

A YEAR AND A DAY

Written by

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Based on a true story

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FADE IN:

The faces of high ranking officials in both the American and British Armed Forces are a study in concentration. Each one, seated next to each other, on a dais, is riveted on what they are hearing.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is pitch black except for a small glow from a night light in the corner by the bed. Two bodies can be seen the in bed having sex. It's passionate, it's loving, and it's over.

LEE "SHORTY" GORDON, a small, feisty, twenty year old, five foot two inch, spark plug Sergeant in the United States Air Force, rolls over in the bed, exhausted. BETTY BAKER, attractive, early twenties, turns on her side and stares at Shorty.

BETTY  
Say you love me.

SHORTY  
(smiles)  
Ah, come on. How many times do I  
have to say it?

BETTY  
Until I believe it.

Shorty leans over and kisses her.

SHORTY  
Believe it.

He looks over and sees the clock reads 3:18am.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
I've got to go!

Shorty jumps up and throws on his clothes.

BETTY  
Stay.

She grabs him and pulls him onto the bed and starts to kiss him.

SHORTY  
No. No. No! I've got to get back  
to the barracks.

BETTY  
Will I ever see you again?

SHORTY  
You can count on it.

BETTY  
Promise?

He kisses her.

SHORTY  
Promise.

He runs out of the room.

SUPER: ENGLAND - FEBRUARY 26, 1943

EXT. BARRACKS - MORNING

ORDERLY, PFC. MITCHELL, 20, red hair, southern drawl, walks across the barracks.

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

Shorty is laying on his bunk asleep. He has lipstick smeared on his face. PFC. Mitchell comes into the room.

PFC. MITCHELL  
Shorty! Let's go!

Shorty barely opens his eyes.

SHORTY  
Huh? Mitchell, let me sleep. My crew's not flying.

PFC. MITCHELL  
You're taking Nagel's place on Stallman's crew. So get up.

PFC. Mitchell turns and walks away.

SHORTY  
Stallman's crew. What's wrong with Nagel?

PFC. MITCHELL  
He's got the clap. And wipe your girl off your face.

Shorty wipes and sees the lipstick.

SHORTY  
God damn, Nagel.

He reaches under his bunk and pulls out his guns for the turret.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
I'll take my guns on this one.

EXT. AIRPLANE DISPERSAL AREA - DAY

Shorty walks out toward the B-17 flying fortress.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
My name is Lee Gordon. Sergeant Lee Gordon. All my friends call me "Shorty." I was told this was just another mission. But what I learned very quickly was there was no such thing as "just another mission."

Shorty walks up to the plane and the ball turret is dropped open. He slides in his guns into the receiver.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
This was war. A war we believed in. Each mission was fifty-fifty. Either you were successful or you weren't.

SGT. WILLIAM JONES walks up to the plane. He looks over to Shorty.

SGT. JONES  
How are going today, Shorty?

SHORTY  
With a chute in the turret.

SGT. JONES  
Why?

SHORTY  
It's the big push!

They laugh as Shorty closes the turret.

EXT. PLANE RUNWAY - DAY

The huge plane lifts off and begins to climb for altitude.

INT. B-17 FLYING FORTRESS - FLYING - DAY

At the controls are pilot, LT. GEORGE STALLMAN and copilot, LT. GEORGE IAGO. The bombardier, LT. FINLAY, and navigator, SGT. ONORATO, man their positions up in the nose. The top turret gunner is SGT. PETER KEKESO. The radio operator, in the middle of the plane, is SGT. CASH MORSE.

In the back of the plane is tail-gunner, SGT. LAWRENCE LOVOS, two waist gunners on either side of the plane, SGT. FLOYD AMMERMAN and Sergeant Jones. They all have on their oxygen masks and radio communication head phones.

SHORTY (V.O.)

To some, success was whether or not you hit your target. But truth be told, deep down inside you knew was whether or not you came back alive.

Shorty pulls out a photo of Betty and stares at it.

SHORTY (V.O.)

And today, something just didn't feel right.

Shorty puts the photo back in his pocket. He maneuvers his parachute into place and secures it tightly.

SHORTY (V.O.)

Everyone used to joke that I was the only one in the Air Force who was small enough to wear a parachute in the ball turret. But today, the joke was on them, because it was about to pay off.

Shorty steps down into the turret stirrups and lowers himself inside.

Lt. Stallman, in the cockpit with Lt. Iago, looks down at the city below.

LT. STALLMAN

Bremems' obscured by clouds. Let's make a run at our secondary.

LT. IAGO

Copy that.

Lt. Iago radios to the other crew members.

LT. IAGO (CONT'D)

Too cloudy. We're going after Wilhelmshaven.

LT. STALLMAN

Keep you eyes open for fighters.

Shorty looks down through the turret and sees German fighter planes taking off from an island.

SHORTY  
I think we're in it!

The B-17 makes a turn to go back toward Wilhelmshaven. They suddenly meets a frontal machine-gun attack by German fighters. An assault from ground forces also takes place.

The top turret shatters as Sgt. Kekeso, trying to fight off the attack, is shot. He slumps over and falls out of the turret back into the plane below.

SGT. MORSE  
Kekeso is down!!

Lt. Finlay is quickly riddled with bullets as well.

SGT. ONORATO  
Finlay!!

Shorty starts blasting away with his guns. A shell slams into the ball turret and hits the sighting station gear box which slams into Shorty's forehead and cuts him. The gears hang down in his face.

SHORTY  
(into head gear)  
I've been hit! Repeat! I've been hit!

The B-17 is struck by several mortar shells, ripping the skin of the plane. Flak from the bombs cut into the plane and nearly severe Sgt. Lovos' leg. He SCREAMS out in pain.

LT. STALLMAN  
Bail out! Bail out!!

Sgt. Lovos crawls to the rear door of the plane. Sgt. Morse runs back to him and helps him on with his parachute. The rear entrance door is opened and Sgt. Morse shoves him out.

Sgt. Ammerman and Sgt. Morse see the plane is critically damaged and beginning to nose down. They leap out.

Shorty reaches back and hits the handles to the door of the turret. He arches his back and kicks backward. He does a back flip out of the ball turret. The force of the wind pulls him quickly away from the plane.

EXT. SKY ABOVE GERMANY - DAY

Shorty is speeding in a free fall toward the earth at twenty-six thousand feet and sixty degrees below zero.

He yanks his rip cord and the parachute deploys with such a tremendous jolt that it jerks off his flying boots, electric shoes, and one glove.

He floats down with flak bursting all around him. He looks over and sees a German fighter make a sweeping turn. The plane completes the turn and navigates back in his direction.

SHORTY

I'm a goner.

The German fighter propels directly at Shorty. He waits for the plane to fire at him and cut him in two.

The plane gets within striking distance and tips up on one wing. It flies close enough for Shorty to see the German pilot smile, wave and fly on past into the distance.

Shorty looks down and sees the B-17 plunge into the North Sea below.

Suddenly he is engulfed in clouds as he drifts downward. He comes through the clouds and sees he is floating over a bay south east of Wilhelmshaven.

EXT. JADE BAY - DAY

Along the edge of the breakwater, wooden stakes with the tips sharpened to a fine, lethal point, stick up out of the water.

With a sudden jar, Shorty slams into the ground at the edge of the bay, just missing the stakes. As he struggles to untangle himself, his parachute fills with wind and drags him toward the spikes.

He is about to be impaled by the stakes, when he disentangles himself and escapes.

Shorty, with his face dripping with blood, lays in the mud in shock. He gets to his feet and takes his .45 automatic pistol and throws it into the water. He looks over and sees a girl and small boy standing on the dyke watching him.

SHORTY

(dazed)

Are you Dutch?

GIRL

Ja. Ja. Ich bin Deutsch.

SHORTY

Am I in Holland?

GIRL

Und Sie sind in Deutschland.

SHORTY  
 Deutchland? That doesn't sound  
 like Holland to me.

He sees nearly forty men who are working on the dyke,  
 watching him.

An old home guard soldier with a rifle on his back, cycles  
 up. He lays down his gun and begins to search Shorty. When  
 he realizes he's a foreign aviator he runs back, grabs his  
 rifle and aims it at Shorty.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 (throwing up his arms)  
 Comrade! Comrade!!

A young soldier on a bike cycles over. Speeding up are two  
 Mercedes and several other cars. They slam on the brakes and  
 everyone jumps out.

All salute each other and speak in German. The young soldier  
 walks up to Shorty and takes him back over to the others.

Out of the Mercedes climbs a Luftwaffe officer. He  
 approaches Shorty and speaks in broken English.

OFFICER  
 What is your nationality?

SHORTY  
 American aviator.

OFFICER  
 Canadian?

SHORTY  
 American.

OFFICER  
 Are you flying with the RAF?

SHORTY  
 No. American Air Force.

All the officers huddle and talk quietly. The Officer turns  
 to Shorty.

OFFICER  
 Were you flying a British plane?

SHORTY  
 No. American.

The officers huddle again. Their conversation is more  
 animated. The Officer walks over to Shorty.

OFFICER  
Do you have a weapon?

SHORTY  
I got rid of it.

OFFICER  
Are you badly wounded?

SHORTY  
I'm okay.

The Officer walks over to the others and points back at Shorty. The other officers nod in agreement. They send the soldier back to Shorty. He stands directly in front of him.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
I knew this was going to be it.  
Their enemy was standing right in front of them and they were going to deal with the problem the only way they saw fit.

The soldier reaches slowly into his overcoat. Shorty braces for the worst. The soldier slowly pulls out, and shoots him with... his camera.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
For some reason, the Germans thought that we were all in the mafia. That we were a bunch of mobsters who joined the war for fun.

The Officer hustles over next to Shorty and pulls out his gun. He poses with a smile and his gun pointed at his first American prisoner.

OFFICER  
Luft gangster!!

The photo is taken.

EXT. LISTENING POST - DAY

Fifteen soldiers huddle around a pot of boiling water outside a small building that has two communication towers. One soldier, having just skinned a rabbit, drops it in the water. They turn and yell with joy seeing Shorty being marched up to the front of the building.

The ranking officer, LT. SCHIMMEL, blonde, slightly overweight, strolls outside the building with a huge smile.

LT. SCHIMMEL

(in German)

We heard about you coming about an hour before you arrived.

He points to the satellite dishes. A guard watches Shorty as he sits and pulls out a piece of chocolate from his escape kit. A Corporal rushes out with a book on aircraft identification. They all crowd around and thumb through the photos of Flying Fortresses and Liberators. They pick out the photo of the B-17 and show it to Shorty. He nods.

LT. SCHIMMEL (CONT'D)

Ja. Ja.

They turn away and continue talking about the plane. Shorty offers the guard some chocolate.

GUARD

Nicht!

SHORTY

Don't want to spoil your dinner?

Shorty lights up a cigarette and offers it to the guard. The guard sees the others are still looking at the book. Shorty reaches over and slips it into his hand. He takes a drag.

GUARD

Gut. Gut.

A chauffeur driven black Mercedes drives up. The guard motions for Shorty to get inside.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Shorty gets inside. A Luftwaffe officer is sitting next to Sgt. Jones. Their eyes connect as the car speeds off.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The Mercedes drives onto a ferry boat which pulls away.

EXT. WILHELMSHAVEN - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls up in front of several buildings. Shorty and Sgt. Jones are escorted inside.

INT. ADMINISTRATION MILITARY COMPOUND - NIGHT

Shorty and Sgt. Jones are led into a room with a Colonel and several officers. An indignant ORDERLY glares at them.

ORDERLY  
(broken English)  
Don't you salute your officers?

SHORTY  
He's not our officer.

Sgt. Jones nudges Shorty and they both salute.

The officers begin searching them. One officer, LT. WULFF, wearing an eye patch, checks Shorty and sees he still has his escape kit with the chocolate and cigarettes. He turns to the guard and smacks him in the face.

LT. WULFF  
Dumbkoft.

The recoiling guard takes the kit. Lt. Wulff also finds a compass, escape money, and a hacksaw blade. He holds up the blade to the others.

LT. WULFF (CONT'D)  
Luft gangsters! Kaput. For you  
the war is over.

The other officers smile and nod in agreement. COLONEL SCHWITTERS, very stoic, walks over to Shorty and Sgt. Jones.

COL. SCHWITTERS  
Where is your identity?

SHORTY  
I don't have my dog tags.

Shorty checks his pockets and finds an American penny and hands it to the Colonel who throws it down.

COL. SCHWITTERS  
Identification!!

SHORTY  
Sergeant Lee Gordon. 19049886.

Colonel Schwitters stares at them both with contempt.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

A doctor leans in close to Shorty and pulls out slivers of glass from his face. He then checks his knee which has embedded metal particles of flak. He pulls out needle nose pliers.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 I figured this would be as good a  
 time as any to show that we  
 Americans were tough and could  
 handle anything.

Without any anesthetic, the doctor jams the pliers deep into the wound. Shorty does a good job in trying to hide his grimace.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 I wasn't going to let him or any  
 other German see any weakness.

The doctor probes and finally pulls out a jagged fragment. He holds it up and smiles at Shorty.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 But God damn that hurt.

Shorty manages an unenthusiastic smile back.

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Shorty and Sgt. Jones are lead into the jail cell where they see LT. WALTER EWING and LT. STAN CLAYTON. They greet each other.

LT. EWING  
 Lieutenant Ewing and this is  
 Lieutenant Clayton of the 422  
 Squadron.

SHORTY  
 Gordon, Lieutenant. Sergeant Lee  
 Gordon. This is Sergeant Jones.

LT. EWING  
 What crew were you with?

SHORTY  
 Stallman's 365th.

LT. CLAYTON  
 I know the 365. Where are your  
 officers? Where is Stallman or Lt.  
 Iago? What about Finlay?

SHORTY  
 We were taking a pounding.  
 Especially up front. We lost  
 several men from the get-go. We  
 probably took a couple out but they  
 had the upper hand. We lost some  
 good men.

SGT. JONES

We got the order to bail out so we got out just before she took a dive into the North Sea.

SHORTY

What about you?

Lieutenant Ewing avoids the question.

LT. EWING

And you don't know if any officers made it?

SHORTY

No, sir. None that I know of.

SGT. JONES

We really have no way of knowing. I landed about five miles from where they picked up Shorty.

SHORTY

And what about you?

LT. CLAYTON

Like you, we were in the thick of it.

SHORTY

Taking a pounding?

LT. EWING

To what degree I'm not sure.

SHORTY

Sir? You were hit though, right? Isn't the why you bailed out?

Lt. Ewing looks at Lt. Clayton.

LT. EWING

Are you sure you heard the alarm bell?

LT. CLAYTON

Yes. No. Maybe... that's what I thought.

LT. EWING

Because when I bailed out, I looked back and it seemed to me like the fighter was headed back.

SHORTY

(to Lt. Ewing)  
So why did you bail out?

LT. EWING  
 (points to Lt. Clayton)  
 Because I saw him going out the  
 escape hatch!

Lt. Ewing glares over at Lt. Clayton who holds his head in his hands.

EXT. BREMERHAVEN TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Shorty, along with Lt. Ewing, Lt. Clayton and Sgt. Jones are herded to the train. He sees Sgt. Morse and Sgt. Ammerman from his crew being escorted with several others as well.

EXT. DULAG LUFT INTERROGATION CENTRE - NIGHT

Shorty and all the prisoners are brought into the centre.

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Shorty is led into his own cell. He searches the room for microphones and finds nothing. Exhausted, he lays down and closes his eyes.

INT. CELL - MORNING

The door to the cell opens. In walks HERR GRUBER, 40's, thin, moustache, dressed in civilian clothes.

HERR GRUBER  
 My name is Herr Gruber. I'm from  
 Geneva with the Red Cross.

He hands Shorty a Red Cross form.

HERR GRUBER (CONT'D)  
 Fill this form out completely.

Shorty takes the form and fills out his name, rank and serial number. He hands it back to Herr Gruber who looks at it.

HERR GRUBER (CONT'D)  
 This cannot go to the Red Cross  
 unless it is filled out completely.

SHORTY  
 That's too bad. Then I guess they  
 won't be getting this form.

An irritated Herr Gruber storms out. Shorty lays back down. COLONEL OTTO, black hair and a pointed nose walks in. He is a Luftwaffe officer. Shorty stands at attention but doesn't salute.

COL. OTTO  
You're Sergeant Gordon?

He holds out a cigarette. Shorty takes it and the Colonel lights it.

SHORTY  
Thanks.

Col. Otto holds out another Red Cross form.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
I did that already.

Colonel Otto smiles and puts the form down.

COL. OTTO  
What part of the United States are you from?

SHORTY  
California.

COL. OTTO  
What is your profession?

SHORTY  
Professional soldier.

Col. Otto lights a cigarette for himself and strolls around the room in an attempt to make the conversation casual.

COL. OTTO  
I've been to America. Ja. Ja. I have.

He looks at Shorty and tries to convince him.

COL. OTTO (CONT'D)  
I really have. Pittsburgh.

SHORTY  
What state is Pittsburgh in?

COL. OTTO  
And New York. Wonderful place, New York. Busy, busy. Several years ago. Ja.

He takes a drag on the cigarette, turning away from Shorty.

COL. OTTO (CONT'D)  
When did you enlist?

SHORTY  
That's not on the form, is it?

COL. OTTO  
Neither is your squadron or group.  
This is us just talking.

SHORTY  
Right. You're right. Sergeant Lee  
Gordon. 19049886.

COL. OTTO  
Come now, don't be like that, Lee.  
These are just minor details. They  
really don't make a difference.

SHORTY  
Then why the interest?

Colonel Otto smiles and sits next to Shorty.

COL. OTTO  
What base did you come from?

Shorty doesn't answer.

COL. OTTO (CONT'D)  
Who shot you down? Where?

SHORTY  
I don't know.

COL. OTTO  
(explodes)  
You American's are pretty God damn  
dumb!

SHORTY  
You're right. So stop with all the  
questions.

Colonel Otto puts his cigarette out on Shorty's blanket.

COL. OTTO  
I'll keep you here until you rot!  
You are a bunch of gangsters!!

SHORTY  
Actually, that's what I was in  
Chicago. A gangster. You can mark  
that down.

The Colonel stomps to the door and turns back to Shorty.

COL. OTTO  
As soon as you feel like letting me  
know some of the smaller details,  
you can join your friends and enjoy  
a hot meal.

He turns around to leave.

SHORTY  
Pennsylvania.

He looks back at Shorty like he might be getting some information.

COL. OTTO  
What is that?

SHORTY  
Pittsburgh is in Pennsylvania. But you know that because you've been there. Right? This is us just talking.

Colonel leaves slamming the door. Shorty walks over to the window and sees two RAF SERGEANTS walking by.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Hey, could you get me something to eat?

They see Shorty and signal with a thumbs up.

RAF SERGEANT  
Sure, Yank.

The door crashes open. In walks COLONEL WILHELM, balding, agitated, carrying a briefcase. He opens it and pulls out the Red Cross papers.

COL. WILHELM  
So, you wouldn't fill out the Red Cross forms we so kindly provided.

He hands the forms to Shorty.

COL. WILHELM (CONT'D)  
Look at them. We've got your squadron, group, bomber command and everyone on the crew. Now, is that your crew?

Shorty looks at the papers.

SHORTY  
No.

COL. WILHELM  
You are lying.

SHORTY  
I was just flying with them that day, it wasn't my regular squadron.

COL. WILHELM

Now we're getting somewhere. Why then were you flying with them?

SHORTY

Because some asshole had the clap?

COL. WILHELM

Clap?

SHORTY

(pointing at the Colonel)

Yeah, you know, creatures in your crotch.

The Colonel is disgusted. He points at the forms.

COL. WILHELM

Write down the names of your crew or they will be shot as spies when they are caught.

Shorty signs his name at the bottom and hands it back. The Colonel hands him another form.

COL. WILHELM (CONT'D)

We know all about you, Sergeant Lee Gordon. Every single move your squadron has made from the time you left Harlingen Engineers' School to your arrival at your base in Chelveston. We have the dates and all the commanding officer's names.

SHORTY

And how did you get all this information, not that it's correct?

Shorty hands back the form.

COL. WILHELM

Oh, it's correct. We know for a fact that it's correct. The reason we know is that it was provided by American newspapers. Every time a man goes to school or gets another rank, they post it in the local paper. American newspapers are good friends to us. Our allies, so to speak.

He puts the form back in his briefcase.

COL. WILHELM (CONT'D)

We will find out everything about you. You can bet your life in that.

He walks out.

Shorty sits back on his bed. Suddenly a piece of chocolate flies through the window, followed by cigarettes, crackers and some cheese. Shorty scarfs down the food.

INT. CAMERA ROOM - LATER

Shorty is brought into the room and shoved into a spot.

OFFICER  
(pointing to a camera)  
Look.

Shorty distorts his face when his photo is taken.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
We distorted our faces whenever a photo was taken so that if we escaped and were caught, we wouldn't be so easily recognized.

The photo is taken.

EXT. BARRACKS - DUSK

Shorty, in a RAF uniform, is escorted into a small chow hall. He grabs some food and sits with Morse, Ammerman, Jones and twenty other American and British soldiers.

SGT. MORSE  
How ya' doin', Shorty?

He nods while gobbling down the food.

SGT. AMMERMAN  
They give you the third degree?

SHORTY  
They didn't get anything from me. But they sure as hell have their own sources. Which turn out to be our sources.

SGT. JONES  
They tell you about the papers?

SHORTY  
Yeah. Any word on the rest?

SGT. MORSE  
Lovis got it real bad. His leg was nearly severed. I put his chute on and shoved him out. I'm not sure if he made it.

SGT. AMMERMAN  
He might be better off.

SHORTY  
What about up front?

SGT. MORSE  
Kekeso, Stallman, Iago, no one up  
front made it.

Shorty pauses from eating.

SHORTY  
I kinda thought that might be the  
case. We were taking it pretty  
hard but I was hoping they would  
have gotten out as well. That's a  
damn shame.

SGT. MORSE  
But we made it, didn't we, Shorty?

SHORTY  
Yeah, Cash. We made it.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty and all the prisoners are lined up. COMMANDANT  
HEINRICH, 50's, tall, stern, is standing before them.

COMMANDANT  
You will be leaving for Lamsdorf.  
You are fliers in the RAF and AAF  
and should act accordingly. Any  
man who escapes will be shot  
immediately after being captured.  
I will repeat. Anyone who escapes  
will be shot immediately after  
being captured. And you will be  
captured. I hope that is  
understood.

EXT. FRANKFURT TRAIN STATION - DAY

Luftwaffe guards load Shorty's group of seventeen onto a  
train. They jam one hundred and eighteen men into two box  
cars. Forty-two are Americans. The train pulls out.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Shorty and Sgt. Morse are next to each other. Shorty looks  
out the window and nudges Sgt. Morse. He looks out as well.

## SHORTY'S P.O.V. - ALONG THE RAILROAD TRACKS

About thirty women are swinging sledge hammers under the close watch of German soldiers. Behind them are lines of stationary boxcars wrapped in barbed wire. Looking out of small openings from inside the trains are hundreds of emaciated faces of men, women, and children waving in vain and screaming.

VOICES

Wasser! Wasser!

BACK TO SCENE

Shorty and Sgt. Morse look at each other not understanding what they've just seen.

SGT. MORSE

What the hell is going on here,  
Shorty?

SHORTY

I don't know. Those aren't  
Americans in that train. They were  
yelling "wasser" not "water."

SGT. MORSE

You think we're gonna end up like  
that?

SHORTY

God, I hope not.

EXT. LAMSDORF - DAY

Shorty and all the prisoners file off the train.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Shorty and the prisoners march down the road surrounded by German guards.

EXT. STALAG VIII B - DAY

Watch towers and barbed wire can be seen as the prisoners are marched inside this prison camp. A German guard pulls out a camera and aims it at the new incoming prisoners. They all give the V-sign and begin singing "Tipperary."

INT. STALAG VIII B - DAY

As they enter the camp filled with British, Australians, Canadians, Indians, and Arabs, they crowd around and join in with the song. They throw cigarettes to Shorty and the gang.

RAF SOLDIER

Hey, look! The Yanks are coming!!

They all cheer.

SHORTY (V.O.)

I started thinking about escaping immediately. I knew it would mean trading off what little food I had to get what I needed to bust out. But for me there was no choice. After having seen what I saw on the trains, the conditions here and the thought of what might be, that was enough.

Shorty checks his pocket and pulls out the weathered photo of Betty.

SHORTY (V.O.)

And there was a promise. A promise I was gonna keep.

EXT. BARRACKS - AFTERNOON

Shorty walks up to a thin, blonde haired British soldier, TREVOR PECK.

TREVOR

Hi, Yank.

SHORTY

(quietly)

Listen, how can I get a hold of some maps?

TREVOR

It'll cost ya, mate.

INT. COMPOUND - LATER

Shorty hands Trevor a pack of twenty cigarettes and walks over to his bunk. Trevor quickly slips Shorty a folded up paper and a magnetized needle.

TREVOR

(whispering)

Switzerland is the way to go.

SHORTY

What about out of here?

TREVOR

Forget it. Too many guards and dogs. You'll be shot. It's either work detail or by train. Any other way you're dead. Believe me. But you've got to be smart, or more important, lucky. Good luck, Yank.

INT. COMPOUND - NIGHT

With everyone asleep, Shorty is laying on his bunk studying the map in the moonlight.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

All the prisoners are lined up. COMMANDANT BERGER, dark hair, 40's, scar on left cheek, addresses the men.

COMMANDANT BERGER

All Americans will be leaving today. You will be searched immediately and sent out. Any man who would be foolish enough to try and escape will be shot.

Shorty looks over a Sgt. Morse and the others.

SHORTY

That seems to be a theme here.

INT. COMPOUND BUILDING - DAY

The American's are being searched. Shorty places his map and needle in his bag and puts his hands on his head as they go through his bag of belongings. They move him on.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Shorty and the other Americans board two "Forty and Eight" box cars. It can carry forty men or eight horses. Barbed wire surrounds each car. The windows above are closed.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The wounded are in the first car with the officers. Shorty is in the second among fifty others. The train pulls out.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train stops and the men get out to relieve themselves. As they are herded back into the train, Shorty stops to tie his shoe, as he does he sees a small compartment underneath the train. He taps Sgt. Morse and he sees it as well.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Shorty and Sgt. Morse sit inside where the compartment should be below. As the train takes off, Shorty lies down and pulls the wood flooring aside. He reaches into the compartment, which leads outside, grabs the barbed wire and unwraps it from around the bolt and door handle. Sgt. Morse helps Shorty cover the floor back up with the wood.

SHORTY

I can pull out the bolt to the door.

SGT. MORSE

When do you want to do this?

SHORTY

Let's be smart about it. Let them think everything's okay.

SGT. MORSE

Right. Let them let their guard down a bit.

SHORTY

Exactly.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The train moves on down the tracks.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

Shorty huddles with Sgt. Morse and others gather around.

SHORTY

I say we get out tonight.

SGT. MORSE

I agree. I'm in. Enough of this rat shit. Let's get out of here.

Several other men come over, having heard the plan. Among them is SERGEANT BERNARD SALTZ, 20's, dark hair.

SHORTY

We've got to be getting near to our next destination and the Germans will be watching us a lot closer.

SGT. MORSE

So, where to, when we get out of here?

SHORTY

I figure from our position here we could head east to Austria.

SGT. SALTZ

But if you escape, they'll shoot us.

Shorty walks away to the middle of the train, pulls the boards aside reaches below and yanks the bolt to the door.

SGT. SALTZ (CONT'D)

That puts the rest of us in jeopardy.

SGT. MORSE

Tough shit, Saltz. Then come with us. We've got a chance and we're gonna take it.

SGT. JONES

(points to several others)  
We're in as well.

Shorty comes back.

SHORTY

The latch is off. We're ready.

Shorty and Sgt. Morse go over to the door, open it slightly and look out.

SGT. MORSE

We're moving pretty fast. We'll probably break our necks.

SHORTY

We'll wait for an incline. When that happens, we go.

Everybody goes back to their seats.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The train barrels ahead down the tracks.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

The train begins to slow down. Shorty jumps up and hurries through the cramped car to the door and slides it open. He looks at everyone who crowds around.

SHORTY  
This is it. We're at about thirty  
kilometers an hour. Who's in?

Sgt. Jones, Ammerman, and Morse step forward.

SGT. JONES  
Let's do this.

They jump one at a time as SGT. COATS, SGT. WILLIS, and SGT. ARNOLD come forward.

SGT. COATS  
We're next.

All three leap as well.

Shorty stares at everyone watching.

SHORTY  
Last chance. Anyone else?

Sgt. Saltz steps forward.

SGT. SALTZ  
What the hell.

As he gets to the door and is ready to leap, Shorty hears the sound of the tracks become hollow.

SHORTY  
Wait!

Shorty grabs Sgt. Saltz and stops him just before he leaps. They both look out of the train to see they are on a trestle going over a gorge.

SGT. SALTZ  
I'm not sure I can do this!

The train passes over the trestle to solid ground.

SHORTY  
Go!

Shorty's scream startles Sgt. Saltz and he leaps off.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Saltz hits the gravel embankment and slides down into the dark.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

Shorty turns back to the others.

SHORTY  
Wire the door closed after me.

Shorty leaps off.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Shorty hits the ground hard. His feet get caught in the signal wire along the tracks. He goes head over heels down the embankment into the darkness.

He pops his head up and watches the rear lights of the train fade into the distance.

Suddenly he hears a whistle. He whistles back. Running over to him is Sgt. Saltz. They catch their breath.

SHORTY  
Let's go.

Shorty and Sgt. Saltz run back across the train tracks and up a hill. They hide behind some brush.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
We'll stay here for the night and  
hop a freight train in the morning.

They lie down in the extreme cold and pull their arms inside their coats to keep warm.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - EARLY MORNING

As the train pulls into the station, the guards jump out and walk over to the other box car. They unravel the barbed wire and slide open the door.

As the wounded are being lifted out of the first car, the German soldiers count the bodies getting off the second car. The guards look inside having finished their count.

GERMAN GUARDS  
Escape!!

INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE OFFICE - DAY

A BRITISH WAF with a headset is sitting in front of her monitoring equipment. She writes down the information she is getting: "Be on the look out for eight escaping American Luft Gangsters." She yells to the others in the room.

WAF  
Look at this! Eight Yanks have  
escaped and are still on the  
loose!!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Shorty and Sgt. Saltz walk down the road, turn the corner and see two young men on bicycles who look their way. Saltz hesitates.

SHORTY  
Don't panic. Keep walking.

As Shorty and Sgt. Saltz continue walking they approach the men. Shorty gives a small "Heil Hitler" gesture. The men stop their bikes in front of them. They speak in German.

MAN #1  
Where are you from?

SGT. SALTZ  
(in German)  
Just up the road.

They look at Shorty.

SHORTY  
Ja. Ja.

MAN #2  
What are you doing?

SGT. SALTZ  
We are out for a morning stroll.  
Taking in the fresh air.

SHORTY  
Ja. Ja.

They stare at Shorty and Sgt. Saltz, turn their bikes around and race off.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
What did they say?

SGT. SALTZ  
They wanted to know who we are and  
where we're from.

SHORTY

I think we're in for it. Let's get  
the hell out of here.

They turn around and walk quickly back around the corner  
where they see a motorcycle racing toward them.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

Let's go back!

They run around the corner to see a State Policeman on a  
motorcycle with a sidecar charging toward them. They freeze  
in their tracks and raise their hands in surrender.

EXT. LOCAL TOWN - AFTERNOON

Nearly all the local towns people, are gathered in front of  
the beer hall to see the captured American escapees.

The policemen on their motorcycles with Shorty and Sgt. Saltz  
in the sidecars, pull up. The towns people scream and yell.

CIVILIANS

Luft Gangsters!

Walking out of the beer hall is HERMANN LUDWIG, 40's, the  
local Nazi Official who looks like Hitler, same moustache and  
hair.

POLICEMEN

Heil Hitler.

LUDWIG

Heil Hitler.

The policemen march Shorty and Sgt. Saltz into the hall.

INT. BEER HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

Shorty and Sgt. Saltz are separated in the hall. When the  
police point their lugars at them they throw their hands up.

LUDWIG

(in German)

Search them.

The police find the map but not Betty's photo in Shorty's  
sock.

LUDWIG (CONT'D)

Strip them.

Sgt. Saltz begins to strip. The police points his gun at  
Shorty to do the same. Shorty puts his hands up.

POLICEMEN  
(in German)  
Strip down!

SGT. SALTZ  
(yells to Shorty)  
They want us to strip.

LUDWIG  
No talking!

SHORTY  
What'd he say?

The policeman points his lugar at Shorty.

SGT. SALTZ  
No talking.

The policeman point his lugar at St. Saltz.

LUDWIG  
Shut up!!

Shorty begins to strip as more policemen file inside. He and Sgt. Saltz stand naked except for their dog tags. They take Shorty's tag.

SHORTY  
American POW.

LUDWIG  
Shut up!

The other policeman looks at Sgt. Saltz' tag and makes a discovery.

POLICEMEN  
JUDE!!

He drops the tags and backs away like he has a disease. The policeman keeps his lugar aimed at Sgt. Saltz.

Ludwig motions for them to put on their clothes. As they quickly throw on their clothes, Shorty sees Sgt. Saltz being led outside with a gun to his back.

SHORTY  
Saltz!

POLICEMEN  
Shut up!

Shorty stands there with his hands up, waiting in fear of the sound of Sgt. Saltz being shot.

The policeman throws Shorty his dog tags. They all huddle with Ludwig and look over at Shorty.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
I figured this was it. I was a  
goner. They'd shoot Saltz and then  
do the same to me and be done with  
it.

Suddenly the door flies open and Saltz walks back in over to Shorty.

SHORTY  
I thought they were going to kill  
you!

SGT. SALTZ  
I told him I had to go to the can.  
I almost wet myself.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Shorty and Sgt Saltz are locked in separate cells in a small, dark, filthy jail. Their beds consist of a board off the ground and a small board for a pillow. Shorty stands holding on to the bars looking across at Sgt. Saltz.

SHORTY  
Why do you suppose the policeman  
threw down your tags and backed  
away.

SGT. SALTZ  
He yelled out "Jude."

SHORTY  
What does that have to do with  
anything? Why would that scare  
him? He acted like you were  
diseased or something.

SGT. SALTZ  
I don't know. I'm afraid to find  
out.

EXT. JAIL - DAY

A tall German guard carrying a rifle nicknamed BIG STOOP takes Shorty and Sgt. Saltz outside and points in the direction they are to walk.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

They walk down toward the railroad tracks.

SHORTY  
 (to Sgt. Saltz)  
 Ask him where we're going.

Sgt. Saltz asks Big Stoop and he replies.

SGT. SALTZ  
 He can't tell us.

SHORTY  
 Tell Big Stoop here, we're gonna  
 know sooner or later so he might as  
 well tell us.

Sgt. Saltz asks him and he shakes his head. They walk on.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Big Stoop looks very confused as he checks the train  
 schedules. His gun in his holster is easily within reach of  
 Shorty who looks at Sgt. Saltz like "What a dummy."

BIG STOOP  
 (to himself)  
 I'm not real sure. I better get  
 this right.

The train starts to rev up. Big Stoop is perspiring heavily.  
 The train starts to move.

BIG STOOP (CONT'D)  
 Shit!

SGT. SALTZ  
 Just tell me where we're going!

BIG STOOP  
 (panicking)  
 Mooseburg. We're supposed to go to  
 Mooseburg! But I'm not sure...

SGT. SALTZ  
 He says Mooseburg.

SHORTY  
 (scanning the schedule)  
 I kinda picked up on that.

Shorty figures it out quickly. He whirls and points to the  
 train that is pulling out.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 We're on that one!

Big Stoop turns and runs to the train ahead of Shorty and  
 Sgt. Saltz. All three jump on.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

They move through the train and sit next to each other. Big Stoop, still panting from the run, smiles and pats Shorty on the shoulder. Shorty looks at Sgt. Saltz in disbelief.

EXT. STALAG VII A - DAY

Big Stoop walks Shorty and Sgt. Saltz inside the gates and hands them off to two other guards. Shorty and Saltz are split up from each other.

INT. "THE HOLE" - DAY

The guard, with Shorty, shoves him inside this small, extremely dark room. The door is slammed behind him.

INT. DETENTION BARRACKS - TEN DAYS LATER - DAY

A GUARD shoves Shorty and Sgt. Saltz inside this dark and dirty room with one light hanging above and one window. Sergeants Morse, Willis, Coats, Jones, Ammerman, and Arnold, who also jumped from the train, greet them along with several other Frenchmen and British soldiers.

SGT. MORSE  
How was the hole, Shorty?

SHORTY  
Everything I dreamed and more.

The Guard points at the other Americans.

GUARD  
(pointing)  
All of you come with me.

SGT. JONES  
Why can't we stay here?

The guard pulls out his lugar.

SGT. JONES (CONT'D)  
You must be a bad influence on us,  
Shorty.

They file out under the watch of the guard.

SHORTY  
(calling to them)  
Hey, I'll be in here for a while.  
Send me a Red Cross parcel, would  
ya?

SGT. MORSE  
Sure thing, Shorty.

They march outside.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
They must have thought I was the  
ringleader because they split us up  
pretty quick. They left Saltz with  
me, but he was no longer a threat.  
He'd had enough of trying to  
escape.

Shorty walks over to a bed and lays down.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
But the thought of that train  
crammed with emaciated prisoners  
still haunted me. I couldn't make  
sense of it. I knew it was war,  
but we weren't treated like that,  
so why were they, whoever "they"  
were, treated so badly? What was  
going on?

He pulls out the photo of Betty and stares at it.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
My decision was made the minute I  
was captured.

He puts the photo back in his shirt.

INT. DETENTION BARRACKS - NIGHT

Sgt. Saltz sleeps as Shorty plays cards with the Frenchmen  
under the dim light. The game comes to an end and several of  
the men throw in their cards and go lay down. PIERRE, 22,  
red beret, shuffles the cards.

PIERRE  
(whispers)  
Are you thinking of escaping again?

SHORTY  
Always.

PIERRE  
We have maps.

Shorty gets up and walks to the door and listens for any  
guard on the other side and walks back to the table.

SHORTY  
Let me see your maps.

Pierre looks at GILBERT, 21, dark hair, thin moustache.

PIERRE  
(in French)  
Go get the maps.

Gilbert and PHILLIPE, 23, beard, and DURET, 20, tall, run to their hiding places and grab their maps and return to the table. Phillipe spreads out his map.

SHORTY  
(to Pierre)  
Is this a map of southern Germany?

Pierre listens to Phillipe and interprets this conversation.

PIERRE  
Yes. A well detailed tourist map that goes as far west as Ehingen. Phillipe will sell this for a can of coffee and two packs of cigarettes.

SHORTY  
How was Phillipe caught?

PIERRE  
One could travel in Germany on slow trains and go short distances without any papers but on faster trains that go long distances, it is most dangerous to do so. That is how he was caught.

Duret lays out his map and speaks in broken English.

DURET  
This map show southern Germany from Ulm to the Rhine.

Shorty looks closer.

DURET (CONT'D)  
It also shows the towns from Ehingen to Singen.

SHORTY  
How did you get pinched?

DURET  
It was fairly easy to travel by freight trains. German roads are well marked and many have bicycle paths. Stay off the Reichsautobahnen, the military roads. Bikes and walking are not allowed.

(MORE)

DURET (CONT'D)  
There are many road blocks. That  
is where I was stopped.

Gilbert places his map down. He talks through Pierre.

PIERRE  
This is a Swiss map.

Gilbert points to certain areas.

PIERRE (CONT'D)  
Lake Constance, Singen and  
Schaffhausen.

SHORTY  
What happened to him? How did he  
escape?

PIERRE  
Gilbert escaped in civilian clothes  
with a rope and headed for a field.  
He found a cow and wrapped the rope  
around its neck and was able to  
look like a dairy farmer. He was  
able to walk through several  
villages quite freely. Nobody paid  
attention to him.

SHORTY  
How was Gilbert caught?

Gilbert replies, smiles, and shrugs.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Well?

PIERRE  
The cow died.

They all laugh and go their separate ways to their beds. As  
Shorty lays down, Sgt. Saltz looks over from his bed.

SGT. SALTZ  
What do you think?

SHORTY  
It's a lot of good information.

SGT. SALTZ  
Are you sure you want to try again?  
They're sure to shoot you this  
time, Shorty. Without hesitation.

SHORTY  
If I'm caught. I'd rather die out  
there than die in here, Saltz.

SGT. SALTZ

Why take the chance of risking your life? This might just be a thing of waiting it out.

SHORTY

What if it's not? What if we end up like those others, thin as a rail and shoved on those trains and taken to God knows where to be dealt with as they see fit?

SGT. SALTZ

Maybe that's a chance we gotta take.

SHORTY

I like my chances better than yours. If there's a way out, I'm gonna find it and take it.

INT. DETENTION BARRACKS - DAY

The door opens and a guard hands Shorty and Saltz a Red Cross parcel and other items to the Frenchmen.

EXT. DETENTION BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty is allowed to walk outside to shake his grey blanket. As his eyes try to adjust to the sun, he sees Sgt. Morse.

SGT. MORSE

Can we help you, Shorty?

SHORTY

Yeah, tell Major Berry to get me the hell out of this tank. I never had a trial. They've forgotten about me.

The guards shove him back inside.

EXT. COMPOUND - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The compound is empty with barely a light glow from any building. Guards walk their patrol.

INT. DETENTION BARRACKS - NIGHT

Everyone is asleep, except Shorty, who sits under the dim light with all three maps spread out on a table.

He looks away and covers random parts of the map with his hands and tests himself as to what towns and roads he has covered. He lifts his hands and smiles.

EXT. AMERICAN COMPOUND - DAY

As Shorty and Sgt. Saltz walk into the compound, Sgt. Morse and Sgt. Coats see them.

SGT. MORSE  
Hey, Shorty's out with Saltz!

SGT. COATS  
Welcome home, sweeties.

Everyone crowds around to welcome them. Among them is STAFF SGT. KEN KURTENBACH, thin, dark hair, nice looking. Shorty sees him and shakes his hand.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
So, the bastards finally let you out. How are you feeling, Shorty?

SHORTY  
Not bad for being in a cave for a month or so. Right now I'm happy as hell to be out of that hole. I've had plenty of time to think and I need your help.

They stroll away from the others.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
What's on your mind?

SHORTY  
I've got an idea. A plan. But there are some things that might be tough for me to get a hold of.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
You'll have to see Sergeant Major Berry. He's the camp leader now. He's the one to help you with that. Besides, he's got the Germans so hoodwinked that he can do almost anything.

INT. BARRACKS "WHITE HOUSE" - DAY

Sgt. Kurtenbach and Shorty walk inside to SGT. MAJOR BERRY'S office in the back. He is 43, handsome, cunning, the British man of confidence who represents all Americans and British. There are stacks of Red Cross parcels behind his desk.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
Ken, what can I do for you?

SGT. KURTENBACH  
Sergeant Berry, this is Shorty  
Gordon.

Sgt. Berry stands as Shorty walks over and shakes his hand.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
I've heard a lot about you, Shorty.

SHORTY  
Not all good, I'll bet.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
On the contrary. Quite ingenious  
and quite daring. But let me say  
if this is about being in the hole,  
all I can tell you is I assure you  
that the assholes never even told  
me you were down there in the first  
place. You did finally get the  
parcel, did you not?

SHORTY  
Yeah, I did. Thanks.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
Shorty has another plan for escape  
he'd like to run by you.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
Very well. Pull up a chair and  
fill me in.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty walks over to Sgt. Coats who lying on his bunk reading  
a letter. Shorty pulls out a map from his pocket.

SHORTY  
Ken told me you were looking for  
something that looks like this?  
You still want it?

Sgt. Coats sees the map.

SGT. COATS  
(excited)  
You bet, Shorty.

SHORTY  
Two cans.

SGT. COATS

Two?

SHORTY

Hey, it cost me a can and a pack.

Coats grabs two cans of coffee from his parcel and hands it to Shorty.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

How about throwing in some pepper as well?

SGT. COATS

Ah, come on, Shorty.

Shorty dangles the map in front of him.

SHORTY

Look at all these exciting places just waiting for you when you escape!

SGT. COATS

All right.

They exchange the map for the goods.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

Guards in the towers survey the compound as Shorty, wearing his jacket, emerges from the crowd of prisoners and strolls over by the Yugoslavian compound, which is separated by a wire fence.

SHORTY (V.O.)

Trading with other camps could be extremely dangerous. Not only could they shoot you on sight if they caught you, but there was always the chance someone might snitch just so they would get preferred treatment. It was a gamble that sometimes didn't pay off.

A Yugoslavian prisoner does the same on his side of the fence.

Once they are close enough, Shorty whips out a pair of Army G.I. pants and a shirt and throws them over the fence. The Yugoslavian does the same with his clothes.

As Shorty stuffs the clothes under his jacket, a German guard approaches, grabs him around the throat and chokes him.

All the other prisoners watch as Shorty struggles for his breath. Sgt. Coats holds back Sgt. Morse from trying to help. As Shorty frees himself, the guard points his gun at him. Everyone freezes.

GUARD  
(in German)  
Get away from the fence!!

Shorty staggers away.

INT. BARRACKS - LATE NIGHT

Shorty stands by his bunk and tries on the clothes for which he traded.

INT. SGT. BERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Sgt. Berry is sitting behind his desk reading an opera program as Shorty peeks his head in the room. Sgt. Berry checks his watch.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
Come in, Shorty. You're right on  
time. Have a seat.

As Shorty sits, Sgt. Berry places the program on the desk.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
Have you ever been to the opera in  
Munich?

SHORTY  
No.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
It's not to be missed.

He motions to the program.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
Go ahead, you can look at it.

As Shorty stands up to get the program, a German corporal, ERIC, 20's, blonde, stocky, walks in. Shorty freezes.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
Eric. How about a cigarette?

He tosses Eric the cigarette. He lights it and stands behind Shorty who looks back at him. He motions for Shorty to go with him. Shorty looks at Sgt. Major Berry, who nods.

Shorty and Eric go to a small partitioned room. Eric stands in front of Shorty.

ERIC  
(broken English)  
Put your hands up.

Shorty is alarmed.

SHORTY  
What is this about?

ERIC  
Make the sign of a cross.

SHORTY  
(panicked)  
What?

Eric slowly lowers Shorty's arms until they are straight out from his sides.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
There must be some sort of  
misunderstanding here.

ERIC  
No. There isn't.

Eric reaches into his uniform. Shorty is frozen. Eric pulls out a... tape measure. He begins taking measurements of Shorty's waist and inseams.

Sgt. Major Berry leans in.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
Shorty, meet Eric.

Eric smiles and continues measuring.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
How much will this cost, Eric?

ERIC  
It will be twenty-five cans of  
coffee.

SHORTY  
(surprised)  
Twenty-five cans?

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
And the other item?

ERIC  
One thousand cigarettes and ten  
cans of coffee.

Shorty looks at Sgt. Major Berry in disbelief.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
That's pretty steep, my friend.

Eric shrugs and writes down the measurements and leaves.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty walks down the middle of the barracks holding up his parcel.

SHORTY  
Which one of you kriegies would  
like my parcel?

Everyone stops and yells out for the parcel. Shorty plays it up.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Oh, there's more than one of you?

They all yell out again. Shorty walks over to Sgt. Morse.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
I thought I was just gonna give it  
to Morse over here.

Shorty holds it out to his out stretched hands as everyone yells their disapproval.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
You don't want Morse to have it?

They all yell out "No!" Shorty walks over to Sgt. Saltz.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
How about Saltz? We've been  
through a lot together, old Saltz  
and me. Leaping off trains.  
Lugars in our faces. Detention.

Saltz nods and reaches for the parcel.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
No?

Everybody screams out against Saltz being the choice.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Well then, since we can't agree, I  
guess I'll just have to raffle it  
off. It'll take one can of coffee  
each to enter the raffle.

Everybody digs into their parcels.

INT. SGT. BERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Shorty loads twenty cans of coffee on his desk.

SHORTY

Twenty cans. That's all I can get.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY

Let me see if I can shore up the rest. I want you to see Robert Cahin. He's the French Barracks Chief. I've told him about you. Go see him tonight. He'll be expecting you. Bring your grey blanket.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty runs into the barracks and over to PRIVATE DUNCAN, 20, lazy.

SHORTY

Duncan, I'll do your work detail for you today.

DUNCAN

Yeah, really?

SHORTY

Give me your tags.

Shorty takes his tags.

DUNCAN

Thanks.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

Shorty runs up, grabs a shovel and gets in the back of the line of the work detail. Three guards count the thirty prisoners, check their tags, and leave the compound.

EXT. STALAG VII A - DAY

All thirty prisoner's walk out of the camp and on down the road.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Half dog tags nailed onto crosses mark the graves. The guards motion for them to dig more graves. Shorty grabs a pick and checks out his surroundings while he works.

Driving up the road and stopping by the prisoners is a flatbed truck. Shorty and the others walk over to the truck and begin pulling off the large bags.

SHORTY (V.O.)

The Russians didn't get many parcels. The Germans saw to that. The ones they did receive were pathetic. They ate bread made from flour and sawdust. Drank what water they could find, but over all they died off at an alarming rate.

Shorty helps carry a body bag to a newly dug grave. He looks down and sees blood dripping from his bag. They place the body in the hole and begin covering it up while the guards talk amongst themselves.

SHORTY (V.O.)

The sight of the dead was a daily occurrence. Death became normal. A frightening thought, but true. We'd try and do things to keep our spirits up and irritate our captors at the same time.

Shorty throws his shovel into the grave and buries it in dirt without the guards catching them.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

All the prisoners walk back minus several picks and shovels. Shorty is scouting his escape route every step of the way.

EXT. STALAG VII A - AFTERNOON

Shorty and the rest of the prisoners file inside. The guards do their final head count and are confused by the lack of shovels and picks.

EXT. COMPOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Shorty, wearing his jacket, walks over to the French barracks, slips the German guard a couple of cigarettes and he lets him walk inside.

EXT. FRENCH BARRACKS - LATE AFTERNOON

Pierre sees Shorty and motions for him to follow.

INT. ROBERT CAHIN'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Pierre shows Shorty inside. ROBERT CAHIN, 40's, receding hair, thin moustache, gets up from his chair to greet Shorty.

CAHIN  
Robert Cahin. Pleasure to meet you.

SHORTY  
Sergeant Lee Gordon. Friends call me Shorty.

CAHIN  
That seems rather condescending.

SHORTY  
Only if it weren't the truth.

Cahin smiles as Shorty pulls out his grey blanket from under his coat.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Here's the blanket.

CAHIN  
Great.

Cahin takes the blanket and Pierre begins to measure Shorty's waist and inseams.

PIERRE  
Shoe size?

SHORTY  
Six.

PIERRE  
He will sew this for two cans of coffee. One can of meat. One pack of cigarettes.

SHORTY  
Fair enough.

Pierre leaves and Cahin motions for Shorty to sit.

CAHIN  
You are committed to going through with this knowing the risks?

SHORTY  
You bet. There's no reason to stop trying now. No question in my mind.

CAHIN

All right. I suggest you go to the Arbeitskommando in Munich. We'll have the French workers put you on a freight car for France. I'll stay in touch with Sergeant Major Berry and when he notifies me that you are on your way, I'll notify my contacts in Munich to keep an eye out for you.

SHORTY

Sounds like a plan.

CAHIN

When you arrive to the location, ask for Henri Moreau. He will help you. If you can get to Alsace, it would be possible to travel into France by river boat.

INT. SGT. BERRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shorty, Sgt. Major Berry, and Eric sit around the desk smoking cigarettes and sipping coffee in a dim light.

SHORTY

(staring at Eric)

Are you sure he's on the up and up?

SGT. MAJOR BERRY

Eric is indeed trustworthy.

SHORTY

How can you be sure?

SGT. MAJOR BERRY

He's in too deep.

SHORTY

That doesn't necessarily convince me. What's to say he doesn't snitch on any one of us?

SGT. MAJOR BERRY

Eric knows if word gets back to the Commandant about anyone or anything we talk about or what we are planning on doing, that I'll incriminate him as well.

SHORTY

You think that's enough to keep him on the up and up.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
You can be sure.

SHORTY  
How?

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
Because for my infraction, I'll go  
to the cooler but Eric will go to  
the Russian Front.

Eric shakes his head "no." He definitely understands the  
words "Russian Front" in any language.

ERIC  
Nein. Nein.

SHORTY  
All right then.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
What did Cahin suggest?

SHORTY  
Cahin said I should go to the  
French labor detail in Munich and  
ask for Henri Moreau. He'll help  
steer me along. They'll put me on  
a freight train for France. If I  
get to Alsace, I could go into  
France by river boat.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
(thinks a minute)  
That's a solid plan, but, I think  
the provisions we've acquired lend  
themselves better for our original  
plan. But check with Moreau first  
to be sure.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty walks inside from work detail. He walks up to Private  
Duncan and hands him back his dog tags.

DUNCAN  
You're spoiling me, Shorty. How  
many more times are you gonna do  
this?

SHORTY  
One more, Duncan. I'm beat.  
Besides, I think five times is  
enough, don't you?

DUNCAN  
Not really.

INT. FRENCH BARRACKS - DAY

Philippe finishes cutting Shorty's hair very short. Shorty looks in the mirror and sees he looks sixteen. They laugh as he puts on his hat to cover the haircut.

INT. SGT. BERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Shorty enters the room. Sgt. Major Berry and Eric greet him and hand him a bag. Shorty looks inside.

SHORTY  
Not bad.

Eric gives him a different bag and smiles.

ERIC  
(broken English)  
The best that coffee can buy.

Shorty checks it and sits.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
You've got Halazone tablets, a toilet kit, some ration D bars, several tins of malted milk and some raisins.

SHORTY  
Is everything else set?

Eric talks to Sgt. Major Berry in German.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
He says beware that the guards have been warned of late that if any men try and escape they will be shot or sent to the Russian Front. They are watching the work detail closer.

SHORTY  
I kinda figured that. I'm not going directly for the Swiss border. I'm going west and then south. I figure five days and nights.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
(writing on paper)  
This is the address of Mrs. Jeb Scott. She is in Switzerland.  
(MORE)

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
 She has taken care of others. If  
 you are successful, contact her.

He hands Shorty the address.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY (CONT'D)  
 Everything is set.

ERIC  
 You must act the same as a German  
 in body and mind.

SHORTY  
 That's a depressing thought.

Eric nods.

SGT. MAJOR BERRY  
 You cannot tell anyone about any of  
 this. All our lives hang in the  
 balance.

Eric shakes his head in agreement.

SHORTY  
 I understand.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

All the prisoners are asleep. Shorty is shaving his legs. He finishes, pulls out the bag from Eric, takes off his clothes and puts on the clothes from the bag. He puts back on his infantryman's uniform over the clothes.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty stands in line for the work detail. Shorty sees it's a smaller detail than the times before. He's alarmed.

SHORTY  
 (to a Private)  
 Where is everybody else?

PRIVATE  
 They said eighteen today instead of  
 thirty.

SHORTY  
 Why? What made them change?

Concern comes across Shorty's face.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 My first thought was there was a  
 snitch.

(MORE)

SHORTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Maybe Eric had tipped them off. If they had a smaller detail it would make it easier for them to catch me. Then they would shoot me. Set an example for the others. At this point I didn't trust anyone.

Shorty and the detail start to march out of the compound. Shorty's buddies in the yard wave.

SGT. COATS  
 Good luck, Shorty!

SGT. MORSE  
 Say hello to Lu Lu for me!

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 Anything was possible. This would be taking an even bigger chance. But I could only take that chance if it was a pretty damn good one.

EXT. STALAG VII A - DAY

The workers grab a large wagon-type cart and pull it along from the hitch in front and push it from behind.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Two GUARDS are on either side of the wagon while a nervous CORPORAL on a bike riding behind counts the detail out loud.

They walk over a narrow bridge and stop in front of a small hospital. Several orderlies bring out bodies in bags and the prisoners load them onto the wagon.

As they move on, Shorty slips off his tags, hands them to another worker who puts them in his pocket, and he moves to the back of the wagon behind a larger worker and pushes.

As they get near a bend in the road, the guard counts those in the rear and rides ahead to count the others. As he does, Shorty steps quickly behind a tree just off the path. He rotates, keeping his angle so as not to be seen.

Once the detail is twenty yards away, he bolts across the road and runs into a field of high oats.

He sprints though the field for a hundred yards, making a large zigzag path. He then back tracks cautiously, sprinkling pepper along the way. He gets twenty yards away from the road and moves carefully off his previous path. He sprinkles more pepper as he maneuvers through the oats, standing them back up as he goes. He lies down and waits.

As the wagon turns the corner, the guard on the bike counts seventeen and stops.

CORPORAL  
(in German)  
Halt. Halt!

The prisoners stop. The other guards walk over to him and huddle.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)  
Did I count wrong? Count them.

All three start their count. They all come to seventeen and look at each other... terrified.

GUARD #2  
God in heaven!! Escape!

GUARD #3  
Jesus Christ help us! Escape!!

They all aim their guns at the prisoners.

CORPORAL  
Get down!!

All the prisoners drop to the dirt.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)  
Search for him! Shoot him if you  
see him!!

The guards run back down the road, racing right past Shorty in the field.

A civilian car drives slowly down the road toward them. The Corporal waves it down. He turns to the other guards.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)  
Find him, God damn it, or our ass  
is on the Russian Front!!!

He points to Guard #3.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)  
Take the rest back!

The Corporal jumps inside the car and speeds off toward the prison. Guard #3 points his rifle.

GUARD #3  
Everyone up! March!

As the prisoners get to their feet and march toward the prison, Guard #2 begins looking around the area.

GUARD #2  
(broken English)  
Come out! We are your friend.

He then shoots randomly into the oatfield.

GUARD #2 (CONT'D)  
We will find you, you bastard!

Down the road a truck races up and ten guards and several dogs jump out. SCREAMS and YELLS of orders ring out.

Shorty lays still, face down in the dirt, while the dogs sniff and howl in trying to pick up his scent. When they sniff the pepper they go every which way.

CORPORAL  
We see you hiding there! Come out  
or we will shoot!!

The dogs are running in circles. The guards are trying to focus them on the oat field. One guard and dog comes within ten feet of Shorty but they suddenly switch back.

Shorty lays still as rain begins to fall. His scent is now completely lost. With the Guards still yelling in the distance and the dogs howling, they drive off.

Shorty rolls over on his back and lets the rain wash the dirt off his face.

EXT. STALAG VII A - AFTERNOON

The prisoners are marched back inside with the truck of guards close behind. Sgt. Morse, Jones, Coats, and all the others come out in the rain to see them coming in. One of the work detail prisoners gives them the thumbs up. Words spread that Shorty is out and they all hug each other.

EXT. OATFIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

It's raining harder. Shorty is drenched. He sneaks along his trail to the back of the field where he sees a small path. On the other side begins a forest of trees. He runs across to a tree right off the path.

As he sits and leans against the tree, he HEARS a SQUEAKING sound coming toward him. He freezes. Along the path on a bike, carrying a rifle and coming toward him, is a German Sergeant from the prison. Shorty, frozen in fear, watches as the Sergeant rides within five feet of him and passes by.

Once clear, Shorty runs farther into the forest. He slides down a hill to a swamp and slips into the water almost completely submerged.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The moon shines down now that the clouds and rain are gone.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

By the light of the moon, Shorty gets out of the swamp, takes off his infantry clothes to reveal the Bavarian outfit. He buries the clothes in the mud and runs back up the hill.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Shorty runs along a road toward a bridge. Suddenly, emerging from the dark, on the road, is a German soldier on a bike riding toward him. Shorty darts down underneath the bridge.

The guard stops his bike and checks the area. He walks to the edge of the bridge and looks around.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The guard jumps down and stares into the darkness underneath. Shorty lays completely still near the stream.

He lifts his head to see if the guard has left and the light from the moon shines off the water onto his face.

The guard turns quickly and sees Shorty. He rushes toward him. As Shorty gets up to run, he sees the moonlight reveal Eric's face.

SHORTY

God damn, you scared me!

He hands Shorty a bag.

ERIC

(broken English)

Stay out of Freising at night.

Good luck, Shorty.

He turns and rushes out from underneath the bridge.

Shorty opens the bag, pulls out a small knapsack and his civilian clothes. He puts on the clothes over his Bavarian outfit.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Shorty races up onto the bridge and sees Eric running down the road back to the prison. He looks over and sees he left him the bike. Shorty hops on the bike and peddles off into the dark.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Shorty rides along in the dark.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
I peddled as fast as I could. It  
was so dark that I was just hoping  
to stay on the road.

Shorty rides farther into the night, passing trees and bushes  
on the side of the road.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
As it neared dawn, the passing  
trees and bushes took the shapes of  
people. Several times I could have  
sworn they were German soldiers  
watching me.

Shorty sees the apparitions of soldiers off the side of the  
road.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
As much as I wanted to keep going,  
I was too exhausted and was in  
desperate need of some sleep for  
the journey ahead. I was lucky  
enough to find a park.

Shorty stops his bike, feels his way to some bushes, lies  
down and closes his eyes.

EXT. FREISING - EARLY MORNING

Shorty opens his eyes at the light of day. He is in the  
middle of a medium of a main road. He looks up and sees a  
sign that reads: Freising. He jumps on his bike and rides.

EXT. MUNICH - DAY

Shorty rides through the town without anyone noticing him.  
He peddles with a smile on his face, enjoying his freedom.

EXT. MARSHALLING YARDS - DAY

Shorty rides up to see the workers loading the trains at the  
Arbeitskommando. Some turn to see him, but no one comes up  
to talk to him.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
Not knowing who to trust or who was  
on the up and up made this nerve-  
racking.

(MORE)

SHORTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Engage one wrong person who had the  
trust of the Germans and my life  
was kaput.

Shorty gets off his bike and walks up to a French worker.

SHORTY  
(quietly)  
Henri Moreau.

The worker shakes his head "no." Shorty points at the others. The worker walks back to the others who look at Shorty and turn back to loading the freight trains.

Shorty decides not to take anymore chances. As he drives away, a worker turns around and watches him ride away.

EXT. MAIN ROAD OUT OF MUNICH - DAY

Shorty rides away from the city as fast as he can.

He rides off the road to a secluded area and takes off his civilian clothes, exposing his Bavarian outfit. He stuffs the clothes into his knapsack and rides on.

EXT. TEN MILES FROM AUGSBURG - LATER

Shorty pulls over along a country road where some cows are grazing. He hops the fence and walks slowly toward the closest cow.

SHORTY  
Who wants to give me some milk?

The cow runs and Shorty puts on a futile chase, collapsing in the mud. He walks over to a stream, pulls out his Halazone tablets and a cup, puts them into the cup and fills it with the water and drinks. He jumps the fence and rides off.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF LEIPHEIM - LATE AFTERNOON

Shorty comes around a corner and is riding toward a large group of boys dressed in Hitlerjugand uniforms.

SHORTY  
Oh shit.

He continues toward them. The LEADER of the group sees him coming and faces him. As Shorty gets close, the leader salutes.

LEADER  
Heil Hitler!

Shorty picks up speed and races by.

SHORTY  
(awkward)  
Heil Hitler.

Shorty, with a smirk, rides on into the distance.

EXT. EHINGEN - 9:30 PM - DUSK

Visibly tired, having ridden from dawn to dusk, Shorty gets off his bike and walks it over to a haystack.

INT. AIR RAID TOWER - THROUGH FIELD GLASSES - DUSK

Shorty is seen throwing some hay on the bike to cover it. He lies down in the hay.

EXT. EHINGEN - HAYSTACK - DUSK

Shorty pulls out his maps, checks them closely, tears up the one map that shows where he has been, and shoves the pieces into the hay. He looks at the other map and puts it in his pocket. He pulls out Betty's picture and stares at it. Suddenly he hears a voice and shoves the picture in his sock.

GUARD #1  
(in German)  
He must be here somewhere.

GUARD #2  
He couldn't get far. Check underneath the hay.

Shorty looks out from behind his haystack and sees the Guards over by his bike. Guard #1 finds his bike.

GUARD #1  
Here, his bike! He's here somewhere!

Shorty ducks back and burrows into the hay.

GUARD #2  
Come out or we'll shoot into the hay.

Guard #1 walks over to where Shorty is, looks down and sees part of Shorty's shoe barely exposed. He motions to Guard #2 who comes over.

GUARD #1  
Come out from there!!

Guard #2 aims his gun at Shorty and puts his finger on the trigger. Guard #1 holds his hand out and stops him just in time. Guard #2 puts down his rifle, grabs Shorty's foot and pulls him out.

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)  
Who are you?

SHORTY  
(his best German)  
Ich verstehe nicht.

GUARD #2  
Why are you not working?

Shorty shakes his head "no." Both guards search him.

GUARD #1  
Are you Russian?

SHORTY  
Nein.

GUARD #1  
Are you French?

SHORTY  
Nein.

GUARD #2  
Serb, Dutch or English?

Shorty shakes his head "no." Guard #2 shoves him.

SHORTY  
(snapping)  
I'm American, you bastards!!

Both Guards grab Shorty and throw him down. Guard #1 throws a punch. Shorty counters and knocks him back. He kicks Guard #2, who sprawls back on the ground. As Shorty reaches to grab the rifle, Guard #1 points his gun at Shorty's head.

GUARD #1  
Halt!

They grab Shorty, stand him up, take his tags and see he is and American aviator POW. The both stand back.

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)  
Luft Gangster!!

EXT. MILITARY PRISON NEAR ULM - NIGHT

A chauffeur driven Mercedes pulls up quickly to the prison and Shorty, in handcuffs, is walked inside.

INT. MILITARY PRISON NEAR ULM - NIGHT

Shorty is led into a small room. His handcuffs are taken off and he's shoved into a chair in front of HANS VOORMAN, dark hair, stern interrogator. Other German officers are there as well.

VOORMAN  
(broken English)  
You should have been more careful.  
Perhaps waited until dark to rest.  
We were watching you closely from a  
tower. Foolish. Very foolish.

Voorman gets up and lights a cigarette. He pulls a chair up close to Shorty.

VOORMAN (CONT'D)  
Where were you shot down?

SHORTY  
Near Wilhelmshaven.

VOORMAN  
(smiling)  
Yes. Wilhelmshaven. How much  
damage has been done in that area?

SHORTY  
(smiling back)  
A tremendous amount. We've bombed  
the hell out of it.

Voorman loses his smile.

VOORMAN  
When do you think the war will be  
over?

SHORTY  
November.

VOORMAN  
It is not true. We are going to  
invade England next month. So, if  
indeed it is November, it is us  
that will be the victors. As the  
great Führer himself has said  
"Germany will either be a world  
power or will not be at all."

SHORTY  
Well, by November, you will not be  
at all.

Shorty looks at the other guards and starts laughing.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 Kaput. Deutschland is kaput!

VOORMAN  
 (worried)  
 Nein! How many bombers are in  
 England?

SHORTY  
 Thousands and thousands and  
 thousands!

VOORMAN  
 (recoiling)  
 Nein! Nein! Nein!!

Shorty stands up and points at his face.

SHORTY  
 You are gonna get yours, you wait!

Voorman walks quickly to the other officers and has a quiet,  
 heated conference. He turns abruptly back to Shorty.

VOORMAN  
 You are lying! You are a lying  
 Luft Gangster! Take him away!!

The Guard grabs Shorty and drags him out of the room.

SHORTY  
 (smiling)  
 Thousands and thousands and  
 thousands!!

INT. JAIL CELL - EARLY MORNING

Shorty is awakened by a tough looking Sergeant. He has a  
 metal cross medal on the front of his uniform and a limp  
 provided by the Russian Front. He grabs Shorty and takes him  
 out of the cell.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

The Sergeant pats his gun, warning Shorty what will happen if  
 he tries to run.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - MORNING

The Sergeant sits next to Shorty. Another PRISONER, 20,  
 blonde hair, sits on the other side of Shorty.

PRISONER  
(broken English)  
What are you?

SHORTY  
American. POW.

PRISONER  
What happened to you?

SHORTY  
Shot down, escaped and got caught.  
How about you?

PRISONER  
I am German.

SHORTY  
German?

PRISONER  
I was in the army. But I don't  
like the war or the Hitler regime.  
They picked me up at home as a  
deserter. I know my fate, but I'm  
afraid of the fate of others.

SHORTY  
There are some that revere him but  
far more that despise him. He  
won't win.

PRISONER  
(slight smile)  
I hope you are right.

SHORTY  
What's gonna happen to you?

PRISONER  
You, being an American, and the  
enemy, have more respect than me, a  
German, who opposes the war. I  
will be shot.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
It chilled me to the bone to hear  
him say that. It was so matter of  
fact. It's like he had come to  
peace with his decision. He knew  
his fate and he was willing to  
stand by his convictions. Even if  
it meant his life. I had those  
same convictions, but I still  
wasn't sure of my fate.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

Shorty and the German prisoner are led off the train by several guards. As they part ways, Shorty looks back at him. He looks back to Shorty, gives a slight smile and flashes the "victory sign."

EXT. STALAG VA - DAY

The gates to the prison open as Shorty is driven inside.

INT. LARGE OFFICE - DAY

Shorty is brought into an office with walls covered in maps. It is the headquarters for information on escapes from southern Germany. Colored flags mark areas where the enemy tried to cross. It also shows all patrols and guard posts.

CAPTAIN SCHMITT, 50's, greying, curt, sits behind his desk. He motions for Shorty to sit. Shorty salutes and sits.

CPT. SCHMITT  
Where were you going?

SHORTY  
I was heading for France.

CPT. SCHMITT  
(points to map)  
What route were you taking? Show me.

Shorty gets up and points to a false route.

CPT. SCHMITT (CONT'D)  
You know that's a lie and I know that's a lie. When were you shot down?

SHORTY  
February 26th.

CPT. SCHMITT  
Tell me about the conditions in England at that time.

SHORTY  
The morale was high and still is very high.

CPT. SCHMITT  
So I've heard. Tell me, do you honestly believe you can win the war?

SHORTY

We are going to win the war. Now you tell me this, do you think your people really want to rule the world or are they just too frightened to stand up against the powers that be and say that it's wrong?

CPT. SCHMITT

Oh we believe. The people believe in the Führer and back him one hundred percent.

SHORTY

Because if they don't they'll be shot.

CPT. SCHMITT

No. That's not true.

SHORTY

Well, I just met someone who would disagree with you.

CPT. SCHMITT

Everyone is free to think for themselves.

SHORTY

But for those who can't, your propoganda helps to steer them the right way.

CPT. SCHMITT

By the skillful and sustained use of propoganda, one can make a people see even heaven as hell or an extremely wretched life as paradise.

SHORTY

So they're free to make a choice but the choice better be the one suggested for them.

CPT. SCHMITT

All propoganda has to be popular and has to accommodate itself to the comprehension of the least intelligent of those whom it seeks to reach.

SHORTY

These are quotes from Hitler, aren't they?

CPT. SCHMITT  
They are, yes.

SHORTY  
And you believe his propaganda just  
like everybody else.

CPT. SCHMITT  
I don't just believe it. I know it  
to be true. You will not win this  
war against a man like Hitler.

SHORTY  
The reason we will win the war is  
because of a man like Hitler.

Captain Schmitt nods to a guard to take Shorty out of his  
sight.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty walks out of the office and into the compound under  
the watchful eye of a guard. He looks around and sees that  
this vast area is completely empty.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

As Shorty is led into a large building, American Sergeants  
RIP COKER and CHUBBY DORSEY, 20's, recognize him.

RIP  
Shorty!

SHORTY  
Rip! Chubby!

Shorty walks over and they shake hands.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
Where did you get caught?

RIP  
Chubby and I were seen stealing  
some bikes outside of Freising.

SHORTY  
I went through Freising. Got there  
at night.

CHUBBY  
Where did you get pinched?

SHORTY  
In a haystack near Ehingen.

CHUBBY  
Not bad, Shorty. Not bad.

They walk over and look out of the barracks to the empty compound.

SHORTY  
Well, we sure got plenty of damn room.

RIP  
That's what Chub and I were saying before you got here.

CHUBBY  
It's kind of nice. We can spread out. Not so claustrophobic.

Rip laughs.

SHORTY  
I don't like it, guys. This place could easily hold three to four thousand people and it's empty.

RIP  
It is kind of eerie.

CHUBBY  
What do you suppose this is about?

SHORTY  
I don't know. If they cleared this place to bring in more prisoners, where did they send the ones that were here? You couldn't send them to another Stalag, there wouldn't be enough room.

RIP  
Well, it's got to be somewhere. Maybe they built another compound and transferred them there.

SHORTY  
Why? Why not take the new prisoners to the new one then?

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Shorty, Rip and Chubby are sitting across from two GUARDS. One of them stares at his prisoners.

GUARD  
If you try and escape we will kill you fast.

SHORTY  
We've heard that before, but thanks  
for the reminder.

RIP  
We're good boys.

CHUBBY  
Actually we're tourists.

GUARD  
Tourists?

SHORTY  
Yeah, we just wanted to see your  
beautiful country. There's nothing  
like Germany in June.

INT. STALAG VII A - DAY

Shorty, Rip and Chubby are driven inside the compound.

INT. CELL - DAY

All three are brought into a small cell. Rip and Chubby lie  
back on the wooden bed with one blanket. Shorty lays on the  
ground with the other blanket.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Shorty is led into the office for his trial. He salutes both  
officers who make up the court. The head of the court  
LIEUTENANT KRUGER, 50's tall, thin, dark hair, is looking  
over Shorty's papers.

LT. KRUGER  
(broken English)  
Aha! You are the one they were  
after.

SHORTY  
Thank you sir, I guess.

LT. KRUGER  
It says that you were caught near  
Ehingen. Very good.

SHORTY  
Thanks again.

LT. KRUGER  
Why did you escape again knowing  
that you could be shot?

SHORTY

I believe it's the duty of every soldier to escape from the enemy.

LT. KRUGER

(smiles)

Do you really? Gut. Gut.

He puts down the papers and looks at Shorty.

LT. KRUGER (CONT'D)

Your fortitude is noble but your aspirations are foolish. Oh sure, you may get lucky and escape once but let me assure you, Sergeant, you will not, in your wildest dreams, escape from Stalag VII A. We are confident about that. And please, believe me, your life depends on it. I sentence you to eighteen days confined to Barracks 39.

SHORTY

Wait a minute. Come on now. I've been waiting to go to trial for a week.

LT. KRUGER

(considers)

Fine. Suspend that. Ten days.

SHORTY

Thank you sir, I guess.

INT. FRENCH BARRACKS - DAY

Shorty walks into the barracks and sees a large group of men crowded around a table. As he approaches, one man turns and walks away with tears in his eyes. Pierre sees Shorty and slips him a photo.

PIERRE

This is what they are doing.

Shorty looks at the photo.

SHORTY (V.O.)

There it was. Hundreds and hundreds of Jews murdered, thrown on top of each other and stacked up like cord wood in a huge pit. It was chilling. It was like my mind froze and was unable to compute what I was seeing.

(MORE)

SHORTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
It was so hideous and hard to believe, but it was the truth... and the answer as to why Stalag VA was completely empty.

SHORTY  
I was just there at Stalag VA.

They all looks at Shorty.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
There was no one there.

Shorty slips the photo back to Pierre.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
It was the turning point in my decision to escape again. That horrible image made me refocus my efforts. I was now, more than ever, determined to get the word out about the horrific atrocities that were taking place all over this country.

SHORTY  
Pierre, where is Cahin?

PIERRE  
In the back.

Shorty walks to the back of the barracks and finds Cahin.

SHORTY  
Did you see the photo?

CAHIN  
Yeah. It was given to me. There are no words to describe that.

SHORTY  
I've got to get the word out about this. I want to get the hell out of here.

CAHIN  
Fine.

He leads Shorty to a quiet corner.

CAHIN (CONT'D)  
Not long after Berry was shipped off to the British camp, Henri sent word that the Arbeitskommando connection is still solid.

SHORTY

But what about the last time?  
Everybody saw me. They looked  
right at me and no one came over.

CAHIN

The word he received didn't  
describe exactly what you would be  
wearing. Henri saw you but said  
that you looked so much like a  
German youth that he was afraid to  
expose himself.

Walking to the back of the barracks is Sgt. Morse.

SGT. MORSE

Shorty, the Krauts want you up in  
the Head House.

SHORTY

What for?

SGT. MORSE

I'm not sure, but they're on their  
way to get you.

Eric walks into the barracks and signals to Shorty to come  
with him. Shorty follows him outside.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

Eric walks Shorty toward the Head House. He grabs Shorty by  
the arm and pulls him behind a building.

ERIC

(panicked)

Schutz wants to talk to you!

SHORTY

Okay. About what?

ERIC

What do you think?! The escape, of  
course!

SHORTY

All right, calm down. It's okay.  
I did my time. And I've been a  
good boy since.

ERIC

No. They want to know how you got  
away! Who helped you!? They know  
someone had to help you!

SHORTY

Take it easy. Take it easy. Just looking at you right now, they'll say it was you. So calm down.

ERIC

Come on, we have to go.

Eric leads Shorty to the Head House.

INT. HEAD HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Eric walks Shorty toward the office. The bike that Shorty used to make his escape is leaning against the wall just outside the door. Shorty sees the bike and looks at Eric.

SHORTY

Isn't that the...

ERIC

(whispering)

Yes. If you tell on me, I'm kaput!  
I'm shot dead!

SHORTY

Got it.

INT. HEAD HOUSE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Shorty walks inside and sees is KLAUS SCHUTZ, 50's, balding, with small glasses, head of military intelligence, sitting behind a large desk looking at papers. He points to a chair and Shorty sits. Schutz finally looks up.

SCHUTZ

(broken English)

Were did you get it?

SHORTY

Get what?

SCHUTZ

You walked down the hall and into this room, didn't you?

SHORTY

Yes sir.

SCHUTZ

What did you see coming into this room?

SHORTY

A bathroom. A painting. Eric, who looks like he could use a vacation, if you ask me.

INT. HEAD HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Eric, listening by the door, rolls his eyes and shakes his head at Shorty's comment.

INT. HEAD HOUSE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Schutz gets up behind his desk.

SCHUTZ

You do recognize the bike, do you not?

SHORTY

The bike?

Schutz walks around and leans against the desk.

SCHUTZ

In case you've forgotten, let me refresh your memory. You escaped in June on that bike, remember?

SHORTY

It was dark, so I never really got a good look at it. Besides, I wasn't trying to escape, I just needed to get out and stretch a little.

SCHUTZ

You think this is humorous. Let's see how funny you think this is when you find out that "your bike" is actually Gummheim's bike.

SHORTY

Gummheim?

SCHUTZ

The Sergeant of the Guards!

Shorty had no clue.

SCHUTZ (CONT'D)

So, now, let's go back to the original question. Where did you get it? Who helped you? How did you get it?

SHORTY  
I acquired it.

SCHUTZ  
Do you realize that you can get  
five years in confinement for  
stealing this bike?

Shorty tries to hide his panic.

SHORTY  
I didn't steal it.

SCHUTZ  
Then how did you "acquire" the  
bike? You obviously have a  
distaste for Germans, so, if it was  
a German who helped you I would be  
more than happy to have him shot.

INT. HEAD HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Eric is turning white. He is sure this is it for him.

INT. HEAD HOUSE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Schutz walks behind Shorty.

SCHUTZ  
Was it someone in a German uniform  
who helped you get the bike?

SHORTY  
No. I bought the bike. For five  
hundred marks.

SCHUTZ  
You are lying! That would be over  
one hundred American dollars you  
dumbkoft!

SHORTY  
Well, with the war going on and  
all, it seemed like a good price at  
the time.

SCHUTZ  
Answer this, did Sergeant Gummheim  
give you his bike?

SHORTY  
Hell no. I bought it from some  
French fella. Don't know his name.  
Wears a beret. He's a little  
taller than me.

SCHUTZ  
Who isn't!

He yells out to Eric.

SCHUTZ (CONT'D)  
Get him out!

Eric rushes in and grabs Shorty.

SCHUTZ (CONT'D)  
I will find out the truth and those  
involved will be severely punished!

EXT. HEAD HOUSE BUILDING - DAY

Eric walks Shorty out of the building. They don't look at each other.

ERIC  
For the love of God, thank you.

SHORTY  
You dumb shit! What were you  
thinking?

ERIC  
You needed a bike and that was the  
only one around. I didn't know it  
was Gummheim's.

SHORTY  
Dumkoft!

Shorty walks away from Eric.

INT. KURTENBACH'S ROOM - DAY

Shorty is pacing in front of Sgt. Kurtenbach.

SHORTY  
Gummheim! He steals Gummheim's  
bike!

SGT. KURTENBACH  
The fool. I'm sure Berry didn't  
know. What did Schutz say to you?

SHORTY  
Christ, he gave me the third  
degree! Where'd you get it? How  
did you get it? Who helped you get  
it?

(MORE)

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 I felt like saying it was God damn  
 Eric and he's right outside your  
 door and I'll help you shoot him!

EXT. AMERICAN COMPOUND - DAY

Shorty stands by the fence smoking a cigar. Suddenly the gates open up and hundreds of men, tired, battered, some with torn uniforms, are paraded into the compound. Sgt. Kurtenbach and many others walk over to watch.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
 Looks like British, some Americans,  
 but mostly Aussies. They're coming  
 up from Italy.

SHORTY  
 What the hell are they going to do  
 with all of these people? They  
 keep coming in by the train load.

Shorty and Sgt. Kurtenebach watch them from a distance.

SGT. KURTENBACH  
 Shorty, word has it that all  
 American Air Forces here are going  
 to be moved out.

SHORTY  
 When?

SGT. KURTENBACH  
 Within days.

SHORTY  
 Where?

SGT. KURTENBACH  
 Looks like Krems, Austria. The  
 guards there are Luftwaffe.  
 They're bastards. You'll never  
 escape from there.

They see hundreds of Australian's crowd into their make shift barracks of eight large tents.

SGT. KURTENBACH (CONT'D)  
 I'll help you, Shorty, anyway I  
 can. But if you ever have any  
 thoughts of escaping again, it  
 better be from this camp and it  
 better be soon.

INT. AUSTRALIAN TENT - DAY

Shorty enters the makeshift barracks and approaches DOUG LIPP, 20's short, light hair and ELTON RASSMUSSEN, 20's tall, well built, dark hair.

SHORTY  
Sgt. Lee Gordon. You can call me Shorty.

DOUG  
I'm Doug Lipp and this is Elton Rasmussen.

They shake hands.

SHORTY  
Where are you from?

DOUG  
Queensland, mate.

Shorty gathers them close.

SHORTY  
Would either you want to take my place? You can go with the Americans and I'll stay here.

ELTON  
Why do you want to stay?

SHORTY  
I'm gonna break out of here. I won't have a chance where they're sending us, so it's got to be here.

DOUG  
I don't think so.

ELTON  
Hell, we've been mates a long time. In this hell hole of a war, we're all we got.

SHORTY  
Understood. Have you got any clothes you want to trade?

ELTON  
Yeah, I got a pair a pants.

Shorty pulls out a pack of cigarettes and hands them to him.

DOUG  
Here, you might as well have this shirt, coat, and hat.

ELTON

I tell you what mate, see that guy with his back to us? He stays pretty much to himself. He might want to switch with you.

SHORTY

Thanks.

Shorty takes the clothes and walks over to PRIVATE LLOYD FERGUSON, 20's, good looking, brown hair.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

Hi. Sergeant Lee Gordon.

LLOYD FERGUSON

Lloyd Ferguson.

SHORTY

Lloyd, how would you like to go with the Americans? You'll get better treatment. Better parcels. No tents. It'd be a whole lot better than this.

Lloyd looks around at the crowded conditions.

LLOYD FERGUSON

What's in it for you?

SHORTY

They're moving us out. I've got plans to escape and honestly, I won't have that chance at Krems. What do you say? Great parcels. You can be an American.

LLOYD FERGUSON

That might be interesting. Okay, I'm in.

Shorty sits next to him and takes off his tags and hands them to him.

SHORTY

You'll assume my identity. Sgt. Lee Gordon. 27680 Stalag VIII B. That's where I was registered. You follow the Americans out when they leave. I'll get you the clothes and tip off my buddies.

Lloyd searches through his belongings.

LLOYD FERGUSON  
 I haven't been registered yet. I  
 was captured at Ruin Ridge in the  
 battle of El Alamein.

He pulls out a card and hands it to Shorty.

LLOYD FERGUSON (CONT'D)  
 This is my Australian pay card.  
 It's the only identification I  
 have.

SHORTY  
 (smiling)  
 Perfect... mate.

EXT. COMPOUND - MORNING

The Americans, including Lloyd Ferguson, file out of the  
 camp. Shorty, dressed as an Aussie, gives Lloyd a nod as  
 they walk outside the compound. Sgt. Morse and the rest wave  
 at Shorty.

SGT. MORSE  
 See you later, Lloyd!

INT. CAHIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shorty is seated with Cahin who is giving him the latest  
 update.

CAHIN  
 They've been alerted to expect your  
 arrival in Munich. There's a  
 British officer in camp who wants  
 to escape as well. You know how to  
 get out and you can tell him how to  
 get to Munich. His name is Richard  
 Carr. He's a Captain in the  
 British Army.

SHORTY  
 Quite frankly, I think I'd be  
 better off on my own.

CAHIN  
 Carr speaks French and German.  
 That might...

SHORTY  
 I didn't plan on going with anyone.  
 I'm really not too keen on the  
 idea.

CAHIN

I think his speaking both languages would be an asset. You really should consider this.

SHORTY

Well, would be good to have someone who speaks the language of our contacts, I guess.

CAHIN

I really think it would be to your advantage.

SHORTY

All right then.

CAHIN

Fine. I'll arrange it. I'll go alert Carr that everything is set to go.

SHORTY (V.O.)

The escape plan was simple but it was also dangerous. If caught, they would shoot us on sight. No questions. I knew this had to be perfect and I had confidence I could do it. But now I had to deal with someone else that might not see eye to eye to my plan.

EXT. COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

Shorty, dressed in a French uniform, sees the prisoners are coming back from work detail. He walks up to a guard and points to the incoming prisoners.

SHORTY

Le copain.

He hands the guard a couple cigarettes and the guard lets him through. Once the guard turns his back to smoke, Shorty, acting like a parolee, walks on the other side of the prisoners who are being counted, and slips past everyone. He walks away slowly with confidence like it's where he should be.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING HALLWAY - DUSK

Shorty sneaks down a long hallway filled with offices. A door suddenly opens and he ducks quickly against a door jam. The guard walks down the hall without seeing him and goes inside an office.

Shorty creeps farther down the hallway and sees the door where the guard entered is cracked open. He peeks in and sees several officers, along with Klaus Schutz, sitting around a table in a meeting. He hurries past the door and on down the hall.

INT. WOMAN'S LATRINE - DUSK

Shorty hurries down the row of toilet stalls, looks underneath, sees they are clear, opens one, and darts inside.

INT. TOILET STALL - DUSK

Shorty closes the door and locks it. He climbs up on the toilet, crouches down and waits in silence.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING HALLWAY - DUSK

The meeting with the officers ends and they all walk out into the hallway and leave. The guard walks out, locks the door and begins his check.

INT. WOMAN'S LATRINE - DUSK

The guard pushes open the door, takes his rifle off his shoulder, and walks down the row of stalls.

INT. TOILET STALL - DUSK

Shorty is frozen. The rifle comes sweeping underneath the stall... then on to the next. Shorty sees the guards boots pause by his stall... then turn and leave.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING HALLWAY - DUSK

As the guard walks away from the bathrooms, CLAUDE, 30's, small Frenchman with a slight limp, walks past him carrying cleaning materials in a box.

INT. WOMAN'S LATRINE - DUSK

Claude walks inside, over to the stalls, and looks under at Shorty who is startled. He hands Shorty a knapsack.

CLAUDE  
Good luck.

He leaves.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - NIGHT

The remaining officers walk out into the night.

INT. WOMAN'S LATRINE - NIGHT

Shorty lets out a short, quiet WHISTLE. The WHISTLE is returned. He gets off the toilet and comes out of the stall.

The door two stalls down opens and out walks CAPTAIN RICHARD CARR, 30's, dark hair, moustache, and a pompous attitude. They nod and look out the window at the guard tower in the moonlight.

Shorty opens the rear door of the latrine that leads outside.

EXT. REAR LATRINE - NIGHT

When the guard looks the other way, Shorty and Carr creep outside, get on their stomachs and crawl to the other side of the building to some shrubbery.

Once they see that they have cleared the angle of the guard, they get up, run and jump a small fence... and escape.

EXT. STALAG VII A - NIGHT

As Shorty and Carr walk quickly away, they see some movement on the road in the distance, coming toward them.

Appearing out of the dark and into the moonlight are Lt. Kruger and Sgt. Gunnheim riding bikes toward them.

CAPTAIN CARR  
(panicked)  
Let's run for it!

Shorty grabs his arm to steady him.

SHORTY  
(under control)  
No. Keep walking straight ahead.

CAPTAIN CARR  
Are you crazy! They're coming  
right at us!

SHORTY  
Shut up! Walk straight ahead.  
Like we belong here.

By now Lt. Kruger and Sgt. Gunnheim are too close for them to run.

They ride toward Shorty and Carr, talking to each other and... never even look their way. They ride on by and continue toward the prison.

Shorty and Carr disappear down the road into the dark.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE FREISING - NIGHT

Shorty and Carr hurry down the road.

CAPTAIN CARR  
We should try and get to Munich as quickly as we can.

SHORTY  
I agree with that. We should keep going and make up as much time as we can.

Carr stops Shorty.

CAPTAIN CARR  
We're gonna do this my way. You'll do as I say and follow my orders. Is that understood?

Shorty glares at Carr.

SHORTY  
Look, I don't care if you're a Captain or the God damn Prime Minister, I'm not following your orders or anybody else's orders. I've been pinched before doing this so I know what I'm talking about. They're gonna be looking for us as soon as they realize we've escaped. I'm all in for getting the hell away from here. But you don't know shit about escaping.

CAPTAIN CARR  
And you do? You've been caught twice before.

SHORTY  
That's why I know what I'm talking about. If you want to play Captain Hotshot, then you're on your own. Find some other sap to take your orders.

Carr finally concedes.

CAPTAIN CARR

All right. Fine. But I must be informed every step of the way.

SHORTY

You follow my lead and you'll be informed.

Shorty starts taking off his French uniform. Carr follows suit and they hide them in the bushes off the path and continue on.

EXT. MAIN ROAD TO MUNICH - NIGHT

In the pitch black, the shadows of buildings can barely be seen. As they walk through a small village, stepping out in silhouette is an armed GERMAN GUARD with a dog. The dog sees them and starts barking viciously.

CAPTAIN CARR

(panic stricken)

Let's go!

Shorty grabs Carr's coat, not letting him run.

SHORTY

No. Stop. Stay calm.

They keep walking toward the guard.

CAPTAIN CARR

(loud whisper)

Oh shit.

SHORTY

Calm.

The dog barks and nips at their pants. The Guard stares at them. Shorty smiles and nods.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

(salutes)

Heil Hitler.

They continue walking away as the Guard watches them closely. As they get ten yards away...

GERMAN GUARD

(in German)

Halt. Let me see your papers.

Carr whispers in terror to Shorty as they continue walking.

CAPTAIN CARR

He wants to see our papers!

Shorty nods and slaps him on his back like their talking.

SHORTY  
Just keep wakin'.

GERMAN GUARD  
Halt!

CAPTAIN CARR  
He wants us to stop!

SHORTY  
I kinda figured that out. Keep  
going.

The Guard cocks back the bolt on the rifle.

GERMAN GUARD  
I said Halt!

CAPTAIN CARR  
We've got to stop or he'll shoot!

SHORTY  
Start walking toward the edge of  
the path.

CAPTAIN CARR  
Why?

SHORTY  
In case he does, we'll run.

GERMAN GUARD  
I'm going to shoot!!

CAPTAIN CARR  
He's going to shoot!!

SHORTY  
Don't look back.

GERMAN GUARD  
Halt!!!

The Guard raises his rifle and aims right at them... and  
watches them disappear into the dark.

Once out of sight, Carr stops and grabs Shorty.

CAPTAIN CARR  
You dirty bastard! You damn near  
got us killed!!

Shorty pulls away.

SHORTY

No, if we would have run, like you wanted to, we would have been shot dead! He's gone and we're alive, so who was right?! This is the fastest way to Munich! That's what you wanted! Those were your "orders!" So if that's the case, we take our chances! Now let's keep going and when day breaks, we walk into Munich like we're laborers, unless you have different "orders."

Carr doesn't respond. Shorty walks on.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

Pain in the ass.

Carr tries to pull himself together.

CAPTAIN CARR

Bloody hell.

EXT. MUNICH - ESTABLISHING - DAWN

The sun rises over the city.

EXT. MUNICH MARSHALLING YARDS - DAWN

Shorty and Carr come through the town to the trains. Some of the workers look their way. Shorty hesitates, thinking the same thing might happen as before.

HENRI MOREAU, 20's, wearing a beret, sees them approach and walks carefully away from the other workers toward them.

HENRI

(to Shorty)

I recognize you from before. Last time you were so convincing I was afraid to approach.

SHORTY

That's okay. Cahin said you could help find us a place to hide, and get us on a train to France.

HENRI

Yes. I have separate places for you both. I think it wise to split you up. The odds that at least one of you escaping will be better.

He hands Shorty a piece of paper.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Here are the addresses. You'll stay in Munich and portray French civilian workers. You'll stay in separate barracks and leave on different trains.

SHORTY

How will we know when it's time to leave Munich?

HENRI

Once I give the word, it will be immediate. I will have someone on alert to contact you.

Henri looks around suspiciously.

HENRI (CONT'D)

You must keep moving. Your success depends on it.

INT. FRENCH BARRACKS - NIGHT

Shorty, without making eye contact, walks inside with all the other French workers. He finds an empty bed in the corner. As he lays down from the days work, he sees a French worker watching him closely. Shorty takes his knapsack and pulls it close to him as he closes his eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - DREAM

Shorty is in bed with Betty.

BETTY

Say you love me.

SHORTY

(smiles)

How many times do I have to say it?

BETTY

Until I believe it.

Shorty leans over and kisses her.

SHORTY

Believe it.

He looks over and sees the clock reads 3:18am. Shorty jumps up and throws his clothes on.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

I've got to go!

BETTY

Stay.

As she grabs him and pulls him onto the bed...

Shorty wakes up to the Frenchman who was watching him, grabbing him.

Shorty grabs his knapsack and pulls away. He is ready to fight. MICHEL, early 20's, slight moustache, tries to calm him.

MICHEL

(whispering)

Be quiet! Follow me. We must go!

EXT. FRENCH COMPOUND - MORNING

Shorty and Michel sprint away from the barracks. They see a black Mercedes coming their way. They slow down to a walk as it drives up to them. Inside are two men from the German GESTAPO.

GESTAPO #1

(in German)

Where are you going?

MICHEL

(in German)

On our way to work on the trains.

Both Gestapo look over to Shorty.

GESTAPO #2

And you?

SHORTY

Ja. Ja.

The Gestapo stare at them for what feels like hours. Gestapo #1 waves them to move on. They drive off.

MICHEL

Do you speak German?

SHORTY

Nein. Nein.

They smile and hurry away.

EXT. SUBURBS OF MUNICH - DAY

Shorty and Michel walk quickly along a road.

MICHEL  
Henri has told me about you.

Michel shakes Shorty's hand.

MICHEL (CONT'D)  
My name is Michel.

SHORTY  
Lee Gordon. You can call me  
Shorty.

MICHEL  
Henri told me that we will be  
leaving on a train tonight. He has  
given me all the information. A  
friend of mine will meet us this  
afternoon and help us with the food  
supplies.

INT. SMALL CAFE - LATE AFTERNOON

Shorty and Michel walk into the cafe. It's filled with  
nicely dressed men and women. Shorty sees two German  
officers seated against the wall and stops. Michel signals  
to follow him. They walk past the officers who glance at  
them, as they go to the bar.

MICHEL  
Ich mochte zwei bier, bitte.

They are handed two beers and Michel walks Shorty to the  
corner of the room where URSELA STEIN, an attractive German  
woman, 20's, is seated. When they sit, Michel leans over to  
her and gives her a kiss. They talk softly in English.

MICHEL (CONT'D)  
Ursela, this is Shorty Gordon.

URSELA  
Nice to meet you.

SHORTY  
Pleasure.

URSELA  
You are American?

Shorty looks around, uncomfortable with the officers a couple  
tables over.

SHORTY  
Yes. Should we be speaking  
English?

URSELA  
No one is listening.

She reaches over and hands Michel a bag. He looks inside.

MICHEL  
Great.

He kisses her again.

URSELA  
Bread, crackers, cans of meat,  
margarine, and string beans.

SHORTY  
Thank you.

She gets up.

URSELA  
Please excuse me.

She walks away.

SHORTY  
(sipping his beer)  
God damn this is good. We should  
get some bottles of beer to take  
with us. We'll need all the liquid  
we can get for the coming days.

Michel, not listening, is watching her walk away. Shorty notices.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
You can see she loves you. She  
knows she can't go with you, right.

MICHEL  
Yes.

SHORTY  
You can see it in her eyes. She's  
German?

Shorty sips his beer.

MICHEL  
Yes. She works for the Gestapo.

Shorty spits out some of his beer.

SHORTY  
(quiet panic)  
Gestapo! Are you crazy?! She can  
get you killed! Get us killed!

MICHEL

No.

Ursela is over behind the counter. She looks back to Michel and smiles. He smiles back.

MICHEL (CONT'D)

That would never happen. You can see it in her eyes. Yes? But even if she was to go with me to France, we would never be safe. They would hunt her down and she'd be shot for helping us. She has taken a chance here. I asked her not to but she wouldn't listen.

SHORTY

Do you love her?

MICHEL

With all my heart. Just as she loves me.

SHORTY

And she knows you're never coming back?

MICHEL

Yes.

Ursela walks back to the table with three pieces of cake and ice cream. Shorty and Michel's eyes light up.

URSELA

Surprise. Bon voyage.

Shorty dives in as Michel takes a fork and feeds Ursela the first piece. She smiles through her tears.

EXT. MARSHALLING YARDS - NIGHT

In the dim of the lights, Shorty, carrying his knapsack filled with food, and Michel carrying a bag filled with bottles of beer, sneak up to the railway yard.

As the patrolling German guards with their dogs turn away, Shorty and Michel dash into the shadows of the trains. As Shorty starts to climb an open freight car, he looks over and sees several men running toward them.

SHORTY

Shit! Let's get out of here!

MICHEL

No! It's okay! These are my friends.

SHORTY

(stunned)

What?! Are they bringing supplies?

MICHEL

No. When I told them that I was leaving, they wanted to go as well.

SHORTY

(vehemently against)

You didn't tell me this! That puts us at more of a risk! Don't you understand? The more the people the better the odds at being caught.

The four Frenchmen, JACQUES, MARCEL, ALBERT, and EMILE, all in their 20's, run up and look at Michel. They look at Shorty.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

(begrudgingly)

All right. Let's go. But be quiet.

Shorty climbs inside the freight car. Jacques and Emile run down to another car. Michel hands Marcel and Albert the bag of beer and climbs inside. As Marcel climbs up, Albert hands him the bag. Marcel loses his grip and the beer smashes to the ground.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

(to Michel)

Shit! What the hell is going on!?

Michel is irate.

MICHEL

(in French)

Marcel, Albert, get inside! Now!!

Marcel and Albert climb inside the car. Shorty looks down the line of cars.

SHORTY

Where are the others?

Shorty and Michel can't see Jacques or Emile. They jump down and run to find them. They see the guards and dogs off in the distance and duck into the shadows.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

God damn, we're gonna get pinched!

When the guards and dogs walk the other way, Shorty and Michel run down the line of cars and find Jacques and Emile standing out in the open on the caboose where the brakeman rides.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

What the hell are they doing? Do they want to stand there for five days? They're right out in the open. The guards will see them and beat them half to death!

MICHEL

Come on you fools!

INT. FREIGHT CAR - NIGHT

Shorty, Michel, Jacques, and Emile climb inside. It contains dredging equipment made up of steam shovels and long metal bars covered with dirt and soot.

SHORTY

We'll have to get under the metal and hide.

Michel tell the others.

JACQUES

(in French)

The steel is too cold.

MICHEL

It's a four day ride ahead of us. We must be strong.

All six men sit in different parts of the car trying to keep warm. The train begins to move down the yard and slams into another train. The shuttling has begun. Shorty looks out the wooden slats of wood.

SHORTY

We're on our way.

EMILE

It's too cold. I can't take it!

SHORTY

(to Michel)

What are they saying?

MICHEL

They aren't sure they can handle the cold.

SHORTY

Then tell them to leave. We can't have them wanting to get out along the way. We'll get pinched.

MICHEL

Make your choice now. Stay or go.

JACQUES

I'm leaving.

EMILE

I'll go as well.

MICHEL

They're leaving.

Shorty gets over and slowly parts the door. He looks out and sees a guard walking by. Shorty reaches out and stops them and signals to be quiet. Once the guard has cleared, Shorty signals them to go. Jacques and Emile leap out and disappear into the night.

As the train begins to move, Shorty and Michel, already covered in dirt and soot, find a spot and to burrow in.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - DAY

Shorty and Michel, who are sound asleep, awake up to the coughing of Marcel and Albert huddled together. Shorty crawls over to Michel.

MICHEL

Where are we?

SHORTY

Should be around Karlsruhe.

As the train begins to slow down, Marcel and Albert continue to cough.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

These guys better get off. They're sick. They're gonna draw attention. I know they're your friends but it's curtains for us if they keep it up.

MICHEL

They told me they want to get to France.

SHORTY

Who the hell doesn't? But if they keep coughing like this, none of us will get to France.

(MORE)

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 I'm sure there's at least a couple  
 of guards on this train. If they  
 hear them cough we're all sunk.

Michel gets their attention.

MICHEL  
 You must keep quiet. Try not to  
 cough. Cover your mouths.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

As the train slows down and stops under an overpass, a man  
 and a woman are looking down at them from above.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - DAY

Shorty and the others, eating what's left of the food, look  
 up at them.

MICHEL  
 What should we do? Should we get  
 out and run?

SHORTY  
 Hell no. Don't say anything. Just  
 stay here. What else can we do?  
 If we jump out and run we'll draw  
 attention and get caught.

As the train starts to move again, Shorty looks at them and  
 salutes them with a "Heil Hitler." The couple turns away.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 (smiles at Michel)  
 Works every time.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

The train rolls down the tracks as the sun slowly fades below  
 the horizon.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - LATER

Shorty and the others are curled up under the steel trying to  
 keep warm.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
 The ride was slow and torturous.  
 We were getting weak without food  
 and you could feel the freezing  
 cold down to your bones.  
 (MORE)

SHORTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I remembered seeing the Jews being transported in the trains to their deaths and I couldn't help think the same kind of thing was happening to me. But at least I still had a chance.

EXT. STRASBOURG YARDS - NIGHT

The train pulls into the yards.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - NIGHT

While Marcel and Albert continue their horrible coughing spells, Shorty strains to see where they are and what is going on outside the train. He sees a sign that reads: "Strasbourg." He signals to Michel and whispers.

SHORTY  
 (to Michel)  
 We're in Strasbourg. Look, I think there are guards outside this train. I can hear somebody talking and walking up and down the rails. It sounds like guards more than just railroad workers. We've got to hang on for another couple days at least. Then we'll be all right.

Shorty crawls over to Michel.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
 We don't know who's out there. You've got to tell your friends to try and stop their coughing. Or at least muffle their coughs as best as they can. They're gonna give us away.

Michel crawls over to Marcel and Albert.

MICHEL  
 Albert. Are you going to make this trip?

ALBERT  
 Yes. I must. I will not give up.

MICHEL  
 Marcel, what about you?

MARCEL  
 (coughing)  
 I will make it.

MICHEL

Then you must be quiet or you will give us all up! We don't want to be caught because of your coughing. We are in Strasbourg now. So we need a couple more days. Yes?

They both nod.

Shorty puts his face up against the wooden slats to look between them and get a view of what is going on outside.

EXT. FREIGHT CAR - STRASBOURG YARDS - NIGHT

Several German guards are walking around. One guard walks right up to where Shorty is looking out. Shorty doesn't move. The guard is literally inches away. He strikes a match against the slats to light his cigarette. The match lights up Shorty's face. Shorty, frozen, stares directly into the guard's face. The guard lights the cigarette and blows out the match. He takes a drag and blows the smoke into Shorty's face.

As the train starts to move, several guards yell out for the rest to come onboard at the same time Marcel and Albert cough. They aren't heard.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

It's extremely cold. All four are huddled separately. Marcel and Albert are getting worse. Shorty hears the train go over a bridge and looks out the slats. He crawls over to Michel.

SHORTY

We're going over the Rhine. I figure by the next stop we'll be in France. If that's the case, I'm gonna leave this train. The way these guys are coughing, we're goners.

MICHEL

We want to get to Paris.

SHORTY

Fine. I understand that. You try and get to Paris, but I'm getting off this train, that's all there is to it. When the train stops, I'm gone.

EXT. RURAL LANDSCAPE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

The train barrels on ahead to its destination.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

The train begins to come to a halt. Marcel and Albert are coughing loudly. Shorty gives Michel a hug, waves to Marcel and Albert, opens the door and jumps off the train.

EXT. FREIGHT CAR - NIGHT

As Shorty lands and gets ten yards away in the darkness and the mist, another box car door suddenly swings open and out jump fifteen German guards with guns and flashlights.

Shorty drops to the ground into a small, shadowed depression, in the dirt. He lays there face down.

A guard with a flashlight walks slowly toward Shorty and shines the light his way. The beam makes several passes just above his body. The guard walks closer. Shorty doesn't dare breathe. The guard lights a cigarette, turns, and walks away.

Shorty crawls back into the darker shadows of the train and runs farther away to a signal tower. He hears two men in the tower speaking German.

SHORTY

Shit!

The train starts to move slowly. All the guards run ahead and jump back on the train. Shorty runs along the train and looks up ahead to see six Mark IV tanks on flatbed cars.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

Oh God!

He runs back to his box car and jumps up on the train.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Shorty swings open the door. The others recoil in fright. He rushes in, closes the door, hurries over to Marcel and Albert and covers their mouths from coughing. Michel joins them.

SHORTY

We're not in France, we're still in Germany! And we're on a God damn military train with six Mark IV tanks and it's swarming with German guards!

(MORE)

SHORTY (CONT'D)

They're on the car in front of us.  
I don't know about you but the next  
time this train stops, or even  
slows down, I suggest you all get  
the hell out of here.

MICHEL

We must go to Paris.

Shorty grabs Michel and pulls him away from Marcel and Albert.

SHORTY

Michel, you'll never make it all  
the way to Paris with these two guy  
sick and coughing all the time.  
You just won't. They're your  
friends. I understand that. But  
you've got to make a decision about  
saving your own life! One cough at  
the wrong time with this many  
guards on board and you're gonna  
get shot. All three of you will be  
shot!

Michel looks over at Marcel and Albert who are desperately trying to muffle their coughs.

MICHEL

I can not leave them. We grew up  
together. And we will live or die  
together.

SHORTY

Fine. Tomorrow at the crack of  
dawn, I'm leaving.

EXT. FREIGHT YARDS - DAWN

The train slows down in the fog of the morning.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - DAWN

Shorty waves goodbye to Marcel, Albert and Michel.

SHORTY

Thank you, Michel for all you help.

MICHEL

Be safe, Shorty.

SHORTY

Maybe one day you'll be back with  
Ursela. Oui?

Michel smiles and nods.

EXT. FREIGHT YARDS - DAWN

The door to the car opens and Shorty leaps out. He lands and runs off into the fog. Michel watches him leave and closes the door.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAWN

Shorty races through the freight yards and into the train station. He runs up to the signs and sees they are in French. He takes a deep breath and walks slowly as to not look suspicious through the station.

SHORTY (V.O.)

The fate of my friends was now in their own hands. I knew in my heart that Michel wouldn't leave his friends. They had each other's trust that they would make it back, together. For me, I was once again on my own, not knowing where to turn and most of all, not knowing who to trust.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF ST. NICHOLAI - MORNING

Shorty walks into a small town and enters a cafe.

INT. SMALL CAFE - MORNING

Shorty sits and the owner comes up to serve him.

SHORTY

Bier.

The man gets the beer and sets it on the table. Shorty points to himself.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

American. No money. Uh... Pouvez-vous m'aider, s'il vous plait?

The owner pushes the beer to Shorty and shakes his head "no" and walks away.

As Shorty drinks down the beer quickly, he looks over and sees a boy out the window staring at him.

EXT. SMALL CAFE - MORNING

Shorty walks away from the cafe and sees the boy still watching him from across the street. The boy follows him on his bike and then picks up speed and passes him. He makes a gesture for Shorty to follow him.

EXT. BOY'S HOUSE - DAY

They've gone about a quarter mile when the boy points to a water pump outside a house. He gets off his bike, runs to the pump, and begins pumping out water. Shorty drinks the water and washes his face and hands of the soot and dirt.

The boy's mother, with two other small raggedy children, walk outside. The boy runs over to his mom and all four stand there watching Shorty.

SHORTY

American.

She gestures for Shorty to follow her.

INT. BOY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Shorty follows them into the kitchen. The mother goes to the cupboard. She looks at her son.

MOTHER

(in French)

You used to just bring home cats.

She reaches into the cupboard and pulls out a small piece of hard, dry bread and some jam. It's all they have left. She places it in front of Shorty and gestures for him to eat. They all watch him devour the bread and jam.

SHORTY (V.O.)

I hadn't eaten for days. I was weak and didn't hesitate taking the food. I'll never, ever, forget the look in the eyes of the mother, and especially the children, as this "stranger," who could barely speak their language and could only gesture to them, was eating what was left of their food.

EXT. BOY'S HOUSE - DAY

Shorty walks outside and turns to the mother.

SHORTY

Merci beaucoup.



INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Michelle sits Shorty down at a table in the back.

MICHELLE  
(broken English)  
You are American?

SHORTY  
(continues eating)  
Yes.

MICHELLE  
How did you get here?

SHORTY  
I'm an American aviator. I was  
shot down over Wilhelmshaven. I  
escaped from a German POW camp and  
made my way here. I want to get  
back to England.

MICHELLE  
Eat. Stay here. My husband will  
be here any minute.

As Shorty continues gulping down his food, the door to the restaurant is HEARD opening. Like a routine, Michelle steps out of the kitchen, Claudine grabs the plate of food from Shorty. Coming back into the kitchen is Michelle and her husband, EDOUARD, stocky, 30's, moustache. He walks up to Shorty.

EDOUARD  
American?

SHORTY  
Yes.

He looks at Michelle and Claudine.

EDOUARD  
(in French)  
The others are on their way. Do  
not alarm him.

He gestures to Claudine who gives him back the plate of food. Shorty continues eating but watches them huddle and converse amongst themselves quietly.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
I knew something was up. I wasn't  
quite sure what it was but it sure  
made me nervous.  
(MORE)

SHORTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I started regretting telling them  
anything about who I was or what  
happened to me. But by now, the  
meal was almost worth it.

Suddenly two men, GUSTAVE, 30's, tall, weathered and PAUL,  
well built, 40's, walk inside from the back door and right up  
to Shorty.

GUSTAVE  
American?

SHORTY  
Yes.

They pull out their guns, and aim them at Shorty's head.

GUSTAVE  
(broken English)  
You are American?

SHORTY  
Oui! Oui! Yes. Yes. American!

Paul looks at Claudine and nods. She pulls out her menu  
tablet, rips off a piece of paper and hands that and a pencil  
to Shorty.

GUSTAVE  
Put down all your information.  
Name. Squadron. Serial number.  
Everything in which you can be  
identified. Your life depends on  
it.

Shorty starts writing down the information. He hands it to  
Gustave, who gives it to Paul, who walks away into another  
room.

SHORTY  
I sure hope they're on the ball  
over there or else I'm God damn  
dead.

Edouard gets a camera and takes a photo of Shorty's face.

EDOUARD  
Gustave, take him to the upstairs  
room and stay outside his door all  
night.

Michelle checks out the dining room and signals that it's all  
clear. Gustave takes Shorty out of the kitchen.

INT. SMALL UPSTAIRS ROOM - EVENING

Gustave lets Shorty into the room.

GUSTAVE  
(broken English)  
I am right outside. There is no  
where for you to go.

SHORTY  
I kinda figured that.

Gustave closes the door. Shorty looks over and sees a beautiful feather bed. He takes off his dirty clothes and flops on the bed, closing his eyes.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAWN

As the sun comes up, a car pulls up outside of the restaurant. Jumping out and running inside are Edouard, Paul, Michelle, and Claudine.

INT. SMALL UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY

The door bursts open. Shorty sits up startled and waiting for the worst. All five rush in and surround the bed.

EDOUARD  
London confirmed your information.  
We are here to help.

They all shake Shorty's hand greet with hugs.

EDOUARD (CONT'D)  
We will move you when we are told  
it is safe to do so.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Edouard is driving with Michelle in the front and Shorty in the back seat.

EDOUARD  
Shorty, we are taking you just  
outside Paris.

SHORTY  
(smiling)  
Oui. Oui.

EXT. PARIS APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Shorty, Edouard, and Michelle walk up and knock in code on the front door. The door opens and Shorty walks inside. Edouard hands the photo of Shorty he took to the man at the door.

INT. PARIS APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

When the door closes, Shorty turns around and sees Edouard and Michelle are gone. Standing at the door is ANDRE LATOUR, 40's, balding. Stepping out from behind the door is Andre's wife, GABRIELLE LATOUR, 25, a beautiful blonde French woman.

ANDRE  
(broken English)  
I'm Andre Latour and this is my  
wife, Gabrielle.

SHORTY  
Lee Shorty Gordon. Nice to meet  
you both. Edouard told me you are  
the head of the resistance in this  
area.

ANDRE  
Oui. Resistance. Excuse me.

Andre walks into another room.

GABRIELLE  
We are preparing your documents.

SHORTY  
You are part of the resistance?

GABRIELLE  
Oui. Oh yes. Come.

Shorty follows her to the living room where she opens the closets and several drawers. Inside are hand grenades, sticks of dynamite, pistols with silencers, two way radio's and a huge cache' of ammunition. She turns to Shorty.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)  
We've been very naughty.

SHORTY  
I'll say.

Andre comes out of the room and hands Shorty his phony documents.

ANDRE  
We will get on the train to Paris  
tonight.

(MORE)

ANDRE (CONT'D)

You'll sit near us, not with us.  
We will be watching you at all  
times.

GABRIELLE

If you get caught, we do not know  
you. If we get separated in the  
Paris train station, you will meet  
us at this location.

She hands Shorty a paper with an address.

ANDRE

If you are going to get caught, it  
will be at the train station. Very  
dangerous. Be very careful of any  
eye contact with anyone.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Andre and Gabrielle, followed in the distance by Shorty, walk  
slowly through the station. It's filled with people and  
German guards, whose eyes are looking everywhere.

One guard is following Shorty as he approaches the train.  
Shorty tries to keep his cool as the guard rushes up and  
grabs... a man near Shorty and pulls him away.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Shorty makes his way down the aisle to his seat near the  
window. Andre and Gabrielle sit in the seats across the  
aisle as the train starts to move.

Coming down the aisle is the passenger conductor with the  
Gestapo, checking tickets. They come to Shorty who hands  
them his identity and travel cards. They check them closely,  
look at Shorty, then check it ever closer.

GESTAPO

(in French)

Where are you going?

He stares at Shorty. Shorty is silent. Andre and Gabrielle  
look over with concern.

GESTAPO (CONT'D)

I asked you where are you going?  
Are you going to see friend?

Shorty sneaks a peek across the aisle at Gabrielle who nods.

SHORTY

Oui.

GESTAPO

Where?

Gabrielle pulls out her documents and waves them at the Gestapo.

GABRIELLE

(with a smile)

Bonjour.

The irritated Gestapo looks over and sees how attractive she is. He looks back at Shorty and hands him his documents. He turns his attention to Gabrielle. He smiles, checks her documents, then Andre's, and moves on.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PARIS - MORNING

Shorty gets off the train and follows Andre and Gabrielle's every move. They walk through the gates, have their papers checked and walk out of the station.

EXT. NO. 9 AVE. NIEL - MORNING

Andre, Gabrielle, and Shorty walk up the street and into the apartment building.

INT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

They walk up to the elevator.

GABRIELLE

Her name is Mademoiselle Royannez.  
She is on the fourth floor, room  
404.

ANDRE

Shorty, they will keep you here  
until they get word that it is time  
to leave for England. If all goes  
well, you will make your way back.

SHORTY

That's a big "if."

GABRIELLE

Good luck.

They embrace and quickly leave.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Shorty gets out of the elevator and knocks on room 404. The door swings open and there stands MADEMOISELLE GERMAINE ROYANNEZ, 50's, plain looking, very proper, upper class.

INT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT - DAY

Shorty walks inside to a beautifully furnished room. Standing behind Mlle Royannez is Bernard, 30's, her butler and Camille, 20's, her housemaid.

MLLE ROYANNEZ  
(broken English)  
Welcome. I'm Germaine Royannez.  
This is Bernard and Camille, who  
work for me.

SHORTY  
I'm Lee Gordon. You can call me  
Shorty.

MLLE ROYANNEZ  
Very well, Shorty. It's a pleasure  
to meet you.

SHORTY  
Believe me, the pleasure is all  
mine.

She walks Shorty into the living room.

MLLE ROYANNEZ  
Welcome to your new home.

SHORTY  
Thank you, it's beautiful.

Walking out of another room is LUCIEN, 20's, thin, slight goatee.

MLLE ROYANNEZ  
Shorty, this is Lucien. He will be  
your roommate now. He arrived here  
two days ago.

SHORTY  
Nice to meet you.

LUCIEN  
(broken English)  
Yes, nice to meet you.

MLLE ROYANNEZ  
Now, how about some tea? Shall we?

She points for them to sit and walks off to get the tea.  
Shorty and Lucien sit on the couch.

SHORTY  
What happened to you? How did you  
get pinched?

LUCIEN  
Pinched?

SHORTY  
Caught. Where did they arrest you?

LUCIEN  
I was taken right off the streets.  
The Gestapo saw me and "pinched"  
me. I was placed in a  
Gemeinschaftslager.

SHORTY  
A work camp?

LUCIEN  
Yes. I escaped while I was working  
on a quarry.

SHORTY  
I escaped on a work detail as well.  
They pinched me though. Sent me  
back. So I escaped again.

LUCIEN  
You never know who to trust.

SHORTY  
That's the thing. I try not to  
give out too much information to  
anyone. Name, rank, and serial  
number, that's it. It's people  
like this, here, that you have to  
trust. She is putting her life on  
the line for us.

LUCIEN  
Yes, very honorable. Very brave.

Mademoiselle Royannez walks back in with a tray of tea.

Mlle ROYANNEZ  
Tea is served.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shorty is peeking through his curtains at the street below.  
A small string of Christmas lights hangs in an apartment  
across the street.

SHORTY (V.O.)

I was happy for Lucien. It was good to know that there were others like me trying to escape to freedom. And I was happy to be "safe." Just to know I didn't have to look over my shoulder this night was a relief. For now.

Shorty walks over and sits down on his bed. He takes off his shoes and his socks. Inside his sock he pulls out the picture of Betty. The photo is so worn, you can barely see her face.

SHORTY (V.O.)

At times like this it was easy to be lulled into being comfortable and almost secure. And that scared me. Because nothing was farther from the truth. As far as I was concerned, if it appeared quiet and still that was because it was the calm before the storm.

Shorty closes his eyes.

INT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT - DAWN

There is a sudden knock on the front door. The knock goes into a pattern. Mademoiselle Royannez puts on her robe as she crosses to the door. Shorty and Lucien rush into the hall and peek out.

Mlle ROYANNEZ

It's okay.

She opens the door. There stands two resistance men, MAURICE, 20's, muscular, and Guy, 30's, beard. They come in quickly. They speak in French

MAURICE

(to Mlle Royannez)

Where is Lucien?

She looks toward the hallway. Lucien steps forward.

GUY

Come with us. We must split you up. We will take you to another location. We must hurry.

Lucien rushes away and comes back with his bag of belongings. Shorty shakes his hand. All three rush out.

EXT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT BUILDING - DAWN

All three hurry to a car and drive off.

INT. MAURICE'S CAR - DAWN

Maurice is driving with Lucien in the front and Guy in the back. They speak in French.

LUCIEN  
What is happening? What is the  
reason to move so quickly.

GUY  
Word travels quickly. It was  
imperative we get you out.

LUCIEN  
Someone found out I was hiding  
there?

GUY  
Something like that.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

Maurice's car speeds along the road toward the country.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - MORNING

Maurice pulls up to the house. Guy jumps out and runs inside.

INT. MAURICE'S CAR - MORNING

Maurice and Lucien sit in silence. Lucien looks tense. Finally...

LUCIEN  
What are we doing here?

MAURICE  
Getting further information.  
Making sure we're right.

Guy runs back outside to the car and jumps in. Maurice looks at Guy who nods.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - MORNING

They drive off from their connection.

INT. MAURICE'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Guy, sitting in the back, leans forward to Maurice.

GUY  
There, by the large tree. He said  
he would meet us here.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Maurice pulls the car over behind some bushes. All three get out and walk over by the large tree and stand in the cold.

MAURICE  
What time did he say?

Guy checks his watch.

GUY  
Any minute now.

LUCIEN  
(beyond nervous)  
Who is coming?

Maurice walks away with his hands in his jacket to keep warm.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)  
Do you know where I will be going?

GUY  
Yes.

LUCIEN  
Where?

GUY  
You look nervous.

LUCIEN  
I just want to be sure everything  
is okay.

GUY  
It is. It's perfect.

Maurice circles back behind Lucien, pulls out his pistol from his jacket and shoots Lucien in the back of the head.

INT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT - DAY

As Mademoiselle Royannez answers the door, Maurice and Guy burst inside. Shorty, Bernard and Camille are startled.

MAURICE  
 Everyone must go! Leave now!  
 Immediately!!

GUY  
 Leave nothing of your existence  
 here!

Mlle ROYANNEZ  
 Quickly, we must go!!

Everyone scrambles for their belongings.

MAURICE  
 Lucien was a collaborator. The  
 Gestapo has just been informed  
 about you!

GUY  
 Mademoiselle, take your servants,  
 we will take the American!

EXT. ROYANNEZ APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Mademoiselle Royannez, Bernard, and Camille rush out and  
 climb into her car. Shorty jumps in Maurice's car with Guy.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Maurice pulls up and lets Guy and Shorty out.

SHORTY  
 Merci beaucoup.

MAURICE  
 (broken English)  
 You're welcome.

Maurice drives off. Shorty and Guy walk into the station.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Guy and Shorty sit across from each other. Guy nods, as if  
 to say everything is all right.

EXT. HOUSE IN QUIMPER - DUSK

Guy walks up to the house with Shorty.

GUY

His name is Monsieur Fanfan. He is the leader of the resistance for those returning to England. He will help you get back.

He knocks and the door is opened. Guy hugs MONSIEUR FANFAN, late 40's, and leaves.

INT. HOUSE IN QUIMPER - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Monsieur Fanfan walks Shorty into the room that has twenty-five evaders waiting.

SHORTY

My name is...

MONSIEUR FANFAN

(broken English)

Sergeant Lee Gordon, but everyone calls you Shorty. 19049886.

SHORTY

That's right. You've done your homework.

MONSIEUR FANFAN

But of course. Welcome. My name is Monsieur Fanfan. If you do what we tell you, you will all make it back to England. We will leave at nine o'clock exactly.

EXT. SHORELINE - NIGHT - 9:00PM

Shorty and the others make their way down to the water in the cold, dark night. There are three small row boats on the shore.

MONSIEUR FANFAN

Get in line and follow the man in front of you exactly. Step for step. Do not deviate one step left or right. We are going through a mine field. One misstep and you will take the whole line with you.

Shorty and all the men walk carefully in step, get into the boats, and row away from the shore.

EXT. OCEAN - ROW BOATS - NIGHT

Shorty, Monsieur Fanfan, and the rest, row their way toward an old fishing boat that appears from the dark.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - NIGHT

The boats row a half mile to the twenty year old, sixty foot fishing boat with a sail and motor. They all climb aboard.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - TOP SIDE - NIGHT

Shorty and the others stand on the deck and look out as the motor starts up and they pull away.

MONSIEUR FANFAN  
We will be in England in the  
morning!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN SEAS - FISHING BOAT - NIGHT - 3:30AM

The sea has taken a turn for the worse. Huge waves crash against the hull.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - TOP SIDE - NIGHT

Shorty and the others attempt to hold on. Suddenly the engine stops.

SHORTY  
Shit!

Shorty, with several others, run down to the engine room.

INT. ENGINE ROOM - NIGHT

Shorty and some other men rush into the room to discover the room has a leak and is taking on water.

SHORTY  
We've got to start bailing and  
pumping out the water! Go up and  
get some help!!

Shorty starts pumping out what water he can with a hand pump. The others come down and join in. The room is filled with two feet of water.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
It's no use! Let's get the hell  
out of here!!

They all rush out.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - TOP SIDE - OFF THE COAST - DAWN

The boat is now six inches off the water and is continually being pounded by waves. Shorty looks and sees they are headed toward a rocky ridge.

SHORTY  
We're headed for the rocks!  
Prepare yourselves!!

As the boat nears a small broken down pier, Shorty grabs a rope attached to the boat, and dives into the cold water to tie it around a piling. It's too cold. They pull him back on board.

With the sun coming up, the boom on the main sail rips free in the wind and crashes onto the boat just as it slams into the rocks. Shorty and others take the mast, extend it to the rocks and use it to get off the boat to shore.

EXT. A CLIFF ABOVE BEACH - EARLY MORNING

Watching from above are dozens of German soldiers.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - SHORELINE - MORNING

Dazed and exhausted, all the men get to the shore. Shorty is the last off the boat. As they all stumble away down the beach, Shorty looks up and sees the soldiers. He yells to the others.

SHORTY  
(pointing to the cliff)  
Look out! Look up!!

The others look up, see the soldiers, and race down the beach to get away. The soldiers follow them along the cliff and begin to run down to capture them.

Shorty, watching this, runs toward the cliff. As the soldiers climb down, Shorty climbs up the cliff.

EXT. ROAD AWAY FROM CLIFF - MORNING

Shorty, soaked, makes it to the top and runs the opposite way. He sees a young man, LUC, 20's, dark hair, carrying a fishing pole. He runs up to him.

SHORTY  
Please, uh, pouvez-vous m'aider?

LUC  
Qu'est-ce que tu veux?

SHORTY  
Look, I'm American.

LUC  
American! Joe Dimaggio! Yankees!

SHORTY  
Yeah, right. Right. Here.

He grabs Luc and leads him to the cliff and points below to the crashed boat and the others being captured by the soldiers.

SHORTY (CONT'D)  
I need help! Aide moi!!

Luc nods and gestures for Shorty to follow him. They run away from the cliff.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

They run up to an area with lots of brush. Luc gives him his jacket.

LUC  
(broken English)  
You stay here. Yes?

As Shorty lays down on the dirt and curls up to keep warm, Luc runs off.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Shorty is shivering in the dark when he HEARS footsteps coming near. He sees a shadow then HEARS a whistle. He whistles back. ARMAND, 30's, short hair, beard, part of the resistance, creeps over to Shorty and gestures to follow him.

EXT. POINT CROIX FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Shorty is led into a barn by Armand.

INT. POINT CROIX FARMHOUSE BARN - NIGHT

Armand points to the hay loft.

ARMAND  
(in French)  
Stay here. Hide here.

SHORTY  
Oui.

Armand leaves. Shorty climbs up to a hay loft and lays back. He takes off his shoes and socks. The photo of Betty is ruined. Nothing can be seen, still he puts it in his pocket and closes his eyes.

INT. POINT CROIX FARMHOUSE BARN - MORNING

The owner of the farm opens the barn door slowly. Shorty wakes up and sees him climb the ladder and hand him some milk, bread, butter and eggs.

SHORTY

Oui. Bonjour. Thank you. Thank you.

Shorty scarfs down the food.

EXT. POINT CROIX FARMHOUSE BARN - NIGHT

In the shadows can be seen two men sneaking up to the barn with their pistols drawn.

INT. POINT CROIX FARMHOUSE BARN - NIGHT

The barn door creeps open. Shorty rolls over to the ledge to see them enter. Some hay falls from the loft. They look up to the loft and aim their pistols. They whistle quietly. Shorty whistles back.

ARMAND

Come!

Shorty joins Armand and his partner, LEON, 30's, big and muscular.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

Shorty follows Armand and Leon single file down the lane in the moonlight. Appearing in the distance are two GERMAN GUARDS, with rifles, standing in the path.

ARMAND

(to Leon in French)  
Check point ahead.

Leon turns to Shorty.

LEON

Say nothing.

Armand and Leon put their pistols inside their jackets and point them in the direction of the guards. The guards hold out their hands for them to stop. They speak in French.

GUARD #1  
What are you doing?

ARMAND  
We are going to a farm to get some  
milk and eggs.

The guards look at them suspiciously.

GUARD #2  
At this hour?

LEON  
It will take us several hours to  
get there and several hours back.

GUARD #1  
Who's farm?

ARMAND  
Yves Rossignol.

The guards look at Armand and Leon with their hands in their  
jackets.

GUARD #1  
Do you have weapons?

LEON  
No.

After a torturous minute...

GUARD #2  
Go on ahead.

They walk past the guards and on down the lane.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
As we walked away, I knew the  
guards suspected we had weapons.  
They were afraid to have a  
confrontation in the middle of the  
night, out in the middle of  
nowhere. Someone would be dead  
when it was over and they weren't  
willing to take that chance.  
Still, my stomach was in knots as I  
waited for a bullet in my back...

Shorty, Armand, and Leon fade into the dark of night.

SHORTY (V.O.)  
... that never came.

EXT. MARCEL COLA'S HOUSE - PRE-DAWN

Armand and Leon lead Shorty up to the house and knock. Opening the door is MARCEL COLA, an interrogator for the resistance. He sees Shorty.

MARCEL COLA  
(broken English)  
Shorty, I'm Marcel Cola.  
Everything is set. We must go now.

Armand and Leon walk off into the dark as Marcel gets into his car with Shorty and drives off.

INT. CAR - MOVING - MORNING

Marcel pulls out some documents and money and hands them to Shorty.

MARCEL COLA  
Here are your train tickets, some money, and another passport. When you reach Guingamp, look for a man tapping a newspaper under his arm. He will take you from there.

SHORTY  
Right. Thank you.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Shorty sits alone as a German soldier walks down the aisle, stops, stares at him, and moves on.

EXT. GUINGAMP TRAIN STATION - DUSK

Shorty gets off the train and walks through the station. Sitting on a bench is a man, FRANCOIS KERAMBRUN, 50's, balding, tapping a newspaper. Their eyes connect. He gets up and Shorty follows.

EXT. OUTSIDE GUINGAMP TRAIN STATION - DUSK

Francois gets into his truck and closes his door. Shorty gets in the passenger side and they drive off.

EXT. DOUARNENEZ - LA MAISON D' ALPHONSE - NIGHT

Francois drives his truck up to the house. They get out and walk up to the front door. Francois opens the door, lets Shorty inside, and goes back outside.

INT. DOUARNENEZ - LA MAISON D' ALPHONSE - NIGHT

Shorty walks inside to see a dozen men who are about to escape with him. They come over to greet him.

EXT. DOUARNENEZ - LA MAISON D' ALPHONSE - NIGHT

Francois stands outside with binoculars, looking out toward the ocean. He sees a quick flash of light. He checks his watch and hurries back to the house.

INT. DOUARNENEZ - LA MAISON D' ALPHONSE - NIGHT

Francois swings open the door quickly.

FRANCOIS  
It's time! Let's go.

EXT. SHORELINE - NIGHT

Shorty and the others all single file down to the water. Coming out from the dark of the ocean are five small row boats, with a man rowing each one.

They all jump into the boats and row back out to sea.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Appearing from the dark this time is a MBT 503 British gun boat.

Shorty and the rest of the men row up to the boat and are welcomed onboard by the BRITISH SAILOR'S.

BRITISH SAILOR  
Welcome aboard mates!

EXT. MBT 503 BRITISH GUN BOAT - TOP SIDE - NIGHT

The roar of the engine is HEARD as the boat pulls away from the coastline.

BRITISH SAILOR  
You can all go down below where  
it's warmer if you like.

Everyone but Shorty goes below. The soldier walks over to Shorty.

BRITISH SAILOR (CONT'D)  
Cup of tea down below.

SHORTY

For some reason I think I'll stay  
topside. Keep a look out.

BRITISH SAILOR

Suit yourself, mate.

SUPER: FEBRUARY 27, 1944 - ONE YEAR AND A DAY

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAWN

Shorty is in the passenger seat of a car driven by LT. KEN BENNETT, 20's, handsome. The car drives up to The Grand Hotel.

LT. KEN BENNETT

There was someone who notified us  
that if we had any information on  
your whereabouts we should notify  
her.

EXT. THE GRAND HOTEL - DAWN

Shorty looks out the window and sees Betty standing in front of the hotel. He jumps out of the car, they see each other and crash into an embrace.

BETTY

(through tears)

Oh my God. You made it back! You  
made it back!

SHORTY

I promised you, didn't I?

He reaches down into his sock and pulls out what's left of her photo and shows it to her. They lock in a kiss.

SHORTY (V.O.)

I understand it's war. But some of  
the things I saw, no one should  
see. Some of the things I had to  
do, no one should have to do.  
Ever.

Lt. Bennett gets out and escorts them inside the hotel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE GRAND HOTEL - LARGE ROOM - MORNING

Shorty has been seated behind a table for four hours. The faces of high ranking officials in both the American and British Armed Forces are a study in concentration. Each one, seated next to each other, on a dais, is riveted on what they are hearing.

SHORTY

Everything I've told you for the last four hours is true. Things are taking place that are unprecedented in the history of war. It's not up to me to make you believe it. It's now up to you to find out truth. And God help you when you do. That's all I've got to say for now. My girl's been waiting for me for a year and a day and four hours and I think that's long enough.

Shorty stands and shoves in his chair.

SHORTY (CONT'D)

Besides, I'm God damn hungry.

EXT. THE GRAND HOTEL - LARGE ROOM - MORNING

Shorty walks out and hugs Betty. They walk toward the coffee shop.

INT. THE GRAND HOTEL - COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Shorty and Betty sit at a table. The waitress walks up to take their order.

WAITRESS

What'll it be for breakfast?

BETTY

Coffee and some toast.

WAITRESS

And you?

SHORTY

Ham and eggs. Toast. Hash browns. Corned beef hash and a large orange juice, oh, and a coffee.

The indignant waitress stares at Shorty.

WAITRESS

Yank, don't you know there's a war  
going on?

She snatches the menu's and walks away. As Shorty looks at Betty, a slight smile comes to his face as he ponders her question.

FADE OUT

Lee "Shorty" Gordon was the only American Airman to escape from a German POW camp in World War II and make it back to England. He received the Silver Star bestowed upon him personally by General James Doolittle.

Upon his retirement from the military, his medal was upgraded to the Medal of Valor.

When Shorty informed American Intelligence of the mass extermination perpetrated against the Jews, they refused to believe the atrocities.

Lee "Shorty" Gordon died November 14th, 2006.