

G.I. - The Golden Lions

Episode 1 - FUBAR

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G.I. - GOLDEN LIONS

EPISODE 1 - FUBAR

TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. 106TH INFANTRY DIV. MEMORIAL ST. VITH - DAY

In the background is a white chapel with a cross on the wall near the left side. In front of the chapel are four flags, the US flag being the highest. Underneath the flags is rough-hewn triangular stone. On the the stone is a plaque.

The plaque reads:

"IN MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THE 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION, U.S.ARMY, WHO FOUGHT AND DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY IN THE ARDENNES FOREST DURING THE WINTER OF 1944-45."

ACT ONE

EXT. AMERICAN TRENCH ARGONNE FOREST - 1918 - DUSK

SUPER: "Argonne Forest, France - September 1918"

Two lines of doughboys dressed in wool khaki stand in a trench; saucer shaped helmets on their heads and gas masks on their faces. In their hands are bayoneted Springfield rifles.

A SERGEANT prowls between the two lines. He carries a .45 caliber Colt 1911 automatic and has a whistle on a chord around his neck.

Light is just beginning to filter through the haze and smoke cling to the battered trees. In the distance in front of the trench artillery is POUNDING all hell out of the enemy lines.

The troops shift nervously and a YOUNG DOUGHBOY in the second line removes his mask for a moment to wipe the sweat from his brow. The Sergeant GROWLS at the doughboy and he quickly replaces his mask.

The Sergeant stops prowling and looks at his watch. Suddenly the artillery stops and there is a moment of tense quiet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHISTLES sound up and down the line and the Sergeant blows his WHISTLE as well.

SERGEANT

(yells)

Go! -- Go! Over the top and straight into their trenches. -- Don't stop for anything!

The first line of doughboys clamber out of the trench and sprint out of sight. In the distance there is SHOUTING and suddenly the deep CHUGGING of a heavy machine gun. It's joined by others, followed by the higher pitched BRAAPS of light machine guns.

The Sergeant climbs to the top of the trench and looks towards where the first line disappeared. There's a CRUMP of a trench mortar round landing nearby and the Sergeant flinches.

He turns to the second line in the trench.

SERGEANT (cont'd)

(yells)

Get ready!

Just then another mortar round lands at the Sergeant's feet. The explosion throws him back into the trench like a rag doll, bleeding from a dozen wounds. He lands on his back.

The young doughboy crouches next to the Sergeant and shakes him.

YOUNG DOUGHBOY

Sergeant! Wake up!

The doughboy removes the Sergeant's gas mask. The Sergeant's lifeless eyes stare at eternity.

YOUNG DOUGHBOY (cont'd)

Sergeant?

INT. QUONSET HUT - DAY

ORDERLY

Sergeant?

An orderly stands over Staff Sergeant John HATFIELD, who has fallen asleep in a chair. Hatfield's olive drab fatigues and boots are spattered with mud.

Both Hatfield and the orderly have a division patch on their left shoulder sleeves. The patches match an emblem hanging on the wall above Hatfield; inside a blue circle surrounded by a red ring is the face of a Golden Lion, its tongue sticking out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Leaning up against the wall next to Hatfield is an Thompson sub-machine gun. His G.I. helmet is in his lap.

Hatfield starts awake and looks around confused for a moment. He shakes his head and stands up.

ORDERLY (cont'd)
Captain Morris will see you now.

EXT. CAMP ATTERBURY - DAY

SUPER: "Camp Atterbury, IN. - July, 1944"

Hatfield is standing in a dusty street just outside the Quonset hut. Over the door a sign reads: "Co. L - 3rd Bn. - 422nd Rgt. - 106th Inf. Div."

Hatfield has cleaned up and is now in his Class B uniform with a tie tucked inside his shirt. He's smoking a cigarette and in his hand is a clipboard with papers on it.

The door to the hut opens and Hatfield tosses his cigarette into the ashcan by the door. Captain MORRIS exits the hut, places his folded garrison cap on his head just in time to return Hatfield's salute.

MORRIS
Ready, Sergeant?

The two start walking up the dusty street lined with Quonset huts. Hatfield hands the clipboard to Morris.

HATFIELD
Yes, sir. The men are formed up on the parade ground.

MORRIS
Any griping?

HATFIELD
Of course. They're soldiers aren't they?

MORRIS
Hated to do this today after they were out all night on maneuvers, but orders are orders.

HATFIELD
There's no good time for something like this.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

Hatfield and Morris enter the parade ground. In front of them 'L' Company is standing at ease in formation. The First Sergeant is at the head of the formation and Second Lieutenants stand in front of each platoon. The two approach the First Sergeant.

FIRST SERGEANT
Comp'ny! Aten-Hut!

The company comes to attention and Morris and the First Sergeant trade salutes.

MORRIS
 At ease.

The company complies and Morris raises the clipboard, looks at for a moment before lowering it.

MORRIS (cont'd)
 Men. I've just talked with the Colonel and he is very pleased with your performance during maneuvers last night. -- Because of that he's authorized me to give everyone a forty-eight hour pass.

Smiles and excited MURMURS break out from the formation.

FIRST SERGEANT
At ease!

The formation quiets down.

MORRIS
 But unfortunately, that's not the only news I have. I...

Morris seems to choke up for a moment, shakes his head and regains his composure.

MORRIS (cont'd)
 First, let me tell you how proud I am of every one of you. In the last two years you've gone from being a bunch boys, and have become... Soldiers!

The smiles in the formation turn to looks of concern and more MURMURING breaks out. It abruptly ends when the First Sergeant glares at the troops.

MORRIS (cont'd)
 That's why it pains me to read the following.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Morris raises the clipboard and reads from it.

MORRIS (cont'd)

The commander of L Company, Four-Twenty-Second Infantry Battalion is hereby ordered to select fifty of his best men to be reassigned as individual replacements for the fighting in Europe.

Morris lowers the clipboard and looks out over his company.

MORRIS (cont'd)

What that means is the brass in their infinite wisdom is taking fifty of you and scattering you throughout units in France that've taken heavy losses. -- Since all of you are my best men, I'm going to ask for volunteers first.

At first the men look at each other and no one moves. Then one by one, a dozen men step forward and stand at parade rest in front of the formation. Morris nods at the volunteers, then turns to Hatfield and hands him the clipboard.

MORRIS (cont'd)

Thank you, men. Sergeant Hatfield here will now read the names of the remainder.

Morris comes to attention and nods at the First Sergeant who comes to attention, and does an about face.

FIRST SERGEANT

Aten-Hut!

The First Sergeant does another about face and he and Morris trade salutes. Morris does an about face and marches off the parade ground. The First Sergeant does another about face.

FIRST SERGEANT (cont'd)

At ease.

The formation relaxes and the First Sergeant nods at Hatfield. Hatfield steps forward, flips a page on the clipboard and starts calling out names.

HATFIELD

Smith, William A., First Platoon...
Conner, James M., Second Platoon...

INT. FARMHOUSE - EVENING

SUPER: Schlousenbach, Schnee Eifel, German Border - December 15, 1944

The stone farmhouse is relatively small and Capt. Morris is sitting at a wooden table in what was the parlor. There's a fire burning in the fireplace and a lantern on the table.

On the wall behind Morris is a topological map of the Schnee Eifel with friendly positions, generally in a line from lower left to upper right, drawn in blue marker. Suspected enemy positions are marked in red, generally down (south) and east (right) of the blue markings.

Hatfield enters the room. He's wearing a field jacket, not an overcoat, and thin wool gloves. He looks cold. He gives the captain a salute. Morris returns a sloppy salute but does not stand up.

MORRIS

At ease. -- So how are things with the men.

Hatfield goes over to warm his hands by the fire looking sideways to talk to the captain.

HATFIELD

Not good, sir. Not good at all. -- No stoves, no winter gear and we're seeing the first cases of trenchfoot and frostbite.

Morris stands up and walks over by the fire.

MORRIS

Dammit. I've tried to drill it into the men's heads that they have to take care of their feet. -- Infantry that can't walk is useless.

HATFIELD

Sir, the boys that've been with us since the beginning are doing all right. It's the replacements that're in trouble. They've never been on a winter bivouac.

Morris shakes his head and walks over to the map, gesturing for Hatfield to follow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS

You toured the rest of the battalion's position on the line this morning. What did you think?

Hatfield points to positions on the map while he talks.

HATFIELD

They're spread out along here in old German pillboxes. The problem is, the pillboxes were sighted to defend the other way. They've got their noses to the rear and they're asses wide open to the enemy.

MORRIS

I know. I warned battalion that they should get out of those pillboxes.

HATFIELD

The worst part, sir, is that the Germans hold the high ground so those positions are like being at the bottom of a sugar bowl. -- And since the Germans built those pillboxes...

Morris nods and frowns.

MORRIS

They know right where to drop their artillery.

Morris studies the map for a moment and shakes his head.

MORRIS (cont'd)

Here we are the newest division in the theater -- only five days in the line -- and we're the farthest forward...

HATFIELD

...and half the men are replacements...

MORRIS

... And we have to cover five times the normal front. An oompah band could march through our lines and we probably wouldn't notice it.

Morris picks up a piece of paper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS (cont'd)

Battalion wants us to send out a patrol towards the 14th Cav's outpost on our left. -- It's in Kobschied, about a mile and a half north east of here.

Morris points at the map.

MORRIS (cont'd)

German patrols keep cutting the land lines between here and there so I want you to take a squad and set up an O-P at the top of this ridge, then contact the Cav boys in the morning.

HATFIELD

Gee thanks, sir. What did I do to deserve this honor?

Morris sits back down and Hatfield moves back to the fire.

MORRIS

You're the only combat veteran in the whole company...

HATFIELD

That was for a couple of days over twenty years ago.

MORRIS

Still. -- And for your squad I want you to use a group of replacements we just received.

HATFIELD

Now, sir...

MORRIS

Two of them are veterans from other units returning from the hospital. -- All of them are warm, well fed and rested.

HATFIELD

Yes, sir.

INT. BARN - EVENING

Hatfield, carrying a Thompson sub-machine gun, enters the barn. Outside snow flurries are falling lazily to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Inside are seven G.I.'s, some huddled around a fire in an oil drum, others lounging in the hay. They are all clean and have winter gear that Hatfield lacks; overcoats, wool caps and gloves.

HATFIELD

Now listen up.

Hatfield points at the men in the hay.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

You -- on your feet.

The men walk over and form a semi-circle facing Hatfield.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

I'm Sergeant Hatfield and I've been ordered to form you men into a squad to go out on patrol. -- You two...

Hatfield points at the only two men with shoulder patches.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

You're from the ninth, aren't you?
You're my veterans. -- You, what was your assignment?

Hatfield points at the one on the left.

IOWA

Private First Class Yoder, Sergeant. I was an anti-aircraft gunner.

The veteran on the left chimes in.

DALLAS

Private Martinez. I was a loader -- with the artillery.

Hatfield shakes his head and looks at the men. Most of them are so young they don't have to shave very often, if at all.

HATFIELD

Let me make this clear. In combat, most replacements don't last a week. -- If you don't like that bitch to God, not to me.

Hatfield leans in and narrows his eyes.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

But if you keep your head down, watch what I do and take everything I say as gospel you might live to see New Year's.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD (cont'd)

-- Until then, I don't want to know your names.

Hatfield relaxes a bit.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

For now, just tell me where you're from.

Hatfield points at the replacement on the left.

CINCY

Priv... Ohio, Sergeant. Cincinnati.

HATFIELD

I like Cincinnati, so we'll go with Cincy.

The next replacement speaks up.

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn, Sergeant.

Hatfield nods and points at the first veteran.

IOWA

Ames, Iowa.

HATFIELD

Iowa, you'll handle the B-A-R. -- Also, you're my second.

Iowa nods and the other veteran takes a half step forward.

DALLAS

(Texan accent)

Dallas, Texas.

HATFIELD

Dallas, you'll take the other Thompson. Can you handle one?

DALLAS

Yeah, Sergeant. No problem.

The others around the circle identify themselves. The next one is a burly kid who looks like he played football in high school.

ALABAMA

Alabama, Sergeant.

KOKOMO

Kokomo, Indiana.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD

Okay, Kokomo.

The last man is a bit different than the other raw replacements. He has a slight build but he has a certain quiet self assurance that the others lack.

TYRONE

Tyrone, Pennsylvania -- up near Altoona.

Hatfield looks at Tyrone and for a second a smile almost forms on his lips before it disappears.

HATFIELD

That's up in the mountains. Ever been deer hunting, Tyrone?

TYRONE

I've bagged a buck or two.

HATFIELD

Good. You're my sniper.

Hatfield points towards the pile of packs in the corner.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Let's gear up. When we move out I want light packs; two days rations, canteens, extra socks, trenching tools, first aid kits and all the ammo you can carry.
-- And nothing else. Am I clear?

The squad chimes in together.

SQUAD

Clear, Sergeant.

ACT TWO

EXT. SOUTH SIDE MERTESBERG RIDGE - NIGHT

The squad wends it's way up a trail towards the top of the ridge. It's dark but the low clouds and occasional flashes of artillery in the distance provide enough light to see by. The ground and the fir trees are covered with about an inch of snow, and the men's breath steams when they exhale.

Tyrone is about fifty feet in front of the squad and is almost invisible to Hatfield, who is next in the column. It's not just the darkness that makes him hard to see. He has an uncanny ability to melt into the background wherever he is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind Hatfield is Alabama, carrying a field radio on his back, followed by Cincy. Iowa is in the middle of the column and is followed by Brooklyn and Kokomo. Dallas brings up the rear.

Tyrone is armed with a scoped Springfield, Hatfield and Dallas carry Thompsons and Iowa the BAR. The rest are armed with M1's.

Near the top of the ridge Tyrone is suddenly visible and holds up a fist to indicate a halt. Hatfield holds up his fist as well and crouches down. Alabama either doesn't see it or doesn't know what it means and nearly runs him over. Hatfield glares at Alabama.

Tyrone gestures for Hatfield to come up and Hatfield holds his hand up indicating the others are to stay there. Crouched over Hatfield trots up to Tyrone.

HATFIELD

(whisper)

What is it?

Tyrone points to boot tracks on the ground and indicates their path along the side of the ridge. Hatfield crouches down to examine one of the boot prints.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

German. -- Looks like three sets of them.

TYRONE

Four. And they're at least a day old.
Maybe two.

Hatfield nods and looks around in the darkness. Suddenly from below there is a flare of a lighter followed by the red glow of a cigarette. Someone down below BARKS a command and the cigarette is extinguished.

HATFIELD

(to himself)

I will skin whoever did that.

Hatfield turns back to look up the ridge then points out a spot at the top to Tyrone.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Go on up and make sure it's clear. I'll get the rest of the men moved up to this point. -- And be careful.

TYRONE

(winks)

Always, Sergeant.

Hatfield stands up and gestures for the rest to move up.

EXT. MERTESBERG RIDGE FOXHOLES - NIGHT

The squad enters a clearing with several abandoned foxholes. Near the edge of the clearing are fir trees that were knocked over by an artillery barrage sometime in the past. Hatfield pulls out his entrenching tool and points towards the holes.

HATFIELD
We'll dig in here.

LATER

The squad is working on expanding the foxholes. In each two-man team, one man digs while the other keeps watch. Beside a foxhole approximately in the center of a triangle formed by three others, Hatfield keeps watch while Alabama digs.

The hole is about three feet deep when Alabama stops digging and looks up at Hatfield, a question on his face. Hatfield shakes his head no and Alabama resumes digging.

ALABAMA
Sarge, why do we have to dig in -- you know, if we're leaving in the morning?

Hatfield rolls his eyes.

HATFIELD
One, it's a good place to hide if the Kraut's come this way.
-- Two, a nice warm hole is better place to sleep than out in the open.

Off in the far distance to the left a barrage of heavy artillery THUNDERS into the night.

HATFIELD (cont'd)
And three -- Shut the hell up and dig.

LATER

The foxholes are dug and are now covered with fir branches cut from the trees. The night has grown unnaturally quiet and for the first time there are no flashes or rumbles of distant artillery.

Hatfield crouches over to the hole to the right front with Iowa and Kokomo in it.

HATFIELD
It's now oh-zero-hundred.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD (cont'd)

-- Iowa, I'll take the first watch and wake you at oh-three-hundred. Till then, try and catch some shut eye.

Iowa nods. Hatfield turns to go, then stops and turns back.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

And remember to remind the men; no sound, no lights, and no fires.

Hatfield glares at Kokomo.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

As for you -- If you light another cigarette you'll be smoking it through your ass. Got it?

KOKOMO

(gulps)
Got it, Sarge.

Hatfield walks away crouched down.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH ARGONNE FOREST - NIGHT

The doughboys crouched in the trench are exhausted. Their gas mask are off but are nearby, ready to be put on if needed. Many are wounded, mostly flesh wounds with bandages on them but one man sits with his back to the trench, shot through the lungs, breath BUBBLING, holding the hand of one of the other doughboys.

The trench's rifle slits are behind the doughboys. Piled along the top of the trench on the other side are the dead bodies of the German defenders.

Overhead star shells coming from the front light the battlefield. Shells from light German field guns PEPPER the area but are not doing any real damage.

Crouched in the trench is a Captain cranking the handle of a field phone. He yells into the receiver.

CAPTAIN

Hello... Hello. Battalion this is C-O of Bravo company. -- Hello!

The Captain slams the receiver to the ground in frustration.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

The line's been cut -- again! -- Runner!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A young doughboy sets his rifle down and scrambles over to the Captain. The Captain hastily scribbles a note and hands it to the runner who sticks it in his pocket.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Get this to the major, tout suite. Make sure he understands that we've captured the trench but we have no supports on either flank and the enemy is readying a counterattack. -- Now go!

The runner nods and sprints over the wall at the back of the trench. The Captain taps the shoulder of the young doughboy from the earlier scene and gestures to where the runner went.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Watch him and tell me if he goes down.

The young doughboy scrambles over to a rifle slit and watches the runner navigate the battlefield.

As the runner is nearing the American trenches there are multiple WHISTLING SOUNDS from above and the earth seems to erupt. One of the first shells hits near the runner and he disappears; literally blown to pieces.

Enormous explosions rock the trenches occupied by the doughboys and some of them are struck in the head by shrapnel. One is even decapitated, a fountain of blood drenching his comrades.

A shell bursts above the trench and several men, including the Captain, are shredded by the hot metal. The young doughboy's calf is also nicked.

While the young doughboy is searching for a bandage to staunch the bleeding, another barrage lands around the trenches. But these rounds do not explode with earth shattering force. Instead they emit a softer, more subtle WHUMP.

Someone down the trench frantically blows a WHISTLE.

VOICE (O.S.)

Gas! Gas! Gas!

The young doughboy is yanking his mask on when the skies open again and the earth heaves.

EXT. MERTESBERG RIDGE FOXHOLES - NIGHT

Hatfield starts awake to the sound of explosions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At first he shrinks further down in the foxhole before he realizes the nearest explosions are at least a mile away. Some are to the left, some to right front, and most ominously, the heaviest ones are to the rear.

He looks at his watch and it says five-thirty. He carefully pulls back the branch covering his foxhole and looks at the sky. It is not yet dawn but the low clouds are illuminated by the flashes of artillery and searchlight beams coming from the German lines in front.

Hatfield recovers his hole and looks at Alabama. The boy looks very young and very scared.

HATFIELD

Don't worry, son. They're not shooting at us. -- Yet.

Hatfield grabs the radio and sees that it is off, flips it on and hands the handset to Alabama.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

We're not supposed to check in for another half hour, but you listen to see if they try and contact us.

Alabama's hand shakes as he places the handset next to his ear.

ALABAMA

Shouldn't we... you know, tell them about the shelling?

Hatfield smiles and shakes his head.

HATFIELD

They don't need us to tell them they're being shelled, son.

ALABAMA

I guess not.

Hatfield grabs his Thompson and climbs carefully out of the hole and crouches down scanning the area. He stands up and trots over to the foxhole with Iowa and Kokomo, the snow CRUNCHING under his boots. He crouches down near the hole.

HATFIELD

Iowa.

IOWA

Yeah, Sarge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD

I'm going to take Tyrone and scout along the ridge. -- You're in charge.

IOWA

Roger.

Hatfield stands up and looks towards the foxhole over to the left but sees Tyrone already climbing out, his Springfield in his hand. They nod to each other and start carefully walking forward.

EXT. MERTESBERG RIDGE EAST END - FIRST LIGHT

It's five-fifty and the sky is just starting to get a hint of light from the rising sun. The artillery is still CRASHING, but the salvos are more ragged now.

Hatfield is picking his way through the trees near the right side of the ridge top. There is a light mist falling and down below there is thick fog, but up where he is it's mostly clear.

Tyrone is about twenty-five feet to Hatfield's left but again he is almost invisible, only showing for a moment when he rounds a tree. Suddenly Tyrone stops and disappears.

Hatfield doesn't notice at first but then he hears the CALL of an American Robin and freezes in his tracks.

Tyrone appears from behind a tree and cups his left hand over his eyes; the hand signal for "I see". Then he rolls his fingers into a tube; the signal for "ten", and taps his arm to signal that it's the enemy. Then he points below and to the right.

Hatfield looks and sees a squad of Germans, wearing white camouflage, emerging from the fog and picking their way up the ridge. Hatfield gives the signals that he understands and that Tyrone is not to fire.

Hatfield crouches down and starts walking back the way he came and Tyrone does the same.

EXT. MERTESBERG RIDGE FOXHOLES - DAWN

Hatfield walks up cautiously and crouches behind a tree.

HATFIELD

Golden.

There is no answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Golden!

Iowa sticks his head out from underneath the cover.

IOWA

Lions.

Hatfield runs crouched over to Iowa.

HATFIELD

There's a German patrol coming up the ridge.

IOWA

Should we engage?

Hatfield looks back and shakes his head.

HATFIELD

No. -- They'll have company coming up behind them. Just sit tight and hope they don't see us. Go tell the others while I contact company C-P.

Hatfield trots over to his foxhole while Iowa crawls out of his hole and goes over to another. Before crawling into the hole, Hatfield sees Tyrone disappear into the tangle of fallen fir trees about twenty yards away to the left.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Anything on the radio?

ALABAMA

No, Sarge. Not a peep. What's going on?

HATFIELD

German patrol coming. Watch the front.

Hatfield grabs the handset and checks the radio. Alabama grabs his rifle and peers out of the foxhole.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

(into handset)

Lion Two, this is Lion Two-Six. Over.

Nothing but static.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

(into handset)

Lion Two, this is Lion Two-Six. Do you copy? Over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS (V.O.)
Lion Two here. What's your situation,
Lion Two-Six? Over.

As Morris talks, shell fire can be heard in the background.

HATFIELD
O-P in position. Shelling all around my
position but none here. Over.

MORRIS (V.O.)
The front is under heavy fire but no
enemy contact as yet. Over.

HATFIELD
German patrol is coming this way, but
hope to avoid. Should I return to your
position? Over.

There is silence for a moment.

MORRIS (V.O.)
No. -- Continue on your mission, if
possible. -- Use your best judgment,
John. -- And Godspeed. Over and out.

HATFIELD
Roger. Over and out.

Hatfield puts the handset down and turns the radio off. He takes his place next to Alabama at the edge of the hole.

ALABAMA
So your first name is John, eh Sarge?

Hatfield glares at him.

HATFIELD
Shut up. -- Eyes front.

LATER

The sky is brightening, but the fog is reaching for the top of the ridge. Tendrils of white smoke curl and form shapes, almost as if they're alive.

Suddenly the artillery barrages stop. All that can be heard now is the distant FIRE of heavy machine guns and mortars. Hatfield looks at his watch; it is six-fifteen.

Iowa in his hole peers out into the fog, the barrel of his BAR barely sticking out of his cover.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, there is the sound of FOOTSTEPS in the snow and about twenty feet away to the right of Iowa a half dozen Germans in white camouflage materialize in a break in the fog.

The Germans are carefully picking their way along the ridge, but just below the crest where the squad's foxholes are. Iowa taps Kokomo on the shoulder, places a finger on his lips and points towards the Germans. Iowa carefully swings his BAR to cover them.

Iowa and Kokomo don't see the GERMAN SCOUT who comes out of the fog, following Hatfield's boot prints from his earlier foray. The German enters the small clearing and stands right next to the foxhole, spinning around looking, trying to see through the fog.

Iowa and Kokomo freeze and the scout turns towards his comrades. He steps on the branches at the edge of the hole and tumbles down on top of Kokomo.

GERMAN SCOUT

Scheisse!

Kokomo is frozen in surprise, but Iowa draws his .45 and aims it at the German.

GERMAN SCOUT (cont'd)

(shouts)

Achtung...

BANG! BANG! Iowa fires twice into the German's chest, killing him.

SHOUTS come from the Germans to the right and Hatfield sticks his head up out of his hole.

HATFIELD

(shouts)

Open fire!

Two GERMAN GRENADE THROWERS, armed with MP40 sub-machine guns crouch down at the edge of the clearing and pull out potato masher grenades. They are cocking their arms back when one of them is drilled through the head by a bullet. Tyrone has dropped him from across the clearing. A grenade rolls down the hill.

GERMAN GRENADE THROWER

Scharfschutze!

GERMAN SOLDIER (O.S.)

Achtung!

The other grenade arcs through the air and hits the cover over Iowa's hole, but the springy branches cause it to bounce and roll on past. BOOM! BOOM! The two grenades explode harmlessly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Iowa's BAR opens up, CHUGGA-CHUGGA! The German grenade thrower is stitched with .30-06 bullets and tumbles to the ground, his blood painting the snow red.

Three Germans cautiously peak their heads over the edge of the ridge and open FIRE with their rifles. Iowa pulls back into to his hole.

IOWA

I can't get a shot at 'em with this. --
Kokomo, see if you can hit them.

Kokomo doesn't hear him. He's pushed himself into the back of the foxhole, eyes wide, staring at the dead German.

IOWA (cont'd)

Kokomo! I swear to God I'll shoot you
myself if you don't get over here and
open fire.

Iowa pulls his .45 again and points it at Kokomo. Kokomo turns to look at Iowa as if in a trance, then nods his head nervously and grabs his M1. He crawls over to the edge of the hole and sticks his rifle out while keeping his head down. He blindly fires EIGHT SHOTS in the general direction of the Germans. His clip ejects with a CLANG and he SNAPS another one into his M1.

Iowa moves in beside him and slides the muzzle of his BAR out of the hole. He looks out but can see no targets he can hit.

Around the clearing shots are coming from the foxholes, but none are hitting the Germans. Hatfield sticks his head up and looks around, sees that there are only three Germans firing. He slides back into the hole.

HATFIELD

Alabama, cease fire. -- They're just
drawing our attention while the rest get
in behind us. -- Come on.

Hatfield slides out the back of the hole with Alabama right behind him. They crawl over beside the foxhole in the rear holding Dallas and Brooklyn.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Dallas, they're going around. Cover us.

Dallas and Brooklyn slide around to the back of the hole, ready to fire. Hatfield pops his head up and looks towards the rear, but the Germans are not yet in sight. He gets up and sprints towards a fallen tree and Alabama follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They dive into the branches and are just getting turned around when two potato mashers come sailing into the clearing and land between Hatfield's and Dallas' hole. BOOM! BOOM!

Rifle SHOTS come out of the trees and two Germans carrying MP-40's start spraying SHOTS into the clearing. Dallas' Thompson BLASTS the one on the left and he doubles over and falls in a heap.

Brooklyn FIRES at the other and misses. The German turns the muzzle of his weapon towards the hole and fires a short BURST. Brooklyn CRIES out and disappears into the hole.

Before the German can fire another blast, a SHOT from Tyrone's Springfield drills him through the heart. He falls to the ground dead, his eyes wide open in surprise.

DALLAS

Hey, Brooklyn. -- You alright?

Brooklyn is out cold, a gouge in his helmet. Dallas leans down and removes Brooklyn's helmet and sees there is a slowly bleeding gash in his head, but no bullet hole. He checks to see that Brooklyn is breathing and returns to the back of the hole.

In the tree pile, Hatfield taps Alabama and signals for him to follow. They slink over to their right trying to outflank the German flankers, using the trees for cover.

Around the clearing the remaining five Germans, three from the side, two from the rear. keep up a steady FIRE, pinning the rest of the squad down.

Hatfield and Alabama go about thirty feet when they reach another fallen tree. They drop behind it and crawl towards its end.

Hatfield peeks around the end and he can see two Germans laying prone about fifty feet away, FIRING towards the clearing. He gestures for Alabama to cover him from there and when Hatfield fires, Alabama is to shoot the one on the right.

Hatfield walks forward crouched down, being as quiet as a possible. He's covered about half the distance when the German on the left turns to get another clip from his ammo pouch. He sees Hatfield and freezes.

Hatfield fires a BURST from his Thompson and from that range the German has no chance.

Alabama fires twice, BANG! BANG! The YOUNG GERMAN on the right is hit in the knee. He CRIES out, and clutches his leg.

Hatfield rushes over to him him and holds his Thompson on the German who raises one hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG GERMAN
Nicht schiessen! Nicht schiessen! --
Kamerade!

Alabama comes trotting up.

HATFIELD
Watch him! I'm going after the rest.

Hatfield moves around towards where the other three Germans were firing but when he gets there he can see through the fog the three disappearing at a trot down the ridge.

Hatfield fires a quick BURST at them to keep them moving, but at this range his Thompson has no hope of hitting them.

Hatfield walks over to Dallas' foxhole and crouches down. The cover is off and Dallas is wrapping a bandage around Brooklyn's head. Brooklyn is awake, but looks shaky.

HATFIELD (cont'd)
You alright, soldier?

Brooklyn nods and winces. Dallas starts tying off the bandage.

DALLAS
He's probably got a concussion.

HATFIELD
Can he walk?

Brooklyn stands up, sways for a second, then steadies himself.

BROOKLYN
I can walk.

Hatfield gives Brooklyn a nod and squeezes his shoulder. He stands up and walks towards Alabama who is dragging the wounded German into the clearing.

ALABAMA
Sarge, what do I do with this Kraut?

Hatfield looks around the clearing. Tyrone has disappeared again and Iowa is taking papers out of the jacket worn by one of the dead Germans in front of his hole. Cincy has left his hole and is taking a watch off the wrist of the other.

HATFIELD
See if he has a bandage and patch him up
while I interrogate him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alabama pulls a bandage out of a pouch on the German's belt and opens it up. The German lays there, fear in his eyes.

ALABAMA

You speak German, Sarge? Where'd you learn that?

HATFIELD

In Germany.

Alabama looks at Hatfield in surprise, then starts bandaging the German's leg. The German MOANS in pain.

Hatfield bends over the German and sees that he is a boy, no more than sixteen, and grimaces. He turns to Alabama.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Give him a syrette of morphine.

Alabama starts to protest but sees the look on Hatfield's face and pulls a syrette out of his first aid kit. He sticks it in the German's thigh and the boy starts to relax.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Ist das besser?

YOUNG GERMAN

(dreamily)

Ja... ja... besser...

HATFIELD

Was ist Ihre Abteilung?

YOUNG GERMAN

Achtzehnte... Volksgrenadieren...

HATFIELD

(to Alabama)

Eighteenth Volksgrenadiers. -- Young boys and old men.

ALABAMA

Kinda like us, eh Sarge?

Hatfield frowns at Alabama and turns back to the German.

HATFIELD

Wo sind deine Kameraden?

The German shrugs and points down the ridge. His eyes start to flutter as if he's about to pass out. Hatfield gives his shoulder a pat and stands up. Alabama pulls a small blanket from the German's web gear and places it over him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hatfield walks to the center of the clearing and gestures that everybody is to gather round. Everybody does except for Tyrone, who is nowhere to be seen, and Brooklyn who is sitting on the edge of his foxhole clutching his head.

IOWA

Is this a good idea, Sarge? There's more Krauts out there.

HATFIELD

(shakes head)

Tyrone will let us know if any Germans are coming.

Hatfield looks at the squad. Iowa is grim faced but the rest have expressions that run from happy to relieved.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

You men did good work here, but that was just a patrol. There'll be more coming. -- Get ready to move out.

CINCY

We going back, Sarge?

Hatfield shakes his head and looks to the left.

HATFIELD

No. -- We continue our mission.

ACT THREE

EXT. ARGONNE FOREST - MORNING

A column of American doughboy prisoners snakes it's way down a forest path. The eyes of the German guards split time between watching the prisoners and watching the sky.

The prisoners are caked in mud and hollow-eyed with exhaustion. Some, including the young doughboy, have light wounds covered by dirty bandages. He limps along, determined to keep up.

The path intersects a macadamed road and the guards CALL a halt. Marching from left to right down the road is a column of German soldiers, followed by a wagon pulled by two horses.

The prisoners flop on the ground, grateful for a rest. Some prisoners have canteens and they pass them around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly from overhead comes the sound of ENGINES. The young doughboy looks up and sees to his right two bi-planes diving towards the road.

The German column stops and SHOUTS come from the NCO's on its flanks. The soldiers start running towards the trees. The prisoners dive for cover back the way they came.

The planes open fire; TACKA-TACKA-TACKA. The horses SCREAM as their bodies are torn apart by the flying bullets. Several Germans that were too slow are hit, including the guard nearest the young doughboy. He looks into the guard's dead eyes, then looks around and sees no other guards nearby. He starts to crawl stealthily into the woods.

The young doughboy gets about fifty feet away when a guard steps from behind a tree and sticks the muzzle of his rifle into the young doughboy's forehead.

GERMAN GUARD

Wohin gehst du, mein kleiner Spinne?

The young doughboy freezes, certain that this is the end. After a moment the guard smiles and gestures with his rifle for the doughboy to get up.

GERMAN GUARD (cont'd)

Loslegen!

EXT. MERTESBERG RIDGE NORTH SIDE - DAY

Hatfield looks at his watch and it says seven-ten. The squad is crouched down on a trail near the bottom of the ridge. The fog is heavier here and little can be seen beyond fifty feet.

To their front a fierce battle can be heard. The sounds of many heavy machine guns FIRING, interspersed with the loud CRUMPS of artillery rounds and the softer POPS of mortars.

Hatfield pulls out his compass and a map and takes a sighting towards the sounds of battle. He's looking at the map when Iowa crawls up to him.

IOWA

I sure wish it would clear up and we could get some air cover. -- It sure sounds like them cav boys are catching all Hell down there.

Hatfield shakes his head and puts his compass away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD

Yeah. It must be coming from Kobscheid.

IOWA

And that's where we're going?

HATFIELD

That's the mission. -- I wonder where Tyrone's gone off to?

Tyrone steps from behind a tree startling the others.

TYRONE

Right here, Sergeant.

Hatfield gestures for Tyrone to come over and points at his map.

HATFIELD

Show me what we're facing.

Tyrone walks over and looks at the map and places finger his on a spot.

TYRONE

We're here, right?

(Hatfield nods)

Well there are a couple of hundred Germans here -- and here trying to get into this village...

HATFIELD

... Kobscheid. -- The Germans making any progress?

TYRONE

Nope. The boys in that village are sure giving them a bloody nose.

Hatfield stands up and looks towards the sounds of FIGHTING but can't see anything through the trees and fog.

HATFIELD

How do you know?

Tyrone grins and stands up.

TYRONE

Hell, Sergeant, what with the fog and them so caught up in the fight I was able to crawl right up into the middle of the German lines.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD

You think the rest of us could crawl
through to the village?

Tyrone looks at the squad, then focuses on Brooklyn who is on all fours retching.

TYRONE

No. -- No. Even if we got through the
Germans our boys would be liable to shoot
at us -- not knowing who we are, and all.

Hatfield looks at his map for a moment.

HATFIELD

I guess there's nothing for it. We go
around and come in from the west.

EXT. KOBSCHEID VILLAGE - MORNING

SUPER: Kobscheid, Germany - 7:00 AM

Kobscheid is a small rural village with a about a dozen mixed stone and wood-frame houses stretched out along a road. Most of the houses have barns nearby.

Inside a stone farmhouse is a Command Post. Lieutenant HERDRICK is using binoculars to look out a window. Dimly through the fog he sees snow-covered fields pockmarked by shell holes. Across the fields about two hundred yards away is a wooded ridge.

SUPER: Lt. Herdrick - C.O. 1st Platoon, Troop A, 18th Cavalry Squadron.

The window is reinforced with sandbags and a .30 caliber M1919A4 Machine Gun is set up ready to fire out the window.

Behind Herdrick Lieutenant CLARK is TALKING on a field phone, a series of numbers specifying map coordinates for artillery fire. Herdrick calls over his shoulder.

HERDRICK

Lieutenant Clark, are the coordinates
laid in?

CLARK

Yes, sir. Awaiting your signal to fire.

Herdrick nods and scans the terrain again. To the front is a pigpen with a small shed on the far side. From around the shed a German soldier peeks out and looks at the house, then withdraws.

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CONTINUED:

Herdrick looks down at the private, SKLEPKOWSKI, crouched next to the machine gun and nods.

HERDRICK
Sklepkowski, get ready.

The private nods and grabs the machine gun, turning it towards the shed. Herdrick resumes watching.

A green flare rises from the ridge opposite Herdrick and arcs into the sky over the village with a WHISTLING sound.

The fog seems to part for a second and ghost-like, a company of German Volksgrenadiers in white camouflage rises from the snow-covered fields. As one they start trotting towards the village.

HERDRICK (cont'd)
Wait for it...

The Germans are nearing the shed when a SHOT rings out from a building to the left, catching one of the Germans in the throat.

HERDRICK (cont'd)
(shouts)
Dammit! Open Fire! Open Fire!

He slaps Sklepkowski on the helmet and the Private starts hosing down the enemy running into the pigpen; RATA-TA-TAT-TAT!

From the buildings of the village literally dozens of machine guns open up, include the heavier CHUGGING of several .50 Caliber machine guns, the famous "Ma-Deuce".

There's a RIPPING sound from the sky and a large caliber artillery round lands about 150 yards to the front right of Herdrick's C.P.

HERDRICK (cont'd)
Lieutenant Clark, up fifty and left one hundred. Fire for effect!

CLARK
Roger. Up fifty and left one hundred.
Fire for effect.

The Germans knock a hole through the side of the shed and the snout of a .30 caliber MG-34 machine gun sticks through and opens fire; BRAAP! BRAAP!

The bullets stitch the side of the house but can't penetrate the stone wall. They do cause chunks of plaster on the inside of the wall to fly about and this causes Herdrick to duck.

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CONTINUED:

From the sky come multiple RIPPING sounds and then the entire field past the pigpen seems to erupt; BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The initial attackers are now inside the barrage but the shells catch a follow-on force running across the fields. Bodies are tossed into the air to land as heaps of bloody flesh, barely recognizable as having once been human.

The enemy in the pigpen has now crawled up too close to the house for Sklepkowski to hit, so he starts shooting towards the shed with the MG-34.

SKLEPKOWSKI

Lieutenant, the Krauts are right below the window! I can't hit them.

Herdrick looks around and sees a box of fast-fused booby trap grenades. He goes over to the box and grabs a couple.

HERDRICK

Here, Sklepkowski.

Sklepkowski turns and Herdrick starts tossing him grenades. As he catches each one, Sklepkowski pulls the pin and tosses it lightly out the window followed two seconds later by a BOOM and SCREAMS.

After ten grenades the box is empty and Herdrick trots back to the window. He sees the surviving Germans running back out of the pigpen and across the fields.

Sklepkowski returns to his machine gun and starts PEPPERING the retreating Germans, but they quickly disappear into the fog.

Herdrick sticks his head out of the window and yells.

HERDRICK (cont'd)

Cease fire! Cease Fire!

His command is REPEATED up and down the line of buildings.

SKLEPKOWSKI

We sure stopped them cold, didn't we Lieutenant?

HERDRICK

Good work, Soldier. -- But they're not done yet.

Herdrick looks out the window and sees dozens of dead and wounded Germans on the ground in the pigpen. MOANS and CRIES come from the morass below him.

GERMAN SOLDIERS

Wasser! Kamerad!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herdrick shakes his head and walks over to Clark who is listening to his radio handset. Clark pulls the handset away from his ear.

HERDRICK
That barrage really saved our asses.

CLARK
A few one-oh-five rounds can sure
brighten up the morning, eh?

Herdrick smiles and nods.

HERDRICK
I want you to lay down a barrage on that
ridge to the south-east. -- Let's
brighten up the morning a bit more.

CLARK
(nods)
Roger.

Herdrick is walking back towards the window when a series of sinister MOANS come from the sky.

HERDRICK
Nebelwerfers! Take cover!

BOOM! Debris falls from the ceiling with a CRASH.

EXT. BESIDE THE TAUFENBACH - DAY

The squad is resting in the woods near the point where two small streams meet. The fog has thinned and it's a bit lighter.

Dallas and Cincy are dozing with their backs against trees. Iowa shakes Brooklyn to keep him awake.

Alabama is hunched over the radio talking into the handset.

ALABAMA
Lion two, this is Lion two-six. Over.
-- Lion two, this is Lion two-six. Over.

Hatfield looks at Alabama and Alabama shakes his head.

Hatfield turns to look to his front right. Intermittent RIFLE SHOTS and bursts of MACHINE GUN FIRE come from that direction.

Hatfield turns to his left front and from that direction in the distance are the sounds of FIERCE COMBAT; an almost constant fusillade of GUNFIRE. He consults his map and compass to determine the location of the fighting.

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CONTINUED:

HATFIELD

You're slipping. I heard you this time.

Tyrone, a big grin on his face, appears behind Hatfield.

TYRONE

I meant for you to hear me, Sergeant. --
Wouldn't want to get shot by accident.

Hatfield shakes his head and Tyrone stands beside him.

HATFIELD

What's the situation up ahead?

Tyrone points to the right front and moves his arm to the left.

TYRONE

There's a road in those trees running
this ways. The German line facing the
village stops at a barn right about
there...

Tyrone points at a spot a little to the right.

HATFIELD

Can we sneak around them?

Tyrone nods and points a little to the left.

TYRONE

The band of trees is narrow but it makes
a turn over there and runs on to cover a
ridge running off to the north.

Hatfield looks at his map and nods.

HATFIELD

Is there anybody between that ridge and
the village?

TYRONE

Yep. There's another barn in the middle
of the fields about half-way in between.
-- And there're G-I's inside it.

Hatfield looks at the map again, looks to the front, and nods.

HATFIELD

Everybody up. Time to move out.

EXT. WOODED RIDGE WEST OF KOBSCHEID - DAY

The squad is threading it's way down a narrow trail along the ridge. To the left front the SOUNDS OF BATTLE continue.

HATFIELD

Halt. -- Ten minutes.

The rest of the men look for spots clear of snow and sit down. Hatfield leans over Brooklyn.

HATFIELD

How you doing, son?

Brooklyn gently touches the bandage around his head.

BROOKLYN

I could use an aspirin, Sarge.

HATFIELD

Afraid I'm fresh out. -- Rest easy for now. We're almost there.

Hatfield stands up, walks ten feet away and motions for Dallas to join him.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

He going to make it?

DALLAS

He's about done, but I think he'll make it a little further. -- Should I give him more morphine?

Hatfield looks over and see's Cincy sharing a cigarette with Brooklyn. Hatfield shakes his head.

HATFIELD

No. -- I'm afraid he'll pass out and never wake up.

DALLAS

(nods)

I don't want to leave him behind. He'll freeze to death out here.

Hatfield pats Dallas on the shoulder and starts walking down the ridge to the left. About twenty feet away is an outcropping of rock and from there Hatfield can see out to the west over the fields beyond the ridge. The fog has lifted some and the clouds appear to be just over his head.

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CONTINUED:

Below him running left-to-right through the fields he sees a road. This enters another village of stone houses and barns on the right. This is where the BATTLE SOUNDS are coming from.

He raises his binoculars and looks at the village. Some of the houses have been damaged by artillery fire and he sees Germans in white camouflage trying to infiltrate the village. American soldiers are keeping up a STEADY FIRE and many Germans lie dead or wounded on the ground.

TYRONE

I wouldn't want to be in their shoes
right now.

Hatfield looks and sees that Tyrone has appeared next to him.

HATFIELD

Why's that?

TYRONE

I saw tanks coming towards the other side
of the village. -- Big ones.

HATFIELD

Probably Tigers.

Tyrone nods but then his attention is drawn by something down and to the left. He points at it.

TYRONE

Will you get a look at that!

Hatfield turns his binoculars to the road down below. Along it a jeep is barreling towards the town at high speed. In it are three men, one manning a .30 caliber M1919A4 on a pedestal in the back. They are heading towards a platoon of Germans attacking the village along the road.

HATFIELD

Jesus Christ!

The jeep disappears into a lingering tendril of fog.

EXT. ROAD SOUTH OF AUW BEI PRUM - DAY

Captain HARMON is driving his jeep down the road at a rapid pace.

The fog has lifted somewhat and about a mile ahead he can see the village of Auw. Smoke rises from some of the buildings and over the noise of the JEEP'S ENGINE come the BOOMS of artillery shells slamming into the village.

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CONTINUED:

SUPER: Captain Harmon, C.O. Company A, 81st Engineer Bn.

As he comes to the crest of a low rise he see's two G.I.'s, a PRIVATE and a CORPORAL, lying in the ditch, firing their M1 Carbine's at a building two hundred yards further up the road.

Harmon lays on the brakes and they SQUEAL as the jeep comes to a stop. The G.I.'s in the ditch stop firing and look at Harmon as if he's crazy. He just smiles and gestures for the Corporal to come to him.

The Corporal rises from the ditch, trots over and gives a quick, nervous salute. Harmon returns it.

HARMON

What are you shooting at, Corporal?

The Corporal points at the building.

CORPORAL

There are Krauts in there. You better take cover, sir.

Harmon shades his eyes and looks at the building. Two shots strike the road near the jeep with TWANGS. The Corporal flinches but Harmon just shrugs.

HARMON

They can't hit us from there.
-- And you're certainly not going to hit them with those carbines.

Another shot ricochets off the jeep with a PING, and the Corporal dives to the ground.

HARMON (cont'd)

You two better get in the jeep. I'll take you on into Auw with me.

The Corporal looks stunned.

CORPORAL

Sir, there's got to be a hundred Krauts between here and there!

Harmon smiles and pats the .30 caliber.

HARMON

That's why we've got this, Corporal.
-- Hop in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Corporal gestures for the Private to get up, and they climb into the jeep. The Corporal stands in the back and pulls on the charging handle of the .30 cal with a CLICK-CLICK.

Harmon ROARS off and they fly down the road. As they near the building SHOTS fly at the jeep, a couple hitting the fender, and the Corporal answers with the .30 cal.; RATA-TA-TAT-TAT. The jeep flies on by.

On up ahead an arm of the fog still lingers across the road and the jeep disappears into it.

When they emerge, the village is two hundred yards ahead and a full platoon of Germans are deployed on either side of the road, FIRING into the village.

The Germans are stunned by the sight of a jeep with three men in it attacking a whole platoon. The .30 cal OPENS UP and hits several Germans before they can move.

When the jeep is in the middle of the Germans, they start firing at the jeep; BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG. One shot ricochets off the hood with a PI-TWEE!

As they pass the last German, who is armed with an MP-40, he opens up and fires two quick bursts; BRAAP-BRAAP! The jeep is peppered with bullets but miraculously none of the occupants are hit.

Harmon swerves the jeep back and forth as he drives down the road. As it disappears into the village, the Germans continue to FIRE wildly toward it.

They miss the jeep completely.

EXT. WOODED RIDGE WEST OF KOBSCHEID - DAY

The squad is threading it's way along a narrow trail that angles downward. Hatfield is in the lead. Behind them the sounds of GUNFIRE from Auw intensify.

BOOM! BOOM! -- BOOM! These sounds are not artillery rounds exploding, but the noise the 88mm main guns of Tiger tanks make when they are fired.

Up ahead Hatfield sees a fist rise from behind a bush. Hatfield holds up his fist and the squad takes cover in the underbrush.

Tyrone emerges from behind his bush, makes the signal for the enemy and points down the trail. Hatfield signals that he's coming up to Tyrone's position.

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CONTINUED:

Hatfield picks his way forward and when he reaches the bush, Tyrone stands up and points down the hill.

TYRONE

There's twenty, maybe thirty, Germans down there at the edge of the trees. -- They're getting ready to attack that barn we're trying to reach.

Hatfield looks down the hill and for a moment he sees a German in white camouflage shift his position.

HATFIELD

Anything else?

Tyrone points a little to the right of where he pointed before.

TYRONE

Yeah. -- They've also got a really big machine gun.

INT. STONE HOUSE - NOON

SUPER: Auw bei Prum. Germany - 12:00 PM

Captain Harmon enters the main room of the house. At the end is a sandbag reinforced position looking out a window. Kneeling in front of it are two COOKS firing a .30 caliber M1919A4 machine gun in short BURSTS.

Harmon walks over to a Sergeant RUTLEDGE and a Corporal who are marking enemy positions on a map. Next to them is a field phone.

HARMON

Sergeant Rutledge, do we have a line to battalion?

Rutledge looks up and gives a quick salute which Harmon returns.

RUTLEDGE

No, sir. And we can't raise anybody on the radio.

HARMON

Where's the rest of the H-Q troops?

RUTLEDGE

Some are upstairs. The rest are in the house next door, sir. -- We've got the cooks manning the machine gun.

Harmon nods. The cooks fire another BURST, then let out WHOOPS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COOK
Got 'em! -- Look at 'em burn!

As Harmon goes to the window to peak out and the cooks fire another BURST. SCREAMS come from outside.

Harmon sees that a barn about fifty feet away has been set on fire by tracer rounds. Six Germans lie dead or wounded on the ground in front of the barn, while two others, their uniforms on fire, run away across the fields.

Another quick BURST and the flaming Germans go down.

HARMON
(to himself)
That was a mercy, at least.

Things quiet for a moment, except for the CRACKLE from the burning barn and an occasional RIFLE SHOT. The fog is now mixed with smoke and visibility is down to about fifty feet.

Harmon walks over to the other window which looks out over the main street of the village and peers out through the haze.

Faintly at first, but steadily getting louder, an ominous RUMBLE interspersed with SQUEAKS comes from down the street. Harmon sees the snout of the 88mm gun from a Tiger tank poke through the haze. He turns to the others.

HARMON (cont'd)
(shouts)
Tigers! Get that gun over here!

The cooks pick up the .30 cal and carry it over to the other window at a trot. Rutledge comes over to look out as well. The first Tiger is fully visible now, crawling slowly down the street, its commander standing up out of the hatch. Clinging to the Panzer are five German Panzergrenadiers.

A second Tiger can is just emerging from the smoke and fog.

HARMON (cont'd)
Wait for the second tank to pass then open up. Aim for the commanders first, then the riders.

Harmon turns to Rutledge.

HARMON (cont'd)
Rutledge, once they turn their guns on you get everybody the hell out of here. -- I'm going over to First Platoon to tell them it's time to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rutledge nods and Harmon bolts out the back door just as the snout of the first Tiger draws level with the window.

INT./EXT. AUW BEI PRUM MAIN STREET - DAY

Harmon, armed with an M1 Carbine, peeks around the corner of a house and looks down the street. The first Tiger is about thirty feet to his left and the second one is drawing level with the window where the cooks have their machine gun.

Across the street is another house and in the doorway is T/5 WITHEE, who is armed with a Thompson. Harmon gives Withee the signal to hold fire and Withee relays the message into the house.

The second Tiger is now past the window and the cooks open up with the .30 cal; RATA-TA-TAT-TAT. The commander of the second Tiger is hit and falls into the turret.

Harmon fires a pair of SHOTS at the lead tank and SHOTS from all up and down the street start riddling the Germans riding the tanks. Many fall after being hit and the rest scramble for cover. The commander of the first Tiger closes his hatch with a CLANG.

Harmon fires another SHOT and rushes across the street.

HARMON

Withee, where's Lieutenant Coughlin?

Withee points up the stairs and Coughlin comes running down. He salutes Harmon but Harmon ignores it.

HARMON (cont'd)

Lieutenant, get your men out of here.
-- Quickly, before those Tigers open up.

COUGHLIN

Yes, sir. -- What about our vehicles?

Harmon shakes his head and points across the street.

HARMON

They'll never make it. We'll have to
light out on foot across the fields to
the west.

Coughlin nods and runs up the stairs.

COUGHLIN

(shouts)

Move out! Move out! -- Everybody
downstairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harmon looks out the door down the street. The Tigers are stopped and the first one has cranked its turret around to hit the house where H.Q. was. The second tank's gun is still facing down the street. The bow machine gun of the first Tiger is FIRING at the second story of the house Harmon is in.

There is still FIRING coming from some of the houses, but it has slacked off. The German Panzergrenadiers are FIRING at the house but the .30 cal is no longer firing from inside.

BOOM! The first Tiger fires its gun point blank and the walls of the house blast outwards and the roof falls in with a CRASH. BOOM! BOOM! Two of the other Tigers fire into houses further down the street.

Coughlin, followed by eight G.I.'s, runs down the stairs and across the street. About twenty G.I.'s from buildings further down the street also run across.

Harmon fires SHOTS from his carbine to cover them until his magazine is empty. Withee also fires two BURSTS from his Thompson. As Harmon and Withee duck back into the house and reload, the first Tiger cranks its turret around towards them.

Harmon points across the street.

HARMON

Time to move out, Withee.
-- I'll cover you from here.

Withee shakes his head and gestures for Harmon to go.

WITHEE

I'll stay. -- Get going.

Harmon starts to protest but the look on Withee's face shows there's no budging him.

Harmon dashes across the street and a BURST from the bow machine gun of the first Tiger follows him. Withee leans out of the door and FIRES a full clip from his Thompson at the panzer.

Just as Harmon passes around the house on the far side of the road there comes the BOOM(O.S.) of a Tiger tank gun followed by the CRASH(O.S.) of a house falling in.

ACT FOUR

EXT. WOODS/FIELDS WEST OF KOBSCHEID - AFTERNOON

The squad is in a rough line hidden in the brush halfway down the ridge. Down below is a platoon of German Volksgrenadiers lying prone in two lines facing the edge of the woods.

In the center of the Germans near the edge of the woods is a strong-point with an MG-42 machine gun mounted on a tripod. The gunner and his assistant are getting it ready to fire.

Two German rearguards are stationed half-way between the G.I.'s and German assault troops, but they're paying more attention to what's going on in front than watching the rear.

The Germans stir; it's almost time. Hatfield signals left and right to hold fire. A German officer stands up and raises his arm. He looks left and right at his men then to the front.

The German officer drops his arm and all hell breaks loose. The MG-42 opens up, firing so rapidly that it makes a RIPPING SOUND. The Germans in the first line, armed with rifles, open FIRE. The Germans in the second line, armed with MP-40's, hold their fire.

The Germans FIRE for thirty seconds, and occasional shots of return fire WHIZ through the woods. The German officer stands up.

GERMAN OFFICER

(shouts)

Vorwärts!

The German first line stops firing and the second line jumps to its feet and sprints out of the woods. The MG-42 pauses for a moment, then resumes FIRE at an elevated angle. FIRING (O.S.) from multiple MP-40's now joins the din of battle.

The German officer moves to the edge of the woods and gestures for the first line to stand up. They do and walk to the edge of the woods formed into three groups ten yards apart; one to the left, one to the right and one around the machine gun.

The officer holds his arm up again, looks out and drops it.

GERMAN OFFICER (cont'd)

(shouts)

Vorwärts!

The groups on the left and right sprint out at oblique angles; moving to flank the defenders ahead. The middle group moves ten yards beyond the trees, lays down in the field, and opens FIRE.

Hatfield stands up behind a tree and nods. A SHOT rings out and one of the rear guards, who is actually watching the rear is drilled through the head and drops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The other guard, who was watching the action to the front, starts to turn, but another SHOT rings out and he tumbles to the ground.

Hatfield signals to Iowa, who has the BAR sighted on the machine gun nest to get ready. The crew of the MG-42 has stopped firing to reload when another SHOT rings out and the German officer, who was crouching next to the nest, is hit in back and sprawls forward.

GERMAN MACHINE GUNNER
Achtung! Scharfschutze!

Hatfield signals to Iowa who opens up with the BAR; CHUGGA-CHUGGA! The Germans servicing the MG-42 are stitched with bullets and go down. SHOUTS(O.S.) come from the middle group of Germans.

Hatfield signals for the squad to move forward and they start down the ridge at a trot. Wild SHOTS come from the field, but none come close to hitting any of the G.I.'s.

Hatfield is nearing the machine gun nest when a German NCO rushes into the woods in front of him. Hatfield drops to one knee and fires a BURST from his Thompson at the German. He clutches his chest and falls to the ground.

Hatfield gets up and rushes to the MG-42, gesturing for Alabama to join him. He kicks the German corpses out of the way and kneels behind the gun.

The Germans had just finished reloading before they were killed. Hatfield mans the gun and aims it forward. Two SHOTS from the middle group of Germans strike the dirt in front of the nest, and are returned by a SHOT from Kokomo's M1.

Hatfield looks around and sees that Kokomo and Iowa are lying at the edge of the trees to his left, Cincy to his right. Dallas sets Brooklyn down beside a tree then rushes up to join Cincy.

Hatfield nods, pats Alabama on the helmet, sights the MG-42 and opens FIRE. The RIPPING SOUND is heard again, but this time the ones on the receiving end of the gun's deadly stream are Germans, not G.I.'s.

The rest of the squad open FIRE and within seconds the middle group of Germans are dead.

Hatfield looks out over the fields to assess the situation. About one hundred yards in front is a barn which is the target of the German attack. The wooden top floor is riddled with holes and the stone bottom chipped by bullets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From inside the barn the defenders are FIRING from windows and doors. The sound of BURSTS from a BAR can be heard and Hatfield sees the top of a G.I. Helmet.

Lying prone around the barn are the fifteen German Grenadiers armed with MP-40's. Several have been hit but most are firing short BURSTS at the barn.

HATFIELD

Iowa! Fire on that group to the left!

Hatfield points at the German riflemen that can be seen trotting through the HAZE at an oblique angle to the left. Iowa nods.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Dallas! Get that group on the right!

Dallas nods and the squad opens FIRE on the groups trying to outflank the defenders in the barn. Several Germans go down and the rest go to ground and return FIRE.

Hatfield turns to Alabama.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Son, we've got work to do.

Alabama gulps, nods and picks up the machine gun belt, ready to feed the ravenous appetite for bullets.

Hatfield pulls the trigger and again comes a sound like the world being RIPPED APART. Hatfield first turns his fire on a group of Grenadiers who have crawled up to one of the openings in the barn and are preparing to toss potato-masher grenades inside.

The Grenadiers are hit and seconds later two of the grenades EXPLODE next to them, shredding their remains.

The Germans are confused at first, not knowing where they're being hit from. Eight crawl into the ditch along side the road that runs in front of the barn and open FIRE towards the woods. But from a hundred yards it would take a lucky shot to hit anything using a sub-machine gun.

Hatfield sprays the Germans who were not near enough to the ditch to take cover there. The carnage wrought by the 7.92x57mm bullets of the MG-42 can only be described as a slaughter. But there's a poetic justice in taking a weapon that helped the Nazis conquer and kill millions and turning it on their own troops.

Hatfield tries to hit the Germans in the ditch, firing short BURSTS at them, but their cover is too good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Germans in the group on the left are all down, but there's one still FIRING back on the right. Cincy FIRES his M1 and let's out a WHOOP when he sees the last German fall, a bullet almost removing his face.

Hatfield looks and sees that the ammo belt is almost gone.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Alabama, get another belt out of that box over there.

Alabama is wide-eyed, shocked by the carnage he's helped create.

ALABAMA

(mumbles)

Lord, forgive me... please forgive me...

Hatfield reaches over and gives his shoulder a squeeze.

HATFIELD

You're just doing your duty, son. If Jesus could forgive those who put him on the cross, he has space in his heart for you. -- Now get that ammo belt!

Alabama nods, tears glistening in his eyes, and crawls over to the open the ammo box. Hatfield finishes the belt in the gun in one BURST.

He's opening the top cover of the MG-42 when the sounds of BAR BURSTS come from the direction of the barn. The Germans in the ditch, distracted by the attack from behind, have forgotten about the G.I.'s in the barn.

Several Germans are hit in the back and the rest are scared and confused. Two G.I.'s run out the side door and toss two grenades into the ditch; BOOM! BOOM! They then fire BURSTS from their Thompsons into the survivors.

The last three Germans alive, two of whom are wounded, toss there MP-40's out of the ditch and hold up their hands.

GERMAN SUB-MACHINE GUNNER

Nicht schiessen! Wir surrunder!

One Thompson gunner has a wild look on his face, and readies to gun down the surrendering Germans. He's stopped by a command coming from the barn.

HERDRICK(O.S.)

Corporal, that's enough! -- Get those prisoners in here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herdrick steps out of the barn and raises his binoculars to survey the woods in front of him. He waves towards the woods. Hatfield stands up and waves back. Herdrick gestures for Hatfield to come to him.

Hatfield turns to the squad, who are all looking at him now.

HATFIELD

Alabama, toss a grenade on this gun -- carefully -- then haul ass over to that barn.

Alabama wipes his eyes on his sleeve, nods and pulls out a grenade. Hatfield goes over to Dallas.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Dallas, help me with Brooklyn.

Hatfield and Dallas walk over to Brooklyn who is now barely conscious and is MUMBLING to himself. They each grab one arm and half walk, half drag him out of the woods. The BOOM of Alabama's grenade echos though the now silent woods.

INT./EXT. BARN WEST OF KOBSCHEID

Brooklyn has passed out and Hatfield and Dallas are now carrying him towards the barn. Hatfield is out of breath and that has slowed them down. They drag Brooklyn through the ditch and up on the road.

Alabama is standing in the open barn doors. His natural smile has returned. He waves at the trio, urging them on.

ALABAMA

Come on, Sarge. You can make it.

Hatfield looks at Alabama and frowns. He's about to say something when there's a PHFFT sound followed by a faint BANG(O.S.) coming from the left. A spray of blood erupts from Alabama's abdomen.

Alabama's eyes go wide and his mouth forms an 'O'. He falls backwards into the barn clutching his stomach.

HATFIELD

Sniper!

Hatfield and Dallas hurry forward, dragging Brooklyn. Just as they tumble into the barn next to Alabama, there's another PHFFT as a bullet strikes the door followed by another BANG!

Somewhere outside the barn, Tyrone's Springfield BARKS(O.S.) followed by another faint BANG(O.S.).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dallas starts dragging Brooklyn further inside and Hatfield goes over to Alabama and drags him away from the door.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Medic!

The MEDIC is in the back of the barn with Herdrick, leaning over a wounded German. The medic picks up his bag and trots over to Brooklyn first, but Dallas shakes his head and points over towards Alabama.

Meanwhile, Hatfield has opened a packet of sulfa and is sprinkling it on Alabama's wound. He reaches into his first aid kit to and pulls out a syrette of morphine.

The medic comes up, probes at the wound and Alabama lets out a MOAN. The medic nods at Hatfield and he jabs the syrette into Alabama's leg.

The medic pulls out a large bandage and presses it on the wound. He grabs Hatfield's left hand and places it on the bandage, then grabs Alabama's face and looks into his eyes.

Alabama starts to relax as the morphine kicks in and the medic checks his pulse. Hatfield looks a question at the medic and he looks at Alabama, who's eyes are closed now, and shakes his head.

Hatfield sits down heavily next to Alabama. A look of grief momentarily passes over his face, but he soon regains his composure.

The medic sticks another syrette in Alabama then gets up and goes over to Brooklyn. Outside the sniper dual has ended, but there's no sign of Tyrone.

Alabama stirs and MOANS. His eyes shoot open and he tries to sit up but Hatfield gently restrains him.

ALABAMA

(weakly)

Sarge? -- Sarge?

HATFIELD

Right here, son.

ALABAMA

Will you hold my hand, Sarge?

Hatfield grabs his hand and gives it a little squeeze.

HATFIELD

Of course I will. -- And you can call me John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alabama smiles, then starts to relax and closes his eyes.

ALABAMA

We did good today, didn't we -- John?

HATFIELD

You did real good, soldier.

Alabama's breathing starts to become labored and he grips Hatfield's hand tightly.

ALABAMA

John -- Do you believe Jesus will forgive us?

Hatfield looks away. His face is blank.

HATFIELD

Yes I do. -- Because I have to.

EXT. METZ RAIL YARD - NIGHT

The rail yard is a confusion of marching German soldiers, wagons pulled by horses and American prisoners being herded towards rail cars. Searchlights light the way as the prisoners start boarding.

More searchlights stab the skies, searching. One passes over something then returns to fix on it. It's an enormous contraption of canvas and wires, which appears to be suspended in the air. The other searchlights converge and soon several bombers are being tracked by pencils of light.

Guns open up and tracers mark the night. Sparks of fire sprout around the bombers and soon the battle takes on an almost magical appearance. As if giant dragonflies were being attacked by angry fireflies.

One of the bombers is hit and immediately bursts into flames. As it plunges towards the ground it's delicate frame is racked by a series of EXPLOSIONS. The flaming remnants fall to the ground like sparks from fireworks on the Fourth of July.

The bombers reach their target and drop their deadly payload. A series of SHRIEKS followed by EXPLOSIONS rack the rail yard and the prisoners still on the ground take cover under the rail cars.

Fortunately, the bombs strike the far end of the yard and none of the prisoners are hurt. The guards start prodding the prisoners to get into the cars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERMAN GUARDS

(shout)

Aufstehen! -- Einsteigen!

The young doughboy scrambles into the car then turns to lend a hand to the others. About forty men crowd into the car, the last two a DOUGHBOY SERGEANT helping a young private, EZRA, with blisters on his face and a bandage wrapped around his eyes.

DOUGHBOY SERGEANT

Give us a hand, son. -- Easy does it.

They lift the injured doughboy into the car and the others make room for him along the wall. As the young doughboy helps the injured boy down, the door is slammed shut and it grows dark.

The prisoners open vent hatches in the walls and light from the fires in the rail yard shines in. The young doughboy sits down next to the injured one and looks at him. The injured boy's breath rattles.

The young doughboy stares at the blisters.

DOUGHBOY SERGEANT (cont'd)

Mustard gas.

The young doughboy grabs some straw and places it behind the injured boy's head.

EZRA

Thanks, buddy. -- My name's, Ezra.
What's yours?

HATFIELD

Hatfield. -- Ah, but you can call me
John.

EZRA

Okay, John.

The rail car gives a lurch then slowly moves forward.

EZRA (cont'd)

Where do you think we're going?

HATFIELD

Germany, I suppose. -- I've never been.

EZRA

(smiles)

Me neither.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They're silent for a moment then Ezra's frame is racked with COUGHING. When he finishes the spittle under his mouth is tinged with blood.

EZRA (cont'd)

Hold my hand.

Young Hatfield grabs his hand, tears glistening in the corners of his eyes.

EZRA (cont'd)

(weakly)

Do you believe in God, John?

Hatfield gives Ezra's hand a squeeze and shakes his head.

HATFIELD

I don't know anymore...

Hatfield looks away and Ezra gives a last GASP followed by a BUBBLING EXHALE. Hatfield looks back and now the tears are rolling down his cheeks.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

... but I want to.

INT. BARN WEST OF KOBSCHIED - DUSK

TYRONE

Sergeant?

Hatfield sits on the floor of the barn next to Alabama, holding his lifeless hand. Hatfield's eyes are open but his mind is far away.

Tyrone taps him gently on the shoulder and Hatfield comes back to the present. He stands up, shakes his head and looks at Tyrone.

HATFIELD

Did you get that bastard?

Tyrone grimaces and nods.

HATFIELD (cont'd)

Good. -- Now lets go talk to our host.

Hatfield looks around the barn and spots Herdrick, who is standing near Dallas and Brooklyn. Brooklyn is asleep but he seems to be resting comfortably. Hatfield walks over. As he does Tyrone takes a blanket and covers Alabama's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HATFIELD (cont'd)
Lieutenant, I'm Sergeant Hatfield from
Love Company, Four-Twenty-Second.

HERDRICK
Lieutenant Herdrick, Troop A, 18th
Cav. -- I understand from talking to your
men that you're all my reinforcements.

HATFIELD
That's right. Our mission was to make
contact and assess the situation.

HERDRICK
(smiles)
Asses the situation? -- Well the
situation is FUBAR.

HATFIELD
FUBAR. -- Yes, Sir. That about sums it
up.

Herdrick walks toward a table at the back of the barn, grabs a map
and spreads it out. Hatfield follows.

HERDRICK
Can you tell me what the situation is to
the west? Towards Auw and Andler?

Hatfield leans over and examines the map. He points at Auw.

HATFIELD
We spotted Tigers approaching Auw from
the north. I assume it's been overrun
and that Andler is also under attack.

Hatfield frowns and taps the map.

HERDRICK
Well that does it. -- We'll have to
destroy our vehicles and escape on foot.

Herdrick turns to go and Hatfield grabs his arm.

HATFIELD
Sir, do you have any contact with the
Four-Twenty-Second? In Schlousenbach?

Herdrick shakes his head.

HERDRICK
We've had no contact with them since
yesterday.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERDRICK (cont'd)

And the ridge between here and there is lousy with Germans. -- I guess you're stuck with us.

HATFIELD

Yes, sir. We'll break out with you, then try and find our company.

Herdrick grabs his map case and his M1 carbine.

HERDRICK

We set out at full dark -- approximately one hour from now.

Herdrick starts to go but stops and turns back to Hatfield.

HERDRICK (cont'd)

Until then you and your men get some rest. -- It's going to be a long night.

Hatfield nods and Herdrick goes out the back of the barn.

EPILOGUE

EXT. BARN WEST OF KOBSCHEID - NIGHT

The squad files out of the barn. In front of them are distant flashes of artillery; north, west and south. The very air seems to TREMBLE with the deadly business of war.

The squad turns to the right and Tyrone sprints off towards a line of trees highlighted by the flashes about 400 feet away. Interspersed across the fields are other men from Herdrick's unit.

Hatfield comes next, followed by Cincy, Iowa, and Kokomo with Dallas bringing up the rear.

The squad is weary, but wary.

And they are determined to make it through.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: T/5 Edward S. Withee was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously, for his gallant sacrifice.

SUPER: In his honor, a recreation center in Belgium was named after him.

SUPER: The only problem, he wasn't dead; merely captured.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUPER: He was the only living soldier during WWII to have an Army post named after him.