

RITCHIE BOY

Written by

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Inspired by the World War II experiences of George Robert Field

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OVER BLACK.

FADE UP TO:

INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

A lantern illuminates a small square wooden table between two folding chairs.

Bespectacled U.S. Army private, GEORGE FIELD (23), diminutive stature, yet world-weary for such a young man, sits on one side of the table. A scruffy GERMAN POW stumbles inside, having been pushed by a MILITARY POLICEMAN who sits him in the chair facing George.

MILITARY POLICEMAN

Another one for you.

The MP steps back and stands guard by the entrance.

**\*\*\* All italicized dialogue will be spoken in German with English subtitles.**

GEORGE

*Name, rank and serial number,  
please.*

POW

*Gunther Steisen-Leid. Upper Guard.  
39344823.*

George hurriedly jots down the information in a moleskin booklet with a pencil.

GEORGE

*Very good. I see that you are a  
sniper.*

The POW does not answer.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

*Correct?*

POW

*Yes.*

GEORGE

*You want some chocolate?*

POW

*No.*

GEORGE

*What I want to know is, what was your division's munitions supply situation when you decided to run?*

The POW says nothing, standing his ground.

George clears his throat and scans his notebook to buy time. This isn't how it was supposed to go.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

*It would be good of you to tell me unless you want things to end badly for you... We already know that Helmut Steinmetz was your commanding officer because we captured him last night.*

POW

*No, he is not.*

GEORGE

*According to my information--*

POW

*An Austrian!*

GEORGE

*Yes.*

POW

*So when was it when you decided to betray the Reich?*

GEORGE

*If you continue to evade my questions, you will not be treated well.*

POW

*An Austrian is not a true German. We had to fight all your battles for you. Nothing but useless bureaucrats and bad artists.*

GEORGE

*You--Your Führer was born there and was a bad artist.*

POW

*You didn't answer my question. Why did you leave?... You a Jew, aren't you? That's it, isn't it? I won't bow to a Jew.*

GEORGE  
*Your munitions situation, private  
 Steinmetz!*

POW  
*Steisen-Leid, you dirty Jew.*

George drops his pencil to the floor. His jaw tightens as he stares down into his notebook again, a lost puppy.

The POW turns to us.

POW (CONT'D)  
 (Southern accent)  
 Y'all want me to keep goin'?

We PULL BACK to see that we are really part of a training exercise with other U.S. Army soldiers watching.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (O.S.)  
 That's enough.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (50) stands in a corner and starts toward the table. He leans his hands on the table, peering down into George's soul.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (CONT'D)  
 Congratulations, private. You've just demonstrated everything that we're *not* supposed to do in an interrogation.

GEORGE  
 Sir, I--

CAPTAIN HARDIN  
 I never said you could speak, private, did I... DID I?

GEORGE  
 No, sir.

CAPTAIN HARDIN  
 (to the other classmates)  
 Never let the prisoner control the interrogation by letting him get under your skin. And you know the best way do that? Be tough with them from the get-go and keep turning their screws, damn-it. Slap 'em around a bit.

GEORGE  
 But, sir, the Convention--

## CAPTAIN HARDIN

Private Field, if you want to succeed in This Man's Army, you better learn when to SHUT UP in the presence of a superior officer. Damn to Hell the *Geneva Convention*. An aggressive talkin' to and a good amount of slappin's what'll get 'em all riled up and primed to talk. That's it. End of story. But right now, private, you're not gonna' pass my course.

EXT. MUDDY PATH -- DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH EARLIER -- JULY 1943 FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

George in a mid-stumbling run behind other RECRUITS.

He wipes the sweat off his forehead with the back o his grubby palm in the searing heat as his blurred vision of the platoon sharpens.

As George makes a last-ditch effort to catch up, one Recruit trips him, falling face down into a mud puddle.

## RECRUIT

Stinkin' Kraut!

The Recruit laughs along with a few others as they leave behind a mud-soaked George, encircled by hovering mosquitos.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

George on knees, he cleans a toilet using a toothbrush.

His DRILL SERGEANT enters.

## DRILL SERGEANT

Private! Base Commander wants you in his office, pronto.

## GEORGE

Yes, sir. Why?

## DRILL SERGEANT

Don't ask, private. Step on it.

INT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE - LATER

George enters and salutes the BASE COMMANDER sitting behind his desk, who returns a perfunctory salute, not even looking at George, who walks toward an inviting chair.

BASE COMMANDER  
Do not sit, private.

George stands at attention.

The Base Commander tosses George a sealed manila envelope STAMPED TOP-SECRET, which George catches clumsily.

BASE COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
You're being transferred.

GEORGE  
To where, sir?

BASE COMMANDER  
I can't tell you that, private, because I do not know. What I just gave you is a classified order for your eyes only. Understood?

GEORGE  
Yes, sir.

BASE COMMANDER  
Whatever it is they want you for, I pray whatever crime you committed over there won't get you hanged... Pack your duffle bag. Your train'll leave at Sixteen-Hundred.

Not knowing what to do next, George stares down the BC.

BASE COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
Go.

EXT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

George opens the envelope. He pulls out a train ticket and a sealed letter which he opens. His jaw drops.

EXT. CAMP RITCHIE, MARYLAND - ENTRANCE - DUSK

George sits in a military car at the front gate attached to a Medieval castle stone facade and imposing fence. Two SENTRIES emerge from the guard station.