

THE PERDITION IN LIÈGE

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ANONYMOUS CONTENT
UTA

Liège, Belgium.

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1944

Night.

Quiet.

Then...

Ringling. High pitched. Tinnitus-like.

The ringing then arcs and dissipates into...

Breathing.

One person. Turning to more people.

Turning to many...

HARD CUT IN:

INT. BUNK ROOM - NIGHT

We see the backs of fifteen men.

In a line.

All facing a closed door.

The fifteen men hold still. Waiting. Breathing out. White vapor steam viewable in the indoor cold.

Outside we hear: yelling. Indiscernible orders.

Then **boots**. Footsteps. Coming closer. Closer.

Then...

The door bursts open.

A soldier stands at the room's entrance. Yelling...

In German. Then...

Our line of men moves. Exiting. We move outside and see where we are:

A POW Camp.

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - MAIN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Aisles of tent-like huts. Lines of prisoners exit them...

We see our line in the bare light of the camp's searchlights:

The men's hands at sides. Heads down. Standard issue olive jackets hang on stalky limbs. Gaunt frames. Malnourished...

Soldiers. American Military...

Prisoners of War.

German soldiers scream instructions at the POWs, moving toward the camp's exit...

When the POWS are stopped.

The American POWs stand. Hyperventilating. Steam bursting from fearing breaths.

When a different German soldier comes into frame.

He holds: an MG-42 automatic rifle.

He suddenly, emotionlessly, turns to face the line of POWs...

And opens fire on them.

All fifteen POWS go down.

The German machine gunner stops.

Quiet.

Yelling in the distance erupts at the sight of the execution.

And then we hear: **more gun fire.**

Our German screams a command over the gunfire at another soldier, who nods in acknowledgement and runs toward...

A caisson wheelbarrow.

INT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - LATER

Fires being set.

The staccato sound of concussive gunfire envelops us.

Executions.

German caravans of vehicles exit the camp. German officers grab what's of value. Set fire to what isn't...

We see Germans exiting prisoner huts with leather-bound ledgers in hand. **Prisoner records...**

They throw them into fires.

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

A dug-out hole in the earth. A pit. The sound of gunfire and the sight of burning prisoner huts in the distance.

We stay on it when...

The German Soldier arrives. The caisson with him. The dead POWs stacked upon it.

The German Soldier angles the caisson toward the pit...

And tips it over.

The dead POWs fall in. Transform it to a mass grave.

The German Soldier walks from the caisson and reveals, next to the grave...

A bulldozer. A massive pile of dirt next to it.

The German soldier gets into the bulldozer. Turns it on. Backs it up behind the dirt pile, angles the blade of the dozer behind the dirt...

Then pushes it.

The dirt pile pours into the grave. Covering the dead.

When...

An air raid alarm sounds off.

The German stops the bulldozer. He looks to the sky...

A barrage of Bombers. Arcing across the sky. Anti-aircraft guns fire into the night.

The German freezes in fear. The gunfire so loud he can barely hear the idling bulldozer.

The dirt pile still. The executed POWs, left uncovered...

The German sees the assault escalating, his eyes move to:

The forest tree-line nearby. A moment of decision. Then...

The German abandons the bulldozer. And runs. Into the nearby forest tree-line.

The bombs sound off as the Germans flee the POW camp...

As we come back to the half-buried mass grave. The bombs and chaos surrounding grows louder.

We hold on the hole in the earth containing the dead.

The flashes of the explosions strobe white...

As the gunfire loudens...

And loudens...

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Morning.

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - DAWN

Silent. Deserted.

Metallic winter overcast. Claustrophobic low hanging clouds.
Dim dawn light coats the silent smoking ruins.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - DAWN

A coal black hole in an ivory white snow field.

INSIDE MASS GRAVE

We push in on the bodies in the mass grave.

Bloodied coats. Mud covers some. Dirt reveals others. Silent.
Relaxed. Lifeless. Cold. But then...

Steam bursts through the pile...

A breath...

A survivor.

He crawls out from the dead piled atop him.

Bursting through, reborn.

He leans against the inside of the grave's wall. Heaving.

Turns back to view the dead from which he escaped as we
finally meet the muddied face of...

ALFRED BERGEN(28). Tall. Gaunt. A stress-degraded frame.
Remnants of an athlete. Dark hair. Blue eyes. Pale. Tight in
the shoulders. Handsome in that classic way it seemed
everyone who had their picture taken was.

His breath pained.

His teeth chatter.

His hands tremble.

His clothes muddied.

Terror in his eyes.

Stunned. Hyperventilating. With each breath, more shock that
he's alive than the last.

He looks down at his dirty hands: **flexes his fingers into
fists. Pooling blood back into his cold, blue hands.**

Then he sees the others' **hands: still. Cold. Pale white.**

He covers his nose from the smell.

Coughing when he notices...

Steam. Coming from a bullet hole...

Through his own shoulder. Blood on his shirt.

Hit.

A bullet strafe, through and through north of his collar bone. The cold having cauterized the wound.

Alfred hyperventilates. He looks up. Out the grave into the claustrophobic white sky...

And crawls out.

OUTSIDE MASS GRAVE

Alfred stands. His hand on his shoulder. Panic in his eyes...

He sees the abandoned POW camp. Quiet. **Smoking...**

He hobbles toward the smoking camp ruins.

EXT. GERMAN STALAG COMPOUND - MORNING

Alfred carefully leans around the corner of a hut. Looking into the rows of smoking Stalags and sees:

Empty. Quiet.

No one left.

Alfred's fearful eyes then land on one hut. Still standing. Not burned. Not smoking:

The German Officer's compound.

INT. GERMAN OFFICER'S COMPOUND - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred rummages through the mess of the abandoned room.

He opens a closet: Empty hangars. A belt. He takes it.

He opens a cabinet: A loaf of bread. He eats. Mauls it. A gallon of water. Drinks it. Spills out the side of his mouth.

He opens an office door: a desk. A radio. Shot out. Silent. On the corner of the room's bureau: **a med kit.**

INT. GERMAN OFFICER'S COMPOUND - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred presses a syringe into a lidocaine bottle. Plunges it. Filling the syringe barrel.

He injects his wound.

Alfred bites a wooden peg as he sews the bullet hole in his shoulder shut from the front. The back, **still open...**

INT. GERMAN OFFICER'S COMPOUND - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred sees his back in the bathroom mirror:

A hole on his upper back bleeds. The bullet through and through. The wound still open. Gaping.

He pours the remaining rubbing alcohol on it. Searing.

He bites down on the peg through the pain. Then presses his back to the bathroom wall.

Winching from the pain, he comes away from the wall...

A spot of blood, now on the wall.

Alfred sticks gauze to the blood spot. Adhering it. He presses his back against it. He comes away from the wall.

The gauze is now stuck to the wound.

Bandaging it.

He takes the belt found from within the closet. Wraps it over his shoulder. Around the gauze bandage.

Pulls it tight...

His eyes shut in pain. His teeth clench. We see his hands:
Shaking. Clenched in pain...

He fastens the belt on a notch.

When he opens his eyes and sees on the opposite wall:

A map.

Belgium. Germany. The western European theater. Left behind by the German officers. Areas marked off by German control.

Axis blue arrows of battalion. Blue circles show Axis divisions moving.

Alfred's eyes on three distinct land features:

The forest. And south of that...

The farmlands. And south of that...

The railroad. Running south. Heading toward...

'B A S T O G N E'

By the Luxembourg territory line.

Alfred notices that area Marked off: A red line.

Differentiating control of the area: **Allied territory**. South of him. **80 Kilometers. 50 miles...**

Alfred's grasp on the belt loosens.

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred stands outside the smoking POW camp. He looks at the snow covered ground around it:

The German's tracks.

Tire marks. Footsteps. Fleeing tracks of all kinds. All heading in one direction...

North.

Alfred then looks at the snow in the opposite direction.

The snow valley leading to a massive, imposing forest; untouched. Not a single track headed in that direction...

South.

Alfred breathes.

About to walk in the only direction he knows he can. Toward the southern allied stronghold at the Luxembourg border.

But first...

He checks the hole in his coat: through and through. Cold air pours into him.

He sees his boots: ravaged. Torn open. Cold air seeping onto his feet. Alfred's eyes move to the mass grave.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - MORNING

Alfred stands over the grave.

His eyes hang on the bodies in it. Piled. Frozen and set in lifeless poses.

Some shot in the head: their olive coats unharmed. Some others: their brown boots left intact.

Alfred sees their hands: **still white. Still motionless.**

Alfred looks at his hands again: no longer ice white. Now pink. Blood in them. **Recirculating.**

Alfred squeezes his hands tight again. Takes a breath. Then another. Gasps before a plunge...

Then descends into the mass grave.

INSIDE THE MASS GRAVE

Alfred unbuttons a body's dry, olive coat.

He averts his eyes from seeing the body's face. Keeps his eyes on the coat itself...

But in doing so, Alfred sees: **A 7th division pin on the coat.**

His hands stop...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

A huddled group in the barracks. A single electric bulb hangs overhead casting long shadows outside its sphere of light.

*A blonde man talking with the group, laughing. A 7th division pin on the man's coat **bounces** as he laughs.*

BACK TO PRESENT-

The 7th division pin on the coat. Still. Motionless.

Pain in Alfred's eyes, he fights through the emotion. His hands unbutton the coat. He takes it off the body.

Alfred moves on to: a body's dry, brown boots. Intact.

Alfred's hands untie the boot laces. Until he sees:

Scratches. On the boot's side. **White powder** marks...

Alfred's hands **stop**...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

Bunkbeds made of hastily nailed wood. Splitting. Mattresses of straw filled cloth sacks on a cold, concrete floor.

A curly haired man sat on his bunk. Scratches his boots. Sprinkles white DDT powder on them...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred sees the **scratches** and **powder** on body's boots.

He breathes out. Then proceeds to untie them. The emotion seeping in. Overwhelming.

Tears form in his eyes as...

Alfred takes the boots off. Puts them on.

Alfred moves to a body with **an olive scarf**. He unwraps it...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

Soldiers stand at mail call. Troops hand letters back.

Alfred sees a man. Looking. Listening. Waiting as each name is called. Letters passed back, around him. Over him.

*He realizes there's nothing, **wraps an olive scarf over his mouth.** And walks. Hands in his pockets.*

BACK TO PRESENT-

Finally, tears in Alfred's eyes as he unwraps the salt-stained, olive scarf from the body...

And wraps the scarf around his neck.

Alfred stands now: in the other man's olive coat. The other man's brown boots. The other man's olive scarf...

Dressed in the dead.

He turns to the grave wall, about to crawl out...

Then stops. Turns around. Looking at them...

Piled.

Alfred goes to one of the bodies. Kneels down. Opens the bodies jacket. Opens the shirt collar. Finds...

The bodie's dog tags.

Alfred rips them off. Puts the tags in his own coat's pocket.

Alfred then moves the body from the pile...

To on its own.

Arranges it straight. A makeshift plot.

An ad-hoc burial.

Alfred pushes through. Moves onto the next one. Takes the body out the pile. Removes its tags. Puts them in his pocket.

Lays the body straight.

The **two POWs no longer in a pile...**

They now rest **in a line.**

CUT TO:

INSIDE MASS GRAVE - LATER

Thirteen bodies **now laid in a line.**

Their dog tags removed. Their faces covered.

Only two bodies left. When Alfred hears...

A horse's neigh. Alfred stops.

ABOVE MASS GRAVE

Alfred climbs out. He sees in the distance approaching...

A convoy. Soldiers. **Grey crosses** on the sides of the trucks.

German.

Alfred's face drains. He sees the tree line south. He has time to get away...

But looks back in the grave: **two bodies left...**

INSIDE MASS GRAVE

Alfred moves the first body.

Opens its jacket pocket as he hears the gears shift and axles whine as the truck approaches closer...

Alfred gets the tags off the body.

His breath accelerates.

The whining of the approaching trucks loudens...

Alfred lays the body in a line and approaches the last body. Opens his jacket. Checks his chest. His eyes sharpen on:

A shot-through dog tag.

Obliterated. Only a remnant left. Its name shattered. Unreadable. Illegible.

Alfred's eyes widen. The truck's whine, getting closer...

Alfred searches the body's pockets. Nothing. Nothing else on the body to identify it. Alfred's hands shake...

He rips off the illegible dog tag. Places the body in line.

As he hears the convoy truck's gearboxes switch to **park. The sound of German soldiers, calling out to each other.**

ABOVE MASS GRAVE

Alfred climbs out the grave. Checks his surroundings. Sees:

The German convoy on the other side of the camp.

The smoke of the destroyed POW camp...

Obscuring their sightline. Giving Alfred coverage.

Alfred gets out. Gets up...

And **runs.**

From the camp. From the grave.

Into the southern Belgium tree-line.

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - PRISONER COMPOUND MAIN AREA - DAY

The German brigade enters the camp.

Two POWs on the ground. A German walks to both and shoots. Once in the head. Ensuring. Sterile. Calculative. Inhuman.

A different German grabs a shovel. Digs graves next to bodies. Clearing out evidence of POW executions.

Then, we notice, after each ensuring gun fire, the German soldiers rip off the dead POWs dog tags. Leaving them nameless.

When we notice one officer...

Different from the others...

He is on horseback.

COLONEL OTTO ZIEGLER(35). A gray trench coat. Gray scarf over his face to warm the wind. **We do not see his entire face.** Black leather gloves. Lightning **SS** on his collar. **Heterochromic eyes. One brown. One green.**

His horse trots from one burnt prisoner hut to the next.

Measured. Overseeing.

Until he sees between two huts: Three dead POWs. On the ground. Uncovered.

Otto stops his horse. Waits.

As if on cue, several Germans flock to his area, see the bodies, and pick them up. One soldier grabs a shovel.

A cleanup crew following his eye. Fixing the site. Perfecting its destruction.

But as he watches the Germans pick up the POW bodies and load them onto a wheelbarrow, his eye catches something else:

A wheel trail in the ground.

Leading outside the camp.

He follows it...

And sees through the smoke outside the camp...

A caisson wheelbarrow.

A bulldozer beside it. A pile of dirt left unmoved.

He turns his horse toward it.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Otto's horse approaches the mass grave.

In the quiet outside the POW camp, we hear Otto breathe: **a rasping, asthmatic breath. A living death rattle.**

He arrives at the mass grave.

He sees the bulldozer. The dirt pile next to it. The mass grave left uncovered. The disorder of it all.

But then Otto sees the bodies...

Linear. Arranged neatly. Cared-for.

He looks back at the caisson: tipped over in a way that could only lead to a pile. But then...

He looks back at the bodies and sees them: **Ordered.**

He sees the POWs. Their faces cleaned. Exposed to the light.

Otto dismounts his horse. He comes over the grave. Kneels. He sees: all bodies wear jackets **but one.**

All bodies wear boots **but one.**

He sees their necks...

The chains on their necks; broken. Their dog tags: gone.

Otto's head turns. Toward the northern inner wall of the grave. We see what he focuses on: leading out the mass grave.

A blood trail. Leading towards the POW camp.

INT. GERMAN OFFICER'S COMPOUND - MOMENTS LATER

Otto stands. He opens cabinets and finds: **A leather-bound prisoner ledger.** Opens it.

Meticulous records of names in the camp. Evidence...

He sets it down. Then...

He sees the bread crumbs. Mauled. Scraps on the counter. The open water. Spilled on the ground. Recent.

INT. GERMAN OFFICER'S COMPOUND - BATHROOM

Alfred's blood spot on the wall.

A finger presses on it. Swipes it. The blood; **still wet.**

Otto sees on the wall across the room. The map: **Only the corners tacked to the wall remain. Its been ripped off.**

We hear Otto's death rattle breath...

Almost **sigh.**

Otto reaches in his satchel and takes out: **Night flares.** Sets one off, and places it on the ledger.

Setting fire to the remaining German stalag.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - DAY

Otto sits atop his horse next to the mass grave...

Otto sees a sole set of footsteps in the snow...

Leading into the southern wilderness...

The survivor's.

A German officer comes to Otto. Otto locks eyes with him.

We see Otto's hand extend outward, toward **the dirt pile.** Open. Palm up. Then gracefully gesture it **towards the grave.**

A gentle invitation to finish the job.

The officer gets into the bulldozer and turns it on.

Otto looks south. At the uncharted territory. He looks at his own sleeve: the Nazi imperial eagle on it. He covers it, wrapping his scarf around his body.

Now an unrecognizable stranger in gray. No distinguishable adornments. No visual delineation as to what side he's on.

Otto then sets out on horseback...

South.

One more trail leading into the southern wilderness.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Dusk.

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT FOREST - DUSK

Snow covered tree clusters specked with clearings. Paths and linear openings snake through like earthly blood vessels.

On one tree-lined hillside, on a clearing in its midst...

A dark speck emerges into the white snow.

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT FOREST - DUSK

Alfred stops. Heaves from an unbroken multi-mile run.

He turns to see the last of the sun gone beneath the horizon.

The last of the dusk sky's blazed **orange** color, gone. Turned **to navy**. Turning **to night**.

Alfred puts a hand over his chest. Feels the rapid rhythm of his gasping breath...

He takes three deep inhales. Catches himself.

Slows his heart...

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT FOREST - NIGHT

A pile of kindling drops to the ground.

Alfred reaches into his pack. **We see inside it:** The map from the wall. The bread. The water. Pencil. Paper. **A flint**.

He sparks the flint into the kindling. Over and over until it catches. A small fire in the sub-zero wilderness.

He takes out the pack: **a canteen. Packs it full of snow...**

Alfred **sets the canteen close to the heat.**

Melting the snow inside to water...

Alfred sits. Silhouetted by the minuscule light in the dark. A view across the Belgian valley in front of him.

His eyes on the **fire...**

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

*A fire in the camp. Soldiers caked with filth. Faces black with dirt. **Together** around the fire...*

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred sits **alone** by the fire.

Puts his hands to the blaze. Warms them.

He looks down at his fingers. Flexes them. **Movement** in them. Alfred pulls his hand back, reaches into his pocket.

Takes out a dog tag. Looks at the name: '**CZIERLIACK, RAY S.**'

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

Alfred and his battalion. Hands on heads...

Surrendering at an intersection. German tanks surround them.

Alfred looks at one fellow surrenderer in particular. Hands interlaced on the back of his neck. Fear in his eyes...

*In a concealed manner, the man removes his **wedding ring** from his finger. Holds it in his fist. Hiding it from Germans...*

Then for the first time we see: Alfred. Watching the man, the name on his pack: CZIERLIACK, RAY S'...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Stung by the memory, Alfred puts the tag back in his pocket...

Then takes out another: '**BARRETT, MICHAEL R.**'

Another. '**KELPMAN, PHILLIP B.**'

Another. '**MORROW, JOHN M.**'

Looking at the names on the remaining fourteen tags.

A private reminder with each, as he gets to...

The obliterated one. '**MA**' the only letters on it.

Alfred holds it in his hand. Scrutinizing it. The two letters, too common to know...

We see his open hands: clean. Pale. The fifteen tags inside them. Cupped. He closes his hands over them. Protected from the horror they went through.

Safe now in his pocket. On their way home, no matter what.

When he hears:

A quiet rumble in the distance.

Alfred looks up to the **western horizon** and sees:

An air raid. The sky flashes. Bombs. Search lights vault into the sky like a distant premiere in a war's midst. Lines of tracer bullets criss-cross through the sky at the air force. Rising and swinging like strands of a fiery necklace.

The silent assault growing with each second. Massive.

Alfred watches the pandemonium. Dread in his eyes at the size of the unsurvivable battle.

We see the obliterated dog tag in his hand: **he clenches it.**

He then reaches for the canteen from the fire. Lifts and drinks the water from it. Sets it down...

When his eye catches something else.

In the **northern** distance...

Through the tree-line and beyond the flats he ran through, he sees it on the crest of a hilltop's plateau...

A fire. Large enough to be seen.

Small enough to be one man.

Alfred stands.

Stares out at the amber dot in the black infinite distance. What warmth was left in Alfred's blood goes cold.

Alfred looks back at his own fire.

His only source of heat...

But a beacon in the night.

A point to follow him from.

He breathes...

Then stomps out his fire. He throws snow on top to choke out any smoke.

Alfred stares into the northern distance.

Watching the small blazing speck in the black void of the dark Belgian countryside when...

The light goes out.

When Alfred hears something else. Faint on the wind...

A horse's neigh.

Fear ignites in Alfred's eyes. His heart gallops to horror.

We see the obliterated dog tag in his hand; **it trembles.**

Alfred puts the last dog tag in his pocket. The other dog tags **chime** as they hit each other.

He picks up his pack. Slings it on his shoulder...

And runs.

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT FOREST - NIGHT

Alfred runs through the forest lit only by the moon. Trees whip by. Their branches hit him...

Breaking. Their 'snap' sound echoes out in the night.

He runs at full speed through the snow, until he reaches...

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

A snow-covered clearing. A tree-line at its southern edge.

Alfred checks the sky: **A low hanging cloud blanket. Approaching the moon.**

Alfred runs through the clearing...

EXT. HILLSIDE CLEARING - NIGHT

Alfred gets to the tree-line.

He looks back at the snow valley.

His tracks: viewable in the blue moonlight. But then, the low-hanging cloud blanket **reaches the moon...**

And covers it. Sending the snowy white valley back into darkness. His tracks in the snow: **invisible.**

Alfred waits in the quiet and dark. Listening. But then...

The **snapping** of breaking branches in the distance. Closer.

Until it can only be on the other side of the clearing

When...

The snapping sound **stops.**

Alfred's follower: stuck by the darkness of the moonless night. Unable to follow Alfred's tracks in the snow.

Alfred checks the sky: No breaks in the clouds. None on their way. **The moon hidden.**

Alfred breathes.

Relief. Covered.

Alfred turns south and begins to trek when; three faint 'pop' sounds fire off.

Alfred stops and sees it in the sky above him:

Three erupting, phosphoric, artificial bright-red suns. Man-made falling stars turn the black night a brutal orange.

Burning and falling slowly...

Night flares.

Alfred looks back down at the snowy clearing and sees what the night flares illuminate in the ground...

His tracks.

Crossing the clearing. Leading right to him.

Coming into view from the light cast by the flares, at the tree line, against the pallid white snow valley....

A dark figure.

A black void against the white ground.

A man on a horse. Lit amber bright.

Alfred's follower.

Alfred's eyes sharpen. The steam of his breath quickens.

The horseman takes a moment...

Then rides forward. Following Alfred's tracks.

Alfred takes a deep breath.

EXT. COMBLAIN-AU-PONT - NIGHT

Alfred sprints from the horseman. He approaches a hill. Running up it fast as he can.

He comes over the hill's peak and sees its other side: another massive clearing, but in its midst...

A battalion.

Black and white crosses on trucks parked at its edges. Soldiers in grey... German.

Alfred stops. Hides behind a tree. Heaving. Trapped. The German battalion in front. The man on the horse behind.

The sound of breaking tree branches north of him: **Loudening. Advancing. The approaching horseman, coming closer...**

Alfred peeks out from behind the tree at the battalion.

His pupils dilate in the dark...

And sees on the ground by the soldiers: Spent bullet casings. Blood. GIs on the ground as well.

Silent trucks parked on the edges of the clearing. The soldiers inside, frozen in strange positions.

A convoy of the dead. GI's and German alike.

The breaking sound of branches loudens. Time running out.

Alfred moves into the valley.

EXT. MONCEAU VALLEY - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Alfred moves across the valley.

He sees inside convoy trucks at the clearing's edge: The dead frozen in them. Shredded from gunfire. One soldier in the truck holds a 98-K semiautomatic rifle in his grasp.

Alfred walks to the truck. Slow. Measured. Quiet.

Comes to it. Alfred takes the rifle. Avoiding the cadaver's eyes. Alfred checks the clip. Five rounds left...

INT. MONCEAU VALLEY - MIDDLE - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred crosses through the field. The German rifle at his side. Bodies on the ground surrounding.

The sound of breaking tree branches continues in the distance until...

It stops.

Goes quiet.

Alfred stops. Looks back over his shoulder at the northern forest line: **Nothing. No one. A moment of quiet horror.**

When the sound of a convoy truck's engine **fires up. Turns on.**

Alfred turns and sees standing next to a German convoy truck at the clearing's northern edge...

The horse. The man inside the truck turns on its searchlight.

Alfred stops. Raises the rifle. Aims it at the convoy truck. Centers it in his rifle's sight. And fires...

'Click.' Jammed.

The truck's searchlight rises onto the valley of the dead.

Alfred **drops down** to the surface. Quiet as the searchlight guides over the valley. Alfred lies still. Prone.

Hiding among the other side's dead.

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto guides the spotlight over on the frozen lake. Over the bodies. One at a time. Then...

He raises his rifle. Lines it next to the searchlight. Moving them together. The light illuminating his targets...

He cocks the rifle.

EXT. MONCEAU VALLEY - NIGHT

Alfred sees the spotlight guide over the bodies.

And brought to light from it: his own breath. **The steam of it. Its white vapor plumes, visible.**

When... **Otto fires into a dead body.**

Alfred's eyes locked on it. Yards away...

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto's rifle sight: locked on the body he shot. **No movement.**

He guides the spotlight and rifle onto another body. Locks. Loads. Then fires into it...

EXT. MONCEAU VALLEY - NIGHT

Alfred watches the spotlight move from one body to the next. Firing into them. **Testing the dead.**

Each one, getting closer to Alfred.

But then he hears something. A sound. Quiet, hushed...

Cracking. Splintering...

He moves his hand to the ground. Brushing away the snow, as he sees below him: **Ice.**

Splintering from his impact. The sound spreading around him. Alfred realizes, this is not a **clearing.**

But a frozen lake.

Alfred draws a deep breath. Then **holds it.** As the sound of the icy surface beneath him **splinters...**

Alfred's breath held in, impossible to keep. When finally...

The **searchlight comes to Alfred.**

Alfred holds still. His face shaking from needing to breathe. Waiting for Otto to either fire into him or move on...

He gasps. Steam pours out his mouth...

A telltale sign of life.

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto sees the steam pour out. He fires. The bullet hits **the body. Directly in the chest.**

A quiet moment. Then...

Otto sees: more steam pours out. From the body **beyond the one he shot. He fired into the wrong one.**

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Alfred sees the body **between himself and the truck. A shield.** The only thing between him and Otto's sight.

The ice splinters underneath Alfred's weight...

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto sees Alfred, shielding himself. **Pinned down.** Otto waits.

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Alfred sees twenty yards away: **A hole in the ice. By the south shore. An opening he can reach.** He takes a breath.

Then...

He raises his rifle **and slams the butt into the surface.**

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto sees Alfred's arm slam the rifle into the ice. **He fires.**

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

The bullet strikes Alfred's rifle barrel. Shattering it, just as **the ice surface splinters, cracks, shatters...**

Breaks.

Alfred drops into the lake.

He gasps in the frigid water. Body submerged. Head above the surface.

He sees the hole in the ice near the shore, twenty yards south, then...

Three bodies. On the surface of the lake. **Between himself and the hole.**

Alfred takes a deep breath. And plunges into the frigid water.

UNDERWATER.

Alfred swims under the icy surface. The searchlight above, grazing over the lake. Looking for Alfred: Illuminating...

Visible outlines of the bodies. On the icy surface above him. Points for Alfred to measure progress by...

Alfred swims under the **first outline** of a body...

The frigid water, slowing him. Numbing his muscles.

The searchlight casts over the ground above...

Alfred swims under the **second outline** of a body. One left.

His muscles strain. The freezing water incinerating any oxygen inside him...

He swims past the **third outline** of a body...

He sees the hole just beyond his reach. Almost there. But unable to keep his breath in anymore...

He coughs out under water. His lungs **filling**...

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - SHORELINE - NIGHT

The opening of the frozen lake. Somber black water...

A circular cutout in the solid lake surface.

The convoy trucks spotlight guides over the lake at random like a suspicious guard tower. Searching. When...

A hand bursts out the hole.

Alfred crawls to the nearby southern edge of the lake.

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto guides the spotlight over the lake. Slow. Hunting.

When he sees in the dark... **Movement.**

He stops.

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - SHORELINE - NIGHT

Alfred gulps his breath. Frigid. Arms crossed at the chest over wet clothes. Hobbling like an injured horse...

As we watch the searchlight slowly move across the lake...
Then lock on Alfred.

Alfred keeps walking, when he hears...

Rifle fire.

The round tears the air by him. A bullet hole erupts in a tree at the shoreline. Bark flies from its trunk.

But Alfred's attention stays rapt on...

His right hand. It moves down, **and pats his coats pocket.**

The hushed aluminum chime of the dog tags.

Still on him. Still safe.

Otto fires again. The air splits next to Alfred as that round buries into the snow nearby.

Alfred looks back at the convoy truck. **Its searchlight on.** Bright and shining. Racked on him.

Alfred looks at the lake's edge...

A German heavy gunner splayed on the ground. Dead and bloodied. But propped on a stand next to him...

A German MG-42 heavy machine gun.

Alfred stumbles to the body. Lies down. Checks the gun's clip. Clicks the safety off. Turns toward the convoy truck...

And opens fire.

INT. GERMAN CONVOY TRUCK - NIGHT

Otto ducks beneath the truck's dashboard.

The bullets hit the truck. Tearing its metal. Ripping into its innards until: It hits the searchlight. Sending it **dark.**

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - SOUTHERN SHORELINE - NIGHT

Alfred, firing across the lake at his follower...

Until he runs out.

Alfred drops the MG-42 down. Stands. Silent. Freezing. Unaware of his body's state from adrenaline. When he sees...

A dark shape in the moon light.

Stepping out from the truck.

Standing there. Across the frozen lake. Across the battlefield and the dead between them.

Otto.

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - NIGHT

Otto gets on his horse. Starts to walk it toward Alfred. When he hears the splinter of the ice.

He stops. Looks down. The horse's weight, too much for the ice. Stuck there. He looks up at Alfred.

EXT. MONCEAU FROZEN LAKE - SOUTHERN SHORELINE - NIGHT

Alfred stares back at the man on the horse chasing him.

The two of them. Out of ammunition. Looking at each other.

A still moment. Then...

Alfred hears the sound of his teeth. Chattering. Rattling. Alfred looks down at his hands: numb white, turning blue...

...And then begin **involuntarily shaking. Hypothermic rhythm.**

His life, now on a clock.

Alfred looks down at the dead German next to the MG-42.

His clothes...

Dry.

55

Alfred's shivering increases in rate and strength. He drops his wet backpack. Takes his wet jacket off. Changes into...

The dead **German's dry topcoat.**

On and dry. Unable to grab the buttons from his shaking extremities, he wraps the topcoat's sides.

When **a dime sized snowflake falls onto his wrist.** Another. And another. And another.

The beginning of a blizzard.

Alfred bends down and reaches into his frozen wet coat. Into the coat's pocket...

Gathers the dog tags. Shaking as he puts them in the dry coat he wears now.

Alfred finishes. Looks up at the lake's northern side...

Otto on his horse. Trotting around the massive lake...

Still following Alfred.

Alfred turns back and sees a pass through the forest.

South.

Alfred looks at the wet backpack. His dead friend's topcoat. The **7th division pin** on it...

Alfred pats it. The coat. Hanging onto it. A raft of memory...

Then lets go. Turns south...

And runs.

We stay on the frozen wet POW's coat on the lake's side. On the backpack.

The map inside leaking out. The bread...

Left behind.

EXT. BELGIUM FOREST LINE - NIGHT

Alfred runs. Through the forest line. Through the blizzard.

In the German gray topcoat.

The sound of the metallic dog tags chime like prison chains. Over and over again the sound reverberates...

When Alfred stops.

Alfred moves one half of the tags to his other coat pocket. Separating them. Silencing the sound.

We see his feet. Each step, slowing...

He comes through the forest line and sees in the distance: A clearing. The beginning of the farmlands.

And resting in its midst: **A light.**

We see through his eyes again, barely able to muster the strength; **his feet quicken.**

EXT. BELGIUM FARMLAND - NIGHT

In the endless flats of farmland, and the blizzard pummeling it. A tiny light in the darkness.

A small dairy farm. Two structures on it: **A red two-story farmhouse** in its midst. **A red barn beside it. A watermill.**

He stares at the red farmhouse. A **light** inside it. Alfred continues toward it...

EXT. BELGIUM FARM - FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred's shaking now extended to every extremity. In the final stages of hypothermia.

He won't last much longer.

Alfred stumbles across the road into the farm. He looks down:

His feet walk in the silent snow. Soundless. Until the ground changes to a stone road. Cobbled. His boots click.

EXT. RED BELGIUM FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Alfred gets to the front porch. He sees through the window: **A fireplace. Raging. The heat off it fogs the window.**

Alfred musters his strength through his convulsing arm... And pounds on the farmhouse front door.

Silence.

His teeth chatter. His breath pained. His legs shaking. His eyes tearing from the cold. From the snow...

He pounds again. When...

The window drape rips open. A dark figure behind it...

The window drape shuts.

Alfred stands in the German top coat. Shaking. Out of time. A moment as Alfred pounds one last time when...

The front door opens...

LOUISE SAINT-ROUX(35) Light brown hair. Gap in her teeth. Button nose. Full mouth. An oval face. A tomboy figure. Wide, innocent distrusting eyes. Pale. Tight in the shoulders...

Terrified.

She holds a side-by-side barrel shotgun in hand. Pointed directly at Alfred's chin.

Alfred's eyes widen. His shaking hands rise. He drops to his knees. Pleading as...

He tries to speak...

But the cold renders him mute. Silenced by hypothermia.
Unable to say anything coherent...

All he can muster through the frozen air. Through the cold
wind and snow. Through his freezing jaw:

ALFRED

American.

Louise stops.

A frozen moment between them. **The watermill beside the homes
slowly clicks. Measured. Steady. Peppering the moment.**

She stares at the English speaking man knelt on her porch.

Dressed in the German infantry topcoat. Cold pale shaking
hands in the air. Helpless in the frozen tundra...

Alfred looks up at her.

He musters the effort and repeats.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

American.

We see Louise's eyes: **Anger. Afraid. Distrust.**

We see Louise's feet: one steps back inside the farmhouse.

We see Louise's hands: one leaves the shotgun for...

The front door's handle. As she starts to shut the door.

The shotgun still trained on Alfred as it closes...

Then Alfred, through the shaking and hypothermia...

Alfred removes the dry German top coat.

His frozen wet American clothes, revealed to the frigid air.
To the pummeling wind. To the battering snow...

Louise stops the door.

She sees what he wears underneath: **His olive khaki uniform.**
American GI colors. Frozen. **Wet.**

Alfred, so cold his voice can only choke out one word...

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Please.

He slumps. The frozen air assaults his wet clothes...

Louise sees Alfred's injury: Shot through the shoulder. The
bloodied bandage. The belt holding it together.

The fear in her eyes, too much to take...

She closes the front door. Latches it. We hear it lock.

We see Alfred's face. His eyes close. The plumes of his steam breath **slow**. Less frequent. Less air.

He won't make it thirty seconds. A moment on him. When...

The front door opens. Louise's hands fall on Alfred's shoulders. Drags him inside. And slams the front door shut.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Louise stands. Her shotgun still trained on Alfred.

On the floor. Shivering. A human wet rag drying next to the heat of the fireplace.

Alfred, reaches into his coat's pocket.

Louise, uncertain of him. We see the two hammers on her side-by-side shotgun barrels: **She cocks one back.**

As Alfred opens the top coat's pocket and takes out what's inside it...

The dog tags. They made it.

Louise's eyes sharpen on the stranger's tags scattered about.

Alfred relaxes. Goes limp. Next to the fire. But then...

Alfred looks to the window and cold white snow outside. Alfred points to the dark window. Then points to the fire.

Alfred points to the dark window.

Then motions to his eyes. He can barely speak...

ALFRED

He'll see.

Louise looks at the stranger.

She looks out the window into the night. She turns to a can of water next to the fireplace...

And snuffs it out.

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The red two-story farmhouse and barn hidden in the dark. We see Alfred's trail: **Each step fills with snow. The blizzard erasing his trail...**

Alfred's footsteps, gone from existence.

FADE TO BLACK.

Dream.

EXT. THE FOREST - DAY

Sunlight shines through the trees. Bright light shafts turn the forest to a cathedral.

Alfred kneels in the clearing. A forest worshipper.

Then...artillery rains down.

Hits the treetops, exploding high above ground. Tree bark erupts downward on the forest haven...

EXT. BASTOGNE - MAIN SAVI ROAD - DAY

Beautiful blue sky. A town. But then...

And in an instant: one section of the town begins crumbling. Then another. Another. Then all the structures.

Metamorphosing from solid ancient structures into piles of newly made dust. Falling into themselves with ease.

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Alfred stands outside the farmhouse.

Looks up and out at...

The sky. Glowing bright. Inferno grade amber.

Innumerable night flares falling. Slowly. Almost suspended still. Flickering like candles. Stand-ins for stars.

Illuminating the snowy white farmland. Alfred sees it:

The land is dead. Dried out. Frozen. A necrotic wasteland.

On the horizon: **Fifteen silhouettes. People.** Not moving. Standing still.

Watching him.

Alfred hears breathing. Looks at the corner of the farm.

Otto. On his horse.

The night flares reflect jaundice, yellow-bloodshot eyes.

Quiet.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Morning.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MORNING

Alfred's eyes open. Alive. In a bed. He looks around: Paint chips off cream-white walls.

Through the window: outside snow falls from a polar white sky. The tempo: **Slow. Consistent. Steady.**

His eyes glide across the room. Dark wood nightstands flank the bed he lays in. A dark wood dresser. Mirror on it...

The dog tags laid on it.

His eyes continue until they rest on... **Louise.**

Sitting in a wooden chair in the corner. Work trousers. A blouse. The shotgun next to her. Propped against the wall.

She picks it up. Lays it across her lap like a militant sewing instructor. The barrels in Alfred's direction.

Alfred's eyes lock on her. A quiet moment. Then...

ALFRED

Thank--

LOUISE

--Prove you are who you say.

Her voice drenched in a quiet discipline. Her survival of her circumstances, rendering her tone almost methodical.

Alfred tries to lean up to face her...

Louise cocks one of the shotgun's two hammers back. The '**click**' sound stills Alfred.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

This is a dairy farm with no cows because of the man who came before you. Another man visited a farm east of here two weeks ago. That visit ended in the farm burned and the woman inside raped and murdered.

Both men wore the coat you came in.

(beat)

But what you wore underneath. What you said at my doorstep...

Alfred, frozen in the relaxed rifle's sight...

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I gave you the night. So answer. Because the only thing stopping me...is the sheets.

Alfred looks at the bed he's on. Its clean linen.

The watermill outside clicks. Tension in the room...

He leans back. Slowly. Then...

ALFRED

I was born July 19th, 1921.
Randolph, Indiana. I don't know
what's happening a hundred yards
east or a hundred yards west. I just
know I survived.

LOUISE

From?

ALFRED

A camp. Prisoners of war.

LOUISE

You were captured?

ALFRED

Yes.

LOUISE

Where?

ALFRED

Near the road convergence in
Baugnez.

LOUISE

By who?

ALFRED

Surrounded. Panzer division.

LOUISE

And the German coat?

ALFRED

I took it from a dead man after I
fell in the lake.

Louise gestures to the dog tags on the wooden bureau...

LOUISE

And those?

Alfred's eyes on them. The watermill outside clicks...

ALFRED

We were put in a line together. Then
fired on.

LOUISE

But you survived.

The simplicity of that hurts Alfred.

He survived. They did not.

ALFRED
Yes.

LOUISE
How?

Her question, daring Alfred to admit it.

Then, simply...

ALFRED
I don't know.

The sincerity of that hangs in the air.

Louise watches the man in her bed make the painful admission.

Both the shotgun barrel's hammers, still cocked back.

Louise, not believing him yet, gestures to the tags again.

LOUISE
There are more than this in a camp.

ALFRED
Yes.

LOUISE
So why only these?

On Alfred's eyes, a flicker of memory...

ALFRED
They were the ones I was with.
They ended up stacked. Missing. I
didn't.
(beat)
So I'll get to Bastogne. To the
allies. And bring them home.

The watermill outside, clicks.

LOUISE
You're carrying pieces of metal,
through a war.

Her skeptical tone registers with Alfred. Then...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Not people. Not wedding rings. Not
rosaries. Named pieces of metal.
(beat)

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 You are ensuring nothing but a
 families pain with each delivered.
 Putting light on what should stay
 dark.

Corrupting a mission with the reality. Each fact she lists
 turns the knife in Alfred...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 They were shot down. Stacked and put
 in a pile. Their families...
 (beat)
 You truly think they would they **want**
to know this?

Alfred, for the first time his certainty of the good in his
 journey, questioned.

He looks to the bureau at the dog tags resting there.

Then...

ALFRED
 Even though the end they met was
 hell, the real hell is the ones they
 loved not knowing. Left **wondering**,
 for the rest of their lives...
 (beat)
 ...No.

His eyes move back to Louise. Alfred fights through the
 uncertainty she's now placed in him.

LOUISE
 And you believe, this pursuit, makes
 sense? That it means something?

The watermill outside clicks.

For the first time, uncertainty in him.

But he pushes through.

ALFRED
 It has to.

Louise stares at him. Moved by his sincerity.

A desperate man trying only to get the memory of others home.

Louise un-cocks the shotgun hammers.

Lays the shotgun back against the wall.

Alfred breathes.

LOUISE
 You pointed to the window. You said
 'he will see.'

Alfred's eyes sharpen.

The metronomic sound of the watermill almost loudens from the mention of 'him.' Stilling the air.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 'He' is chasing you. He knows you
 survived. He is who made you test
 how frozen a lake was.

The implication of danger close behind it.

Alfred nods 'yes.'

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 And all this, one man chasing
 another through the middle of a war.
 (beat)
 Why?

A moment as Alfred sits with the thought. Then...

FLASHCUT TO PAST:

EXT. LIÈGE POW CAMP - DAY

In the German barracks, we see the vacant wall space, previously occupied by...the map. Indicating German positions. Their next movements. Enemy information...

BACK TO PRESENT:

Alfred eyes, left alone with his chaser's presumed motive. Disappointment in himself for not realizing the map's potential value.

ALFRED
 I can guess.

LOUISE
 Then why has he not come?

Alfred gestures to the snow outside the window...

ALFRED
 Either he's not moving in this snow,
 or it's hidden my tracks.

LOUISE
 Then, you should know, there is
 nothing else near here...
 (beat)
 And the snow is slowing.

Alfred looks outside. The tempo of the snow: **visibly slower.**

Anxiety wakes up in Alfred's eyes at the sight.

ALFRED
I have to wait for him.
(beat)
Here.

Louise is amazed by his assumption.

LOUISE
Why would I let you?

ALFRED
Because even if I leave, he will
still come here. Looking for me.
(beat)
He will make sure I'm not here.

She realizes, the idea of Otto arriving at her home and suffering whatever fate that holds. Then, Alfred appeases...

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Please.

Beat.

LOUISE
And now you will tell me I have to
trust you? That I have to or else I
will be alone and defenseless
against him?

Alfred, as sincere as possible.

Again, admitting the only thing that makes sense in the moment...

ALFRED
No.

His sincerity, honesty, strikes a chord in her.

Louise looks at the man in the bed. At the tags on the nightstand bureau.

LOUISE
I lost friends who tried to hide
people like you.
(beat)
If I help you, afterward, you will
leave?

ALFRED
Immediately.

Louise stands from her chair.

Brushes her blouse. Looks out the window.

The horizon clear.

She turns to Alfred...

LOUISE
You need warmer clothes.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Louise in front of a closet.

She stares inside. Pain in her eyes.

She removes black trousers. Lays them on the bed. Black boots. A black sweater. A black top coat. Lays them down.

Alfred stands at the room's entrance. Blanket draped over his shoulders. Staring at the clothes she's laid down.

Realizing: they're **men's** clothes.

ALFRED (O.S.)
How long has he been gone?

Louise turns. Looks at him.

Invaded...

LOUISE
I don't know you.

Louise turns back. Continues working.

Alfred looks at the bedside table as Louise removes the clothing and what rests on it...

A brass picture frame. In it: Louise and a man. Him in farming clothes. **A pitchfork slung over his shoulder.** Her in a light dress. Smiles. In love. Wedding rings.

Alfred's eyes move away from it. Understanding now the life he's invaded with his mission.

Louise finishes. The outfit now assembled on the bed. A man's wardrobe. A ghostly image of the one not inside it.

Louise looks at it. Pain in her eyes. A moment. She looks to Alfred. Motions to the empty clothing. Offering.

ALFRED
You don't mind?

She shakes her head 'no.'

LOUISE
I chose what he hates.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - BASEMENT - AFTERNOON

A dim light opens on a stonewall basement. Damp. Moldy. Dark. Alfred and Louise descend the steps...

Him in her husband's clothes.

Louise holds a candle. Takes Alfred to a wooden bureau in the corner. Opens it. Reveals:

Three hunting shotguns. Shells. Two German MP-43 submachine guns. Ammunition clips. Trench knives.

Alfred looks at her. His eyes question...

LOUISE
Not all men I find are alive.

Alfred eyes lock on the MP-43 and trench knife. Takes both.

ALFRED
Your friends who hid people like me.
(beat)
Where did they hide them?

INT. SAINT-ROUX BARN - DAY

The red barn's wooden door opens. Alfred and Louise outside. He sees inside: empty cow stalls. Farming supplies. Tools.

Louise then points up...

LOUISE
There.

Alfred sees: **A second story level. A window on its wall.**

His eyes fall down to the empty cow stalls. One last stall; obscured. He walks to it. Sees inside: **a brown Anglo-Norman horse**. Turns back to Louise.

ALFRED
You didn't say you had this.

LOUISE
I don't. It's his.

ALFRED
The men who took your cows didn't
want your *horse*?

Louise clutches her fists. Her eyes flicker. Then...

LOUISE
Exchanges were made.

Alfred nods. Understands. Apologetic.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 He loves him. Perks up when he sees
 him. Stomps with happiness.
 (beat)
 I will see this again.

Alfred sees over Louise's shoulder against the barn's wood
 wall: **Spindles of wire. Lanterns.**

Alfred walks to the barn entrance. Sees the farm layout: two
 structures, farmhouse and barn, separated by seventy yards.

The perimeter: All sides fenced off.

Except the entrance.

Alfred scans the ground: Their tracks, **filling with snow.**
 Alfred scans the sky: **still snowing.**

His eyes impregnated with possibility...

FLASHCUT TO EARLIER-

Alfred enters the farm. His feet step on snow. Soundless...

BACK TO PRESENT-

ALFRED
 The road. Is it the only stone one?

LOUISE
 No. All our roads are stone.

FLASHCUT TO EARLIER-

The farm ground changes. Stone. Cobbled. His steps click...

BACK TO PRESENT-

ALFRED
 Good.

Alfred walks to the barn wall. Grabs a lantern and wire
 spindle. Alfred looks back at the snow. **Its tempo slowing...**

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 Anywhere else you can keep the
 horse?

LOUISE
 Why?

ALFRED
 I don't want it to get shot.

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARM - ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

Louise ties the horse to a pen behind the red farmhouse.

Alfred kneels at the entrance road. The only un-barbed area.

In his right hand: the bundle of wire. Takes out a wire...

He crosses it over the entrance. From one wooden post to the other. Then walks to the farmhouse.

The spindle unravels...

The snow: **slowing**.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Alfred splits a stick in half like a 'Y' shaped wishbone. Inserts **a twig** between the sides of the stick. Fastens it.

Wire tied to the twig leading outside.

An ad-hoc trip wire. Then...

Louise hands Alfred the lantern. A candle in it.

INT. SAINT-ROUX BARN - MAIN AREA - AFTERNOON

Alfred lights the candle lantern. Sets it on the floor.

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - EVENING

The clicking watermill outside the red house. Alfred puts a stone in it. Jamming it. **Silencing it.** The snow: **slower...**

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DUSK

Alfred stands on the front porch. We see: **no tracks outside the farm. Work done in time to fill them.**

Alfred looks at the barn: the lantern's light through the wood slits of the walls. **The appearance of someone inside.**

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Four windows. On the north side. The south. East. West.

Alfred moves a dining table to the northern window. The view from it: **The barn across the field.**

LOUISE

When is the last time you ate?

He turns. She nods to a mirror. Alfred sees his reflection:

Gaunt. Thin. Skeletal.

He looks back at Louise.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Louise's shotgun on the table. Shells next to it.

Then...

A plate of eggs. Toast. Butter. Set in front of us.

Alfred sits at the table. He picks up the knife. Fork. Eats. Louise watches the man dressed in her husband's clothes eat.

Alfred notices on the living room wall: A faint outline of a cross. **A crucifix that no longer hangs.**

Alfred stops eating. The sight too intriguing to ignore. Louise sees his eyes on it. Then...

LOUISE
My father took his own life. I could
not believe in something that could
not understand someone's pain.

A moment. He looks at her, wanting to ask the question of
'why'...thinking better of it...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Eat.

Alfred continues, at her will almost.

Louise watches him.

But like a dam having opened up, the connection with a
stranger, the catnip of conversation...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
He became ill. Losing his grip.

Alfred stops. She continues.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
I would bring him breakfast. The
first thing he would say when I
entered his room: 'Good morning,
Louise.' To remember my name. But
morning after morning, it lost its
feeling.
(beat)
Until the morning he stayed quiet...

On Louise's eyes, reflecting the memory...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

*The upstairs bedroom. The view outside the window; a delicate
cascade of snow drifts through the monotone overcast.*

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 His eyes came to me, and I saw...
 ...he didn't know me. Where he was.
 (beat)
 That night is when he did it.

BACK TO PRESENT-

Louise lost in the memory of the moment. Reliving it.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 That winter I was alone. The house
 became quiet. The fog overwhelmed.

Louise turns her head, and looks out the kitchen window...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 But **he** kept coming. To check on me.

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

*Now, the glimpse through the kitchen window, milk white fog
 on the Belgian country horizon...*

*A man walks out from the fog. We recognize him. A **pitchfork
 slung over his shoulder**. Her husband from the picture.*

LOUISE (V.O.)
 Before his own life began everyday.
 Everyday, from the fog.

Dressed in black. The same clothes Alfred wears now.

The man comes out from the fog for her...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Louise's eyes, still on the kitchen window. An empty horizon.

LOUISE
 At a time when little made sense.
 He was consistent.
 (beat)
 And then the war came. And he went
 to it.

A pregnant moment as Alfred watches her. Listening.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 This house is all I have of him now.

We see up close: the kitchen counter. The picture frames.
Clean. We see the piano: covered in dust. Untouched.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 I lose myself in work. To keep my
 mind. From nights listening to the
 battles in the distance. Wondering.

She looks out into the overwhelming fog. Then...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
*'Did I just hear the sound that
 brings him back or the one that took
 him away?'*

She takes a breath. Lets it out for the first time in who knows how long. Louise looks at Alfred. Thankful...

LOUISE (CONT'D)
 For what I said to you, earlier,
 about the deed you carry out and its
 uselessness.
 (beat)
 I am sorry.

Her eyes. She means it.

Alfred seeing now he ignited an unnecessary hope in her that her husband may still be alive. He says all there is to...

ALFRED
 Thank you.
 (beat)
 For all this.

She hears his sincerity.

LOUISE
 You are welcome.

Alfred sets down the fork. Then motions to the kitchen walls.

ALFRED
 The walls up here are wood.

She looks at the wall. Then back at him. Not understanding.

Alfred then motions to the **basement door**.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 Down there, they're stone...

Louise recognizes his inference...

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 I'd rather not risk your life in
 order to get the others ho--

LOUISE
 --This is **my home**.

The simplicity and weight of that registering. Then...

ALFRED
 Don't risk not seeing your husband
 again for a stranger's fight.

She recognizes his concern for her. Louise looks at his food on the table. Finished. A moment.

She pushes her chair back. Stands. Picks her shotgun up and walks to the basement door.

Alfred watches her. She opens the basement door. Then...

LOUISE
Please don't lose.

She closes the door. Descends the basement steps.

Alfred looks out the window. In the evening light he sees:
The snow flakes falling. And falling. And falling.

And then...

it stops.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The fireplace rages. Alfred comes to it. Takes a moment.

Then kicks it out. Kills his source of heat.

He cracks the western window. A whistle of air. A hiss of wind.

We see behind him: **the 'Y' shaped perimeter alarm stick. The wire tied to it. Leading outside through the window...**

The table laid longways toward the northern window.

When, like a living thing collapsing down on the outside world...

The fog.

Rolling in. Coating the air.

Alfred lies down on top of the table.

Lines up the MP-43 toward the dark window.

Facing his trap.

The glowing barn in its midst.

The light of the phantom occupant within...

Alfred waits.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Night.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The fireplace sits dark.

The perimeter alarm stick: **Intact. Its wire leads outside to the farm's entrance.**

Alfred lies on the table. Bundled in the black coat and blanket like an old vagabond.

His breath: visible in the cold inside the house.

His MP-43: sited on the barn in the distance. A faint flicker from the lantern inside. The only light in the area.

Alfred lays the machine gun down.

Rubs his eyes. Blinks out the tired.

When he picks the gun back up he feels something in his coat pocket. He reaches in. Pulls out...

A small black leather book. A gray drafting pencil with it.

Louise's husband's.

Alfred opens it.

Notes. Measurements and drawings of what could only be the farm. Supply lists. Mundane.

Alfred's eye on a dead man's unfinished work, when in the wind through the cracked window...

A '**click**' sound.

Alfred's eyes move back to the northern window. On the glowing farm in the distance...

'**click.**'

Alfred puts the pad and pencil back in the coat pocket...

'**click.**'

Alfred looks at the western window. He sees the watermill outside: jammed. **Silent.**

'**click.**'

The hair on Alfred's neck spikes.

He picks up the MP-43.

As the click sound becomes consistent.

On the cobbled road outside the farm. Unmistakable...

A horse's trot.

Alfred looks at the 'Y' shaped stick.

The ad-hoc trip wire system: Still intact...

He stares down the MP-43 sight through the window: On the barn. Its half-cracked door glows from the lantern inside.

We push in on the northern window as the 'click' of the horseshoes on the road continues.

Closer.

Alfred's steam breath quickens. The horse's clicks louden.

Closer. Until...

Silence.

Alfred looks at the 'Y' shaped stick. The ad-hoc trip wire system: Still intact. Then...

The twig yanks out. The 'Y' shaped stick snaps together...

Otto's within the farm.

Walking in on silent snow.

Alfred's sight on the barn's glow in the distance:

Empty.

Sweat beads on Alfred's brow in the sub-zero living room.

He waits for the horse silhouette to enter his sight...

He clicks the safety 'off' on the MP-43.

Nothing on the air but the wind.

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARM - NORTHERN SIDE - NIGHT

The barn in front of us. The light of the lantern inside.

We come back to see: A black horse. Standing still.

Otto atop it.

His head angled: away from the barn. We come over his shoulder and reveal what it is he looks at...

The watermill. Still. The water beneath it: running. And in the watermill's plank: a stone jammed in it.

Silent. **Quieted.**

Then next to it, in the snow...

A linear ridge dug out. From the farmhouse to the barn's entrance. Faintly lit.

Reflecting the light from the lantern...

The trip-wire having frozen, and disturbed the flat snow.

We see his heterochromic eyes...

They sharpen.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alfred's rifle sight: locked on the glowing barn.

Waiting in the silence.

We see Alfred's finger: it trembles over the trigger.

And then...

A shape enters Alfred's rifle sight.

Walks up to the barn. The silhouette crosses into Alfred's sight, in front of the hushed glow of barn through the fog...

The horse.

Alfred's **left eye** closes as he aims...

But then Alfred sees...

The horse is alone.

Alfred's **left eye** opens.

He sees the horseman's trick...

And then we hear it...

Rasping. Asthmatic. A death rattle breath.

Over Alfred's shoulder at the **western** kitchen window.

Otto's shadow darkens it.

Alfred sees the shadow. Turns toward it...

And opens fire.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Louise snaps her hands to her ears from the deafening sound.

The flashing of the gunfire light visible through the ceiling's floorboards. Her home being torn into...

Horror in her eyes.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alfred fires at the window until his clip empties.

His eyes hang on the western kitchen window. Shot through. Perforated. But the shadow outside it...

Gone.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alfred comes to the western window. Carefully leans. Looks out it for any sign of Otto...

Nothing. Vanished.

He sees on the snowy ground outside: **tracks**. Leading away from the house. Back into the dark.

Alfred changes his MP-43's clip.

When he hears that familiar '**pop**.'

The '**hiss**' following.

The night erupts in that hellish amber light...

Night flares.

But this time, he sees the night flare travels **horizontally**.

At the house.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The night flare bursts through the window. Through a drape. Lands on Louise's bed. Both catch fire.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alfred shudders from the bursting sound of glass upstairs. He hears the flare hissing from inside the bedroom...

When Otto opens fire from the **eastern side of the house**...

The interior of the home, bursting apart from gunfire.

Alfred hits the ground.

Pinned down, Alfred sees the **stone** fire place in the living room. He crawls toward it...

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - EASTERN SIDE - NIGHT

Otto sprays the farmhouse with his MP-43 like a militant painter. His brush the submachine gun. His canvas the house.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alfred gets to the **stonewall** fireplace.

He stands next to it. Protected by it...

Bullets tear through walls. Mangling the room's insides.

Alfred leans out from behind the stone fireplace. Returns fire through the eastern window. Emptying his submachine-gun's clip in Otto's direction...

Then stops. Silent.

Alfred waits. Peers out the eastern window...

But Alfred realizes, looking at the first window; shattered, the second window; shattered, the third window: **intact**...

Otto is circling the house.

Alfred sees the next window. At the **southern side**...

He goes to it. Looks out it into the dark flatlands...

Nothing. Quiet. Alfred waits. When he hears...**crackling**.

Alfred looks back. Sees amber light coating the staircase walls. Smoke billows like an apparition...

A fire upstairs.

Alfred's eyes widen...

FLASHCUT-

The dog tags. On the master bedroom bureau...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Without hesitation, Alfred runs to the stairs...

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alfred enters to see: the bedroom burns.

Alfred crawls in, but his shadow casts on the window from the fire...**giving away his position to the outside...**

Otto's bullets tear through wall. The bureau. The bed.

Alfred drops. The room full of smoke.

And in the room of disarray, Alfred sees: **six of the tags**. On the floor. Strewn about the fiery bedroom.

Alfred **crawls to them...**

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - WESTERN SIDE - NIGHT

Otto fires at the upstairs bedroom until his MP-43 goes empty. He ejects the one clip. Pulls out and inserts another.

And continues firing. Ensuring whoever's inside the home burns with it, or comes out into his point-blank view.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alfred coughs in the room's thickening smoke.

Alfred puts the coat sleeve to his mouth, trying to breathe.

The remaining tags hidden amongst the room's ruin.

He can't see past five feet in front of him. Searching. Coughing even harder. When...

A tag reflects light through smoke. Under the burning bureau.

He reaches for it. Clenches it in his hand...

It **burns** his palm.

He jerks in pain. Shoves it in his pocket. Opens his palm and looks at his hand...

Burned. A mark already forming.

He then looks up at Louise's bedroom. Her life. Her bed. Her husband's closet. Then his eyes on...

The brass picture frame.

The photo of her and her husband. Their **smiles**. The frame torn apart. The picture burnt.

Stun and shame in Alfred's eyes...

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Bullets tear through the wall and get closer to...

The piano. When a round strikes the piano's leg, crippling it, sending it to the floor and **sounding out...**

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Louise hears the piano. The destruction and burning of her home. Her eyes widen from the sound.

LOUISE

No.

She runs to the stairs...

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alfred hears the sound of her running up the basement stairs...

Alfred stands.

Runs out the bedroom through the gunfire.

INT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alfred comes down the stairs. Coughing. Forearm over mouth to guard from the smoke. As Otto stops firing.

Alfred rounds the stairs corner when he sees it...

On the floor. In the kitchen...

Louise's hand. On the ground. Open palm.

Limp.

Alfred's forearm drops from his mouth. Agape.

And just then, a **faint trace of blood. Pooling toward her hand.** Spreading on the kitchen floor like spilled syrup...

Louise is gone.

Alfred's eyes water from the smoke or the sight. Anger in them. Then...

Otto opens fire from the **south** side of the home. Ceaseless.

Alfred ducks behind the stone wall again.

Alfred checks his rifle: empty. No more ammunition. All his clips spent. He's **defenseless.**

But then his eyes catch something.

Out the northern window. Near the barn outside...

Otto's black horse. Alone.

First, Alfred looks back at Louise's body. At her necklace round her neck...

EXT. SAINT-ROUX FARMHOUSE - EASTERN SIDE - NIGHT

Otto fires at the home until he runs out. He ejects his clip. Removes another. Ready to open fire on the **burning** home...

When he hears his own horse's neigh.

Otto turns and sees...

Alfred. **Riding into the south. On Otto's black horse.**

Otto's eyes erupt with rage.

He raises his weapon about to fire at Alfred, but sees in his sightline: **his horse.**

He lowers his gun. Watching his target sprint into the southern distance. Evaporating from his sightline.

But just then, as if on cue...

Otto hears a different horse neigh.

He turns and sees, tied to a tree nearby...

Louise's brown spotted Anglo-Norman horse.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRYSIDE - FLATLANDS - NIGHT

The southern flatlands of Belgium. Quiet.

When...

The black horse flies by us.

Alfred atop it.

Riding south. Through the southern Belgian countryside. The snow erupts behind the black horse.

Alfred sees an air raid battle in the **eastern** distance.

He puts his hand on the black horse's rein...

And runs **south.** Home free.

When...

A 'rip' sound by his ear. A sonic tear next to him. A burst of snow on the ground not ten yards ahead of him...

Alfred shrugs away from the 'snap' sound. Looks back over his shoulder as he rides...

Otto. On Louise's brown Anglo-Norman horse.

Chasing him. Intrepid. Unstoppable.

A bright flash strobes on Otto's shoulder, and the sound of a bullet snaps by Alfred again.

Strikes the snow near him. Bursting in it.

Alfred, weaponless and defenseless. Turns forward. Eyes on the only thing ahead of him:

Flat, open country side. Nothing to hide behind...

Except a hill.

In the southern distance he rides toward.

Alfred kicks the black horse's side...

The horse runs even harder.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN VALLEY - NIGHT

Alfred runs the black horse toward the hill. He pounds the side of its flank.

The sound of another bullet snaps by Alfred. Hits the snow nearby. Powder bursts like a snow covered landmine.

The hilltop in the southern distance getting closer...

He pushes the horse even harder toward it.

Alfred looks over his shoulder.

Otto still in pursuit. Gaining on him. Raises his rifle and fires...

The telltale muzzle flash giving his position...

The bullet snaps by Alfred. Hits the ground.

We see the snow bursts **even closer to Alfred.**

Otto's shot improving.

Desperation taking over, Alfred takes out...

The trench knife.

He reaches it back, cuts the black horse in the flank.

The black horse runs even harder. Its steam breaths turn to heaves. The hill top coming closer...

Almost there...

Alfred reaches back and slaps the area where he stabbed the horse. Pushing it even harder. Crazy eyes...

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN VALLEY - HILL - CONTINUOUS

As he runs up it. Crests it. Just as he hears Otto fire.

When this time...

A spray of flesh and blood bursts off Alfred.

The snow near him stains crimson.

Alfred gasps. His heart races. He looks down...

Otto hit the black horse.

Its right flank shot. Its right ribs bleed.

The black horse's speed **decelerates**...

Just as Alfred crests the hill and his eyes rest on what's on the other side...

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN VALLEY - HILLTOP - CONTINUOUS

A pasture. Snowy tall grass... Cover.

Alfred runs the black horse into the pasture...

PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

...And then stops it.

The black horse still. Heaving. Alfred gets off. And then slaps the black horse's flank.

The black horse sprints off...

Into the western distance.

The farther it runs into the distance, **the harder it is to see whether or not Alfred is on top of it...**

Alfred looks north. Seconds until Otto crests the hill and gains a sight on him...

Alfred dives into the pasture's icy tall-grass...

And digs in the snow. An ad-hoc foxhole...

Alfred buries himself.

Camouflaging among the snow covered ice coated tall-grass.

Panicked. Frenzied. Desperate. Not twenty seconds until Otto comes over the hilltop...

Alfred finishes covering himself in snow....

...Just as Otto and the brown horse crest the third hill.

Alfred stays prone. Hidden. Dug in.

Otto and the brown horse continue. Running full pace.

Directly at Alfred.

The ground shakes from the horse's hooves. Pounding the ground. Coming right at him...

As Otto runs the horse at full speed...

Alfred sees Otto raise his rifle to his shoulder...

Alfred closes his eyes. **As Otto fires...**

And runs the horse directly over Alfred.

Otto, fires at the black horse in the western distance. Unable to see Alfred not atop it.

Alfred holds still as Otto rides off...

Until he's out of sight.

Alfred stands.

In awe. It worked.

But Alfred looks to the dark night north of him, he sees...

The smoke.

From Louise's farm. Burning in the north.

The home he stopped at, that took him in...

Now just another battle in the skyline.

Alfred looks down at the black coat keeping him warm. The clothes he's wrapped in. Louise's missing husband's black clothing. Puts his left hand on his right forearm...

Alfred feels the sleeve. He raises it to his nose.

And smells it.

The smoke...

FLASHCUT-

Louise's prone hand on the kitchen floor...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Another life on his hands. Another memory on his back.

He reaches down to his pocket. He takes them out: Only six of them left now. **He's lost nine.**

FLASHCUT-

*In Louise's burning bedroom. Reflecting in the fire: At least three tags. Remaining. **Still there...***

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred looks at the ones in his hand. The ones he's saved. We see through the pile of them...

The burn mark on his palm. **Singed.**

But a different look in his eyes toward the tags...

Contempt. For the first time...

Questioning them.

Uncertain of their worth.

He puts them back in his pocket. He hears their chime.

Alfred then reaches in his other pocket and removes...

Louise's necklace.

He took it off her.

Alfred's thumb grazes the minute strands of the necklace. Regret in his eyes. Shame in them.

A life cost in exchange for the pieces of metal in his pocket.

He puts the necklace in his pocket.

He turns south. Faces the southern distance. All flatlands.

FLASHCUT-

The map in the German stalag. The forest. The flats. The railroad...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred puts his hands in his coat pockets.
 And walks the flat valley.
 South.

EXT. BELGIAN SOUTHERN VALLEY - NIGHT

Otto's black horse lies on the snowy white ground. Stained red from its wound. It bleeds. Heaves.

Otto comes to his own horse. Kneels down. Looks at its injury.

He hears its breath. Heaving. Asthmatic. Replicating his own. The two of them sharing the death rattle like breath.

Otto's eyes sweep the snow nearby the heaving horse:

Flat. Pristine. No tracks lead away from it.

Alfred outsmarted him.

We see his heterochromic eyes. **Otto looks up to the coal overcast. Stares up at the gray.**

OTTO

Hmm.

A tone in this sound. Almost curious admiration. Appreciative. A sound from a person rarely deceived.

His eyes then float back to his injured horse.

He stands.

Raises his Luger. Aimed at the horse's skull...

OTTO (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

And yet...

(breath)

...You **let** him run you.

We hear his voice: a **soft, storybook rhythm. As if every sentence could begin with 'Once upon a time...'**

But he sounds. Almost betrayed by the horse.

A beat of quiet. He lowers the Luger.

Letting the black horse feel the pain. Otto stands silent.

Watching it go.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Day.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Low rolling hills. No farmhouses. Open fields with bands of pine trees interspersed on the hills. A fresh snow blankets. Clouds blot out the daylight. A postcard setting lost.

Then we see: Alfred. But we notice...

He's no longer jogging.

He's now only walking. The journey weakening him.

Quiet. Step by step. Still headed south.

We see his face: Pale. Sunken eyes.

His frame and pace: **weakening. When...**

He hears a hum sound.

He stops. Looks up:

A flock of P-51 mustangs. A mechanical murmuration. Symmetrical. Turning and climbing and perfectly aligning through chalk white overcast.

Alfred watches them **head south with ease.**

Jealousy in his eyes at the ease with which they head where he needs to go...

When...

The air bursts with flak. Tracers lance upward. Crisscrossing. Converging on a crippled plane trailing smoke.

Their hum fades off and back into silence...

Alfred continues south on foot.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Alfred comes over a hill and sees: More flat lands.

Fragments of a Sherman tank lay about. Smoke casts skyward. The remains of the soldiers inside, now soot. Charred mannequins still in shocked poses. Horror.

But Alfred walks by them. Numbed. The violent after-effects he would've stopped for before, now ordinary.

A country lane runs west of and parallel to something...

Alfred's exhausted eyes see it. South...

A line. Cut through the ground.

Running uninterrupted...

Heading south.

Alfred recognizes what it is...

The train tracks. The railroad.

On Alfred's eyes...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

The map on the stalag wall. First the forest. Then the flatlands. Then the southern railroad. To Allied territory...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred's pace quickens toward it...

Hope in his eyes.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRY - TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The tracks pierce through the snow like a brace across the flatlands. Snow still on top of them in areas.

Alfred comes to the tracks...

He kneels down next to them.

Takes his hand out his coat pocket. Trembling. Reaching for the train track like a desert vagrant picking up a canteen...

His hand reaches the track. Feels it. Touches it.

We see the track up close...

Buried in snow. Rusted. Still. Cold. The heat of his hand fogs the cold metal...decommissioned.

The southern trains, no longer running.

He keeps his hand on it.

Nothing. No heat. No sound. Lifeless.

He takes his hand off. Puts it back in his pocket. Defeat in his eyes. He stands.

But then he notices: The snow on the tracks...

Vibrating. Shaking. Like a micro-sized avalanche initiating on a peak. Falling over itself...

His eyes follow the train track's to the southern horizon...

Nothing there.

He turns and looks north of him. In the faraway distance of the northern of the track...

Dark smoke plumes. Contrast against the pearl-gray horizon...

A train.

Headed south. Coming his way. Alfred's eyes widen.

He spots a brush near the river...

INT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRY - RIVER BRUSH - MOMENTS LATER

Alfred hides in the brush. Watching. Waiting.

As the train rolls closer and closer. Alfred waits, looking for any indication on the train of whose side it belongs to.

Maybe fifty yards from him. He sees its sides:

Lumber made. Rosewood. Horizontal boards on hammered wood sides. **A cattle train.**

Hope in Alfred's eyes. He runs toward it.

EXT. BELGIAN TRAIN - DAY

The rosewood train barrels along the winter countryside. Cutting through snow. **Headed south.**

When Alfred enters frame next to the train. Running through the snow. Fast as he can.

EXT. BELGIAN TRAIN - REAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Alfred runs until he gets to the back of the train. He sees: a small platform. **A steel bar.**

On the train's side. **An anchor point to grab.**

Alfred runs harder. Closer to the train. Closer to the bar...

He pushes until he runs alongside it. The bar within reach...

He pushes with everything he has left. Running next to the train, the handle bar closing in...

Almost reaching it, when his left hand grabs the steel bar...

And latches onto it.

His fingers clinging. His body hangs. Frigid in the wind. Dangling on the train's side like a doll.

Alfred's arm **tightens...**

He pulls himself up. With any and all strength he has left. He whips his other arm around and latches onto...

A barred window.

We see his foot. Dangling there. Nothing to rest on. His body weight relying on failing arm strength...

Until we see...

A pedestal. His foot comes to it. And rests on it. Solid enough for him to stand on and absorb the cold. The wind.

His arms relax.

On the rosewood train. Barreling along. He looks south. The southern horizon comes at him. Faster than ever before.

What spreads across Alfred's face, foreign as it has become to him, could only be described as...

A smile.

But then he notices something. On his right hand.

Grasped on the window bar on the side of the cattle car. And what now rests on top of it...

Another hand.

Coming out from within the cattle car. Holding his.

Alfred looks inside **the barred windows** and sees...

People.

INT. PRISON TRAIN - DAY

Deathly-ill looking. Malnourished. Huddled. Blankets over heads. Over shoulders. Crammed. Inhuman. Staring at Alfred.

EXT. PRISON TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Alfred eye's blink repeatedly. Trying to be certain what he sees is real. Then he hears, from within the car...

Pleas.

OUTSIDE TRAIN:

Alfred outside the prison train, can't understand. One woman sees his face. He locks onto her within the car.

INSIDE TRAIN:

She's staring at Alfred. Almost through him. When she finally calls out amongst the chaos...

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN
MALKA BERNHEIM.

The people in the train quiet. Alfred looks at her.

She's **pointing to herself**.

OUTSIDE TRAIN:

Alfred locks eyes with her. Her back onto him. Her expression of desperation in her eyes, digs in him...

INSIDE TRAIN:

In the now quiet train, she repeats. Pointing at herself.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN (CONT'D)
Malka. Bernheim.

Crying. She repeats her own name. Then...

MIDDLE AGED MAN
Nadab Metger.

A man. Pointing to himself. Indicating...

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT'D)
Nadab Metger.

OUTSIDE TRAIN:

Alfred watches the train's inhabitants call out their names.

ELDERLY MAN
Chaim Keshl. Chaim Keshl.

For Alfred to hold onto. As every passenger in the train calls out their name to him...

INSIDE TRAIN:

ALL TRAIN
Jachin Hameln!/Chaim Keshl!/Nadab
Metger!/Malka Bernheim!

OUTSIDE TRAIN:

To carry them with him. To remember them. Alfred calls out...

ALFRED
I can't.

Alfred realizes he can't hang on any longer. He looks at the ground beneath him. Speeding by. **Snow** on it.

He looks in the distance not a hundred yards away: **The snow is gone. Melted. A rocky ground awaits.**

He has to let go.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.
(beat)
I can't.

INSIDE TRAIN:

The huddled people look at Alfred.

Outside the barred window.

Until...

He lets go.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN COUNTRYSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Alfred falls off the moving train.

Hits the ashen snowy ground.

Smashed by the impact. Rolling from the inertia of the speeding train. Until he stops.

He coughs into the ground. Holds his side. A broken rib at the least.

He looks up...

The rosewood train rolls on. Into the distance. Toward whatever hell it takes its occupants to.

Alfred watches it. Despair in his eyes.

Then Alfred hears:

That familiar grinding sound...

The shifting of gears.

He looks to the east: A German brigade.

Panzer tanks. Tigers.

But then notices the rocky ground in front of him is something else: **Foxholes.**

Alfred's eyes lock on a nearby foxhole...

Alfred lies there. The German brigade in the distance. Coming toward him. The train he leapt from, rolling on. a moment in his eyes where we're not certain he'll try...

IN FOX HOLE -

Alfred drops in.

When he sees with him inside it:

A dead soldier. A G.I. His eyes open. Shelling shrapnel lodged in and through his upper body.

Alfred's eyes on the man as he waits...

Then...

A German soldier walks by the fox hole. Another. Another.

Alfred lies still. Face down with the cadaver as the brigade walks by over head.

Until finally.

A Panzer tank's roar, coming closer.

Alfred's eyes widen into the dirt he faces. When we see behind him into the sky...

The Panzer tank track, rolls over his foxhole.

Sending it dark.

The foxhole ceiling tank track. Alfred looks down into the dirt. Away from the horror...

When...

The panzer tank track stops.

Alfred looks up. The iron tank track, right on top of him. Its linear rivets, inches above him. Covering the hole.

Trapping him.

Entombing him and the dead GI next to him.

Alfred stares up at the track.

Praying it moves...

Then...

The tank rolls on. The tank track retracts and daylight pours back into the fox hole as Alfred holds still.

The final members of the brigade walking over him when Alfred hears one member: **shooting into the foxholes.**

Alfred cannot move.

As the German comes to his foxhole. Lines up his rifle to the dead man next to Alfred...

Then shoots him.

Alfred holds completely still. As the German puts his rifle to the back of Alfred's head.

Alfred closes his eyes. We see his hand. It clutches the remaining tags in his pocket...

When...

'click'

Alfred's eyes flinch from the sound. He's empty.

The German makes an annoyed sound. As if he lost a game. The other German laughs as he pulls the rifle away. Walks on.

Alfred holds still. Eyes wide.

He waits until it's absolutely silent.

Then emerges from the fox hole.

OUTSIDE FOXHOLE

Alfred comes out. He sees in the distance. The German armored division moves off into the fog.

He breathes out. But because of the broken rib...

Alfred's breath, sounding...

Almost **asthmatic**.

He pushes himself up. Barely able to stand from the impact. Alfred follows the tracks south.

But now walks with a limp.

Breathes painful steam breaths.

South, away from the German division.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN RIVER MARSH - EVENING

Mist.

Sight obscured from every angle.

The river marsh cast in an unintentional melancholy glow. As if the sea evaporated and its remains hung in the air.

The quiet din of a battle rages in the hidden, misty eastern sky. Relentless flashes from distant bombs...

Alfred limps along.

Through ankle deep river marsh water.

Wheezing from the broken rib.

His black coat, soggy from the mist. His face pale. Hands in pockets. His frame somehow even more gaunt. Reaper-like.

He limps through the fog blanketed river marsh. The ankle deep water: **deepens...**

We come in on Alfred's eyes, still-white orbs on a soot covered face. Memory firing off in them...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

Malka Bernheim stares at Alfred from within the train...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred trudges through.

The river marsh water deepens, now **at his shins.**

Step by step. His breath **rattles.** We see his eyes...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

In the mass grave. Alfred's pale hand holds the 'ma' tag...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred trudges through.

The river marsh water deepens, **now at his knees.**

His pace, slowing. On his eyes as he struggles forward...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

Louise staring at him...

LOUISE
You're certain, **they want to know?**

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred stops. Overwhelmed.

The river marsh water: over his knees. Almost to his groin.

He looks to the east. The flashing of the battle inside it.

And brought to light nearby, silhouetted: **A bare tree.**

Alfred feels the **remaining tags** in his pocket.

He turns and trudges through the marsh toward the tree.

Alfred comes to the lone tree.

Its leaves gone. Extending upward like a skeletal hand burst out the ground reaching.

He stares at one low hanging branch.

Alfred reaches into his black coat's pocket.

Pulls out the last six tags.

He sees them in his pale white hands: **The burn on his one palm. Blood on the other. The tags charred from fire.**

Alfred reaches into his coat pocket. Rips a piece of the inside off. Takes the unravelling string from it.

He drapes the tags on the string. Then ties it tight.

Tears form in his eyes. He reaches them upward and drapes the string on the tree's limb. Hanging there.

They hang and chime from the faint wind.

Alfred looks at them...

Tears fall out...

He lets go of them.

A moment.

Alfred turns his back on them.

Limps away. Back into the mist.

The tags hang.

Their soft chime on the wind.

EXT. SOUTHERN BELGIAN RIVER MARSH - SOUTHERN END - NIGHT

Alfred limps through the knee height marsh water.

The faint wind on the tags. Still chiming out in the distance. He listens to them in the blind fog...

When...

The wind dies off. The chime of the tags quiets. All he hears is the splash of his limped steps.

Until something else whines out in the blinding mist...

Vehicle brakes.

Alfred goes still.

Then: splashes.

Multiple. Many. Marching...

Alfred sees in the flicker from explosions and fires in the distant battle, lighting in the fog and smoke...

Figures. Soldiers. A brigade.

Seventy yards in front of him.

The infantry shadows weave. Grow. Blip. Appear from and disappear into wisps of fog. Ghosts in the light of war...

But hidden in the mist.

Friend or enemy. Impossible to tell.

Alfred, paralyzed with uncertainty...

Unable to move in the knee height water for fear of giving away his position.

He listens to the steps of the soldiers. The sound of their artillery rolling.

Trying to discern whose side it is in the fog. When...

A burst of light flashes from artillery, lighting the silhouette of something else in the overpowering mist...

The shadow of a man on a horse.

Otto.

At the other edge of the river marsh.

Coming Alfred's way.

Alfred, stuck in the marsh water. Stuck in the fog.

As the sound of the brigade moves east. Farther away...

The horse's steps coming closer and closer to him. When...

SARGEANT
(American English)
Five-hundred and first...

Alfred stops.

Turns around. Toward the sound of the voice. Stunned by the familiarity of the language...

Otto's horse stops. Yards in front of Alfred. Unable to see him. The water stills.

SARGEANT (CONT'D)
...Whatever's on that other side...

An American convoy.

A lifeboat a hundred yards away. The voice in the distance echoes like a dream.

Hope in Alfred's eyes...

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
...Stay on my ass. Under any and all
circumstances...

The brigade keeps moving **east**. Alfred calls out to them...

ALFRED
(wheezes)
HEY...

But...

His ribs.

Broken. From the fall off the train...

ALFRED (CONT'D)
(wheezes)
HEY!

Little more than a whisper.

He can't yell out.

He looks back.

Otto is too close.

The convoy **is too far**...

They won't get to Alfred before Otto does.

Frozen, Alfred listens to the American convoy roll east.

Toward the battle in the distance, until they roll over a hill. And on to the battle.

Gone.

Alfred realizes this, his chase with this thing following him, is endless.

Resigned to the inevitable...

Alfred takes out **his trench knife**.

Turns.

Sees Otto's horse silhouette: **still. Motionless. Then...**
Starts walking. Toward Alfred. Sloshing, slow and steady.

Alfred waits. **Knife in hand**. Certain death marching to him.

He sees the river marsh water ahead of him: **still**. Then the river marsh water **ripples**.

Its reflection: Open. Vacant. Then, from out of the mist; Otto's reflection. His outlined shape emerges.

Alfred, stands, finally ready for it...

When from the east...

The wind comes back.

A faint chime of the hanging tags.

Otto stops.

His eyes held on the eastern fog.

Alfred stares at the horse's outline. Yards away.

Otto's attention rapt on the sound of the tags Alfred left behind...not seeing Alfred in the mist in front of him.

Alfred waits. Holding his breath. When...

Otto turns his horse.

Walks toward the chime sound. Recedes into the mist and disappears from sight.

Alfred stands still. Stunned.

His life saved by the tags he hung.

Then...

Alfred moves into the southern mist. Away from Otto. Away from the battle...

EXT. ROAD - DAWN

A German machine gun division set in a cross fire behind a hedgerow. English Lorrie trucks, turned over in ditches. Shot up. American jeeps blown apart. Roadblocks, opened.

Alfred stands on the road outside the river marsh.

He looks back at the mist over the edge of it.

A moment. Their sound on the wind. The tags chime out in the distance. Melodic and soft and never-ending...

Alfred listens.

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

The men in the camp. Around the fire. Standing there. But now staring at us. Expectant...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred reaches into his coat pocket.

Takes out: The black notepad. The grey drafting pencil. He opens it. Louise's husband's farm notes. Unfinished.

Alfred writes.

'1. Ray Czierliack'

'2. John Morrow'

We see he writes down every name.

Every tag's name he can remember. Until he finishes. But we see his last one: '14.'

Empty afterward. One left. He can't remember them all.

FLASHCUT-

The 'MA' obliterated tag. Unable to make out the man's name.

BACK TO PRESENT-

Alfred takes a moment. Then writes...

'14. Malka Bernheim.'

Writes again.

'15. Louise.'

A moment.

He puts the pad and pencil back in his pocket.

In the beginning gray light of dawn, Alfred turns south. And walks the road. Hands in his pockets. Un-celebratory. Common.

Fighting through the limp. His black coat fades white as he disappears back into mist.

The tags chime out as Alfred evaporates from sight.

FADE TO BLACK.

Dark.

FADE IN:

EXT. BELGIAN SKY - EVENING

White snow falls against the dark Belgian sky. Gray. Slate colored from the overcast night.

Spruce trees weighed down with snow. Drooped as if mourning. Snowflakes drift down and pile...

A north-to-south road flanked by a still canal. A line of bare-limbed birch trees next to it run parallel.

And laid prone on the road's side...

A body.

Legs crossed. Arms planted. The posture of the fallen. We come in close on it...

And start to feel the anxiety. We recognize it.

The black coat. Punctured twice.

White snow beneath him: stained crimson red. Turning brown.

Shot through the back.

The black boots on the feet of the crossed legs...

And then finally...

On the open palm of the outstretched hand...

The burn.

Alfred.

On the road side.

We see Alfred's face: Eyes half open. Dull. Lifeless.

Gone. Dead.

Then...

Otto on the horse.

Clicks by.

Walks away from us.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

Town.

EXT. BELGIAN SKY - NIGHT

Overcast sky reflects manmade auburn light. Light pollution.
From the only thing that can be beneath it: **A town.**

Nameless in the wintery night. Quiet. Glowing from the street
lamps. Snow falls on it. We see from above:

Seven roads lead to it.

All converge at a point inside it.

EXT. SAVI ROAD - NIGHT

On the lone northern road. Leading toward the Belgian town
and the seven road convergence in its center.

At the intersection: a destroyed schoolhouse.

A church left standing, its steeple intact but covered in
bullet holes from whomever last used it as a sniper post.

A **LOCAL**(50) works outside his ancient stone home. Carrying
supplies. Glass milk bottles. Feed. Eggs. His eye catches
something coming down the road.

A man on a horse.

A stranger in grey.

Otto.

**His gray coat somehow immaculate. Unharmed by the journey.
The gray scarf over his face. Black leather gloves, clean.**

The local sets his things down. Looks up at Otto...

Otto approaches. Comes to the local. Stops his horse.

A moment. Otto gestures with his hand to a nearby road sign.

OTTO
(French)
How far?

Beat.

LOCAL
A kilometer. Slightly more.

Otto looks toward the light pollution on the night sky. The
town beneath it casting them...

OTTO
Occupied?

The local looking up at Otto, doesn't see any obvious military regalia on Otto's person. Questions his eyes...

Otto's eyes guide back from the town. Across the fields... And land back on the Local.

Silence. The question hanging and an answer awaited...

LOCAL

No.

OTTO

Have any forces come through?

LOCAL

Not for days. German moved through.
East. Gathering somewhere.

A moment. Then...

Otto walks the horse down the flat road. Toward the town and its light polluted sky. As he passes by the road sign.

We see it.

And recognize the name:

'B A S T O G N E'

EXT. BASTOGNE - NIGHT

A snowglobe town without a casing. Otto enters the road leading in. Towards an opening in the town's center...

EXT. BASTOGNE - TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Quiet.

Save for the ache sound of a shop sign swinging. Shutters sealed on dim windows of gothic-romanesque buildings. Dull-boarded doors and shattered glass contrast one another.

Otto trots the horse down the center of the snowy road. Enters the stonewalled town square...

To an unobstructed view of the sightline south.

He stops the horse. In the center of the town square.

He sees outside, in the southern distance, on the horizon...

The forest tree line.

The Ardennes.

But accompanying the sight of them...

A sound.

Like the ground split and the mechanical gears of the world were audible. Strange and engineered and rhythmic and massive. Drifting in and out...

Coming from within the South. Coming from the Ardennes.

Otto squints. Trying to be certain of the source.

He pulls the scarf wrapped around his head down. His ear revealed. He angles his head. Listening to the sound...

When he sees **a tiny light. At the end of an alley.**

A cigarette.

An old man. Alone on the quiet street side. Leaned against the wet stone-wall. Smoking. Watching Otto.

Otto turns the horse to him, and walks.

EXT. BASTOGNE TOWN SQUARE - ALLEY'S END - CONTINUOUS

The old man smokes. Listening to the distant storm. Otto comes to him on the horse. Stops. Nods to the sound...

OLD MAN

Panzers.

Otto's eyes on the forest...

He **sighs**. Disappointed. Resigned.

Otto sees the Ardennes forest in the distance. Extending along the southern line like a wall holding back a beast.

The sound of the sightless enemy continues. Preparing to unleash like never before. A vengeful God builds.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

In the Ardennes.

(beat)

Something in the Ardennes.

Otto shakes his head.

Disappointment. Disbelief.

He looks up...

The fog, finally melted. The clouds parted. The stars broke through. Foreign bright specks of ivory in an oil black sky.

Otto looks up at the black infinitum.

Until he hears...

A nearby door swings open.

Otto looks to the corner of the stonewalled square: **A chapel.**

Two locals walk out. Pull their collars up. Guarding from the cold wind, they disappear into the night.

When...

...Otto turns his horse toward the chapel.

INT. BASTOGNE PROTESTANT CHAPEL - NARTHEX - NIGHT

Candlelit.

Altar candlesticks. Candelabras. Re-purposed cans full of votives. The chapel glows with Godliness.

When...

The entrance doors swing open. The night air spills in. Flickering the candlelight...

Otto stands.

Sees inside the room...

And marvels.

Amazed at what the chapel has been re-fashioned into...

A pub.

Church pews stacked. Turned to face one another. Ad-hoc booths. Locals sit. Drinking. Dice marks on the floor. Farmers. Peasants...

They stare back at Otto. A stranger in grey. Peering. Assessing. A quiet moment...

The subtle roaring gears of war in the distance.

Then...

The locals turn back to each other. Uninterested in Otto. An unremarkable stranger in grey.

Otto sees in the church's corner: **a confessional**. Stripped apart. Its wood used for other purposes.

Otto sees at the end of the chapel near the altar area...

A bar.

And still hanging above it: **A crucifix.**

A moment of decision. Then... Otto shuts the entrance door. Walks toward the altar area...

NAVE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Otto hears the locals' voices as he walks. Low enough to be whispers but the acoustics of the church amplify every word.

He continues through the candlelit nave until...

ALTAR - CONTINUOUS

Otto reaches the altar. Sits at the bar.

Otto looks up at the Christ. The sound of the Panzers outside. Grinding. Preparing...

Then...

He pulls the scarf down from his nose...

We see his entire face **for the first time...**

Brown hair cropped tight on the sides. A crooked nose. Protruding ears. The antithesis of intimidating. The opposite of an expected Nazi. Zero sought after traits of the Aryan. A seemingly perfect pursuant, wrought with aesthetic imperfections.

He turns and looks at the local peasant sitting on the stool next to him. Mustached. Dark hair. Olive coat. Tired eyes. Beer in hand. **JEAN(23)**.

OTTO
Did you come for Him...

Otto's hushed voice reverberates through the chapel. He reaches in his pocket and removes: eyeglasses. Puts them on. Now even less intimidating.

Jean turns and sees Otto's heterochromic eyes. Locked on the strange man beside him.

A long look. Then...

Otto motions his hand to the crucifix and Christ...

Then at Jean's beer...

OTTO (CONT'D)
...Or for the drink?

Jean stares at Otto. A moment. Then calmly...

JEAN
For the effect.
(beat)
Whichever gave it first.

Unexpected. Otto nods. Smiles.

OTTO
I thought it was a chapel.

He looks up at the Christ.

The bartender comes to Otto, looks at him, an unremarkable stranger, and awaits an order.

Otto sees Jean's beer. Then in a no nonsense tone...

OTTO (CONT'D)
Water.

Bartender turns to the wooden barrel behind the bar. Puts his hand on the lever and pours water in a tall glass...

Otto takes his gloves off. Lays them on the bar like abandoned duties after a long day...

Jean takes a sip of his beer...

As Otto pulls out and puts on the bar...

His **MP-43**.

Almost comedic in size on the bar next to gloves and a scarf.

Jean's stops sipping his beer. Bartender sees the assault rifle. Stutters pouring.

A moment.

Then...

Jean finishes his sip. Sets his beer down.

Bartender finishes the pour. Sets the water in front of Otto.

OTTO (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Bartender looks to Jean. Covered fear in his eyes...

Otto sips his water. Puts the glass down.

Jean straightens his jacket. Turns on his stool. About to stand to leave. Until...

Otto's hand moves to the bar.

OTTO (CONT'D)
Now that I've come...

Rests on top of the **MP-43**. Jean stops. Holds still.

OTTO (CONT'D)
I will speak.

Trapping the local peasant there beside him.

OTTO (CONT'D)
Will you listen?

From his tone, we recognize, it is a demand. Not an invitation.

We see over Otto's shoulder at the chapel pews. Its inhabitants:

Four groups of locals.

A moment. Then...

Jean turns forward. Facing the bar. Held still by Otto.

JEAN
All right.

Bartender looks at Otto. Then turns. Walks. Worry concealed.

Otto takes a deep, raspy breath. Before the plunge.

Then...

OTTO
As a member of the Reich, I'm
expected to fulfill a certain
portrait painted.
(beat)
Entering rooms by bursting through
floorboards. Fire and perdition
behind me.

We see: Over Otto's shoulder, in the background of the chapel. **The bartender goes to a group of locals.** Whispers...

The group quiets. Listens. Bartender motions to Otto at the bar. The locals then **quietly stand...and calmly exit.**

OTTO (CONT'D)
Black eyes. Paws. Horns. Talons.
Living in a cave in the alps.
(beat)
But I come with no physical
specialty.

The sound of the door, audible through the chapel.

OTTO (CONT'D)
I am a man. Skin. Flesh. Skeleton. I
have a home. Paintings on easels.
Tea in the afternoon. I enjoy the
cinema. I even acted once. I use the
front door like any other.

Otto bleeds honesty as he admits and acknowledges his unexpected appearance. But we see:

Over Otto's shoulder. Bartender goes to the second group. Whispers. The locals stand. Exit. The sound of the doors...

OTTO (CONT'D)
Beneath the grey, there is only a man. Born to a mother and father. Never struck. Disciplined in an ordinary manner. The experiences and vista of emotion any child would be blessed to have. There is no physical specialty.

Otto, turns to Jean...

OTTO (CONT'D)
There was only a special **day**.

Otto's **breath rasps**. His picks up his water. Sips. Quells.

OTTO (CONT'D)
A day, when I survived what others could not.
(beat)
A day I met death face to face, and left able to describe him.

Bartender approaches the third group. They stand. Exit.

OTTO (CONT'D)
Though not without having lost a piece of myself.
(beat)
But that event, that day, gave me a gift. A truth. A conviction. That my cause, my purpose, would keep me alive.
(beat)
Belief that my cause was divine.
Perfect.

Otto's eyes, as he describes the day, descend **to his hands**.

Behind him, the Bartender goes to the final group. Whispers. The group stands. Walks. The chapel door sounds out. Then Bartender calmly exits.

The chapel: **Now empty, save for Otto and Jean**.

OTTO (CONT'D)
My survival made me reaffirm what I **do** is right. What I **do** is special.
(beat)
Not me.

Otto's hand, still on his **MP-43**. Pats it like a prize pony.

OTTO (CONT'D)
They say '*the devil is in Malmedy.*' '*In Liège.*' They say he wears grey.

Otto holds his hands open. Palm up. In selfless surrender.

OTTO (CONT'D)
 I say I am a man.
 (beat)
 I say I like the color.

Otto's hand still on his gun. Then...

OTTO (CONT'D)
 But I experienced a test.
 (beat)
 I pursued a man. For three days. I
 hunted a man in a sea of inhumanity.
 Through hell and worse. And **reached**
 him. On the northern road. Outside
 this town. I found him. Walking. In
 what may be the last war of mankind,
 I ran one man to his end.
 (beat)
 I will be asked why. I will respond
 with the constructed reason of duty.
 (beat)
 But the truth of the pursuit had
 more to do with reaffirming...
 (beat)
 My escaping death that day **was**
special.

Otto recites this, practiced. Mantra like. But then, an
 honest moment, shaking him.

OTTO (CONT'D)
 Because...

He lets it out...

OTTO (CONT'D)
 This man...

FLASHCUT TO PAST-

*- Otto at the POW camp. Seeing the ordered bodies in the mass
 grave. The escape from an impossible scenario.*

OTTO (V.O.)
 ...Challenged my conviction...

*- Otto on the frozen lake. Alfred in his rifle's sight.
 Stumbling after having fallen in the water.*

*Otto fires at Alfred. Misses. Fires again. **Misses**. As if
 Alfred was being **protected**...*

OTTO (V.O.)
 Rattled my belief...

Stunned eyes on Otto...

BACK TO PRESENT-

Otto's voice trembles at that admittance.

OTTO
Because if his cause was also
special...

Otto shakes his head, offended even by the possibility...

OTTO (CONT'D)
But then, I discovered his flaw. The
reason he was in fact not special.

Otto removes his hand from the Luger, and enters his pocket.
Takes out: The four tags. The string Alfred hung them with.

OTTO (CONT'D)
He was dropping them. Along his way.
(beat)
In my pursuit I recovered the
fragments of what he held on to.

Otto reaches back into his pocket.

Takes out: another tag.

Another.

Another.

We see: Otto found all fifteen tags.

OTTO (CONT'D)
What presumably gave him **reason**.

Otto takes the last tag out. Puts it down. All 15. Laid out.

OTTO (CONT'D)
All this way for pieces. Not
hundreds. Not thousands. Little more
than a dozen.

Otto stares at the fifteen shards of metal on the bar.

OTTO (CONT'D)
And I killed more to find him. Every
stranger I encountered. A family and
their store.
(beat)
A red farmhouse north of here burned
to the ground.

Jean's eyes lock on Otto.

That fact, suddenly registering with him more than anything
Otto has said prior.

OTTO (CONT'D)
And the woman inside it.

Piercing through Jean.

Jean turns his head. Looks. Sees through the window. Out the entry way and into the Bastogne square.

Louise's brown Anglo Norman horse.

Docked at the square.

Jean's eyes flinch...

OTTO (CONT'D)
And now I know my purpose is true. I know this man's end. That it was as it was supposed to be. Like the others in the pit he crawled from...

Otto's eyes on the tags. Burning. Otto gently lets it out.

OTTO (CONT'D)
...Missing.

The gears of war in the distance. The panzers, repeating...

OTTO (CONT'D)
But now that I achieved and reaffirmed my place, I am left to do what I never have. To wonder.
(beat)
On that **sound** in the distance.
(beat)
A reminder that my future is undetermined. Reminding me of the question I buried but now need to unearth: the question of **how this ends.**

The sound of the Panzers repeating as we push in on Otto. His eyes, on the cross. On the Christ. Rattled...

OTTO (CONT'D)
The ones who know the answer to this question, the ones in the future, will point to events in their past as evidence of its obvious outcome.
(beat)
As points along the line where the end became inevitable.
(beat)
But I cannot see them.

Otto lost in thought. Alone with this.

The sound of the panzers in the distance, repeating...

OTTO (CONT'D)
Maybe that sound is a force.
Maturing into what will become a
victory. An altering point in the
timeline of humanity.
(beat)
Or maybe that sound is a hollow
stand, against the inevitable.

Then... his eyes locked on the vacant distance, unable to
decipher how this conflict will end. What it holds for him...

OTTO (CONT'D)
It is a mystery.

A moment. Then...

Otto **sweeps** his hand across the bar.

Over the tags.

Taking them like chips in an appreciated but unnecessary win.

Otto shovels the tags back into his pocket. Then sips the
last of his water. Places the glass back down on the bar.

Turns and puts his hand on Jean's shoulder. Accommodating.

OTTO (CONT'D)
Thank you for listening...

Almost a gesture of paternal gratitude.

OTTO (CONT'D)
...My new friend.

Jean winces from the word. Then...

He breathes deep. Takes a sip of his beer. Puts it down.
Wipes his mouth with his napkin. Turns to Otto.

Jean kicks out Otto's chair. Slams him to the ground.

Otto holds his MP-43, fires into the wall on his way down.

Jean jumps on top of Otto. Grabs his knife by the handle.

Otto fires into a church pew where the locals sat.

Jean stabs Otto through the lungs. The neck. Over and over.

Otto fires into the wall. Plumes of plaster erupt.

Jean finishes. Otto lets go of the assault rifle.

Jean stands back up.

Otto lies in shock a moment...

Then he breathes.

The holes in his lungs and neck. Airways to silence his
asthmatic death rattle breath.

Otto stands. Looks at Jean.

Confused almost.

Holding his wounds in disbelief. Looking at his hands, the
blood on them. Checking to make sure...

A divine man relegated to human wounds. Otto looks at Jean,
almost in offense. Stunned.

He turns around. And walks.

Through the empty chapel's silence.

EXT. BASTOGNE PROTESTANT CHAPEL - OUTSIDE STEPS - NIGHT

The chapel steps. Coated in fresh white snow. Footprints on
every step. Filling in with more white snowflakes. When...

Blood runs down a step.

Seeps over and down onto the next.

We come back to see...

Otto.

Laid down on the chapel's snowy steps.

The air from the wounds, rushing him oxygen. In his final
breaths. His death rattle open. Clear.

Jean stands over him. Looking down at him.

Otto, stares death in the face. Confronted with mortality.

Confronted with the fact his mission is not divine.

Jean looks down at him. Pity in his eyes. Knife still in
hand. Ready in case the animal has one final death throes.

Otto's hand comes over his wound.

Covers it as he stains the white snow crimson.

Bleeding out on the steps. Left out in the cold.

Kept outside the divinity of the chapel.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BASTOGNE - TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

Jean stands at the edge of the Belgian town. He walks toward Louise's horse. The horse sees Jean. Then...

The horse noticeably perks up. Nods its head. Stomps its hooves with happiness.

We realize...

Jean is Louise's husband.

This, his horse.

He survived.

Jean looks his horse in its eye. Pats its ears. Brushes its neck. He sees its hind quarters...

Knife gashes. Otto had stuck a knife in when running it.

Jean turns and looks at the chapel at Otto, dead on its steps. The crimson snow turning brown.

Jean brushes his horse's wound...

Then gets on.

The Ardennes forest south of him. The massive sound of the Panzers and men assembling in the Ardennes forest.

Jean turns north. Toward home.

Leaving Otto and his mission behind him.

The bells of the chapel ring out, over and over again, as we hang on Otto, bled out on the steps.

The man carrying a divine mission, now just another body.

EXT. SAVI ROAD - MORNING

On the lone northern road. Leading away from the Belgian town and the seven road convergence in its center.

Jean approaches. On his horse.

Passes the local's home we met earlier. When he sees, north, On the shoulder of the road...

A body.

Alfred.

But now covered by snow.

Concealed.

Jean rides the horse by Alfred's snowy body. Continuing into the northern distance. Passing Alfred. Leaving him.

We leave Jean on the horse, and stay with Alfred's body. The snow continues. Concealing him. We come in close on Alfred's body. Cold and alone and covered...

Then...

A horse hoof steps back into frame.

Jean.

He turned around.

Jean gets off his horse. Kneels to Alfred. Brushes the snow **off Jean's own coat. Alfred still wears it.**

Emotion in Jean's eyes. Then...

He hears those gears of war again. Propelling. Churning. He looks to the northern distance.

Approaching Bastogne: **A massive brigade of US military. Tanks. Soldiers.**

Jean looks back at Alfred's body. Then...

He opens the coat Alfred wears. Pulls down the neck. He reveals...

Alfred's dog tags. Hanging on his chest.

Jean takes them off Alfred.

Jean stands. Reaches in his pocket...

And removes the fifteen other dog tags.

He took them from Otto.

Jean holds Alfred's tags. The fifteen he carried.

Jean looks back to the US military. Coming toward him.

Jean gets on his horse. Standing there.

Jean holds the string of tags up. High in the air.

Home.

CUT TO BLACK. SUPER:

' T h e P e r d i t i o n

I n L i è g e '

THE END.