

RITCHIE BOY

Written by

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An Original Screenplay
Based on a True Story

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INT. INTERROGATION TENT - DAY

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

ON THE TABLE

- a shiny Moleskine NOTEBOOK.
- a tattered soldier's PAY BOOK.
- a small, full DITTY BAG.
- a PEN.
- a CHOCOLATE BAR.

Bespectacled U.S. Army private GEORGE FIELD(23) enters. He is slight of build and world-weary for such a young man.

George sits on the chair at the far side of the table facing the entrance. He opens the pay book and reads.

He draws his finger down the page. Various dates and notations are written in German.

He opens the notebook, starts writing, but then hesitates. *

He reaches for the ditty bag and empties its contents onto the table: a shaving brush, wooden key ring, flashlight and a SEWING KIT, which he examines.

George wipes sweat from his brow.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS approach.

A scruffy GERMAN POW(20), stumbles in, closely followed by an AMERICAN MP(20), who sits him in the chair to face George.

AMERICAN MP

Another one for you.

The MP steps back and stands guard by the entrance.

***The following interrogation is spoken in GERMAN.

GEORGE

Name, rank and serial number.

POW

*Gunther Steisen-Leid. Upper Guard.
3-9-3-3-4-4-8-2-3.*

George jots down the information in his notebook. He eyes the POW's insignia.

GEORGE
And you are a sniper.

The POW does not acknowledge him.

GEORGE
Correct?

POW
Ja.

GEORGE
Would you like a piece of your chocolate?

The POW does not answer.

George refers back to the pay book and rifles through some pages.

GEORGE
Helmut Steinmetz is your commanding officer, correct?

No response.

GEORGE
We captured him last night.

POW
He is not.

GEORGE
According to your pay book --

POW
You are an Austrian!

GEORGE
(shaken)
Y-yes.

POW
You betray the Reich!

GEORGE
Answer my questions.

POW

An Austrian is no German. Nothing but useless bureaucrats and bad artists.

GEORGE

You-your Führer is Austrian and a bad artist.

POW

You're a Jew, aren't you? I won't answer to a Jew.

GEORGE

Tell me your munitions situation, private Steinmetz.

POW

Dirty Jew.

George sets the pen down. It rolls off the desk. His jaw tightens as he stares down into the pay book, lost.

The POW glances sideways to an UNSEEN OBSERVER.

POW

(Southern twang)

Y'all want me to keep goin'?

PULL BACK to reveal other U.S. Army CLASSMATES watching.

CAPTAIN HARDIN (O.S.)

Enough.

The POW mouths "sorry" to George, stands and joins the other seated Classmates.

The silhouetted image of CAPTAIN HARDIN(50s) observes from a corner. He steps forward and POUNDS his fists on the table.

CAPTAIN HARDIN

Congratulations, private. You've just demonstrated everything you're not supposed to do in an interrogation.

GEORGE

Sir, I --

CAPTAIN HARDIN

Did I say you could speak, private... DID I?

GEORGE

No, sir.

CAPTAIN HARDIN

Never let the prisoner get under your skin. And you know the best way to prevent that? A good punch in the face'll let 'em know who's in charge.

GEORGE

But sir, the Geneva Convention --

CAPTAIN HARDIN

If you want to succeed in this man's army, you'd better learn when to shut your mouth in the presence of a superior officer. To hell with the Geneva Convention. At this rate, private, you're more suited for digging latrines.

EXT. FORT BENNING, GEORGIA - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: FT. BENNING, GEORGIA - 4 WEEKS EARLIER

INT. BARRACKS - LATRINE - DAY

George is on his knees, cleaning a toilet with a toothbrush.

Several Recruits stand in the doorway mocking him.

RECRUIT 1

Look at him, boys. Our Kraut bastard's right where he belongs.

RECRUIT 2

I betcha this one's a spy. You know what we do with spies, don't cha?

Recruit 2 steps up to the toilet George is scrubbing, turns and urinates on his head.

George drops the brush and vaults up, grabbing Recruit 2's shirt.

GEORGE

Schtop it, now!

The other recruits parrot "schtop it" and LAUGH.

Recruit 2 grabs George's wrist and twists it. He grabs George's hair and dunks it in the toilet.

DRILL SERGEANT
Alright, enough! Let him go.

RECRUIT 2
But Sarge, he came at me when I
tried to piss.

DRILL SERGEANT
I don't care. All of you clear out!

The Recruits leave the latrine.

The Drill Sergeant steps up to him.

DRILL SERGEANT
Clean yourself up, Feldmann.

Catching his breath, George is too confused for words.

DRILL SERGEANT
Private! You an imbecile? The base
commander wants you in his office,
pronto.

GEORGE
Sir?

DRILL SERGEANT
Don't ask, private. Move!

EXT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

George cautiously approaches the main entrance.

INT. BASE COMMANDER OFFICE

George enters and salutes his BASE COMMANDER(50s) who sits behind his desk. George eyes an inviting chair.

BASE COMMANDER
Do not sit, private.

George remains at attention.

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

BASE COMMANDER
You're being transferred.