

TO THE WHITE SEA

Screenplay by Joel Coen & Ethan Coen

Based on the novel by James Dickey

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FADE IN

Cobalt blue.

A dark speck is just visible in the center of the screen. It resolves itself into a sea bird, flying toward us.

As it passes we hear the propeller engines of a B-29 and a title burns in:

TINIAN ISLAND
March 8, 1945

From just below us the aircraft looms into frame and roars off into the distance, leaving only the sound of the wind.

Voice

Fire. We are going to bring it to him.

CLOSE

On the weathered face of the Colonel. Extremely close. He is the speaker. We are pulling back slowly at the cut.

... Fire. This is what you've got to look forward to. This is what *he's* got to look forward to. We're going to bring it to him. To the enemy, you know. Up yonder, friends. Up yonder to the north. . .

He points his finger up:

... North and fire.

FLOATING

High, high up in an empty airplane hangar. Down below us, laid out like a grid on a bombing plan, are rows of folding chairs. In the chairs are khaki-clad airmen. Standing at the front is the Colonel, just lowering his hand.

... We are going to put him in it. That's saying friends that we're going to put it

all around him. *All* around him. We're going to put it over him and underneath him. We're going to put it down on him and on *to* him.

DISSOLVE TO:
OVERHEAD TRACK

Closer, looking straight down on the seated rows of airmen passing beneath.

... We're going to put it in his eyes and up his asshole, in his wife's twat and in his baby's diaper. We're going to put it in his pockets where he can't get rid of it. White phosphorous that will hold on. . .

DISSOLVE TO:
FORWARD TRACK

From the back of the hangar tracking forward, just skimming the heads of the airmen as we approach the distant Colonel.

... We're going to put it in his dreams. Whatever heaven he's hoping for, we're fixing to make a hell out of it. Soon, good buddies. We just got the good word this morning. White phosphorous and napalm. That's our good stuff for the little yellow man and his folks. We're going to make him a present of it in his main city. Bestow it. Give it away. With three hundred airplanes. With both hands. They're going to remember us. Within a week, I clue you. That's all I can tell you now. But we're going all the way with incendiaries.

We have arrived at the Colonel and come to rest on the extreme close up with which we began.

... No ammo, no gunners. All bombs. All payload. All fire.

WIDE REVERSE

On the rows and rows of assembled airmen staring mutely at the Colonel. He continues:

Colonel

The firebomb strike is going to be gravy. But that's not tonight. Tonight it's the same as always, gunners and all. One more time with frags and two-thousand pound G.P.'s. We rendezvous at angels nine, at sixteen three seven. Your course is three-five-six degrees true. The target is Tokyo.

The airmen rise and we go to slow motion, slowly tracking forward through the milling pilots, navigators and gunners to find one young man still seated, perfectly still, staring off towards the front of the hangar. The cacophany of voices fades away to leave, once again the sound of the wind. And we hear a different, younger voice:

Voice

When I tell you this, just say it came from a voice in the wind: a voice without a voice, which doesn't make a sound. You can pick it up anytime it snows, or even just when the wind is from the north.

The boy looks slowly down at his watch and we cut to:

WHITE

A swath of the white is wiped away. We are looking through the soaped-up plexi bubble on the tail section of a B-29.

INT TAIL SECTION

The boy, Muldrow, soaps down the gunner's bubble at the back of the empty bomber.

CLOSE

On the twin-fifty tail guns being snapped together.

CLOSE

On an ammo belt being slowly lowered into a feed box, gently curling over on top of itself.

CLOSE

On toggle switches being clicked on.

CLOSE

On an ordinary bread knife, its double edge honed to razor sharpness. Muldrow reaches up and bends it almost double.

With the harsh sound of ripping tape we cut to:

CLOSE

On the boys skin as he tapes the bread knife carefully to his side underneath his flight suit.

CLOSE

On a parachute being taped down to the side of the airplane near the bulkhead.

CLOSE

The blue sky reflected in the curved plexi of the tail-gunners bubble. A dark distorted speck moves across the blue.

CLOSE

On Muldrow's eyes, squinting up through the bubble at the sky.

CLOSE

On a bird moving across the sky.

BOOMING DOWN

On Muldrow lying on his bunk, fully clothed in his flight gear.

As we boom down into an extreme close up he closes his eyes.

FADE OUT

OVER BLACK:

Voice

You the big Nip knocker around here?

Muldrow opens his eyes to see two new recruits standing over his bed. One is a pale redhead. The other one, the speaker, is taller and rougher looking with a snake tattooed on his left shoulder.

Muldrow

I'm Muldrow.

Man

Four kills, right?

Muldrow
Seven.

Man
The board says four.

Muldrow
Go read the board, then.

Man
I'll do it or not do it, little man.

Muldrow, looking bored , sits up on the edge of his bunk

Muldrow
Take off, buddie. I've still got to count up and check off.

Man
You say you're gonna jack off?

Redhead
Don't fool with him, Arlen--

Arlen
This little prick? He don't have his twin fifties now, I could bust his back with one chop.

Muldrow
Tell me something, snake. You like money?

Arlen
... What?

Muldrow
Do you like money?

The taller man looks at his pal, then back to Muldrow.

Arlen
Yeah. I like money.

Muldrow
You got any?

Arlen
Some.

Muldrow
Twenty?

Arlen
. . . Yeah. I got twenty.

Muldrow
I'll bet you fifty against twenty that I'm stronger than you are.

Arlen
How're you gonna tell?

Muldrow
It's just something we take on, you and me. We both try to do it, but you can't do it and I can. That's all.

Arlen
I could bust your ass in half, you little shit.

Muldrow
Yeah, but let's try this first.

Arlen
Name it.

Muldrow
See that brace over your head, that long two-by-four? Grab it and chin on it.

Arlen
That all?

The big man jumps up, chins gracefully on the two-by-four, and drops back down.

. . . How's that, asshole?

Muldrow
Average. Now jump up and catch it from underneath, like this.

Muldrow holds up four fingers together with the thumb opposite—a pinch grip—to show him.

The big man knits his brow, unsure where this is going.

... Go on. Try it.

Arlen jumps up, catches the brace but can't hold, and falls back down to the floor.

... No grip. No grip no guts. That's what they say.

Muldrow hops off the bunk.

... Stand clear.

He jumps.

He catches the brace with one hand, in the pinch grip, and swings from it. He adjusts, getting both hands on the board.

Muldrow

Now watch.

He has stopped swinging. He chins quickly up, lowers himself slowly, and then chins slowly and gracefully two more times.

Muldrow drops to the floor and turns to face the big man, extending his hand.

Muldrow

Shake.

The big man hesitates.

... C'mon. Shake.

Arlen

I don't think so. With that grip you got there might not be too much left.

Muldrow

A few bone splinters, maybe. I could use those. You can sew with them.

Arlen furrows his brow and shifts uneasily.

Arlen

I, uh. . . I ain't got your twenty.

Muldrow

Uh-huh.

Muldrow turns back to the bunk and the big man shuffles away, leaving the redhead staring at Muldrow's back.

Red

... I... I've been assigned to your crew, Muldrow. I never have to ask anybody but once who the best gunner in the squadron is. They all say you don't fly with them—they fly with you. It's a damned honor. I'm fucked if it's not.

On the bunk Muldrow is sorting through things from an emergency kit. He ignores the redhead.

... Can I ask you one thing, sergeant? Just one?

Muldrow

I guess. What is it?

Red

This is my first time out. Have you got anything special you can... clue me in on?

Muldrow turns, finally, to face the kid, holding two small stones in his hand.

Muldrow

Nothing special... Don't waste your ammo. Never fire at anything out of panic. Make it count. That's all.

Red

That's all?

Muldrow

You'll be all right. Just get up there and do what you know. Get them Nip fighters on the pursuit curve and let them slide on down the string, just like they showed you in gunnery school. Even if you can see them don't shoot first, 'cause then they can see you. Keep the Nips off you with that fifty caliber and the Major will get you on back here. That's a fact.

Red

What're those in your hand? Some kind of lucky stones?

Muldrow

They might be lucky down the road. They're flints. To make fire.

Red

Don't you got matches in your emergency kit?

Muldrow

Sure, but when they're gone they're gone. With the flints you got all the fire you want.

Red

Can I try 'em?

Muldrow smiles.

Muldrow

Sure. Try all you want.

Muldrow hands him the stones and Red knocks them together. Nothing happens.

Red

How do you do it? Is there a trick to it?

Muldrow takes the stones and walks back to the bunk, the kid following.

Muldrow

The trick is to practice for a few years. Everybody in this barracks could knock these rocks together all night and they wouldn't get a single spark. If you needed fire you'd all freeze to death.

Red

Show me how you do it.

We are close on the rocks being held over the bunk. Muldrow strikes one against the other. A spark flares.

Close on Muldrow's lips: they pucker with an exhalation onto the stone.

Close on the blanket as the spark lands.

Muldrow (off)

See. There's plenty of fire in the rocks. All you want.

Another breath coaxes the spark to bloom into a tiny flame in the nap of the blanket.

Red (off)

Colonel says we're gonna burn the Japs up. Gonna burn 'em up in a couple of days.

We move even closer on the flame until it fills the screen.

Muldrow (off)

Yeah, but not tonight. Tonight we've got a chance to knock on 'em.

NIGHT 20,000 FEET

A squadron of B-29's in tight formation drones among the broken clouds in the moonlight.

WAIST SECTION B29

The engine noise is relentless as the new starboard gunner, the redhead, sweaty and scared, wearing an O2 mask, peers out into the night, nervously clutching his guns.

TAIL BUBBLE

Muldrow crouches calmly behind his guns in the plexiglass bubble, surrounded by night sky. His gaze out at the sky is focused and alert.

His point-of-view shows spooky mountains of cumulus clouds, backlit by bright moonlight. No sign of enemy aircraft.

THE COCKPIT

The pilot and navigator are dimly lit by the lights from the instrument panel.

WAIST SECTION

Across from Red the port gunner is dozing, his mask pushed up on his forehead. The bombardier dozes next to him.

Red glances nervously over at his sleeping companions, clearly uncomfortable being the only one awake in the waist.

BACK TO MULDROW

Still staring impassively out at the clouds.

There is a momentary glint, moonlight against metal, in the distance.

Muldrow does not visibly react, except:

His hands tighten on the guns.

THE PILOT

Looking down at his radar. He reaches over his head and throws a switch.

PILOT

We got something closing above and behind us.

MULDROW

Softly:

Muldrow

I see it.

WAIST SECTION

The port gunner stirs and pushes his mask down, while across from him, on the starboard gun, Red is sweating and breathing hard:

RED

If he sees him why don't he shoot. Christ, I can't see him.

TAIL BUBBLE

Muldrow stares out through the bubble at the night sky.

It is dark and empty.

Then, suddenly, flashes as the enemy pilot fires.

Bullets rip into the tail section of the plane.

The plain rocks; Muldrow coolly pans the twin fifties as he hunches forward to peer through the gun sights.

WAIST SECTION

We hear the AKAKAKAKAKAK of the enemy guns.

RED

JESUS, WHAT'S THE MATTER! WHY DON'T HE SHOOT?

The bombardier looks impassively over at Red.

Bombardier

Take it easy, pal. We're just getting started.

BACK TO MULDROW

Peering through the gunsights as more bullets rip into the tail section, a couple puncturing the plexi bubble. He still slowly pans the guns.

His point-of-view through the gunsights shows muzzle flashes—ending, the sky going black.

The enemy plane is now invisible.

Muldrow continues to sight--seemingly on nothing--as he pans the guns, moving in the same direction and at the same pace as when he was tracking the flashes.

His finger tenses on the trigger.

Through the sights we see blackness. No target.

Muldrow pans, staring down the sights.

His headset crackles:

Pilot

Muldrow?

Nothing in the sights but black; no sound but the thrumming of the aircraft.

Muldrow's finger. . . squeezes.

The twin fifties chatter, spewing fire.

Through the sights we see tracers being swallowed, to no effect, by impenetrable blackness.

The guns continue to roar.

Muldrow's arms shake with the guns bucking and smoking in his hands.

The tracers still probe only blackness, and then--

BOOM--an extravaganza of dazzling light, a huge explosion, very close.

WAIST SECTION

Light illuminates the compartment as the shock wave hits, throwing crew members to the floor.

The redhead, terrified, holds on for dear life.

BACK TO MULDROW

Hunched over his guns. He speaks softly into his headset:

Muldrow

Did you see that, Major? You think I mighta hit that fucker?

His headset crackles:

Pilot

I saw it, Muldrow, we all saw it. Now get off the horn.

THE COCKPIT

As the pilot regains control of the aircraft.

Pilot

. . . Bombardier, the plane is yours.

WAIST SECTION

The bombardier acknowledges:

Bombardier
Aye aye, sir.

Just then the plane is rocked with a barrage of small explosions and the redhead, wide-eyed, yells:

RED
THE FUCK IS THAT?

The bombardier looks calmly down into the Nordrom bomb sight.

It shows anti-aircraft fire, coming from the ground, speeding toward them.

AERIAL VIEW APPROACHING TOKYO

We enter a bank of clouds and emerge to see a surrealistic scene of a city sky dotted with huge tethered balloons. Giant searchlights pan the skies and anti-aircraft fire streaks through the air to explode at various altitudes.

TAIL SECTION

Muldrow holds on tight. Through the bubble we can see the sweep of the searchlights and exploding anti-aircraft shells.

The plane bucks and rocks from the aftershocks.

EXTERIOR

Twelve droning B-29's, revealed by the anti-aircraft fire and the ground searchlights, open their bomb-bay doors.

WAIST SECTION

The bombardier peers intently into his sights, waiting for the exact moment.

The docks of Tokyo become visible immediately ahead.

The bombardier's right hand tenses on a lever.

Bombardier

Five, four. . .

The docks, scattered with huge cranes and gantries, start to pivot beneath us.

. . . three, two, one!

The bombardier squeezes the lever.

Through the sights, bombs drop dead away.

EXT LOOKING UP AT THE BOMBERS

Two-thousand pound bombs fall towards us through the searchlight-swept clouds.

TAIL SECTION

Muldrow leans forward, staring down through the bubble.

There is a series of fiery explosions below, like a row of flowers blooming.

WAIST SECTION

The bombardier also watches, through his sights.

Bombardier

Eight birds, eight bull's eyes. Let's get the hell outta—

The inside of the cabin goes blinding white, and a split second later, an enormous BOOM.

THE BUBBLE

Muldrow is hurled over his gun butts.

A tremendous wind, coming from midships, howls through the cabin.

Muldrow pushes himself off the gun butts, against the wind.

The plane starts to list nose-down and he is thrown back against his seat. He looks down at his feet.

His view through the bubble shows the plane barrel-rolling; the background sweeps from earth, to cloud bank, to starry sky.

Muldrow whispers:

Muldrow

... Man, I am here. . .

The starry sky twinkles.

The wind howls around Muldrow. He reaches up to his belt

Close on its buckle as he releases it.

Muldrow is sucked from his seat and bangs up against the wall. Everything not nailed down is flying around the cabin.

Muldrow grabs ahold of the cargo webbing and swings himself around.

Half crawling, half tumbling weightlessly, he claws his way down to the waist, fetching up against the walls like a clapper in a bell.

THE WAIST

Muldrow tumbles in and reaches for a bracket by the hatch.

His hands close over the bracket, hanging on.

An airborne parachute pack bangs him in the head and swings him around. One hand flails loose; he manages to hang on with the other.

The redhead tumbles by in mid-air, screaming.

Muldrow looks to his right, toward the hatch.

His parachute is right there where he left it, straining in the gale force wind against the tape that holds it to the wall. He reaches with his free hand and rips it from the wall.

Muldrow twists around, wrestling the parachute onto his back.

In front and below him he can see into the cockpit. Half of it is blown away. The fires of Tokyo burn far below.

The wind blowing through the airplane is starting to sound like a scream.

He swings with one hand to grab a jump bar over the hatch then calmly pulls the pin from the latch.

He heaves his shoulder into the hatch but it doesn't budge.

Just as he manages to get his other hand on the bar the plane lists again, swinging him violently away from the hatch; then, just as violently, the plane swings him back.

He hits the hatch squarely with both feet and it—and he—are gone.

Everything in the cabin is sucked toward the door.

EXTERIOR

Muldrow hits the night air in a vortex of debris.

Above him, against the stars, the flailing body of another airman, without a chute, tumbles.

We look straight down as Muldrow tumbles away, end over end, receding to a speck.

The scream of the airplane fades away and we hear his voice:

Muldrow (voice-over)

Cold weather is right for me. Wherever it's cold enough I can get along. Dark weather is right. . .

We are close on Muldrow as he spreads his arms and legs, arresting his tumble. He floats like a hawk on a thermal.

. . . Nearly everything about the cold is good. The cold weather birds are the fiercest and the prettiest by far. There's not a bird in the jungle that can compare with them. . .

The fires of Tokyo are rushing up toward him.

The wind whips his face. He reaches up and pulls the rip cord.

The lines from the chute shoot up toward the stars, and the canopy blossoms, filling the screen with an unnatural white.

The white dissipates and we move through it as through a bank of clouds, to reveal that we are airborne, high above a snow-covered mountain range.

We top the farthest ridge and an endless expanse of snow opens up beyond us stretching to the horizon, as far as we can see.

Distantly, something breaks the uniform blankness of the snow: a winding line of trees defines a river course, the river itself now invisible, frozen over and covered with snow.

A small trainlike shape is moving slowly along the contour of the line of trees. Its motion, irregular in its parts but smooth as a whole, resolves itself, as we draw closer, into that of a dog sled.

It slows and stops.

CLOSER

The young man driving the team—a boy, really—is Muldrow. He steps off the sled and goes to a dark patch in the snow nearby.

The dark patch is the frozen carcass of a beaver. It stares sightlessly up, light snow dusting its whiskers, frozen spittle trailing from its mouth, body stiff.

A recent snowfall has covered its hind feet and softened the small mounds of snow there, formed by some earlier agitation.

Muldrow whisks the snow away with his mittens, revealing the trap which holds the animal by one shredded foot.

He squeezes the trap open and carefully resets the crosspiece that keeps its steel teeth separated. He carries the carcass back to the sled.

He steps onto the back of the sled and with a click of the tongue mashes the dogs. Their breath puffs in the late afternoon air as the sled creaks back into motion.

There is a snapping sound. The double line of dogs abruptly slues leftward and the sled crunches to a halt.

The dogs on the right have come loose from the sled itself, and are now connected by harness only to their partners on the left. The severed trace means the team no longer pulls.

Muldrow steps from behind the sled to examine the harness.

The rawhide strap that connected the right rearmost dog to the sled has a frayed end hanging free.

The dogs, unsure of why they are halted, and restive, look back at Muldrow.

He steps back to the sled. He takes off his mittens to undo the lacing that holds a canvas cover on the sled. He rests the mittens on the front of the sled.

The lacing is tight. Muldrow pauses in undoing the knot to clap his hands together. The dogs start at the sharp noise, then resettle.

Muldrow blows on his hands, hurriedly finishes undoing the knot.

He pulls back a corner of the canvas and pulls out a length of line.

He goes to the snapped rawhide, blowing on his hands. He hurriedly and expertly ties one end of the line to one end of the snapped trace.

He takes a knife from a sheath at his waist and cuts off about a foot of line.

After resheathing the knife he pauses to slap his hands down against his thighs. He waves his hands vigorously, rubs them briskly together. He looks at the horizon.

The sun hangs just above the horizon.

He picks up the length of line and is about to start tying it, a little more fumbling now, to the other loose end of the severed trace. Before the knot is finished, the line is whipped out of his hands.

There is snarling and yapping. Two dogs in the middle of the team have started fighting. Their motion has jerked the line from Muldrow's hands and given the sled an unbalanced lurch forward.

A third dog, constrained by the harness, starts snarling and awkwardly twists to join in the fight.

Muldrow grabs a whip from its mount on the back of the sled.

He wades into the yapping dogs and uses the knout to slap them apart and restore order.

A couple of lingering snarls, a couple more blows from the knout.

The team is now quiet.

Muldrow blows on his hands, rubs them together. He glances across the snow.

The bottommost sliver of the sun is just disappearing below the horizon.

He replaces the whip and goes to the front of the sled, blowing on his fists, to pick up his mittens.

The mittens are gone.

He looks at the churned snow in front of the sled, but the mittens are not there. In lurching forward, the sled probably covered them.

Muldrow shakes his head, angry. He slaps his hands against his thighs. He goes to the back of the sled.

With clicks and shouts he mashes the team. With the unbalanced team pulling, and Muldrow awkwardly wrestling the sled from behind, he finally manages to clear the sled from the area it had formerly covered.

There is churned snow; no foreign objects break the field of white.

He blows on his hands, then stabs them into the snow here and there, feeling.

He comes up empty. A loud "Oh!" as he slaps his stinging hands together. He glances at the horizon.

The horizon now bisects the setting sun. It will soon have disappeared entirely.

Muldrow looks at the team of dogs.

Dogs here and there, still restive, and curious at this lengthening halt, look back, ears pricked.

Muldrow trots to where he was working on the line. He stoops and with difficulty picks up the two separate ends. His fingers are barely working sufficiently to pick up each end of line; he clamps them awkwardly between middle of thumb and ball of opposing finger.

His fingertips will not cooperate in forming a knot.

He vigorously thumps his hands, tries again.

He cannot form a knot.

The dogs look back.

Muldrow straightens. With the approaching dark the wind has picked up, blowing the top layer of powder in eddys around his feet.

He surveys the line of trees.

Moving with a sense of urgency now, he trots to a nearby declivity between a couple of trees. Dead drift, washed up by the river now frozen, pokes through the snow in a couple of places.

He hurriedly stamps down some nearby snow to make a packed bed.

He pulls up a few of the larger pieces of drift, awkwardly, having to use both hands, and hustles them over to deposit them on the packed snow.

He pulls up some of the smaller branches which bear leaves now dead. He clumsily closes a fist around one of the branches and drags the branch through, stripping the crackling leaves onto his little wooden hearthpad.

He likewise strips another branch.

He pulls his flints from his pocket with a trembling hand, and with the branches standing by as kindling, he squats over the dead leaves.

With the flints held not lightly in his fingertips, but clamped heavily in his pawlike fists, he tries to strike them. He sometimes misses altogether and strikes only knuckles; when the flints do hit, they yield no spark.

The dogs, back at the riverbed, look curiously over, ears pricked. Here one shakes itself; there another goes down on its forepaws to bite snow from between the pads on its feet.

Muldrow trots to the rearmost dog on the right. He bends to unharness it.

His fingers are useless on the traces. The dog sniffs curiously back at him.

Muldrow takes out his knife and cuts the harness, freeing the dog. As the dog starts to edge warily away Muldrow jams a hand awkwardly into the strap at its shoulder.

The other dogs are watching.

The free dog resists at first. With clicks and a couple of slaps, however, it falls in, as Muldrow,

stooped, hand through its shoulder strap, trots it away from the team.

The dog obstinately halts, digging in. Muldrow strikes it again and the dog again trots with him.

They round a treed hillock. The dog team is now hidden.

Muldrow halts, swings one leg over the dogs back; he is straddling it.

The dog squirms between his legs. Muldrow is lowering his weight onto the dog, immobilizing it from above, as he once again takes out his knife.

He hooks one elbow under the dog's snout, hugging its head with his face, pulling its snout up. His other hand has disappeared.

With a sudden downward motion the dog wrenches its head down and away, twisting to break free. Muldrow's frozen hand closes over the harness on the dog's back as the momentum throws him to the ground.

The dog is twisting violently around, trying to close its jaws on Muldrow's arm.

He pulls the snarling dog toward him and plunges the knife into the dog's throat.

There is a gurgling sound as blood steams into the snow. The dog continues to writhe.

From behind the hillock the team starts baying.

The writhing subsides and the dog lies still. Muldrow rolls it onto its side.

Its eyes are still open. Once or twice, it blinks.

Muldrow pushes the knife in at its belly. He drags the knife headwards, opening a slit in the belly.

The dogs eyes lower to half-open, and are still. The hidden team continues to bay.

Warm vapor rises from the ragged gashes at the dog's throat and belly. Muldrow drops his knife and plunges his frozen hands into the dog's belly.

NIGHT

Muldrow sits at the fire now crackling by the river.

DAWN

CLOSE ON HARNESS

Mended.

MULDROW

He stands in the churned-up snow behind the sled. Beyond him his fire still crackles. He is sinking a rod here and there into the snow.

MINUTES LATER

Muldrow stands at the top of the hillock that is between the sled and where he killed the dog. He is pulling on his mittens, looking:

A wolf from a pack of three looks up from the carcass of the dog. The other two continue to root in the carcass.

The sled dog's head waggles with the activity of the feeding beasts.

LATER

Still day. Muldrow pulls the sled up before an isolated cabin. It is in a clearing, the far end of which ends in a vertical drop. Beyond it is sea.

Smoke rises from the cabin's chimney.

INTERIOR CABIN

As Muldrow enters, a man in his forties who sits before the fireplace does not react. He is mending something with needle and thread.

Muldrow pulls off his gloves. His hands are still red and swollen.

He wordlessly pulls a chair around to face the fire.

He sits to warm his hands.

His father glances over, sees the boys hands.

He goes back to his sewing.

Muldrow gazes into the fire.

Its flames lap at the wood.

Muldrow stares.

DISTANT FIRES

Fires in the night rush up toward us from the burning docks. Our perspective wrenches and twists.

Muldrow grunts as his descent is brought up short.

He twists in the harness of his parachute.

He looks down.

Twisting below--far below--is the black sparkle of water.

It is bordered by gray pavement: dock. The line between solid dock and tossing water rotates slowly with our twisting perspective.

Muldrow looks up.

The view up is equally dizzying. The lines from his chute are surrounding radial lines that twist. They reach up to meet the dull white of the underside of his chute.

The parachute has snagged on a projecting piece of trusswork, far above.

Muldrow looks around.

He is suspended from the gantry of a crane at the docks of Tokyo harbor.

Very present is the creak of his twisting gear.

Less present is the lap of water below.

Distant is the intermitting booming of bombardment and anti-aircraft fire.

Muldrow reaches up.

He grabs his line and starts climbing, hand over hand.

The line is too thin to climb comfortably. It is too fine for him to be able to use his feet; he cannot pinch it between sole and ankle to help support his weight. All of his weight is borne by his arms, and the cord digs into the meat of his hands.

He pauses, looks up.

A very long way to go. It will not happen.

He looks over.

The strutwork of the crane, many feet away.

He lowers himself, hand over hand, and lets himself drop the last foot or so to hang once again suspended from the harness.

He withdraws his knife. He reaches up and cuts the lines from one shoulder. His shoulder jerks down a bit as each line is severed. Cutting the last line on the one side causes him to swing the opposite way.

He reaches out with an ankle, trying to hook a crossbar on the crane.

He just misses; swings his legs to try to increase the arc of his pendulum swing.

The next swing into the crane allows him to hook an ankle. He swings the arm of his untethered shoulder, grabs the crane, pulls himself in.

He cuts his other shoulder free.

He starts climbing the crane.

TOP OF THE CRANE

Muldrow reaches the projecting gantry and starts across it to gather his chute.

Midway there he stops, reacting to human noise from below. He looks down.

The view down along the abstract receding geometry of the crane is disorienting. Far below, we see the tops of two helmeted heads—Japanese soldiers. They are shouting as they look down over the dock into the water.

Two more soldiers—helmet tops, from our perspective—are running to join them.

The soldiers back away from the lip of the dock to make way for somebody climbing up.

An American airman, ditched into the bay, is exhaustedly hauling himself up and collapsing onto the dock.

The soldiers jabber at him. Kicks rouse him to his feet.

One soldier hooks an arm under the airman's shoulder and starts to lead him away. One of the other soldiers, however, accompanying, raises his own arm high, holding something indistinct. He strikes downward onto the airman's head.

A second after we see the blow we hear the dull impact.

The airman is still being held up by the shoulder, though his body sags.

Another blow.

A second later we hear it.

The soldier who had been supporting the airman now releases him and he flops onto his back. He is looking straight up at us.

Muldrow looks.

The man looks back, perhaps seeing him, perhaps not.

The soldiers are kicking at him. The man with the truncheon continues to strike him.

Closer on the kicked man shows his eyes looking directly up, fluttering closed, and then open again. He stares up, looking, blinks a couple of times.

His eyes seem to glaze—still staring, he seems no longer to see.

Muldrow watches.

The sounds of the blows are delayed, rather faint. The men continue to shout as they kick and hit.

At length, long after the airman has ceased to move, the blows stop.

The men stand back.

One of them steps up, gestures for another to join him. He grabs a heel; the other man grabs a heel.

The party leaves, dragging the dead man with them, leaving a smear of blood.

Their voices fade to silence.

Muldrow advances toward his chute.

CRANE CAB

Minutes later.

Muldrow is climbing down towards the cab, his bundled chute hugged under one arm.

INTERIOR CAB

Its bottom trap door is thrown open and Muldrow enters. He closes the trap door behind him.

He looks around.

The front window of the crane looks out at the projecting gantry. Though the interior of the cab is still dark, the gantry, pointing out to sea, seems to be aiming at a faint red glow to the east--the beginning of dawn.

Muldrow jams his parachute behind the crane operator's chair. He sits down on the floor and empties his pockets, spreading the objects on the floor in front of him to take an inventory.

He has:

His knife.

A .45 pistol.

Two clips for the pistol.

A small packet of fish hooks.

A length of twine.

A tin of C-rations with a top-opening key.

Two flints.

A compass. The north on the compass is labeled with an ornately seriffed N.

Something that looks like a silk handkerchief, which he spreads to examine:

On one side is a map of Japan, Tokyo labeled on the main island.

His gaze shifts to one side.

A small diamond inside a circle has corners that point the four directions; only the top, however, N, has been labeled.

His gaze drifts up the map, northward. . .

. . . along the length of the main island, to the north island, where it lingers.

Moving again, it travels up the northern archipelago of Japanese islands.

A dotted line across the map indicates a break in scale; above it is another archipelago which the continuing upward pan reveals to be the Aleutians.

Muldrow gazes.

At length he flips the handkerchief over.

There is print on the other side.

The top line is in English. Each line underneath is in a different transliterated foreign language, specified to the left:

ANNAMESE
BURMESE
THAI
FRENCH
JAPANESE

Muldrow looks at the English original, at the top:

I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN. MY AIRCRAFT IS DESTROYED. I AM AN ENEMY OF THE JAPANESE. PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE NEAREST AMERICAN AUTHORITIES. MY GOVERNMENT WILL PAY YOU!

Muldrow looks expressionlessly up.

The window of the gantry glows red.

BLACK

We linger in black. Quiet.

We begin to hear a very faint clung-clung-clung—a rhythmic, very distant, hollow metallic sound.

MULDROW

His eyes open.

Still in the cab, he has been asleep. From the light we know that it is now full day.

He holds very still, listening.

The clung-clung-clung, while still faint, seems to be growing.

Muldrow cautiously rises to a half-crouch, freezes again, listening.

The metallic sound continues, and continues to grow.

Muldrow hurriedly gathers his things. He presses himself into a back corner of the cab, behind the operator's seat. Crouched, largely hidden by the seat, he holds his knife at the ready.

The climbing footsteps continue.

Muldrow is still.

Closer and closer, yet still not very loud.

The interior of the cab makes the footfalls resonate, like the inside of a drum.

Muldrow is motionless and ready, but not tensed.

There is no movement, only sound.

The footsteps continue, slow, regular, approaching.

They are quite close.

Their rhythm breaks.

There is a pause, some scuffing, some metallic scraping.

With a startlingly loud screech the trap door swings up. The man entering is largely hidden from Muldrow by the operator's seat.

He climbs in, straightens--we fleetingly see the straw hat he wears--and starts to ease the trap door closed, but then drops it the last bit to let it slam.

We see only his legs as he pauses, shuffles a bit, turns and seats himself.

He puts a lacqueur bento box on the floor next to his chair, shifts in the chair, clears his throat. We have yet to see his face.

We hear paper rustling. Another throat clear.

He is reading the newspaper.

He turns a page.

There is a long silence.

With an absent shift of weight, the sole of his right foot twists on the floor.

The foot has been resting on the silk of a tufted-out piece of the stowed parachute. Its slick twist underfoot is apparently sensible.

The foot twists again, experimentally, and there is another creak and shift of weight as the man leans to look down at the floor.

After a moment, fingers reach down to feel. A murmur.

Another still beat.

But now a drop of blood hits the white silk. And another drop. Blood patters down onto the silk.

We are close on the man's eyes: they do not move.

We pan down to his slashed throat.

Muldrow holds the man's head by his hair, holding the head forward, forcing the flow of blood outward onto the floor.

It patters now onto the cab floor like rain on a tin roof.

Muldrow reaches down, snatches up part of the chute, and quickly winds the silk around the man's throat. He seems to be taking some care with the blood.

MINUTES LATER

Muldrow is now wearing the man's clothes. He is sitting on the floor of the cab, grunting, both hands forward, trying to pull on one of the man's shoes.

It is too small.

Muldrow gives up, looks at the man.

The man is laid out on the floor, naked except for a length of white silk stained red wrapped round his throat.

Muldrow puts on his own boots, pulls the pant cuffs down, trying to hide as much as possible. He looks, evaluating, and is not really satisfied.

He pulls over the man's bento box. After a quick examination he sees how to slide it open. He frowns.

Inside, neatly laid out in different compartments, are various unidentifiable foods.

Muldrow examines each. Some of it is clearly raw fish. Some is fried food of mysterious provenance.

Muldrow picks up a piece of fish, sniffs it, eats it. He picks up another piece. It is covered with orange roe.

He examines it. He licks off a few bubbles of the roe, feels them with his tongue. He pops some of it between his front teeth.

The silence is interrupted by a loud rattling ring.

It is a long, wheezing ring, like a telephone except that it has a more gradual attack and trail-off, as if rung by hand-crank.

There is a primitive telephone handset cradled by a black box next to the seat. Apparently it is the means by which the ground communicates with the crane operator.

A long silence. Muldrow sets down the bento box.

Another wheezing ring.

Another silence. Muldrow is stuffing his gear into the pockets of the pyjama coat he now wears.

As he is finishing there is a very faint shout. He looks out the window.

Far below, small and foreshortened, a man shouts up.

Muldrow hesitates, opens the window, sticks an arm out the window, gives an acknowledging wave. He waits a moment, then peeks again.

The small foreshortened man is walking away, shaking his head.

Along the dock the other cranes are roaring to life, grinding into motion. The work day is starting.

Muldrow moves the dead man's legs so that he can haul open the trap door.

EXTERIOR CRANE

Muldrow is climbing down. His straw hat is pulled down as low over his eyes as it will go.

He reaches the dock and starts walking.

A motorized cart is approaching. Two men ride in front.

Muldrow keeps to his steady pace and keeps his chin low.

The cart passes with a shout from one of the men. The other man laughs.

The activity on the dock behind him is quickening as Muldrow reaches the end of the dock.

The area here is a maze of warehouses. Facing Muldrow is a large sign.

On the right side of the sign is some information in Japanese and an arrow pointing to the right. On the left side of the sign is some information in Japanese and an arrow pointing to the left.

Across the bottom of the sign is information of greater importance, apparently, because the characters are bigger and in red.

Muldrow gazes at the sign.

Behind him, from the dock, ring the voices of men at work. From nearby, however, is a subtle, intermittent clink-clink-clink.

Muldrow looks to the right.

There is a narrow concrete staircase leading down, with a chain strung across its entrance. The staircase is just where dock meets shore; presumably it leads down to the beach. The heavy machinery operating on the dock communicates vibrations to which the chain responds, swaying and clinking, ever so slightly.

Muldrow goes to the chain, gives a quick look around, swings one leg over, swings the other over, starts to descend.

STAIRWAY

On one side the stairway is open to the harbor; on the other side is stone seawall.

Midway down some of the steps are wet. We hear the trickle of water. Muldrow looks up the stone wall.

A couple of feet above eye level is the mouth of a drainage pipe.

Muldrow tenses, jumps, catches the lip of the drainage pipe with his hands, and easily chins himself up and in.

DRAINAGE PIPE

It is perhaps four feet in diameter. It slopes slightly upward. Water trickles only down its middle.

In a crouch Muldrow proceeds up the pipe, his footsteps becoming progressively more resonant. About twenty feet up there is a bend. Muldrow looks back toward the mouth.

The mouth of the pipe is a small bright circle, filled by the blue of the harbor. Light streaks in to highlight the corrugated ripples of the pipe.

Muldraw turns the bend. In front of him now is only black.

He sits crossways in the pipe, feet planted against the far side, helping to push his weight back and keep him out of the water trickling down the middle. He leans his head back.

The elbow in the pipe is only faintly illuminated by daylight from the distant mouth, now hidden around the bend.

Far away, very muted, the sound of the docks carries on.

FADE OUT

IN BLACK

A dull, distant concussion. All low end, its ring-out does not go away. The vibration goes on and on.

Muldraw opens his eyes.

Another dull boom.

The pipe elbow in front of him shows the faintest, dullest, flickering red--a reflection of a reflection.

Another dull boom; the explosions are now joined by the whine of sirens.

Muldraw rounds the turn in the pipe and looks.

The mouth of the pipe presents a small circle of harbor, which now consists of red caps dancing atop the agitated water. A more vivid red--a reflection of fire.

BOOM!--a nearer explosion, still all low end but quite loud, knocks Muldraw off his feet. Water slurps in the pipe, the length of which has been set trembling.

Muldraw climbs to his feet, smiling, and whoops. His voice echoes along the pipe. He scoots in his crouch down towards its mouth.

EXTERIOR

As Muldrow lets himself drop down onto the stairs.

A bend in the harbor gives him a view of the city of Tokyo, burning. Lights rake the sky, occasionally catching an overflying plane.

White phosphorous and red napalm bloom here and there, each explosion followed seconds later by a dull concussive boom. The red light, now direct, is intense. Now audible over the sirens and explosions is the drone of the bombers.

Five bombs hit in a line and a sheet of flame a mile wide shoots up into the sky. Now the whole city appears to be on fire.

A bomb hits the docklands, collapsing one of the cranes. A river of flame spills the sea wall and shoots over the water as the petroleum napalm ignites.

Muldrow's face flickers red in the light of the burning city. He starts to run toward the source of the light.

Close on his feet shows his GI boots running over the sand. Smoke, like low ground fog, creeps in and eddys around his running feet.

A low moaning sound, like a wind, but lower and darker than the wind, fades up as he approaches the light.

Oncoming people are starting to pass him now, fleeing the city. They moan and whimper--small pieces of the larger tone emanating from the center of the fire. No one looks at Muldrow.

He is leaving the beach and jogging along a street, still heading against the tide of people, toward the heart of the fire. The oncoming people are more numerous now--a stream.

A napalm explosion blows fire out a building just in front of him and into the street. Its concussion punches an oncoming woman forward and off her feet to slam directly into Muldrow, chest to chest, as if shot by a cannon.

Both Muldrow and the woman grunt at the impact. Muldrow is knocked onto his back; the woman is on top of him.

The woman scrambles to her feet, whimpering, and continues on her way.

Muldrow too gets to his feet. The way in front of him is now blocked by flaming wreckage, among which bodies also burn. Muldrow takes a side street.

He is still running against the tide. He passes a woman who is crouched over a prostrate man,

shrieking. The man is on fire but not dead. Muldrow looks as he passes. The man is about his size.

Muldrow slows to look at the man's feet. They bicycle against nothing. His pants and shoes are burning. Muldrow resumes his run.

The smoke now whips alternately in and away, obscuring everything and then abruptly parting to reveal the stream of oncoming faces. Muldrow is jostled; he now has to fight his way forward. He seems to be in the very middle of the low moaning sound.

Muldrow pushes on, looking side to side at the people who pass, none of whom look at him.

Smoke whips in, whips away to reveal an oncoming man, a little larger than most, about Muldrow's size. Muldrow works himself into the man's path and, when they meet, stiff-arms him backwards.

The man grunts, surprised, and looks at Muldrow. His eyes widen. Muldrow's left hand rises to push upwards on the man's chin, and his right hand rises with the .45. There is a flat CRACK as Muldrow shoots upward from under the man's jaw. The noise is audible but not remarkable in the chaos.

The man's backward sag is arrested as Muldrow grabs a fistful of shirt and pulls. He stoops to let the man flop forward onto him and then straightens, holding the man in a fireman's carry.

He works his way through the crowd to an alley mouth.

In the empty alleyway he dumps the man carelessly to the ground. The streets at either end are teeming with people flowing in the same direction. None has a sideward look.

Muldrow takes off the man's shoes; takes off his boots; puts the shoes on: a good fit.

He feels the man's pockets, digs into the one that seems to hold something. He sorts through the contents in his open hand--some odd looking coins and bills; a metal ring that appears to be a token of some kind with an hexagonal hole punched in it; a clipping from a newspaper; another piece of paper with handwriting on it; and an odd, rather archaic looking key, like a jailer's key. He drops each object drop to the ground in turn after looking at it.

He squats and rubs his hand thoughtfully against the wall just in front of him. He looks at the hand, blackened with soot, feels it between his fingers. He smears some on his face, gathers some more, smears some more.

He straightens and wades back out into the street.

It is now almost impossible to move against the tide. The crowd surges back and forth. Muldrow notices that now many people hold handkerchiefs pressed against their faces. He grabs one from an older man whom his own shove and the swirling tide quickly moves away; he presses it over his own face.

The concussive booms throughout the city are now punctuated by one immediately nearby. It combines with the shattering of glass; Muldrow looks up.

The windows of the building to the right are blowing. Through a third-floor window a flailing man is ejected; it is difficult to tell in the confusion of his movement but it seems that he is missing an arm. He crosses the street, somersalting three stories high to crash, in shower of sparks, through a window of the facing building.

There is no freedom of movement in the crowd; Muldrow now submits to it. It is moving steadily one way but then whipsaws and eddies; there are screams from up ahead.

People are trying to make way, shoving desperately towards the side of the street to clear the middle. A screaming horse is galloping through. Napalm burns in patches along one of its flanks. The horse, eyes rolling, knocks down and churns up someone unable to get out of its way. After it passes, the crowd folds back in its wake.

The crowd is bearing Muldrow into an open area, away from the burning buildings. It is a park.

The crowd in front of him is dropping downward. Muldrow stumbles forward and down with them; he looks down.

His feet are in water. The crowd has been surging toward a pond in the center of the park.

The pressure from behind him moves him deeper into the pond. In front of him the moans are turning into screams here and there as people are forced into water over their heads. Those who cannot swim thrash and flail, trying to force their way back.

Muldrow is caught between those in front trying to push back, and the much stronger pressure from behind to keep going. He, along with his neighbors, is losing his footing on the lakebed.

He stumbles and recovers, his head soaked.

An old woman nearby looks at him. He is very white. Their eyes make contact.

As she starts to scream, Muldrow takes out his knife.

The woman is losing her footing. As she continues to scream, she thrashes.

Flailing bodies are all around them. The woman is being borne away from Muldrow, going deeper into the pond.

People she tries to grab fight her away.

Muldrow watches as, partially hidden in the confusion of bodies, she struggles to stay afloat. She is churned under, resurfaces only briefly; there is a rolling flash of her eyes, perhaps looking at him, and she is again swallowed by the water.

The lake is a vision out of the Inferno as the city burns around it. Crowds continue to stream into the water where they thrash and flail like condemned souls.

Muldrow churns in the water, working his way toward the center where it is a little calmer. Dead bodies float around him. He lies back in the water and looks up at the sky.

The sky is a glowing, flickering red. We hear a distant hum, growing louder, and the moaning of the crowd fades away. The B-29's, in wing formation, are droning placidly home, silhouetted against the glowing sky.

DAY ROAD

The day is gray and hazy with smoke.

Muldrow, face darkened once again, trudges along a road on the outskirts of the city, in an area that is almost rural. There are many other pedestrians.

Unlike the night before, it is quiet--no conversation even, no industrial noise, no bird twitters. The only sound is the sluggish scuffle of feet.

Muldrow notices something.

The house to one side--one among the many small square houses separated by yards that line the street--has a fighter plane parked in front of it, like a car parked in a suburban driveway.

There is a shout up ahead; Muldrow looks.

A man in the road thirty yards up is squatting to pick up a stone. He rises and pegs the stone at something at the side of the road in front of him, shouting again.

A cumbersome bird with a large wingspan flaps awkwardly away, a length of intestine swaying from its beak.

Muldrow keeps walking.

A putt-putt noise from behind him. Muldrow turns, moves to make way.

A fighter plane is chugging up the road. As it passes, Muldrow has a glimpse of the pilot, a bleary-eyed young man whose jaw hangs open as he bounces along.

The plane makes an awkward right turn at a street ahead, its wide turn radius making it clomp up off the road and then back down again. Muldrow watches it chug away.

His gaze shifts slightly.

To the right, in the general direction of the bearing of the plane, a Zero drifts down through the sky with a faint drone, its outline softened by haze. Its angle of descent implies an airstrip in the middle distance hidden from us by an intervening hill.

Muldrow looks wearily about. He leaves the road to his left.

He is going behind one of the houses to hide himself from the road. He sinks to the ground, sitting with his back against the wall. He takes out a chocolate bar, eats half of it, then carefully rewraps it in its foil. He licks his fingers, examines them to make sure he has gotten everything. He puts the chocolate away.

He takes out his compass. He aligns the needle with the N, and looks where it points.

A range of hills. The haze gives no great visibility beyond.

He puts the compass away. He glances about, notices something.

The tail of an airplane parked beside the house.

He rounds the side of the house, shoots a glance at the road; no passersby at the moment.

He climbs uncertainly onto the airplane's wing, looking for unfamiliar handholds.

Another glance at the road and he climbs into the cockpit.

He sits heavily into the pilot's seat. He sits still for a moment, gazing out through the windshield.

He looks down at the controls.

Switches, gauges, dials, a stick. Japanese characters, half obscured by grime.

He grips the guns on either side.

He stares out, gripping the guns.

At length, he hoists himself out of the cockpit.

HILLS

Muldrow is walking. The hills are covered with low scrub.

A distant bird noise; Muldrow looks.

Up ahead, slightly to the left, something floats in the air, its shape softened by haze. It abruptly confirms the bird sound by starting to flap its wings. It is descending. Its trajectory will take it out of sight beyond a group of hills to the left.

Muldrow adjusts his course.

MINUTES LATER

edge of the chocolate with his front teeth. He chews for a long time, savoring the one piece he has allowed himself, as he proceeds with the fishhook.

He tears off a roughly rectangular piece of foil and pushes the hook through the middle of it. He twirls the hook again, the foil glinting.

He rewraps the bar, sticks it in his pocket.

He lets the twine play out of his fingers and into the stream.

LATER

Muldrow is just rising from a half crouch, ankle-deep in the stream. His right hand is raising high the twine; his left grabs after the flapping fish being hoisted from the water.

After a couple of vain grabs at its wriggling tail Muldrow uses the line to swing the fish onto the bank. He gets out his knife while he waits for it to suffocate.

He squats over it and waits patiently as it flops on the ground, less and less energetically. Its gills flare, relax. Its one visible eye goggles.

It stops moving.

Muldrow picks it up and, after it gives one or two weak flops, unhooks it. He draws the knife up its belly and carefully cleans it, scraping its glistening organs out onto the ground. He scales it. He puts a stick through its mouth.

He squats by the makings of a fire he has prepared: dried pieces of scrub and smaller and larger sticks. He pulls out his flints, expertly strikes them, gets a spark which starts a dried leaf crinkling. He quickly but gently blows on the leaf, nursing it along.

LATER

Muldrow is finishing eating the fish. He has gotten just about all of the flesh.

He examines the head. He stares at the eyeball, which seems to return the stare.

Muldrow uses the tip of the knife to coax the eyeball out of its socket. He sticks it in his mouth, back between his molars.

He bites down on it experimentally, feeling it pop between its teeth. He chews slowly, carefully, feeling the texture.

He is suddenly alert at a noise.

It is a rustling from the brush; a clinking sound accompanies it.

After a moment a dog emerges. It is very gaunt, its ribs visible. It advances hesitantly towards Muldrow, head ducked below its shoulder in a submissive attitude.

Muldrow tosses the fish head over to where the entrails lie, near the dog. The dog sniffs at the head, sniffs at the entrails. After a couple of tentative, feinting bites, it picks up the stomach in its teeth, brings it deeper with a jerk of the head, chews, swallows. It laps up the heart, chews, swallows, tail wagging.

Muldrow

Here, dog.

The dog advances again, its movement still accompanied by the metallic clinking sound. As it reaches him, Muldrow gives it a pat to reassure it, then reaches under its neck to feel.

It has a collar. The source of the clinking is a couple of tags, which Muldrow examines.

The little metal discs are engraved with Japanese characters.

Muldrow lets them drop.

The dog goes back to the entrails.

It picks up the head and trots away with it, downriver, tail wagging.

DUSK

Muldrow is near the crest of another hill, the area now lightly wooded.

He halts near a boulder that will give shelter on one side. He walks around it.

He picks a side, kicks at the ground, clearing away some loose stones. He looks around.

Bird calls. Breeze through the treetops.

Muldrow sits, leaning against the rock. He takes out the chocolate bar, unwraps it, takes a bite, licks his fingers, rewraps the chocolate, puts it away.

He looks at his legs sticking out in front of him.

NIGHT

We are looking up. The dark shapes of trees recede upward. The sky is now clear; we can see stars where they are not blotted by leaves.

Muldrow is lying on his back, hands clasped behind his head, staring. The background of bird calls is different now--night birds.

Muldrow closes his eyes. After a moment he opens them and sits up. He reaches in his pocket and takes out his forty-five caliber army-issue gun.

He turns it over in his hand, looking at it.

He gets up, walks over to the edge of the clearing of trees, then hunches over and brushes away the leaves and ground cover. He uses the barrel of the gun to dig a shallow hole in the dirt.

He carefully places the gun in the hole and covers it back up.

He goes back to his spot and lies down and looks back up at the trees. He closes his eyes.

After a long hold:

WHITE

The sound background drops out completely at the cut. We are in perfect quiet, looking at a field of unbroken white.

We begin to hear a swishing sound, very faint, but growing. Footfalls, but not sharp ones.

At their loudest point a figure enters in the foreground. It is Muldrow, wearing snowshoes and carrying a long Inuit spear. He recedes into the background, defining the snow-covered ground by the tracks his snowshoes leave. Nothing else distinguishes ground from sky on this overcast day.

The sound of swishing footfalls recedes with Muldrow. We hold as he grows small.

BLACK

Ambient sound comes back with this cut: birds, wind. There is a new sound: chanting. With it, a faint ratcheting sound.

MULDROW

He opens his eyes.

His point of view is of the same upward stretching trees. The sky beyond them is now starless, however, and starting to take on color.

MINUTES LATER

Muldrow reaches the top of the hill and looks down. The chanting is slightly louder here.

There is a wooden temple in the glen below. Only one monk, in saffron robes, is visible; the chanting--many male voices--comes from inside the temple.

The monk outside is spinning a prayer wheel, the source of the ratcheting sound.

LATER

Now full daylight. Muldrow is finishing climbing a series of agricultural terraces, scrambling up steeply banked earth to arrive at the top level.

He pauses, panting, to look around.

Below him, tiny bobbing hats are signs of people working the terraces. None are nearby.

A faint, and brief, flapping sound. Muldrow has to look about to locate its source:

Just at eye level, just at the horizon, an irregular round shape jigs slightly, as if on air currents. It is not otherwise perceptibly moving.

Suddenly wings extend to flap briefly, with the same sound, and then tuck back in.

It is a bird, its distance difficult to gauge because its course is directly at us. It alternately flaps

and glides, flaps and glides. As it grows closer we see that it is a swan.

And, as it approaches, its great size becomes more apparent. It keeps to its bearing, straight at Muldrow.

At the last moment, in a glide, with the subtlest movement of its body, it swerves to avoid collision with Muldrow, and then, having passed, it swerves back to resume its path.

Muldrow watches it recede, flapping and gliding.

WIDE

On a pond at the foot of a grassy lawn. Dozens of swans glide gracefully across the water. Most of them are concentrated at one end of the pond where an old man crouches at the water's edge, feeding them.

We appear to be in some kind of park or preserve. A small hut with a pagoda style roof, probably the caretakers house, stands at the edge of the pond.

Muldrow stands at the far edge of the lawn, observing.

We watch the old man from behind, as he hunches forward, throwing grain out onto the water.

A shadow falls over the water in front of him. We have not heard any sound. Several of the swans crane their necks to look toward the shore.

The old man's back tenses and he freezes, but does not look around. Muldrow's arm enters the frame, grabs the man by the back of the neck and forces his head down under the water.

The old man feebly beats the water but is too weak to offer much resistance. The swans glide away from the churning water but continue to paddle serenely around the old man, pecking at the grain that floats on the surface of the pond.

MOMENTS LATER

At the cut a cacophany of honking and splashing water.

Muldrow is waist deep in the pond, wielding a short heavy stick, clubbing the swans.

The swans at the periphery move only to the extent that they are crowded out by the retreating swans near the middle. They bunch up in confusion.

Muldrow has clubbed several swans dead but by now the others have edged back out of reach. As the nearest one heavily flaps its wings and starts to rise from the water Muldrow lunges and grabs, snagging a retreating leg in one hand and a handful of flapping wing in the other.

With a honk the bird twists around and bites Muldrow's face. It has locked onto his cheek. It will not let go.

Muldrow lets go of the wing and, still holding onto its leg, grabs the bird by the neck and tries to pull it off.

The bird is batting its powerful wings, buffeting Muldrow's head while maintaining its grip on his flesh.

Muldrow tries to snap its neck. The swan twists again, releasing Muldrow's cheek and trying vainly to bite down at the hand.

Muldrow plunges the bird into the water. As he holds it there its flapping wings churn the water. Muldrow's tensed arms waggle with the activity of the bird.

Finally it subsides. Muldrow, his cheek heavily bleeding, pulls up the dead swan. It drips and sags, its head a lolling weight at the end of its long neck.

CARETAKER'S CABIN

Muldrow sits at a low table, ripping fistfuls of feathers from the carcass of a swan. He stuffs them into a sack.

A fire has been built in the fireplace. A high grate, apparently a brasier, sits above the fire

Having finished plucking the bird, Muldrow brings the carcass to the fire. The bird is huge and, without its feathers, rather grotesque. It barely fits onto the grate.

Its head lolls off the edge. Muldrow takes out his knife and with a few sawing motions takes off the head.

He looks around for a place to toss it.

CABIN EXTERIOR

The door opens and Muldrow tosses the head out into the yard.

In the pond nearby, the swans have resettled and placidly glide back and forth.

TRACKING THROUGH TREES

It is not a natural wood but a grove of trees planted in evenly spaced rows. The trees are straight, tall and limbless. Their shadows in the afternoon sun create a geometric pattern on the ground that complements the trees' own pattern. As we pass by, our forward motion makes the lines of trees hypnotically stretch and contract, stretch and contract.

Muldrow is walking with the bag of feathers slung over his shoulder.

A house--a large house--is surrounded by lawn at the end of the grove.

Muldrow pauses at the edge of the grove.

In the clearing in front of the house an elderly couple are strolling together in the sunshine. The man is perhaps sixty. He wears a long black robe, some kind of house coat, and his fine, graying hair is pulled up in a top knot.

Instead of walking behind him in the Japanese fashion, his wife, or nurse, walks beside him, their arms locked together as they walk. Neither speaks. Muldrow waits.

LATER

It is late afternoon. There is no more direct sun.

Muldrow edges up to a window of the house and looks in.

Inside the old man sits crosslegged on a tatami mat before a low table, eating. A panel is slid open and the woman we saw earlier appears to clear an empty plate from before the man. She leaves through the same panel, reappears with another plate.

She sets it on the table and leaves again. The man reaches out with one hand and has to locate the plate by touch before reaching with the chopsticks in his other hand to eat from it.

Muldrow watches intently.

The man's eyes stare fixedly as he eats, not tracking the chopsticks as they travel from the plate to his mouth. He is blind.

Muldrow turns from the window and sits with his back against the side wall of the house resting in the shadows. He looks back across the clearing.

Black birds circle silently above the trees.

Muldrow smiles faintly and closes his eyes.

BLACK

A noise: a door, opening and closing.

Muldrow opens his eyes. The birds are gone. He peers around the corner of the house.

The woman is leaving. Muldrow watches as she walks away across the clearing and into the grove, and disappears.

INTERIOR HOUSE

Muldrow enters.

He is in a hallway; he slides a panel to his right to enter a room.

It is the room he was watching from outside. The old man sits at the low table, his back to us. He is motionless, his stillness a reaction perhaps to the noise of Muldrow's

pieces of bamboo—perhaps for calligraphy; small jars of dark fluid—perhaps ink.

As Muldrow pokes through the contents of the drawer he shoots the occasional glance back at the old man. The man sits frozen exactly as before, still holding his chopsticks, still listening.

Muldrow pushes the top drawer shut and opens the larger one underneath. This drawer contains fine and neatly folded clothes of indeterminate gender. Muldrow feels through the fabric, less interested in the clothes themselves than in whatever else might be underneath them.

The songbird twitters.

Muldrow glances back at the table and freezes.

The old man is not there.

He has disappeared without a sound; Muldrow's search has itself been too quiet to cover any but the slightest noise.

Muldrow straightens from the drawer, still looking at the space now vacant where the old man had been. He notices something:

On the table, the man's chopsticks have been neatly placed on their little enameled rest.

Muldrow looks across the room. Not only has the old man left, he has closed the screen behind him.

Muldrow crosses the room and pauses for a moment in front of the screen, listening. Nothing. He reaches under his tunic and takes out his knife.

Slowly, noiselessly, his arm at full length to put some distance between himself and the screen, he slides it open.

For a long beat he stares at the open screen, waiting. He sees nothing; he hears nothing.

He edges forward and peers around the screen.

The long hallway through which he entered is rather dim now, and is empty. The flooring is narrow bands of polished wood and the hallway is lined by the same sliding panels of laquered paper, all of which are closed.

Quietly, quietly, Muldrow starts down the hallway, his knife at the ready. Moonlight glints off the polished floor and the wooden frames of the the sliding panels.

As he makes his way down the hall, each footfall is carefully planted and noiseless.

One board of wood gives, ever so slightly, under Muldrow's right foot and faintly squeaks. Aside from the wind it is the only sound that has broken the quiet. Muldrow stops, his right foot still planted and supporting his weight.

He looks down at the floor. Still looking down, he slowly starts to shift his weight to move forward.

As his weight shifts the board groans again. We hear a faint whoosh.

Muldrow looks up.

A panel has slid open and the old man is emerging, preceded by a quickly flashing blade. The sword snick-snick-snicks through the air as the man snaps his wrists and advances towards Muldrow.

Muldrow stumbles back, unprepared, as the flurry of sword swipes abruptly ends and the old man is frozen in a defensive posture, crouched, perfectly balanced, sword held over his head at the ready, listening.

Neither man moves, Muldrow staring at the Japanese man, the Japanese man expressionlessly listening. Muldrow looks at his own shoulder.

He has been cut; the fabric at his shoulder has a small rent around which blood seeps.

Muldrow looks back at the old man. A silent beat.

With no audible cue, the man explodes into motion again, sword slicing the air in front of him as he advances.

Muldrow retreats and swipes a screen open to enter another room. The scrape of the panel has cued the old man and the whisk of his slicing sword abruptly stops.

Muldrow is inside a new room, staring at the open panel giving out onto an empty patch of hallway.

Perfect quiet.

With a snap of paper, the sword blade appears through the pane next to the open panel, barely missing Muldrow, like a magician's sword probing a trunk. It immediately disappears.

Perfect quiet again. Left behind in the paper pane is a slit the breadth only of the blade now

gone.

Muldraw edges further back towards the center of the room.

This room is almost as dim as the hallway, but discernible on the wall to the right are a couple of sliding panel doorways, both now closed.

Muldraw manages to move noiselessly to one of them, but its dull scrape as he slides it open is surely audible outside.

This new room, as Muldraw enters, seems to be a sort of potting room, with small plants and garden implements ranged around.

Muldraw pauses again to listen.

Very faintly, we hear the pad of trotting feet--receding--imperceptibly merging into silence.

A long silence.

Muldraw looks around the room. Dim light softens the features of the room and its contents. There are panels on each wall; Muldraw looks at each in turn.

From the distant front room a brief twitter from the songbird.

Silence again.

Muldraw looks to one side.

The old man stands before an open panel which we have not heard him push to the side. He is motionless and balanced, waiting and listening. His body, dressed as it is in black, almost fades into the background; all that stands out is the glinting line of his sword and the two faint circles of his eyes milked by cataracts.

Another long silence. The two men stand facing each other.

A faint, rhythmic tap-tap-tap.

Muldraw looks down at the floor.

He cups his hand under the cuff.

Plip-plip-plip—fainter, but still audible, we hear the blood dripping into his palm.

The old man explodes into motion again.

Muldrow can only dodge; the reach advantage of the old man's sword, relative to Muldrow's knife, makes it impossible to attack.

The old man advances in pace with the retreating footsteps. Muldrow half-falls, half-rolls; he is under a table and bumps its leg.

On the table a clay pot tips over with a clunk. Spilled earth patters onto the tabletop and onto the hollow floor.

The old man, reacting to the noise, turns and swipes at the source of the noise. Muldrow is rising to his feet, next to him.

A distant clunk. The man is turning again, but Muldrow has his opening: he stabs the man in the neck. He has hit the jugular: there is projectile blood around the knife, which remains planted in the man's neck.

The distant clunk was the front door which now closes. There is an inquiring female voice.

The old man continues to cut and slice; Muldrow backs away and waits.

The old man's blood is pattering onto the floor. His action is becoming graceless, unsteady.

He sinks to one knee, still holding the sword two-handed.

One hand drops from the sword. As the old man sways, he reaches up and pulls the knife from his neck.

With a clank, he drops the sword to the floor. He reaches up with his second hand now free, to feel the knife, examining its unfamiliar shape.

There are approaching footsteps and the female voice repeats its inquiry, closer now.

The old man opens his mouth to respond. All that emerges is a windy rattle.

He tips over and is still.

Muldrow stoops over him and takes the knife from his hand.

The door opens and the woman looks in.

LATER

It is now day. Muldrow is back in the front room, carefully working on something with needle and thread. The songbird twitters.

As he flips the fabric around, turning a corner, it becomes clear that what he holds is some sort of thin jacket. He is sewing a lining onto it.

Before sewing it completely closed he picks up the bag of feathers, holds the opening down between lining and jacket, and pats the underside of the raised bag to pour feathers into the lining. He pats at the coat, distributing the feathers evenly through the lining. Escaped feathers float through the air.

He picks up the needle again to sew the lining shut.

VARIOUS CUTS

Muldrow is looking through the house for whatever might be of use. Each room is neatly arranged, and now disarranged by Muldrow's search. He looks through drawers, closets, shelves.

One room houses books and scrolls. Muldrow pauses before a picture on a desk:

It is a young soldier in an old picture--probably the old man. He is wearing round rimless glasses. He is in some kind of dress uniform with a sword in scabbard at his side.

Muldrow moves on and, for some reason, gathers up an armful of books. He is about to leave the room with the books when something else draws his attention:

One shelf in a bookcase is bare: it is used as a space to display a map. The map has a great degree of topographical detail; apparently it is the immediate locality.

Muldrow sets the books down, studies the map.

He pulls out his own silk map.

He studies coastline, tracing it with a finger. He matches the large contours of the detail map with the scaled-down contours of his own map. He places himself midway up the main island from Tokyo, or perhaps a bit less.

His eyes continue to wander over the detail map.

His attention is drawn by an irregular north-south line. It has diagonal cross-hatches like sutures along its length. It is railroad.

Muldrow gazes.

PUSHING MULDROW

He is walking up the hallway towards the front room, books once again in hand, stepping over the legs of the woman that trail out of the potting room into the hallway.

FRONT ROOM

Muldrow dumps the books onto the floor. He rips out several pages from one and crumples them.

He gets out his flints. He strikes them over the crumpled paper.

A few attempts bring a spark. Muldrow quickly hunches to blow on the paper crinkling where the spark landed.

He is nursing it along when a sound stops him: the twitter of the bird. He looks over.

The bird hops up onto its perch, cheeping.

Muldrow straightens and goes to its bamboo cage. He taps aside the little bar that keeps its door closed and swings the door open.

He goes to the windows, opens them.

The bird hops to the cage's open door. It stands perched momentarily on the cross-piece of bamboo that is the bottom edge of the doorway.

It takes wing.

Muldrow picks up his half-empty featherbag.

OUTSIDE

Muldrow is at the foot of the yard, walking toward us. Behind him flame is beginning to climb the front wall of the house.

RAILS

We are looking straight down at a pair of steel rails, dipping beneath us. The rails are

Muldrow stares back, not moving. The train chugs.

The old man gapes, not moving.

The doorway: empty now: Muldrow has vanished.

The old man: still staring.

LATER

Muldrow sits next to the empty tracks. We hear a distant whistle.

In the distance another train is approaching, this one pulling long flatcars stacked with freshly cut timber.

HIGH LOOKING DOWN

Timber runs longways through frame, jiggling and clunking with the motion of the train.

Muldrow enters with his bag, sits, then stretches out, lying on his back, body oriented with the timber, snug between a long hump of wood on either side. He tucks the bag of feathers behind his head as a pillow. He gazes up.

His point-of-view shows sky. Pointing towards it from either side are pine trees that stretch up and steadily march through frame with the progress of the train.

Muldrow relaxes, folds his arms behind his head. His body rocks with the car and its cargo.

MULDROW

In a dim interior, still rocking with a gentle motion, still enveloped by machine hum. A different machine, though--and Muldrow is now wearing a flight suit, with a parachute strapped to his back.

A droning voice is barely audible over the airplanes shuddering engines:

Voice

... It's fucking cold you hit the air, it's cold out so your first impulse is to tense up. That don't help, though. Gotta relax.

Muldraw is on a bench, next to other boys in flight suits, all looking towards the front of the plane.

There, standing by an almost painfully bright open hatch, the jump instructor continues:

Instructor

... All right, you fucking ladies. How many of you still walk around holding your fucking dicks. None of you. Well you don't hold onto the ripcord either. Leggo the fucking thing.

Several of the boys drop their hands from where they have been nervously clutching the metal ring.

... Like your dick. Grab it when you wanna use it. Til then don't worry it's there. Okay we hop off by platoon. Platoon leader first, two-second intervals. This is your first practice jump. This is your last practice jump. The brass figures we shouldn't kill too many a you in practice. That, ladies, would be pointless. Okay. Hit the air, spread your arms or you'll keep tumbling. Arms spread, stabilize, once you're steady don't flap, you're not a fucking bird. Okay, you're ready to deploy. You grab your primary. You pull. That don't open, you grab your secondary, you pull. That don't open, we got a procedure: you write a letter to the Air Force to complain. Any questions.

The boy closest to the hatch leans over and vomits.

... Okay, no questions. Upsy-daisy, ladies, it's been a pleasure.

The boys stand.

We track Muldraw as he advances slowly toward the door.

In front of him each boy jumps at a tap from the instructor.

The line stops:

One boy stands frozen in the hatchway, arms stretched up, fingers hooked around the upper frame of the hatch. A second tap; he will not move.

The instructor pushes; the boy screams and his body bows out but he still doesn't jump. The instructor has to shout to be heard over the rush of air:

Instructor

GET THE FUCK OFF THIS AIRCRAFT, SON!

He curses, reaches up and pries the boy's fingers loose, gives him the shoulder. The line precedes.

Muldrow is in the open hatchway now. Bright, windy. Muldrow looks down. A tap on the back.

He jumps.

As he tumbles he is immersed in a deafening, but pitchless, rush of air.

He throws his arms out and stabilizes, but is still whipped by buffeting winds.

His shaking point-of-view shows abstract earth far below, mostly green. One or two little plumes of white--parachutes--are opening.

The intensity of the buffeting--the flap of his flight suit--the roar of the wind--are increasing. The all-powerful rushing sound almost but not quite covers an insistent ching-ching-ching: Muldrow's altimeter.

Arm shaken by wind, Muldrow reaches unsteadily for his own chest. He finds the ring, pulls it.

A snap of silk like a thunderclap brings a cut to:

Silence.

White.

Our view is still aerial but now steady, floating rather than shaking.

Only the faint chinging of the altimeter has echoed over the cut, and it gradually dies away.

We are in Alaska, high up, looking down.

Mountains glide beneath us, snow, outcropping rock.

Quiet.

A great crash accompanies a short cut:

Boots into earth, body landing, flapping silk--

Muldrow opens his eyes. His body is rocking. The great crash has reintroduced the clack of the train.

He looks curiously down at his own body.

Snow thinly layers his shirt, though it is not now snowing.

Muldrow props himself on his elbows.

Each long log is now also patterned with snow, thickest at the top of its curve, tapering down the sides.

Muldrow gets to his knees, looks out at the countryside.

Evening's last light is retained by the fresh snow thinly layering the ground.

LATER

It is night. Muldrow rides atop the shuddering logs with his knees hugged to his chest, gazing out at the passing scenery.

His point-of-view shows lights intermittently flashing through the intervening trees; we are passing a town or small city. Here the tree limbs are more heavily laden with snow.

With a screech of steel the train starts to brake. Muldrow throws a hand out to brace himself. From the locomotive far ahead there is a brief whistle blast. The train, with sounds of metal stress, gradually slows to a stop.

Muldrow rises and looks forward. All that's visible in the dark of night is the ghostly line of trees retreating on either side.

There is a rumble of several beats' duration. The rumble is from some distance away; its vibration, however, generates rocks and squeaks the length of the train.

A moment of silence.

The train abruptly lurches into motion again. Muldrow almost loses his balance, grabs a stake to one side to steady himself. Metal screeches again but the train is not really accelerating; after a slow huffing advance of a few yards, it stops again.

Silence, and then a repeat of the distant rumble. Now, very faintly, we hear voices.

Another brief advance of the train, which Muldrow is this time prepared for. As the train once again stops, he can now make out some activity around a stakebed car many cars ahead. Under a

harsh unshielded worklight, men are moving at the side of the train.

As the fence siding on the stakebed car is sprung and swings down, its cargo of timber, with a great vibrating rumble, rolls out and down an incline at the side of the tracks.

The train lurches into motion again. When it stops this time, Muldrow vaults off the back side of the car.

He pads across the deserted tracks on the far side of the lurching cars, across the newly fallen snow.

OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN

It is deserted and only dimly lit by street lights. Muldrow walks in the shadows, hugging the low buildings.

Up ahead headlights sweep a turn and a Japanese Army six-by-six rounds the corner and cruises silently towards him.

Muldrow puts his head down and keeps walking. The truck approaches and Muldrow sneaks a look to the side as it glides quietly past, tires squeaking on the snow. Under the truck bed's canvas canopy soldiers sit dozing.

The truck has left tire tracks in the fresh snow up the center of the street. Muldrow listens for the sound of the truck receding behind him but the snow has muffled everything. After a moment he risks a look back.

The truck taillights are receding silently up the street.

Still walking, Muldrow watches back over his shoulder for a beat, and then, as he looks forward, finds that he is facing:

An old woman in black, a sack over her shoulder. She has been bearing silently down the center of the street, having appeared out of nowhere: though the street is straight, and her footprints stretch straight behind her, she is closer than seems consistent with Muldrow's brief look back—perhaps ten feet away.

Both he and the woman stop, too surprised to do anything but stand and stare at each other, each holding a sack—a distorted mirror image.

She opens her mouth, still staring at him.

He holds up a calming hand.

She screams—a dry, rasping scream that stands out in the snow-muted quiet.

Muldrow looks back around.

Up the street the truck has stopped. With a faint grinding of gears it starts to turn.

Muldrow looks quickly about, and runs.

Before plunging into an alley his brief look up the street shows:

A few soldiers hopping out of the back of the truck as it finishes its U-turn; the truck then starting to accelerate towards him.

He heads up a narrow alley bordered on either side by high wooden fencing.

Truck sounds and then agitated voices stand out in the quiet behind him.

He gives a door in the alleyway his shoulder: it does not give.

A brief glance shows that the truck is entering the alley.

He resumes his sprint toward its far end.

He corners onto the intersecting street and starts backtracking along it.

Two soldiers, rifles held loosely across their chests, appear around the corner ahead and trot towards Muldrow, having made the run across an alley parallel to his.

One of them shouts what is clearly a command at Muldrow. Both men ready their guns.

Behind Muldrow, the truck is emerging from the alley.

Muldrow slows to a walk, looks in front, looks behind.

The pair of soldiers in front lower their rifles as they see that Muldrow no longer means to flee. Muldrow and the men walk towards each other; at the repeat of the Japanese command Muldrow shrugs incomprehension, puts up his hands.

As he meets the two soldiers, one abruptly swings his rifle stock up into Muldrow's face.

BLACK

In the black, there is engine noise.

MULDROW

Rocking with the motion of the truck. He lies on the floor of the back of the truck.

His face is battered; blood mixed with saliva leaks from his mouth. He struggles to look around, realizes his movement is inhibited.

His arms are tied behind his back. The soldiers on the U-shaped bench are visible only as pairs of uniform boots; we don't see their faces. One of them, alerted by Muldrow's head movement that he is awake, stands, unsteadied by the movement of the truck, kicks him a couple of times, yells, and then reseats himself.

The engine noise is a deep rumble; we also hear the clink of chain. Muldrow now sees that one pair of boots, just next to him, is worn by a soldier in leg manacles. Muldrow's eyes shift to look steeply up.

Like Muldrow, this soldier has been beaten. From his posture and the set of his shoulders it is clear that he too has his hands bound behind him.

The truck is downshifting. Some kind of toplight plays down on the bed's canvas top. The truck comes to a halt.

The truck's gate is lowered. An officer, less disheveled than the soldiers in the truck, is looking in. He speaks a few words to them, receives an answer, speaks harshly to the prisoner seated by Muldrow and turns to walk into the background.

The prisoner, apparently responding to instructions, rises and walks awkwardly, clinking, to the tailgate. Hands bound, it is impossible for him to climb down. He hesitates, either trying to figure out how to do so, or waiting for help.

A soldier behind him shoves him forward and he pitches down and disappears to land out of our view, presumably face-first on the ground.

Soldiers dismount and one of them grabs a shoulder of the prisoner and half-hauls, half-kicks him toward the officer waiting in the background.

A soldier is screaming at Muldrow, who does not respond. A couple of kicks bring him to his feet.

He goes to the tailgate, jumps.

EXTERIOR

He lands on pavement and almost keeps his feet, but not quite. He rolls onto his side. More kicks get him to his feet.

He is escorted to where the officer is now screaming at the Japanese prisoner.

The prisoner does not respond, his head hanging in mute shame. The officer hits him in the face with some kind of truncheon. The man staggers but stays on his feet.

The officer turns to Muldrow, screams at him in Japanese. Then, two words of English:

Officer

What you? What you?

Muldrow doesn't answer, receives a bash in the face.

The officer reaches to his neck, pulls off his dog tags, looks at them. He shakes them in Muldrow's face, shouting something again in Japanese.

He paces in front of the two men, decides, yells an instruction.

The Japanese prisoner hunkers awkwardly down to his knees. He crouches, leaning forward, hands behind his back.

The officer repeats the command to Muldrow, emphasizing it with another blow to the face.

Muldrow kneels, drooling blood from his wounded mouth.

The officer is drawing a sword.

Muldrow looks over at the man kneeling next to him.

The man turns his head to look at Muldrow. He is quite close. Sweat drips off his face. His face is battered; his look is neutral.

The man looks back down at the ground. His breath vaporizes in the air but his sweat continues to drip onto the cold ground.

We hear the WHOOSH of the sword blade cutting the air and the head of the Japanese soldier separates from his body and hits the ground with a dull thunk.

His neck gouts blood as the body twists slowly, and then almost gently relaxes from its kneeling position to flop into the dirt.

Muldrow looks down at the ground. The boots of the Japanese officer and the tip of his sword enter frame. He is screaming at Muldrow.

The officer's toes dig in as he plants himself. The sword rises out of frame. He repeats his question.

After a long silent beat, his planted feet relax. He issues instructions to the other soldiers.

Muldrow is abruptly hauled to his feet and shoved back toward the truck.

LATER

Muldrow is once again on the floor of the moving truck.

One soldier sits in back now, staring at him, gun held casually in his lap.

Muldrow grimaces and moves his shoulders to relieve the stress on his bound wrists.

With this the soldier jumps to his feet and screams at Muldrow as he takes the two steps over to him. The soldier kicks at him; Muldrow stops moving.

The soldier straightens, steadies himself with an arm against the side of the truck, reseats himself.

He is staring sourly at Muldrow. Muldrow returns his stare.

The truck bumps onto an uneven surface, continues rumbling along.

Muldrow stares at the soldier. Now, very deliberately it seems, he again twists his shoulders, as if to find a more comfortable position. It again brings the soldier screaming off the bench. He kicks at Muldrow, his gun pointed down at him.

Muldrow's legs are drawn into his chest, as if to protect himself from the blows, placing himself in an almost fetal position. At length the soldier backs away and once again reaches with a hand to steady himself as he begins to sit down.

Just as he starts to sit Muldrow kicks outward as hard as he can. There is the crunch of bone and ligament giving way in the soldier's knee. The soldier drops to his good knee in front of the bench.

As he is bringing his rifle around Muldrow kicks out again, heel into chest. The man is dropping away, out of sight.

Muldrow drags himself hurriedly and awkwardly along the floor; the man's twisting feet are now in front of his eyes, his body stretching away towards Muldrow's feet. Muldrow kicks, experimentally but with force.

He is kicking shoulder; he adjusts; he kicks the prone man's head, as hard as he can, many times. The man's neck now gives limply under the blows; his feet have stopped writhing.

A cautious pause. Both Muldrow's body and the soldier's seem to jog only with the movement of the truck. Muldrow moves to get some distance.

With some effort he sits up. Breathing heavily he looks at the prostrate soldier.

The man is a limp body; no sign of life.

Muldrow draws his knees up to his chest, curling as tightly as he can. He angles his heels over the rope binding his hands, uses his feet to push down on and wriggle over the rope.

His hands are now in front of him. He tilts them this way and that in order to examine the knot. His breath starts to slow.

He chooses a spot, brings the knot to his mouth and starts working at it with his teeth.

MINUTES LATER

Hands free now, Muldrow picks up the soldier's rifle and looks at it.

It is a bolt action. He opens the breech, sees it holds a round, closes it. He looks at the soldier's body.

He stands unsteadily on the bed of the moving truck, his back to the tailgate. He brings the rifle to his shoulder and points it at the canvas front of the truckbed, towards the cab.

He fires. He hear the simultaneous phht! of canvas and twank! of bullet through metal.

After the shortest beat the truck brakes, hard. Muldrow braces himself as it brakes and, once the

engine.

At length, we hear a door of the cab open. The truck lists ever so slightly as a man steps out onto the running board, then onto the ground. A short beat, and then another man steps down.

Muldrow sits staring at the patch of road visible over the tailgate.

Silence, then an enquiring voice from outside.

Muldrow sits waiting.

The enquiring word, perhaps a name, is repeated, louder.

Quiet.

A soldier appears at the left corner of the tailgate, rifle swinging in, firing into the truck. Almost simultaneously the second soldier appears at the right corner, also hooking his rifle around.

Muldrow's first, unhurried shot is at the soldier on the left and it hits him in the face and flips him back.

He must throw the bolt and his second shot is hurried. The man on the right screams and is swinging his rifle toward him and fires just as Muldrow does.

Muldrow's shot hits the soldier in the chest and makes him drop back out of view. Muldrow, apparently unhit, goes to the gate, throwing the bolt, and looks down.

The soldier is on his hands and knees, beginning to crawl out towards the center of the road. Muldrow fires down on him.

The impact slaps the man down onto the road, but he still weakly moves. Muldrow throws the bolt again and pulls the trigger.

Click. Muldrow throws open the breech to look when--

The dull engine rumble, and the vibration beneath his feet, stops. Now there is quiet, through which we hear only forest insects and the liquid breath of the man in the road.

Muldrow thinks. He looks at the dead man below him to his left. His rifle lies on the ground at the end of his outflung hand.

The man to the right is making extremely slow progress into the street, his rifle left behind.

We cannot feel or hear movement from the cab of the truck.

Muldrow decides. He bends down to the soldier inside the truck and pulls his bayonet out of the scabbard at his belt.

He reaches up and slices a vent in the canvas top between two ribs.

Still holding the bayonet in one hand, he makes the short standing jump up and catches a roof rib with the other hand. He chins himself easily with the one hand, reaches to set the bayonet on the roof outside with the other, and then uses both hands to pull himself up onto the canvas.

TRUCK EXTERIOR

Muldrow slides to the front of the roof and looks down at the roof of the cab below of him. He sits, waits, thinks, as does no doubt the invisible man below him.

At great length, a hand reaches out of the left window. It cautiously tilts the side view mirror, scanning the road to the side of the truck. After a moment the hand withdraws.

A head appears; the man is looking back at the weakly crawling soldier near the rear of the truck.

Muldrow waits.

The top of the man's head is motionless as he stares. At length it draws back into the cab.

There is a beat, and then the faintest squeak of upholstery. His hand appears out of the left window, adjusts its mirror. The hand withdraws.

The door on this side is carefully opened, with as little noise as the soldier can manage. A rifle protrudes, and then the soldier himself, easing himself down onto the running board.

One hand holds the rifle; one arm extends for balance to the open door as the soldier starts his step down towards the ground, craning to look around towards the back.

Muldrow jumps.

As he falls on him he tries to plant the bayonet at the junction of the man's shoulder and neck. The two land in confusion in the dirt.

Muldrow's hand is still wrapped around the bayonet mount, the blade of which is in the man's body. Muldrow twists and grinds. The mount snaps off in his hand.

He rises to his feet, as does the screaming soldier. Both of the soldier's hands go up to claw futilely at the piece of blade projecting from his collarbone.

Muldrow stoops for the man's rifle. The soldier, still screaming, steps on it, kicks Muldrow away.

Muldrow reaches for the man's waist, for his own bayonet. As the soldier slaps at him ineffectually with one hand, the other still scrabbling at his shoulder, Muldrow pulls out the bayonet. He stabs the man with it.

With this bayonet planted in his midsection the screaming soldier turns and stumbles down the roadbed, off towards the woods.

Muldrow goes to the dead soldier behind the truck and picks up his rifle. He goes back to the roadside at the front of the truck.

The receding screams have stopped; now there is only the intermittent crackle of brush from the disappeared soldier. Muldrow takes one step off the road in his direction, stops, decides not to bother.

He goes back to the dead soldier and hauls him to the roadside and sends him tumbling down the declivity. He goes to the second soldier, still weakly moving, fires down at the back of his head, and disposes of him the same way.

INTERIOR CAB

Muldrow climbs in behind the wheel. He looks around.

The keys are in the ignition. His bag of feathers is down in the passenger legwell.

He pulls it up, rummages inside.

He pulls out his map, compass, knife; satisfied that they are still there, he stuffs them all back in.

He briefly looks over the gear shift and dash. He turns the keys in the ignition.

The truck's deep, rumbling idle resumes. With it comes a high tinkling sound.

Muldrow looks at the dash.

His dogtags hang from a knob, vibrating with the truck.

He slips them off the knob, then onto his own neck.

He experimentally puts the truck in gear.

LATER

It is early morning. Muldrow is driving.

We are moving through an area of low-lying hills. The snow on the ground is deeper here.

Muldrow glances at the dash.

Some kind of gauge--presumably fuel--has a needle pointing about midway.

There is an oxcart ahead; Muldrow passes it. Its driver's broad black hat turns as he passes, looking at the truck. It is the only other vehicle on the road.

LATER

Later in the day. There are intermittent vehicles here; it is an industrial area; perhaps the outskirts of a town.

The windshield is beginning to fog. Muldrow leans forward and wipes it.

Smokestacks belch black smoke from the factory-like buildings. The road is beginning to fill with pedestrians, bicycle tri-shaws, and the occasional battered car or truck that feeds onto the macadam from loading docks and rough dirt lanes.

Muldrow can see that he is about to cross a small suspension bridge into a much busier area. He slows down, but there is nowhere to turn off.

Behind him a horn sounds and a muddy truck pulls out and passes him.

Muldrow looks in the side mirror.

What appears to be a bus loaded with workers rumbles up behind him. The bus is so full that workers hang on the running boards or sit on the roof breathing the sooty air through little white surgical masks.

Muldrow accelerates the truck over the suspension bridge.

Muldrow is now in the center of a small city. Traffic teems all around him, but the height of the cab affords him some protection from being seen.

In traffic, the truck has slowed to a crawl. Muldrow takes the silk map out of his pocket and, with one hand, spreads it out on the seat next to him.

The map shows a city near the top of the island bisected by a river: Morioka.

There is a sharp rap at the truck door.

Muldrow looks up. No one is there.

He hears a similar rap now some distance away and looks in the side view.

A child is walking away down the line of creeping vehicles, banging on each with a stick as he passes.

There are more bangs from up ahead:

Another child is running toward us, also with a stick, maybe trying to catch up with his friend.

He bangs on the hood of Muldrow's truck, then hops up onto the running board. He looks at Muldrow, registers surprise and hops back down.

Muldrow twists around, trying to find the boy, keeping one eye on the traffic in front of him.

Suddenly the boy reappears at the window, smiling. Another boy, even younger, hops up next to him.

They point at Muldrow, jabbering merrily. The older boy points his stick like a gun at Muldrow and makes a firing sound: BOP-BOP-BOP-BOP-BOP.

They hop down and run away, laughing.

LATER

Still in town, Muldrow glances at his compass on the seat next to him. He turns left at an intersection to make his bearing more northerly.

He wipes the windshield, fogging over again. Up ahead of him is another military vehicle--a transport somewhat like his own.

He looks in the side view. More vehicles are joining him, behind, pulling in from the right. He is in the middle of a military convoy.

Lacking an alternative, he drives on.

LATER

Close on the compass shows that we are still moving north.

It is still day, but shadows are lengthening. We are no longer in the city. Muldrow grinds on, in the middle of the convoy.

He reaches forward, wipes the windshield clean. All that's visible is the one truck directly in front.

He rolls down the fogged side window to look at the side mirror. Trucks follow behind.

The truck ahead is slowing; Muldrow downshifts. The truck ahead is pulling over, slowing further.

Muldrow, hand on the gearshift, hesitates.

He decides: he upshifts, steers to the center of the road to clear the stopping vehicle.

He passes it as it slows to a stop. Ahead of it is another vehicle, also pulled over.

Muldrow glances in the side view. The truck behind is slowing, pulling over behind the one that Muldrow has just passed.

He is still passing parked vehicles; the whole line ahead of him has stopped.

He keeps to a steady but not high speed. He glances to the side as he passes trucks. Soldiers disembark from some of the cabs, casually circling their trucks. One or two of them look at his vehicle as it passes but none, it seems, with particular concern.

He looks in his side view mirror. One truck from midway back has not pulled over, but follows in the middle distance.

Muldrow keeps to his pace, tops a hill, descends.

After a beat the following truck appears over the same hill, starts to descend.

Muldrow's hand vibrates on the gearshift. He keeps to his pace, keeps one eye on the truck following at the same speed.

At length it turns right onto an intersecting lane, and disappears.

Muldrow relaxes, continues driving.

LATER

There is no more direct sun; it is near dusk, and overcast.

The road now is barely a track in the snow. It follows the contours of the rolling hills, which are themselves barely defined in the snow. Landscape and sky are the same gray tone; the dull green of the canvas-covered truck is the only thing moving and the only object of color in the environment.

A headwind has picked up, buffeting the truck and flapping the canvas.

At the crest of a hill Muldrow stops the truck, climbs out, stands in the snow at the side of the road.

He is facing the direction the truck was heading, into the wind. It beats back his hair, makes him squint, makes the canvas snap loudly and continuously.

There is nothing to see in front of him but a mist-diffused and undifferentiated gray.

The mist damps his face. He sticks his tongue out to run it over his upper lip, tasting it.

He breathes in, deeply.

INTERIOR TRUCK BED

Muldrow climbs in, stretches out on the floor, uses the bag of feathers as a pillow.

FADE OUT

LATER

Muldrow opens his eyes.

The back area of the truck is now an almost glowing green, lit by direct sunlight hitting the canvas.

Muldrow sits up, listening:

A deep, steady, rhythmic sound. Breakers.

Muldrow climbs out.

EXTERIOR TRUCK

It is morning.

As we look at Muldrow in close-up, the landscape behind him now looks completely different. Blue cloudless sky meets the land in a hard seam and the white hills are perfectly defined by the sunlight.

The sound of the breakers is sharper here outside the truck. Muldrow is looking fixedly off.

The reverse shows his point of view: Below him is glittering blue sea, meeting flat blue sky.

Muldrow looks intently.

A longer lens point of view shows that the shimmering sea horizon is broken, directly in front of us, by a dull grey patch--land, softened by great distance.

NIGHT

We are close on Muldrow, gazing intently at something off. He is flat on his belly peering over a low rise. We can faintly hear a clunking bell, echoing over water. There are voices nearby, and a scraping sound.

His point-of-view shows that he is now down at the beach, a small gravel beach apparently protected since there are no heavy breakers here.

The voices are from two men, one of whom is dragging a small boat off the gravel out into the water. The other man is dumping in fishing nets. When the boat is pulled out far enough to be waterborne, the men clamber in. A bell mounted on its stern dully clunks; a lighted lantern is mounted on its prow.

Beyond them, at varying distances out to sea, we can see a few other fishing boats visible on the

moonless water only by virtue of their yellow lanterns. The surface of the water is defined only by glints of starlight.

Muldrow waits for the two men to get some distance out, the clunk of their bell receding, before he shows himself and walks onto the beach.

Perhaps a half-dozen more small fishing boats are grounded there, unguarded. Muldrow walks along the line, looking into them. He pulls a length of rope out of one boat and drops it into another along with his bag, and drags it into the water, its bell thumping.

LATER

Muldrow is at sea, paddling kayak-style by means of two oars that he has lashed together. His bell clunks with the swell of the sea. A few other lantern lights are visible, none of them very close.

A Japanese voice stands out, carrying with an eerie clarity over the surface of the water. Muldrow looks; its source must be the nearest lantern light.

After a moment the voice repeats its phrase, a few extra words thrown in at the end.

Muldrow hesitates. He sets down the kayak blade and, hands on gunwales, shuffles toward the front of his boat. He takes out his flints. He opens the lantern door and, after a couple of tries, gets it lit. He goes back to the stern and resumes paddling. He shoots the occasional glance at the other lantern light. All we hear is the placid clung of its bell; the voice does not return.

LATER

We are close on the familiar ornate N of Muldrow's compass, lit by feeble yellow light; its needle wavers and aligns.

Wider on Muldrow shows that he is rocking with the motion of the boat, not paddling but gazing down at the compass in his hand, which he has tilted forward to catch the lantern light. He looks up from the compass into the sky

His point of view shows stars, many stars, very bright. No moon.

Muldrow continues to look.

A closer field shows fewer stars; one of them is particularly bright--something to navigate by.

We hear the sharp slap of a wave hitting the side of the boat and the lantern pitches slightly. The

Muldrow, still paddling, stares at it.

The bird abruptly takes flight, its wings beating awkwardly at first, and then smoothly as it becomes airborne.

It is headed directly away. Its dull white shape becomes less and less distinct as it recedes, and then is swallowed by the blackness.

The sound of its beating wings has also receded. But now Muldrow stops paddling to listen: barely audible over the lap of water against the boat is a familiar low, rhythmic sound: breakers.

SHORE

Muldrow is walking away from the boat, which he has left beached.

DAY

We are looking at hoofprints in the snow. The camera tilts up to reveal the path that the animal has taken, across a snow-covered field and into the woods.

Muldrow, who has been hunched over examining the prints, stands and walks over to a small sapling. He stows his bag under the tree, then takes out his knife and strips a long, straight branch from near the base of the tree.

LATER

Muldrow walks quietly through the woods, stalking the animal. In his right hand he holds a makeshift spear--his knife lashed to the end of the tree branch.

There is a high chirping sound and Muldrow pauses at the edge of a clearing, looking up into the trees.

White, shorthaired monkeys with puffy muttonchops and startled expressions are hopping from limb to limb, raising a ruckus.

Muldrow smiles at the unfamiliar and amusing sight.

His attention is drawn by snorting and the sound of many feet galloping through snow:

About fifteen shaggy grayish animals that look like some kind of mountain goat, are charging directly towards him. Their horns are lowered as they run; Muldrow readies his spear.

He picks one out as they draw near--the biggest one--and prepares to stab. He reacts to something odd:

The goat has an arrow buried in its shoulder, bobbing with his motion as he runs, like a picador's lance in a bull. Blood flows from the fresh wound.

Muldrow stabs at the animal, withdraws, and stabs again.

The beasts around him are milling; they start to turn and run the other way, in the direction they came from.

The goat injured by Muldrow and the arrow straggles behind, plunging with effort through the snow, looking about ready to drop.

Muldrow stabs at the animal again from behind. There is a loud scream--

Not from the animal. It is a human scream. It repeats. Muldrow looks.

Up ahead the other goats are milling and butting at something on the ground.

Muldrow runs up and wades in. A downed hunter, dressed in skins, is trying to beat the animals off. Muldrow stabs at the goats; they start to disperse.

One butts him ineffectually but immediately he is hit from the other side. This second goat has buried one horn in the meaty part of Muldrow's thigh. It waggles its head, tearing up the wound. Muldrow screams, drops his spear.

The goat is pushing up, forcing the leg up and almost tipping Muldrow off his feet.

Muldrow balls a fist and swings down, banging the animal on its snout. He places two hands on top of its head and pushes away.

The goat waggles its head away; the horn disengages. The goat bounds off.

The goats have left; the two men are alone.

The hunter on the ground unballs himself and stands. He does not seem to be badly hurt.

He and Muldrow stare at each other.

The man is clad in furs and, although clearly Japanese, is also somewhat aboriginal looking. He is an older man and has a whisp of a white beard and very weathered skin.

After a long staring beat, he simply turns and walks off through the snow.

Muldrow, hands clamped to his wound, watches him go.

He stoops to scoop snow and packs it against his bloodied leg. He hobbles over to the goat which is now dying in the snow, blowing loud and bloodied breaths through its nose.

Muldrow sinks to his knees behind the animal. He draws its head back and slits its throat.

MINUTES LATER

Muldrow sits in the same spot, eating meat from the dead animal. It is partly skinned, hide slit and partly peeled away to expose flesh.

He wolfs down the meat, barely chewing, blood dripping down his face.

LATER

The last rays of sunlight are slanting through the trees. Limping badly now, Muldrow is just finishing a makeshift lean-to, made from branches he has stripped from the surrounding trees.

He looks down at his injured leg.

A deep puncture wound is still oozing blood out of a purple bruise.

Muldrow scoops up another handful of snow and packs it into the wound.

MORNING

Sunlight dapples Muldrow as he sleeps in the lean-to. He is covered by the blood-crusted hide of the slain mountain goat.

He opens his eyes.

Sunlight streams in through the branches and leaves.

Muldrow squints against the light.

Through the branches, eyes--oriental eyes--look back at him. Whoever it is is standing very still.

Muldrow shifts his eyes to another part of the lean-to.

Another pair of eyes.

Muldrow struggles up to his elbows.

VILLAGE

Muldrow is being led in on a litter dragged by a horse. People come out to look at him as he passes. Their looks are curious, not hostile.

There are shouts from behind Muldrow, the direction in which his horse is traveling. He cranes to look.

A dead bear is being dragged on its back in the opposite direction by means of a rope attached to its bound hind legs. As it is pulled along its body leaves a great furrow in the snow.

Muldrow's horse is stopped in front of a hut. One of the men escorting him stoops by the litter and indicates by gesture that he will help him up. Muldrow throws an arm over his shoulder.

INTERIOR HUT

Muldrow hobbles in with the help of the man and is eased down onto the bed.

Muldrow's head lolls back. He looks up.

Over his head a huge, shaggy bear head is mounted to the wall.

We hear the sonorous note of a drum.

CLOSE ON A YOUNG MAN

Stripped to the waist, wearing only a white loin cloth, he is beating on a huge drum.

Muldrow is sitting on the ground inside a long low-ceilinged lodge filled with the people from the village.

In the middle of the lodge a man is dancing in a small circle, clad in bear hides and wearing a huge shaggy headdress made from the head of a bear.

The other villagers clap their hands or shake long poles topped with the skulls of various animals.

The old man whom Muldrow helped earlier, now sitting next to him, claps and grins at Muldrow, wanting, it seems, to encourage him to enjoy the spectacle.

While the dancer is still performing, two bear cubs are brought in in a cage. They pace uneasily inside.

The dancer dances in front of the cubs. He chants something at them, seeming to ask a question.

The celebrants are laughing. The old man next to Muldrow laughs as well, again checking on Muldrow to see whether he is enjoying himself.

The bear cubs pace with even more agitation under the attention of the dancer, who continues to chant at them. Another man shakes a bow and arrow at the two bears; another still reaches into the cage, rattles a beartooth necklace in front of one of the cubs, then loops it around its neck.

The disturbed cub starts bawling, racing from one end of the cage to the other, rising onto two feet to rest its forepaws against the bars, then dropping again to race to the other side.

Drink is being passed around. Muldrow takes the jug offered by the old man, swallows some and, to the old man's amusement, reacts to its strength, and then passes it on.

Someone opens the cage and the cub wearing the necklace is brought out. The dancer shakes a skull at it and chants. The cub bawls.

The cub is lassoed. The celebrants, especially the children, laugh and clap. They follow as the cub is yanked off its feet and dragged to an upright pole. Some of the children are shooting arrows at it, apparently dulled, for they merely bounce off.

The cub is shoved against the pole which is hung with colored ribbons. The dancer has followed, still talking to the bear. As he talks, other men bring in thick poles which they use to force the bear up to its feet and chock its head as it is tied in place.

They now make way as another man with bow and arrow takes his place a few paces in front of the bear. The dancer backs away from the bear, still chanting at it, as the archer draws back his bow and aims.

It is a shot to the center of the bear's chest. It howls and twitches, but only briefly, and as the

audience cheers and the children and some of the men rush in with clubs and swat at the cub, it is unclear whether they are killing it or it is already dead.

MORNING

It is very early morning. The village street has the quiet of a morning after.

INTERIOR MULDROW'S HUT

Muldrow is up and dressed--probably the only person in the village who is. He is stropping his knife.

He hunches down and eats a handful of rice from a small earthenware bowl that has been placed by his bed.

STREET

Muldrow sticks his head cautiously out of the door to his hut. He emerges carrying his bag, walking stiffly.

He walks towards the lodge--the village's only large building.

INTERIOR LODGE

Muldrow enters.

The one bear cub is still in its cage. It stirs at Muldrow's entrance.

The only person in the lodge is the old man--Muldrow's friend--who turns to look. Seeing Muldrow on his feet, he smiles and claps a welcoming.

As Muldrow walks towards the man and the cage, the bear cub rises and begins its agitated pacing.

The old man says something to Muldrow and then pantomimes bringing food to his mouth, inquiring if Muldrow is hungry.

Muldrow walks up to him and, without breaking stride, plunges the knife into his neck. He holds it in, still, for a moment, then twists and shakes it. He pulls it out and the old man drops.

With the gushing of blood the bear cub starts baying. Muldrow opens its cage. It backs away; Muldrow reaches in and grabs a fistful of fur and hauls it out. Once out, he kicks it towards the open door.

EXTERIOR

The village street, as before, except that now the bear cub scampers away toward the woods, kicking up snow as it runs.

After a moment Muldrow emerges from the lodge. He starts down the street in the same direction as the bear, but hesitates. He looks up and down the street.

A line of huts, one much like the next.

Muldrow goes to the nearest one and cautiously opens the door.

INTERIOR HUT

It is dim--windows shuttered--and smokey. There are shapes of bodies on pallets on the floor, very close to each other. Four men, asleep.

Muldrow squats at the head of one man. He looks at the man.

The man is lying on his back, his mouth open, one arm outflung. Muldrow covers his mouth with one hand. The man's eyes open and widen. Muldrow stabs him in the throat.

He moves to the next man.

EXTERIOR

After a beat Muldrow emerges from the hut.

Again he looks up and down the street.

The line of huts.

A long, considering beat.

Muldrow finally turns and walks towards the woods.

LATER

It is now full day.

We are looking down at snow, tracking forward. The snowfield is marked by two tracks: one set of tracks is a pair of fresh, very defined animal tracks; next to it are footprints, pointed the same direction that we are. We hear the crunch of feet in the snow and finally overtake the boots that are leaving the human tracks.

A low pulling reverse shows that it is Muldrow, gazing down at the animal tracks which he follows. Suddenly he slows, puzzled.

Our forward track on the ground leaves Muldrow behind as it follows the animal track—which abruptly ends, without disturbance in the snow, as if the animal had simply vaporized.

Muldrow is stopped, looking. At length he resumes walking.

His footsteps crunch in the snow. It is otherwise quiet.

The snowfield he is walking in is on a high plain, flat and clear of trees. Muldrow pulls out his compass to get a bearing.

Close on the compass shows the needle finding the familiar ornate N.

Muldrow looks in the direction of the needle.

High white mountains.

He looks back down at the compass. We hear a faint tinkling sound.

Muldrow looks up. The bell sound, though delicate, is growing louder.

He places the sound, looks behind him, then back around again as its source shoots over his head:

It is a hawk, a bell around its neck, bearing a dead rodent in its beak. It is heading north.

LATER

Looking down at the ground, tracking again, Muldrow is emerging from trees into a clearing.

Ahead of him a flap of wings and the bell sound again. A disturbed hawk—another one, or the same?—is rising from the carcass of a rabbit, which it leaves behind.

Muldrow watches as it rises and then circles, apparently watching him.

Muldrow crosses to the rabbit, picks up its limp body, examines it. He resumes walking, with the rabbit.

The tinkling hawk, seeing that its prey has been appropriated, heads north, on the same bearing as Muldrow.

A HOUSE

A crude wooden house in a clearing that ends, on its far side, in a vertical drop. Beyond it is sea. Smoke plumes from a hole in its roof.

A reverse shows Muldrow halted, looking at the house.

He starts toward it.

INTERIOR HOUSE

As Muldrow pushes open a rough wooden door and steps into the dark interior.

The only light comes from a couple of small windows at the front of the house. A black cast iron pot bubbles over a fire on an old wood stove against the far wall.

Muldrow crosses the room, still holding the rabbit, looking at a low wooden table in the center of the room. On it, a bowl of rice and a smoking candle.

Motion in a dim corner of the room draws Muldrow's attention.

A man sits on the floor, swaddled in hides and rags. He gets to his feet and moves haltingly to Muldrow; it is clear from his gait that he is old.

As he draws near we see that he is clean-shaven, unlike the bear people, with a brown and deeply creased face. He looks with frank curiosity at Muldrow, then down at the rabbit.

He asks something. Muldrow shrugs. The old man points at the rabbit, then at the pot.

Muldrow

I'll clean 'er.

He flops the rabbit onto the table and sits. He takes out his knife and starts skinning it.

The old man sits slowly across from him. He looks patiently, matter-of-factly, from Muldrow to the rabbit he cleans.

Muldrow finishes pulling the skin off. He guts the animal. He cuts the animal's head off. He starts slicing the meat off the bone.

The old man takes the pieces of meat as they are cut free and drops them in the pot by the table.

LATER

The two men are finishing eating.

Muldrow rises, looks around a little self-consciously, then nods at the old man. The old man nods back, saying something. Muldrow turns and heads for the door.

Another word from the old man stops him; the old man is getting laboriously to his feet. He shuffles over to Muldrow and plucks his sleeve. Hanging onto the sleeve he shuffles to the door and out into the snow.

EXTERIOR CABIN

The old man brings Muldrow around a corner of the cabin.

Two enormous hawks are tethered to a wooden perch. Leather hoods cover their eyes.

Their heads bob at the sound of approaching footsteps, and as they do so they sound the small bells at their necks.

The old man is saying something to Muldrow as he leads the way to the animals. He stops and drapes something like a small leather apron over one forearm.

He raises the forearm to the perch. He bumps it against one bird's talons.

The hawk responds. It steps blindly from the perch onto the old man's arm.

The old man removes the bird's hood. The bird looks around, bell tinkling.

Muldrow stares.

The bird's head swivels to fix him with its grey-flecked orange eye. A lid blinks over it once, twice. The head swivels away.

The old man is still talking. He gently dips his arm.

The bird hops off and drops momentarily as it spreads its wings, then beats them into flight. It rises, circles only briefly, and heads south.

The old man is still talking as he shuffles back to the front of the cabin. He lowers himself cautiously into a broken down old chair in front of the house; in its dilapidated state it tilts his body back at a comfortable angle, like an adirondack chair. He closes his eyes and relaxes in the sun.

Muldrow looks back at the bird still on the perch, still hooded, easing its weight from foot to foot.

LATER

It is late afternoon; the sunlight is warmer, shadows, longer.

The old man still sits in the sun in the same beachside posture, his flesh almost glowing in the dying sunlight. He opens his eyes.

There is the faint bell sound, growing louder.

The old man stands. He flops the leather apron onto his forearm.

The returning hawk alights on his arm. The old man calls Muldrow over.

He is talking again; as he talks he points at the bird. Muldrow looks.

The talons wrapped around the leather guard are slick and red.

Muldrow looks up.

The bird's orange eye returns his look; blinks; its head swivels.

Its beak is flecked red; a drop of blood collects at its tip and drops.

INTERIOR CABIN

It is night. Muldrow lies on the ground, covered with an animal skin, lit only by a flicker from the stove. We hear muttering.

The old man is shuffling around the cabin puttering, in what is probably a nightly ritual. He mutters to himself as he fusses with this and that. Finally he goes to a corner where his pallet is, grunts as he lowers himself onto it, pulls a skin over himself, and sighs.

The cabin is quiet.

FADE OUT

EXTERIOR

Watercolor on an aged paper. It is a landscape with a small cabin in the foreground and a large, dark, shadowy figure in the background. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting a night scene. The figure appears to be a person or a large animal, possibly a bear, standing near the cabin. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

We are in another high snowfield. The falling snow softens the perimeter of trees, making them ghostlike. The mountains beyond are the merest hints of shapes.

We hear the faint but now familiar tinkle of the hawk's bell before we actually see the bird. As the sound grows more distinct the bird materializes in the falling snow.

Just over Muldrow's head it backbeats its wings heavily. Muldrow raises his arm to give it a perch.

Its feet descend; its talons are about to curl over the leather. The instant before they do:

There is a dull flat crack. Muldrow stumbles backward and falls into the snow, dog tags clinking.

The hawk beats quickly upwards:

A fast crane up gives its point-of-view of Muldrow spiraling away in the snow below.

Close on Muldrow shows him reacting to the shot; he has been hit in the chest. He looks to the side.

His low angle dutch point-of-view shows men just starting to materialize in the snow, walking towards him.

Muldrow looks up.

His point-of-view up shows snow falling straight down, and the hawk circling above, watching.

Muldrow (voice-over)

For most of you flight is not in you, and never will be in you. Even when you're in an aircraft it's not in you. But the great thing about birds, especially if they're predators, is that anyone who loves them, who understands them; his mind, his imagination can fly with them. I don't think God himself could ever want anything more. . .

He looks back down, across the field.

The same low dutch angle shows the men drawing nearer. They carry guns; they are soldiers, in white winter gear.

Muldrow looks up again at the hawk.

An extreme high angle, looking down, gives the hawk's point-of-view. Snow drops dead away;

far below, Muldrow lies in the middle of the field as the soldiers approach.

... When I tell you this, just say that it came from a voice in the wind: a voice within a voice, which doesn't make a sound. . .

We go back to Muldrow. His point-of-view shows the soldiers arriving; our low angle is extremely steep on the nearest man, who is drawing a sword.

... I was in the place I tried to get to. I was in it and I had it. And I will be everywhere in it from now on. . .

The man cocks the sword high over his head. There is the tinkle of the circling hawk.

... You will be able to hear me just like you're hearing me now. . .

He brings the sword down with a great whoosh and on impact we cut to white.

... You can pick it up any time it snows, or even just when the wind is from the north. Everywhere in it, for the first time and the last, as soon as I close my eyes.

The tinkling bell nears.

With a whoosh the hawk enters frame. It shoots into the background and we slowly pan down with it as it recedes, its shape softened more and more by intervening snowfall.

Our easy adjustment down has brought horizon drifting up into frame: distant mountains, very indistinct.

The bird too becomes less distinct as it grows smaller, smaller, and finally merges into the landscape.