

## "Journey to Hell"

The storyline takes a dramatic turn as the Japanese call upon the POWs with skills and engineering backgrounds, which includes all the main characters, diverting them to awaiting their "Hell Ship", the *Tattori Maru*, a prison at sea disguised as a cargo ship. Their destination is Mukden Allied POW Camp, a Japanese labor camp situated in the barren, freezing northeast of Manchukuo, Japanese-occupied China.

Inside the Hell Ship, the conditions are nothing short of inhumane. Enlisted men like Chasten, Paliotto, and Meringolo are crowded together in wooden pens or stand in the cargo hold, enduring the stifling air and rolling seas that are often accompanied by vomit, feces, and the horrifying presence of dead bodies. The physical and psychological toll on the prisoners is unbearable as they face these nightmarish conditions. On deck, the officers Anderson and Perry plea for better conditions for their men but are threatened with being tossed overboard.

Amidst this turmoil, an American submarine, *Grenadier* mistakes their ship for a military transport and torpedoes it. Fortunately, the torpedo only damages the propeller but tragically hits another ship in the convoy, the *Asan Maru*, causing it to sink resulting in the loss of all 1,500 lives aboard. The POWs finally dock in Pusan, Korea, where they disembark ending their sadistic sea journey to join British and Australian POWs from Hong Kong jails. Perry asks fellow British officers for any news about the situation in Hong Kong but receives none. They are now set to board a train headed north to China, facing further uncertainty and challenges as they inch closer to their destination at the Mukden Camp. Anderson and Perry reunite aboard the train that combines "cattle car" freight carriages and luxurious dining cars serving meals of salmon and hot rice.

## "Frozen"

The POWs arrive at their first POW Camp in Mukden during the harsh winter, where they are subjected to brutal conditions with no protection from the ice, snow, and sub-zero temperatures. The American commander, Major Stanley Hankins, is an alcoholic who shows signs of weakness, frequently bowing to the Japanese. The cold-hearted Japanese commandant, Colonel Genji Matsuda, generally hides from his "Guests of the Emperor" and allows his cruel staff to beat the prisoners into submission. The POWs first grueling work shift is at the nearby Mitsubishi munitions factory. The growing cemetery of fallen soldiers serves as a stark reminder of the immense problems they face.

A heroic Chinese factory foreman named Lao Gao befriends Maj. Perry, who provides him with medicines and food. Lao becomes a symbol of hope and resistance, as he has connections with local Chinese villagers, who wish to help the Allies. Lao takes young Li Lishui under his wing, cautioning him about the dangers of providing help but eventually allowing him to take on a lookout position.

Lao Gao becomes enlisted in an escape plan involving Sgt. Joe Bill Chasten, Capt. Victor Paliotto, and S1C Ferdinand Meringolo. Commandant Matsuda hoards Red Cross relief packages while one of his Nisei from California named Sgt. Ono, takes pleasure in beating and torturing the POWs. Ono bitterly recounts his own family's suffering, as they lost their home and business then were sent to a relocation camp in Utah, while he manages to escape to join the Japanese Imperial Army. Miki "The Bull" Toru is feared by POWs and Chinese citizens alike for his sadistic brutality.

Anderson and Perry discover the escape plan being orchestrated by Lao Gao and the three Americans, warning them that their chances of success are slim but ultimately supporting their decision to try. Lt. Col. Grow secures permission to construct musical instruments from wood scraps at the munitions plant, offering the men a much-needed diversion from the despair that surrounds them.

