREN SING]
"London bridge is falling down
"Falling down, falling down.
"London bridge is falling down
"My fair lady."
"Let us build it up again
"Up again, up again.
"Let us build it up again,
My fair lady."
[CHILDREN CONTINUE SINGING]
Hello, Robin.
[THOUGHTS] Dear Robin...
...for three years...
...as the rice was sown and harvested,
and sown and harvested again.
I looked after you and
watched you grow.
And when the war ended and
I gave you back to your father...
...it was like losing my
own child.
[CELEBRATORY MUSIC]
The water's good, Suleiman,
you have done well.
Good. Now I must go
back to my home.
- Oh where's that?
- Kuantan.
Kuantan?
Very bad Japanese man in Kuantan
during the war, Captain Sugaya.
Many bad things done.
Many evil things.
Suleiman, I was in Kuantan.
When we were starving, a
prisoner stole some food for us.
Captain Sugaya crucified him.
I remember that. He was
a long time in hospital.
But he died!

How could he be in hospital?

My son shall tell you.

Yaqub, the Australian soldier who
was crucified during the war.

Did he die?

He went to hospital.

What?

Yaqub, come here.

Tell Miss Jean if that man,
did he live or did he die?

Captain Sugaya ordered him
to be taken down that night.

The guards were good,
they took him to hospital...

...he lived.

Oh..!

What is it, Jean?

Oh, please help me!

Please help me to find him.

I must know he lived, if he's
alive, if he got home.

[FLUTE MUSIC]

[RUSTIC THEME MUSIC]

You seem to have
everything here.

Sure, we got a picture theatre
and a swimming pool and...

...two hotels and another
one going up.

Alice is a beaut.

There's your man.

Hey, mate.

Hello, Dave.

Jack, I want you to meet Miss Paget.

This is Jack Burns, Shell agent.

He's been here for twenty-five
years. Knows everybody.

- Hello, Miss Paget, pleased to meet ya.

- How do you do, Mr Burns?

- Do you know a Joe---

- You're from England.

I got folks in Wolverhampton,
is that near you?

Oh, about two hundred

miles away!

Well, you know the Fletchers
in Wolverhampton?

- Oh, Wolverhampton's a big place!

- Ha ha. Yes, I suppose so.

Er, what was it you wanted?

Did you ever know a

Joe Harman?

Joe? Yeah I knew him.

- Did he come home after the war?

- Sure.

He took up his old position at
Willstown, that's out in the bush.

He took his family with him,

I suppose?

Didn't know Joe was married.

Oh, perhaps I got it

wrong - engaged?

Oh, could be. Never heard of it.

You, Dave?

No.

How do I get to Willstown?

Eddie Conlan flies the

mail out once a week.

But it's a cow of a place.

[AIRCRAFT NOISE]

- G'day, Dave.

- Hey, Sam.

For Daphne Campbell. Her
shoes will be ready next week.

I'm going across to Millers now,
be back this evening.

I'll bring the beer then.

See ya later. Oh, Sam...

- ...this is Miss Paget.

- How are you, Miss Paget?

- She wants to get to Willstown.

- That's something new!

Most people want to get out of it.

Get inside, Miss Paget.

Thank you.

Don't take a minute to get into Wells
Town - get through it and get out of it.

[STARTS ENGINE]

[BRAKES SQUEAL]

It's all yours.

[WIND HOWLS]

Where can I find Joe Harman?

Joe?

- Yes, is he around?

- He's not here.

He's gone off.

- Where to?

- He didn't say.

He's left the country

I do know that.

He's been gone for

a couple of months.

Well, when's he due back?

He don't write. If he thinks

as I do about Willstown...

...he'll never come back.

It's a fair cow, isn't it?

Yes, it's a fair cow.

[TRAFFIC NOISE]

Well, you see, Miss Paget and I
don't know each other very well.

We never had much
of a chance.

Well, you know what happened.

- Are you all right now?

- Sure, I'm fine.

Well, last time I saw 'er,
she was...

...dressed up like a native, with a
sarong and everything.

I don't remember
much about it.

They were beating her up.

Mr Harman, I've got some
news for you.

You've come across the world to
England to look for her, haven't you?

That's right.

Well, she's gone across the
world to Australia to look for you.

Hey..?

[AIRCRAFT NOISE]

[OVER TANNOY] Announcing the
arrival of Trans-Australian Airways...
...flight five seven one from Darwin.

[CELLO MUSIC - THEME SONG]

G'day, Paul.

I'm going on with Eddie Conlan to
Willstown, any messages for me?

- No, sorry Joe.

- Are you sure?

No, nothing.

Joe.

Oh, Joe!

[ROMANTIC MUSIC]

[END THEME MUSIC]