

OKONSKI

CHAPTER 6

Seamen scurried about, making final preparations for docking. Commands were shouted out, and hurried feet beat a tattoo on the steel-plated deck. The freighter was not a large ship; neither was it small. But it was a dirty looking old tub, and the years of neglect showed by blotches of peeling paint. It may have been their way of camouflaging it.

Two of the ship's officers stood on the bridge, watching the seamen go through their paces. Their white, high collar uniforms made them especially visible. The seamen hurried about their duties, bringing forth large coils of rope, removing tarpaulins from the hatches, and preparing the winch for use. While most wore a pair of knee-high pants, others wore only a G-string. A few had a cloth band tied around their forehead. Their bodies glistened under the rays of the noonday sun. The sun's rays were absorbed by the unpainted metal, and the heat was transferred into the bowels of the ship. The ship's speed suddenly decreased. It was now two weeks out of Manila, and coming into a port, which later turned out to be the military port of Takao, in Formosa.

All hatches were kept closed, with the exception of one, which was just forward of the bridge. Through that hatch, the ship's officers could look down into the hold and watch the

activity.

As the sun came directly overhead, its rays flooded the hold with scorching heat. The five hundred prisoners-of-war which were crammed into the hold, lay motionless. When the ships speed decreased, so did the breeze that had been entering the hold through the open hatch.

A few men moved, some to wipe the perspiration that ran freely, some to swipe at the many flies that alighted on them. Some sat naked, and searched the seams of their clothing for lice and other insects.

The more fortunate ones in the hold were housed in a double tier of wooden cubicles, which circled the perimeter of the hold. Each cubicle was large enough to house four men, and its location shielded them from the direct sunlight. For those in the cubicles, the big battle was with bedbugs, lice, and the other insects that hid in the wooden structures.

When the ship's forward progress slowed, the eyes of the five hundred scrawny, famished, men watched the hatch opening, seeking relief. Many turned resentful stares toward the bridge. "Why don't they give us more water?"

The man talking was sitting with his back against the timbers of a cubicle. He ran his tongue over his parched lips, and a fly crawled on his forehead. He made no attempt to chase the fly. He just sat there and stared out the hatch opening.

A second man rolled to one side.

"I'd be happy if the sons-of-bitches would just let us go up on deck, and get out of this goddamned oven for awhile."

His face was flush, and his abnormally long hair, lay plastered to his head. The fiery sun, together with the body heat of five hundred men, drove the temperature above endurance levels.

One of the Japanese officers, who had been watching the prisoners, turned and walked to the rear of the bridge, away from their view. A second, taller one continued to scan the scene below. What he saw was motionless men, so tightly packed together that the deck itself was not visible to him. Then his eyes became fixed on one of the prisoners who was squirming and writhing in apparent pain. Another man sat next to him, fanning him with a folded piece of clothing.

The tall Jap turned and spoke to someone to his rear. Then he turned back to the hold and continued his observance. Soon, the shorter one returned and looked down into the hold. The taller one pointed out the squirming American to him.

The smaller officer looked, with an expressionless face, but made no comment. Then he shrugged his shoulders and returned to the rear of the bridge. The taller officer continued his observation for a time, but soon turned his attention back to the activity taking place on the upper deck.

A few fleecy clouds were suspended in the sky. There'd be no relief today. ^

Private Paul Thacker, formerly of the 31st Infantry, sat next to the twisting, pain-wracked man, and slowly moved a pair of folded trousers back and forth.

"Damned flies are getting worse," he said to Private Creston Roland, who was laying nearby.

Roland turned his head and looked at his sick buddy. Both were members of the 60th Coast Artillery. They had manned the big coastal guns on Corregidor. Then he turned his gaze back to Thacker.

"Ya know, Jerry's got more than just a stomach ache."

Private Jerome Okonski lay on a thin, worn, blanket that separated him from the hot steel deck of the hold. He rolled from side to side, clutching his stomach, and groaning.

The only clothing that Jerry wore was a pair of cut-off khaki trousers, and his body was deeply tanned from the daily exposure to the tropical sun. His cheeks were hollow. His ribs stuck out. Rivulets of sweat ran between them. Thacker moved Jerry's hair back from his forehead, and looked up at the sky. Its brightness made him squint his eyes.

"If it would only rain, or even cloud up. Anything to cool this oven down, maybe Jerry would feel better."

Roland stood up, with a concerned look on his face.

"There's a doctor in this group. I'm going to find him, and see if he can do something for Jerry. Ya know where he's at, Paul?"

Thacker turned and pointed toward a cubicle in the corner of the hold.

"Major Mamerow is over there somewhere. The doctor is probably there too."

Roland started off in that direction, carefully stepping over bodies as he made his way toward the Major's area. He stopped and looked into one of the cubicles. Four men were lying

on their backs. Three had their eyes closed, while the fourth had his hands behind his head, and was staring at the boards of the cubicle above his head. Only his eyes moved.

"What do you want?" "I'm looking for the Major." "Next door."

"Thanks," said Roland, and he moved toward the adjoining cubicle. In doing so, he accidentally kicked the thigh of one of the men lying on the deck.

"What the hell you doin'?" he blared out.

Other eyes opened and heads turned to see what was happening.

"I'm sorry, I'm looking for the Major."

"Right here soldier. What do you want?"

Roland turned, taking special care, as he stepped across another man.

"Sir, there's a buddy of mine," and he indicated with his thumb. "He's sick as hell sir."

Major John Mamerow sat and listened to Private Roland's story. The major had close cropped hair. His features were those of a rugged, outdoors-type individual. All the while listening to Roland, he wiped perspiration from the right side of his face with his hand. Then, he turned to the adjoining cubicle and knocked on the wall.

"Doc, you awake?"

"Yes, came the soft, gentle reply.

"We have a sick man out here."

"I'll be right out." Major Mamerow looked back at Roland, and assured him.

"He's one hell of a good doctor; he'll take care of your friend."

"Thanks," said Roland, and a slight smile crept across his face.

Captain Thomas R. Hewlett, the medical officer, crawled out of the lower cubicle. During the defense of Corregidor, Captain Hewlett had tended the sick and the wounded. He was a frail young man, in his twenties. Roland's six foot two frame towered over the small doctor.

"This way, sir." Roland led the way over the sprawled out bodies.

It wasn't difficult to see where the sick man lay. Among all the immobile bodies that covered the deck, one stood out. His head was moving from side to side, in obvious pain.

Captain Hewlett knelt down next to Okonski. Paul Thacker ceased his fanning, and looked at the doctor.

"Can you help him, sir?"

"What's his name?"

"Okonski - Jerome Okonski, sir. "

Doctor Hewlett moved closer.

"Okonski, I'm doctor Hewlett. I'm here to help you."

Okonski opened his eyes. There was no doubt about it, he did need help. Beads of perspiration covered his face.

"Wipe his face," the doctor instructed Thacker.

Paul refolded the shorts, then gently wiped Okonski's face.

"Tell me where it hurts," the doctor said.

"Here," responded Okonski, gently touching the right side of his abdomen.

"How about here," and the doctor gently pressed on the left side.

"No."

"And here?" Captain Hewlett applied pressure just below the rib cage, in the vicinity of the heart.

"No," was the reply.

"Here?" He gently placed his fingers on Okonski's right side.

"Yeah, yeah!" Okonski shot out, and his body stiffened.

Captain Hewlett felt Okonski's forehead. Then taking hold of his patient's wrist, the doctor tried to determine the pulse rate. Doctor Hewlett had lost his watch to a Japanese soldier shortly after the fall of Corregidor.

"Okonski, I'll be back in a few minutes." Then to Thacker, he said, "Keep him wiped off. He'll feel cooler."

Thacker watched the doctor make his way over the bodies, and toward the cubicle. As he did so, the ship's noise ceased and the vibration of the screws stopped. Most of the men lying on the deck, sat up. Those in the cubicles began to crawl out. Some of the men in the upper cubicles, stood on the edge and, holding onto the upper frame, tried to see out of the hold. One of the men called out in a soft voice.

"We're docking. I can see the roofs of buildings."

Captain Hewlett stopped and looked at the man giving the information. He then looked up through the hatch, but from his position, he couldn't see the buildings. Glancing up at the bridge, he saw the busy activity of the ship's officers.

Major Mamerow, crawling out of his cubicle, stood up next to the doctor.

"We're either in Formosa or China. This scow couldn't make Japan in such a short time," said Mamerow, kneeling to tie his shoe strings.

"We have a very sick man on our hands."

Mamerow stopped tying his shoes and looked at Hewlett.

"How bad is he?"

"It's appendicitis. If he's not operated on today, he won't see tomorrow."

Mamerow let out a soft whistle. "That's bad. What do you suggest?"

"Fortunately, we are in port. He's got to get to a hospital and have his appendix removed."

"Let's see if we can get topside and talk to someone."

Mamerow and Hewlett made their way across the crowded hold, stepping carefully. As they approached the vertical ladder going up to the hatch, Mamerow shouted to the guard.

The guard's back was toward the hatch, and he did not hear

the major. Evidently his interests were with the activity on shore. The major climbed a few more rungs and shouted again.

That startled the guard. He jumped toward the hatch opening, and brought his rifle up. Stepping forward, he looked down in the hold toward Mamerow. When he saw that the Major was halfway up the ladder, he shouted at him to descend.

Mamerow held onto the rung, and the Jap kept shouting. All this commotion aroused the men in the hold. The word had spread throughout the hold, the cubicles and along the deck. Word of Okonski's plight passed from one group of ears to another. The men were up and stirring about.

With his limited Japanese vocabulary, the major tried to inform the guard that he was the "number one" man in charge of the Americans, and that he wanted to talk to the "number one" man of the ship.

The guard finally got the drift of the conversation, and told the major to wait at the bottom of the ladder. After Mamerow descended, the Jap disappeared from view.

"Can't they do anything?" Okonski forced out the words. "They're trying, Jerry," said Thacker. "Mamerow and Hewlett are trying to work out something with the Japs."

The men in the hold talked in low tones, keeping abreast of the drama before them. Most, either wore a look of concern, or a scowl on their face, as the word spread that the Japs had

refused to take Okonski to the hospital. The sound of a murmur increased, as they waited for the second Japanese reply. Since the trip began, back at Cabanatuan in the Philippines, only resignation had been displayed by the prisoners. But now the Japs were letting one of the group die.

The worried look on Mamerow's face deepened as he listened to the increased resentment in the men's voices. There was nothing he could do until the Jap came back. Most eyes were turned to the top of the hold . . . waiting. But the prisoner's expressions had gone from submissiveness to a determined, resentful glare.

Then, the noise in the hold shut off, like a faucet. The scholarly Jap reappeared above the anxious American officers. His look, into the hold, was returned by four hundred and ninety-nine pairs of eyes. He looked first at Okonski, as he laid, encircled by the men. Roland and Thacker stopped fanning and looked up. Then the officer shifted his gaze to Mamerow and Hewlett.

"You may operate on your man up here on deck. You may also bring enough men to do the job. I will be the observer."

Captain Hewlett turned on his heels and started back toward (?)

"I will relay your request to the captain of the ship. He will make the decision."

Both officers (as well as the silent audience in the ship's hold) listened to the reply, and watched as he turned and disappeared from view.

Mamerow asked, "What if they refuse?"

The doctor pursed his lips, then ran his hand over his face, as if checking for whisker stubble.

"John, if they refuse to take this lad to the hospital, then we will just have to operate. That is the only alternative, if we want to give him a chance to live."

Major Mamerow glanced up at the bridge, then motioned for Hewlett to also look. The tall Japanese officer stood with his hands clasped behind his back, watching the final activity of the docking operation. The scholarly Jap stood at rigid attention before the smaller Japanese officer, who seemed to be doing all of the talking.

The two American officers watched, trying to get some inclination as to what was being said.

When the small Jap was finished, he turned and went to the rear of the bridge. The scholarly one bowed, came to rigid attention, turned and walked out of the bridge.

"We'll get our answer shortly," said Mamerow.

Captain Hewlett stood there, not saying a word. His mind was reeling. What would he do if the request was refused? What

could he do? What equipment and supplies were available to perform an appendectomy? The operation was not particularly difficult - as long as he had the necessities. How about the sterilization of the few instruments that he did have? There were no bandages, no sulfa drugs - no drugs of any kind. He did have a small bottle of bichloride of mercury, and also one of tincture of iodine. He could at least cleanse his hands, and the area where he would have to make the incision.

The scholarly Jap returned to the top of the ladder. A hush spread throughout the hold.

"The Captain refuses your request. No one will leave the ship until it docks in Japan." He started to leave.

"Just a moment, please," yelled out Major Mamerow.

The Jap stopped, and looked down. Mamerow turned with a pleading expression. "Can you do it?"

"Yes, I can operate," said Hewlett, "but I will need a few things."

"What things," was the stern reply.

"I would need to have my instruments sterilized, and I would like to operate up on deck, where I would have more light."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

The Japs eyes moved from one officer to the other as he thought out what was being asked. Without saying a word, the Japanese turned and walked away.

The prisoners came out of their cubicles; they were all standing around now, in groups. A circle formed around Okonski. Thacker and Roland continued to fan him. They occasionally looked up, to see if the Jap had returned.

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"You may operate on your man up here on deck. You may also bring enough men to do the job. I will be the observer." Captain Hewlett turned on his heels and started back toward his cubicle.. He knew that he had to set things in motion. Time was of the essence. Major Mamerow was right behind him.

"What do you need? What can we do to help?" He shot questions at Doctor Hewlett.

"I'll need Doctor Proff to assist me. But, as you know, he hasn't been feeling well." When Mamerow nodded, Hewlett continued, "Along with Proff, I'll need two Medical Corpsmen, and four men to hold the patient down, because I don't have an adequate anesthetic. Then I'll need one more man to handle the sterilization of the equipment."

"How do we get Okonski out of here?" Mamerow asked.

Hewlett looked up at the Jap, still standing at the top of the hold opening.

"Do you have a stretcher that we could use?"

The answer was a shake of the head - NO.

"That's a crock of shit," said Mamerow in an angry tone.

"You know damned well that they do."

Hewlett shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll get a hold of Proff and the two Medical Corpsmen. You get the others, and also figure out how to get Okonski up out of here. Remember - he has to remain in the horizontal position, and put no pressure of any kind on his stomach. I'm going up to see if I can find a decent place to operate. I also need to see how, and where, my equipment is to be sterilized."

"We'll get him up there," the major said, as he surveyed the top of the hold.

Captain Hewlett now had the chore of collecting all of his instruments. On the day prior to boarding the ship/ he passed out most of his instruments to the men, instructing them to hide them. He had known that there would be a »shakedown, and if he carried them all in his bag, he would lose some of them - as he had when he left Corregidor. So he located his Medical Corpsmen and instructed them to spread the word that he wanted all of his instruments.

As the word went throughout the hold, surgical instruments began to come out of the seams of shirts and trousers. One man

had a scalpel handle taped to the inside of his thigh, just below the crotch. Another pried the heels off his shoes and produced two scalpel blades.

"How do you feel?" Hewlett asked Proff.

Doctor Proff was a few years younger than Hewlett, and during the past week he had been feeling quite ill.

"I feel all right."

However, Doctor Hewlett could see that he wasn't in the best of health. His face was flush, and beads of perspiration formed on his upper lip and chin.

"Are you well enough to assist?"

"Sure."

"When all of my instruments have been collected, bring them topside, along with an empty coffee can, and the two hand towels that I have at the head of my bunk. I'll be up on deck, looking for a place to operate."

Major discussing how best to get Okonski up out of the hold.

Mamerow instructed them. "I'll be topside with Doctor Hewlett. When I call down for Okonski, bring him up the way we have-it planned."

He looked around at the men. They were all eager to help.

"You," he said, pointing to one of two men. "You're a sergeant, aren't you? You run things down here in the hold, and remember - keep him horizontal at all times, and handle him

"We'll get the job done Major."

Mamerow went back to where Okonski was lying. He spoke

to Roland and Thacker.

"We'll be needing some help topside, are you two willing?"

"Yes sir!" they replied.

Hewlett will need four men to hold him down, and one to sterilize equipment."

"I'll sterilize equipment," said Roland. "I'm familiar with the steam pots in the galley."

Mamerow looked at Thacker. "You help hold him down."

"Yes sir."

"I need two more men."

Two men standing nearby quickly stepped forward. The major looked them over, then told them to come along.

The Japanese seamen had got word of what the Americans were attempting, and many of them were lining the railing on the second deck. They were laughing and making comments to one another. Those working on the main deck would stop and look down into the hold from time to time.

The eight Americans that made up Doctor Hewlett's surgical team, stood above the hold opening, waiting for the doctor to return from his search for a place to operate. Lieutenant Proff held the surgical instruments, wrapped in a towel. He stared up at the Japs on the second deck.

"Look at those bastards - they're laughing at us."

Proff's face was flush and his hands shook slightly.

"Don't worry about them," said Mamerow, who was watching Proff with some concern. "If they are anything like their captain, they're all a bunch of idiots."

Hewlett was making his way forward from the afterdeck, accompanied by a guard. When he reached his team, he asked:

"Who is going to sterilize the equipment?"

"I am, sir," said Roland, slightly raising one hand.

"Are you familiar with those steam pots?"

"Yes, sir."

Turning to Proff, he asked, "You have everything we need?"

Proff nodded, but lowered his eyes.

"You sure you're all right?"

"I'll make it."

"Give all the equipment to Roland," said Hewlett, pointing to the towel wrapped package. Then turning to Roland, "Get those into the steamer immediately, including the towels."

"Do I just walk to the stern by myself?" asked Roland.

"This guard will go with you," said Hewlett, and glanced at the interpreter who was standing close by, listening to the conversation.

The interpreter said a few words to the guard. Then the guard and Roland left for the stern of the ship. Captain Hewlett turned his attention to Major Mamerow.

"You can bring the patient up now. I'll have a place ready for him. Proff and I are going to the rear."

The lift of Okonski, from the floor of the hold, up through the hatchway, to the seadeck above, was handled in four stages.

In the first stage, five men stood shoulder-to-shoulder on each side of Okonski, who was laying on the deck. The sergeant was standing by his head. They would lift him from

the deck up to shoulder height.

In the second stage, twelve men got on their hands and knees and formed two double rows of six, (one double row on each side of the patient.) Three men on each side, then placed one foot on each of the backs of two kneelers, and stood up.

In the third stage, ten men were hoisted to straddle the necks of the ten strongest men in the hold. This group ringed the second group.

The fourth stage was the surgical team, leaning over the hatch rail, waiting to accept Okonski.

When Major Mamerow looked down into the hold, he saw that practically all eyes were on him.

"Okay, bring him up," he said.

The men were ready. First, the ten men of the third stage were lifted onto the shoulders of the ten strongest. They positioned themselves directly under where Mamerow stood.

Then the twelve men of the second stage got on their hands and knees, and the six lifters stood on their backs. Other men stood by to give support, wherever it might be needed, in case one of the undernourished bodies should falter.

The sergeant stood by Okonski's head; five others stood shoulder-to-shoulder on each side of Okonski. Mamerow looked at the men, and they looked back.

"Okay," he said.

The eleven men bent their knees to the squat position. The sergeant placed his hands under Okonski's head, while the others cradled him from head to foot.

"Lift," the sergeant said.

Okonski rose horizontally.

"Move 'im this way."

The eleven men shuffled closer to the waiting hands of the men standing on the backs of the kneelers, holding Okonski waist high as they moved into position.

"Okay, up - slowly."

Okonski rose over the heads of the men holding him. Then slowly, he passed to the next set of hands. Those not involved stood watching, wishing they could help. A few rose on their toes as they watched Okonski raise up, as if trying to help.

The Jap seamen on the second deck had stopped their giggling, as they watched Okonski being handed from one group of hands to the next.

The men sitting-on-shoulders, extended their arms down, waiting for Okonski to float up to them. On top of the hold opening, six men waited, ready to reach down.

Men moved among the forest of arms, legs, and bodies, trying to give assistance, where it was needed. This was a joint effort. They were doing something together, helping a buddy.

One of the second stage men, one who was on his hands and knees, collapsed. The man standing on his back came down with a crash. Okonski wavered, but hands from the third stage reached down, and took hold of the situation. He floated higher, to the arms of the men waiting on deck.

"Get your arms around him," said Mamerow, as the six men reached down into the hold, wrapping their arms around Okonski.

Mamerow had hold of his feet, then looked down the row of his men.

"Do you have hold of him?"

All six men answered affirmatively.

"Okay, let's lift him out."

The six men lifted in unison. Then slow, and sure footed, they moved him toward the rear of the ship.

The Japs, who watched from the second deck, moved toward the rear of the ship also. They started to laugh again, making motions, as if lifting an object over their heads, mimicking the Americans.

Lieutenant Proff scrubbed his hands as he watched the Japs.

"Look at those silly sons-of-bitches. They're making *fun of* us."

"Forget them, we have a job to do."

Hewlett was worried about Proffs condition. He saw the men approaching with Okonski. Hurrying toward the hatch cover, he motioned where to lay him down. They gently lowered him.

The hatch cover was a few feet above the deck. Four feet from the hatch cover was a door leading to the galley. Roland stood there in the steam-filled room, watching a cauldron, as steam came out of its side valves.

Hewlett looked into Okonski's eyes.

"How do you feel?"

"It's cool up here," Okonski forced the words out softly.

"We'll have you fixed up in a little bit."

Hewlett turned his attention to the medics.

"Get the bottle of bichloride of mercury out of my bag."

The medic did.

"Pour some on my hands."

Hewlett rubbed the fluid over his hands.

"Now the iodine."

The medic opened the bottle, and Hewlett dipped all of his fingertips.

"Do the same thing for Doctor Proff. Then take off all of Okonski's clothes, wash his abdomen with soap and water, and paint it with iodine."

Hewlett then walked into the galley, not paying any attention to the laughing Japs above him.

"How long has it been steaming?"

Roland hesitated, then said, "About ten to fifteen minutes."

"Shut it off and let them cool."

The medic was painting Okonski's stomach when Hewlett returned.

"Jerome, I'm going to give you a shot to relieve the pain. You may not feel a damn thing."

A smile came over Okonski's face. "Sure, Doc," he forced out.

Then the doctor turned once again to the medic.

"There's one vial of dental Novocain in my bag. Get it and give it to Doctor Proff."

To the other medic, he said:

"I want you to hold down Okonski's head. Keep him from moving it around. And, also watch his breathing. Tell me if there is any change."

He turned to his assistants.

"John, you hold down one arm, and Thacker you hold down the other. You two men, each hold down a leg. Now don't let him bend an arm or a leg."

The medic had completed the painting of Okonski's abdomen.

"You," continued Hewlett, "get on the hatch, on the other side of Okonski. I want you to keep the flies off of him, especially 'the incision area."

Hewlett took the hypodermic syringe from Doctor Proff. The patient was turned on his side and Hewlett administered the spinal. Then Okonski was turned back over on to his back. Each assistant got into position to perform his task. The sterilized towel was placed on the patient's chest, and the instruments then placed on the towel. Hewlett touched Okonski's abdomen, and watched the patients reaction. He then looked at the other men. Everyone was ready. With a smooth motion, Hewlett made the incision. At that very moment, Doctor Proff collapsed, and lay at Doctor Hewlett's feet. Hewlett continued to work.

As he spread open the incision, he took a deep breath. The appendix had burst.

"Doctor, the patient has passed out."

"How's his breathing?"

"Appears normal."

"Let go of his head. Come over here and drag Proff out from under my feet. Put him in the shade somewhere."

The medic jumped down off the hatch. Grabbing Proff under

the arms, he dragged him to the shade of the winch. Then the medic felt his pulse and forehead.

"His pulse seems okay, but he has a fever."

"I know," was Hewlett's reply, as he continued to work on Okonski. "Stand by me. I'll need your help. His appendix has ruptured. Get my stethoscope out of my bag."

The medic did as instructed. Hewlett looked up quickly, then down again.

"Cut off about six inches of the tubing," he said, as he continued to probe into Okonski's abdomen. "Then give it to Roland to sterilize for at least fifteen minutes. Hurry."

The medic reached into the kit and took out a mess kit knife, and cut off the piece of tube that Hewlett had requested. Roland was standing nearby and heard the conversation. He grabbed the tubing from the medic and hurried to the rice steamer. Hewlett continued his work. There was no fatty tissue to probe around. The muscles were lean and easily identifiable. He exposed the appendix. The contents of the sack had oozed out and spread about the stomach muscles.

The doctor made the necessary cuts, then set the scalpel on Okonski's thigh. With his fingers, he reached into Okonski's abdomen, gently cradled the ruptured appendix, then slowly withdrew it.

"Get that can."

The medic held the can, while Hewlett dropped in the appendix.

"Now, hand me the sterile rags."

The medic picked them off the towel and handed them to the

doctor. Gently, Hewlett sopped the remains from the appendix, then deposited the rags into the can.

"Get rid of that, but bring back the can."

"Where?"

"Hell, throw it overboard. Feed it to the fish these people eat."

When Hewlett finished the final stitch, he looked at his work, then gently pressed down the four inches of tubing that extended from the incision.

"The clean towel," he ordered.

Taking the towel, Hewlett folded it in half lengthwise. He looked at the medic. Before he could give another order, the medic reached into his rear pocket and took out, a rag that looked like the sleeve from a khaki shirt. He wiped the doctor's face.

"Thanks," was all that Hewlett could muster.

"Now, I want you to grab him by the hips and lift him, so that I can get this towel under him.

The medic nodded. There was no trouble getting the towel to encircle Okonski's midriff. To secure the towel, Hewlett took about three stitches where the towel overlapped. When he finished the last stitch, he looked at Mamerow.

"That's it. Take him back down and put him in my cubicle."

Holding up his blood covered hands, he looked at the iodine tipped fingers.

"Roland," he said, as he walked toward the railing overlooking the dock, "Get a can of water and follow me."

Roland stood next to the doctor and poured the water, as Hewlett washed his hands. The dock was full of workers. They

stopped working when they saw the two Americans by the railing. When they became aware of Hewlett's bloody hands, they pointed, and their chatter increased.

"That should give them something to talk about," Hewlett said, with a short laugh.

Roland held the can so that a slow steady stream of water came out.

"Captain, when you've finished washing, let them see your brown tipped fingers. They look weird."

But before Hewlett could hold up his hands, they heard a hurried pair of hobnailed shoes. The interpreter began to ream out..
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"Get away from the railing! Get away!" "Come on," said Hewlett. "Let's go see about Proff." Jerome Okonski's naked, unconscious body was being lowered into the hold. ' The extended hands of those sitting on shoulders, waited. Slowly, the surgical team lowered Okonski to the outstretched hands. He floated down into the cavity of the ship on a carpet of palms.

One week later, the ship docked at Moji, Japan. Jerome Okonski walked down the gangplank with the rest of the five hundred. Over his shoulder he carried his belongings, wrapped in a thin, worn blanket.