

Bitte

By
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EXT. BEACH - MORNING

A flock of gulls pecks at the surf.

Until an explosion cracks the air. The birds scatter as troop ships beach themselves, drop ramps. Unseen officers shout orders. Soldiers pour onto the shore.

From cliffs above, machine gun nests spit flame and lead.

Still the men stream from the ships. Bullets tear dozens in half but dozens upon dozens more swarm the sand.

MURPHY, 18, runs frightened, shouting, shooting.

MURPHY (V.O.)

It's June the sixth, nineteen forty four. It's the day I die.

A SERGEANT stands halfway up the shoreline, waving soldiers into trenches as they're being dug.

Murphy falls in alongside his comrades. A shell explodes. Shrapnel. The man next to him falls, spurting blood.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Didn't have a vision or nothin'. No angels or choirs like you think. One moment I didn't know.

Machine gun fire rips the edge of the trench. Men duck, scream, bleed, die. The Sergeant shouts orders to advance until a bullet shatters his face.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Next I did.

The leaderless unit pours from the trenches, keeping low, returning fire at the towering cliffs.

Gunfire. Screams. Sand. Shouts. Blood. Chaos.

Murphy emerges from smoke, alone at the foot of the cliffs. He takes a map and compass from his pocket.

MURPHY (V.O.)

They say dying's peaceful.

He tries to orient the map. His shaking hands won't allow him.

From the smoke emerges a GERMAN PRIVATE, as disoriented as Murphy.

The men scream at the sight of one another. Raise their guns. A shell explodes nearby, knocking them down.

The German loses his gun.

Murphy rises, stands over the defenseless, weeping soldier.

GERMAN
BITTE! BITTE!

Murphy shoots the man in the throat.

The German's lifeless eyes stare at Murphy. Murphy stares back.

An American soldier appears from the smoke, grabs Murphy, pulls him back into battle.

EXT. CLIFFS - EVENING

The calm after the storm. Soldiers pitch tents, herd prisoners, assemble for mess.

Murphy stands in the mess line, eyes elsewhere. The line moves. He doesn't. A GI nudges him.

EXT. CLIFFS - NIGHT

Murphy watches the sun dip beneath the horizon. A sergeant passes. They salute. Then...

MURPHY
Sarge? When a kraut says 'bitte',
what's it mean?

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Murphy lies awake, staring at the ceiling. At nothing.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

A cheering throng waving 'Victory' banners as a ship enters port.

Soldiers turned veterans wave to the crowd, embrace family.

Murphy moves through them, unnoticing.

INT. BAR

The joint is packed to the gills, a victory party. Murphy drinks alone.

INT. BAR

Murphy, now twenty-five, drinks alone. Baseball on the television. The Yankees. DiMaggio bats.

INT. BAR

Murphy, now thirty-five, drinks alone. Baseball on the television. The Yankees. Mantle bats.

A woman sits next to him.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Murphy in a tux, the woman in a white gown. People cheer, throw rice. The woman smiles, waves. Murphy simply moves, along for the ride.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Youngsters play. Parents watch. Murphy sits at the end of the bleachers. Apart. His wife turns to him. Her smile fades.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Christmas morning. Kids open presents.

INT. KITCHEN

Murphy sips coffee, the holiday muffled sounds beyond a door.

INT. GRAVEYARD

Murphy, in his sixties, stands over a gravestone.

A car pulls up. A man in his twenties emerges with a wreath of flowers and a 'Mother' banner.

They see each other.

The man gets back in his car and drives away.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Murphy, in his seventies, lies alone on a respirator.
Baseball on the television. The Yankees. Jeter bats.

He draws a breath.

EXT. CLIFFS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Murphy has just asked for the definition of 'bitte'.

SERGEANT
Means 'please'.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Murphy pushes off his ventilator.

MURPHY
Bitte. Bitte.

BLACKOUT