

BIOHAZARD

THE
S
E
C
U
R
E

FRESH BLOOD EDITION



TAROKO

Written by

Kerry Yang & Steve Emmons

www.kerryyang.com
kerryscyang@gmail.com

EXT. TAROKO GORGE - DAY

A drone shot introduces an ISLAND in the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by mist. The mountains are blanketed by lush forests, overflowing with clear jade-blue waterfalls.

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC...

A thin suspension bridge hangs high over the rocky river rushing through the TAROKO GORGE, connecting the jagged cliff-sides of two towering mountains.

We hear a low, throbbing tone that evolves into the droning chant of the aboriginal Truku people. From the chant, the deep, raspy voice of an elderly woman emerges:

SHAMAN (V.O.)

Long ago, this valley was a
paradise for the spirits of nature.
A peaceful place where the *Mssungut*
would play among the rainbows in
the mist. Singing was our way to
maintain order. Humanity and nature
coexisted in harmony.

Note: This film will feature four languages: ENGLISH, CHINESE, JAPANESE and TRUKU. The Shaman speaks in TRUKU throughout this opening sequence.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

The sounds of WIND CHIMES, FLUTES AND XYLOPHONES join the chant.

A group of little TROLLS, known as MSSUNGUT by the native Truku people, walk along a trail. They have thick black hair, big noses and small tails with fur tufts on the ends. The Mssungut play among the rainbows as they sing along with the chanting in the background.

Suddenly, the singing stops.

An EXPLOSION pierces through the sky. The Mssungut SCATTER as thick smoke fills the forest.

SHAMAN (V.O.)

Then the war came. Boots marched
here for the first time.

JAPANESE SOLDIERS in WWII uniforms arrive in Taroko and begin to build a MILITARY LUMBER MILL.

Many native TRUKU WARRIORS rise up with bows and arrows to protect their homeland but are quickly put down by the Japanese who unleash guns and artillery.

SHAMAN (V.O.)

Our land was under the rule of an Empire who knew nothing of our magic. Our Truku Warriors rose up but they were suppressed time and time again. Many died. The ones who survived ended up in slavery.

Truku people are put to work by the Japanese, whipped and forced to cut down trees and dig mines.

Wood is chopped and shipped to make into gun stocks. Iron ore is mined for cannons and military aircrafts.

A JAPANESE FLAG flies over the new base in Taroko. THREE MITSUBISHI ZERO FIGHTER PLANES fly through the gorge toward the ocean.

EXT. ABOVE THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

The fighter planes soar over the Pacific. They chase and attack an AMERICAN CURTIS P40 FIGHTER PLANE.

INT. AMERICAN CURTIS P40 - DAY

A BULLET flies through the pilot's window and smashes the glass. Smoke begins to pour out of the plane engine.

BILLY, an American pilot, 19, grabs the stick tightly, ready for an emergency landing. The aircraft begins to lose control.

Pulling up on the stick with all his might, Billy prays.

Note: All dialogue spoken by Billy will be in ENGLISH.

BILLY

(quoting Psalm 23)

...The LORD is my shepherd I shall
not want. He maketh me lie
down...leads me beside... restores
my soul... guides me in...
MAAaaaaaahhh!!!!

BANG!!

The plane CRASHES through the jungle canopy and comes to a stop in the limbs of a tree.

INT./EXT. AMERICAN CURTIS P40 - CONTINUOUS

Billy quickly unbuckles his seat belt, takes out the parachute and jumps out of the plane.

The parachute trails behind him. He detaches from it in a hurry.

EXT. TAROKO JUNGLE - DAY

Billy runs for his life, as fast as he can away from the burning plane.

The Curtis P40 hangs in the treetops, spilling fluids from twisted holes, smoking and ready to explode any second.

Not far from the crash site, A FIGURE emerges in silhouette. Billy hides, pulling out his HANDGUN.

A TRUKU GIRL emerges from the woods: SHU-CHEN, 18, carrying a bamboo basket filled with freshly-collected herbs, wearing a nurse's armband with a TAKASAGO MEDICAL ORGANIZATION logo.

She walks to the crash site to look for survivors. She removes the bamboo basket from her back and climbs up the tree.

Billy watches Shu-Chen in silence as she gets into the cockpit, finding no one inside. The plane begins to rock violently, losing balance.

BANG! Half the plane falls from the treetop!

Shu-Chen is buried underneath!

Billy puts away his gun and rushes to the wreckage. Shu-Chen's legs are stuck underneath some metal panels.

Billy pulls her out and carries her on his shoulder. She's unconscious.

INT. UNDER A TREE - CONTINUOUS

Billy hurries to bandage Shu-Chen.

Shu-Chen slowly opens her eyes.

BILLY
Are you a soldier?

Shu-Chen stares at Billy in silence.

BILLY (CONT'D)
How far is the Japanese base from
here?

No response from Shu-Chen.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Where is the nearest village?

Still registering no response, Billy assumes Shu-Chen does
not speak English.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I should probably get going.
Godspeed.

But just as Billy turns around to leave, Shu-Chen replies, in
a feeble voice. Note: Shu-Chen always speaks in broken
English, unless noted otherwise.

SHU-CHEN
No. Don't...

Billy turns back.

SHU-CHEN (CONT'D)
Left, is Japanese base. Right, is
our village. If you keep walking
East, you will see the ocean. You
might find American planes there.

BILLY
Thank you.

SHU-CHEN
My name is Shu-Chen. I'm not a
soldier. Thank you for saving my
life.

Beat.

BILLY
We're still technically enemies, so
don't tell anyone you saw me.
Save yourself some trouble.

Billy rushes out.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Billy runs through the forest, the Japanese chasing after
him.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Bakayaro!

Billy is swiftly overtaken. The Japanese Soldiers knock him down, kick him on the ground and take him captive.

The most violent and austere-looking soldier among them steps forward: CAPTAIN SETSUDA, 60, the commanding officer of the lumber mill in Taroko. He shoots a harsh look at the mud-covered American on the ground.

EXT. NEAR THE LUMBER MILL - DAY

Led by the Captain, the Japanese troops charge down the trail with Billy in the middle. Though Billy is cuffed and caked in dirt and blood, he marches defiantly with his captors, head held high.

The camera follows them along the trail as they approach the large LUMBER MILL. Wood is stockpiled in the lumber yard around the entrance. A sign reads NANPO LUMBER INC.

Just outside the mill is a makeshift PRISON CAMP surrounded by BARBED-WIRE FENCES. A metal sign hangs from it, along with a Japanese flag.

EXT. BAMBOO CAGE - DAY

Ichiro, 9, is a Japanese boy scout, wearing a flat-top field hat and a pea green uniform with shorts and low-top shoes. A SHORT SAMURAI SWORD is at his belt and a BRASS BUGLE hangs from his shoulder. He sits on the ground, tinkering with a BROKEN FLASHLIGHT as he sings softly to himself.

ICHIRO

(singing in Japanese)

*Momotaro! Momotaro! Those millet
dumplings on your waist. Won't you
give me one?*

BILLY (O.S)

(inside the bamboo cage,
in incredible pain)

Ahhhhhh!

Ichiro stops singing and timidly takes a peek inside the bamboo cage.

Captain Setsuda is violently interrogating Billy. Japanese Soldiers have tied two wooden blocks around his arm. They begin to twist the ropes, tightening the blocks and crushing the arm.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
(shouting in English)
TELL ME! Where is your *radio*?

BILLY
(shouting back, in pain)
GO TO HELL!!!

CUT TO:

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - DAY

Billy lies on the floor, disheveled, the crushed arm outstretched. An Aboriginal Truku DOCTOR, 60s, in a lab coat, kneels over Billy, wrapping the arm in bandages.

His daughter is Shu-Chen, who we met earlier. She wears a white nurse's dress, her hair in a large round bonnet. She hands her father medical tools as needed.

BILLY
Hey doc, why don't you just chop it
off and save me the trouble?

The Doctor smiles kindly.

DOCTOR
(in broken English)
We fix you so they may break you
again.

Billy manages an uneasily laugh.

As the Doctor works, Billy watches Shu-Chen, admiring her beauty. Shu-Chen catches him staring and blushes.

Billy grins, but feeling a sense of warmth. Shu-Chen avoids eye contact.

FADE TO:

INT./EXT. BAMBOO CAGE - NIGHT

Ichiro is no longer around. Billy lies on the floor, tossing and turning to find a comfortable position. He looks up at the starry sky.

BILLY
(praying quietly)
Dear Lord, please help us to win
the war, please do not abandon me
and let my body rot in this cursed
jungle. May my brothers out there
in the sky come rescue me.

Billy hears FOOTSTEPS in the distance.

Then, he sees Shu-Chen sneak into the bamboo cage.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Shu-Chen!

She hands Billy a bunch of BANANAS. He takes it into the cage immediately.

SHU-CHEN
I wanted to come and thank you for
saving my life. I wanted to help.

Billy begins to devour the bananas.

Shu-Chen takes out a piece of A RIPPED PAGE from a TIME MAGAZINE indicating that the Americans have taken down Iwo Jima. The Japanese fought to the last minute and have surrendered.

SHU-CHEN (CONT'D)
So... the Americans have taken down
Iwo Jima?
(beat)
Will here be next?

Billy suddenly becomes guarded.

BILLY
I know nothing about it. Why do you
ask? Are you a Japanese spy?

SHU-CHEN
No. I just want all of this to end.
(beat)
This is never our war.

Billy continues to devour the banana.

SHU-CHEN (CONT'D)
Why don't you just turn the radio
in? At least you would get fed by
them, and... stay alive.

Billy pauses.

BILLY

We will win the war. Go now! Don't risk your life for me no more. If you really want to help, you can just pray for me.

Shu-Chen nods, closing her eyes. She holds the RED ABORIGINAL NECKLACE around her neck in one hand and reaches the other hand into the cage, placing it gently on Billy's head.

SHU-CHEN

(singing in Truku)

Gaya, you are my shelter.

Gaya, we are protected by you.

Gaya, send us a guide. Gaya, please take us in and let us become One with you.

As Shu-Chen sings the prayer, the grass begins to rustle as if by the breath of the Universal Spirit.

In the shadows of the forest edge, we can see Mssungut, the mythical Taroko trolls, peeking out to spy on them.

Billy closes his eyes. For the first time, he feels a sense of harmony and calm.

Shu-Chen's chanting merges with the Shaman's.

SHAMAN (V.O.)

They met almost every night and prayed together. They came to believe that nature has its order. They found peace when they prayed together.

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - NIGHT

In a MONTAGE, we see Shu-Chen come back to visit Billy over various nights, always separated by the bamboo cage.

Shu-Chen dozes off, still holding Billy's hands through the cage. They are a lot closer now.

SHAMAN (V.O.)

Only in peace, you can hear my calling.

Shu-Chen's eyelids tremble a little, as if she's having a dream.

THE SHAMAN'S SINGING STOPS.

Shu-Chen opens her eyes, and--

EXT. FOREST (SHU-CHEN'S VISION) - DAY

--she finds herself in a peaceful forest.

Under a GIANT TREE, THE SHAMAN is waiting for her, in A RED ROBE and A HEADPIECE MADE OF OLD GNARLY ROOTS, her face covered with AN INKY LACE TATTOO.

Shu-Chen stares at the Shaman in awe.

SHAMAN

Shu-Chen, the girl I've chosen.
Listen carefully! In three days,
something big is going to happen
here in Taroko. There's one song to
lead everyone out...

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - NIGHT

Shu-Chen opens her eyes in shock. She sees Billy half-asleep next to her.

SHU-CHEN

Three days... In three days,
something is going to happen.

BILLY

What? What is it?

SHU-CHEN

I don't know. Gaya told me. A
vision from Gaya...

Seeing Shu-Chen panic makes Billy worried.

BILLY

Gaya? Are you okay?

SHU-CHEN

Listen up! In three days, I have to
get you out of here.

BILLY

But I don't want you to risk your
life.

SHU-CHEN

You have to believe me!

BILLY

Okay.

SHU-CHEN

I will try to get the keys. Pay attention to the guards and know when they do their rounds. And... we need a map.

Shu-Chen takes out a piece of PAPER and begins to draw.

EXT. BAMBOO CAGE - DAWN

The sun rises and wakes Ichiro. In the distance, he can see Shu-Chen and Billy, talking to each other at the cage and doing something suspicious. He continues to spy on them.

ICHIRO'S POV: Shu-Chen rolls up the map and hides it inside one of the hollow shafts of the bamboo cage. Shu-Chen says goodbye to Billy and leaves.

MOMENTS LATER

Ichiro sneaks into the bamboo cage. Billy is deep in sleep. Ichiro quietly takes out the piece of paper hidden inside the bamboo shaft and opens it. It's a well-drawn MAP of all the trails to leave Taroko.

INT. CAPTAIN SETSUDA OFFICE AT THE MILL - DAY

Ichiro puts the map on Captain Setsuda's table. Setsuda picks it up.

Note: From here on out, all dialogue spoken by Ichiro, Captain Setsuda, and any Japanese soldiers will be in JAPANESE, unless noted otherwise.

ICHIRO

That Truku woman, she wants to help the American escape.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

Well done, nephew. That little bitch!

Captain Setsuda claps Ichiro's shoulder as encouragement. Ichiro looks proud.

INT. HUT AT THE MILL - DAY

The hut is filled with TRUKU LABORERS, having a secret meeting led by Shu-Chen. She speaks in a quiet voice.

SHU-CHEN

(in Truku)

All your wives and daughters will
be waiting underneath the *Giant*
Tree for you. Once you hear this
song, you run as fast as you can
towards the bridge.

Suddenly, the door is kicked open!

Two Japanese Soldiers RUSH IN AND DRAG SHU-CHEN AWAY.

EXT. BAMBOO CAGE - DAY

Captain Setsuda is kicking and torturing Billy when the two Japanese Soldiers arrive with Shu-Chen.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Captain, what should we do with
her?

Captain Setsuda wipes away the sweat on his forehead and adjusts his hair. He looks at Shu-Chen, and then at Ichiro.

Captain Setsuda pulls out his NAMBU PISTOL and hands it to Ichiro.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

Get rid of her, nephew. Prove your
worth as a man.

Ichiro nervously takes the pistol.

EXT. BORDER OF THE LUMBER MILL - DAY

With her hands tied up, Shu-Chen walks through the woods with Ichiro close behind her, sticking the pistol in her back.

SHU-CHEN

(in Japanese)

Listen to me kid, something big is
going to happen today.

ICHIRO

Shut up, Truku.

SHU-CHEN
(in Japanese)
The God of the forest has warmed me
to help everyone escape.

ICHIRO
Stop your superstitious non-sense.

They reach A WELL, where the Japanese have been executing criminals and dumping their bodies.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
Kneel down.

Shu-Chen kneels by the well.

SHU-CHEN
(in Japanese)
Run!

ICHIRO
Shut up.

Ichiro trembles nervously, the pistol shaking in his sweaty hand. He is unable to pull the trigger. Tears begin to fall from his eyes.

In a rush, Ichiro PUSHES SHU-CHEN INTO THE WELL and runs away as fast as he can.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Ichiro runs, crying, with the pistol still in his hand. He blames himself for being a coward and unable to finish the task.

EXT. WELL - DAY

REVEAL: TWO HANDS are on the edge of the well. Shu-Chen is holding herself up with all her might. She has not yet fallen.

With her last ounce of strength, she successfully climbs out. We can see all the DEAD BODIES, BONES AND ROTTEN FLESH beneath her in the dark well.

Shu-Chen finally sets both feet on the ground by the well.

She feels a subtle RUMBLING. Her expression turns worried.

Shu-Chen RUNS toward the peak of the mountain.

EXT. TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Shu-Chen continues to run, higher and higher. She has not yet forgotten her mission.

When she reaches the top, she begins to sing the song, trying to call for everyone.

SHU-CHEN
(singing in Truku)
*Gaya, you are my shelter.
Gaya, we are protected by you.
Gaya, send us a guide. Gaya, please
take us in and let us become One
with you.*

A SUDDEN LOUD BLAST can be heard in the distance.

EXT. HIROSHIMA CITY - DAY

THE ATOMIC MUSHROOM CLOUD rises over Hiroshima.

SHAMAN (V.O.)
The bomb that exploded out in the
distance was so powerful that its
shockwave was even felt here,
awakening something deep within.

EXT. TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Shu-Chen sees the ground begin to crack underneath her.

SHAMAN (V.O.)
Her song never reached the ears of
the people...

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - DAY

Billy is being tortured by the Japanese. They all stop when they feel the rumble.

INT. MILL - DAY

All the Truku Laborers sense the rumble. They drop whatever job they were doing and run for safety.

EXT. TAROKO GORGE - DAY

THE EARTHQUAKE STRIKES!

Avalanches of boulders and trees come own on the lumber yard from all sides, sealing everyone below.

Chaos and screaming can be heard in the distance.

THEN, SILENCE.

SHAMAN (V.O.)
Everyone was trapped here, without
knowing the war had ended. Their
spirits continue to rage in the
after-life, unable to move on!

EXT. TAROKO GORGE - CONTINUOUS

Shu-Chen runs for her life with tears streaming down her face. She is the only survivor.

She takes one last pained glance at the mill, a silent apology to all, and then runs away.

Death and mayhem surrounds the forest.

SHAMAN (V.O.)
Sometimes a task can take more than
one lifetime to fulfill. They fall
upon the children who come after...

The Shaman's voice dissolves into the sound of a busy train station...

FADE TO:

EXT. MODERN TRAIN STATION - DAY

A pretty YELLOW BUTTERFLY flies in the sky outside a train station plaza.

SUPER: YEAR 2020

A little girl named MEI MEI, 8, rushes to catch the butterfly.

Mei Mei's MOM, 50, in a hurry, calls her impatiently.

MOM
Mei Mei! Hurry up! Train's leaving!

Note: Mei Mei, Mom, and all other modern-day characters speak in Chinese, unless noted otherwise.

Mei Mei takes out her iPad and takes a quick picture of the butterfly while it is momentarily still. Mom grabs Mei Mei's hand and drag her away.

INT. MODERN TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Rushing through the train station with her two daughters, Mom takes them toward the escalator. JIE JIE, the elder sister, 15, can't stop complaining.

JIE JIE
Mom, do we really have to go to
Taroko this weekend?

MOM
Can we not talk about this right
now?

JIE JIE
Today is Daniel's birthday party. I
already promised him I'd go!

MOM
You know what is more important,
right!?

Mom drags a big suitcase with her two daughters following closely. The family descends the escalator to the underground platform.

CLOSE-UP of the clock on the wall: 8:00 AM.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The doors slide shut and the train begins to roll.

CLOSE-UP on the light-up sign on the front of the train: "DESTINATION: TAROKO". As the train moves forward, the word "TAROKO" fills the frame and then cross-dissolves into the passenger cabin.

The train carries a wide variety of PASSENGERS. A nerdy boy reads a Japanese comic book, a young woman scrolls endlessly down her iPhone, a businessman reads The Economist, and a group of college guys play Magic The Gathering on the fold-down table between their facing seats.

As the train enters a tunnel, the camera takes us past all of them to the family of three. Jie Jie plays a loud video game on her iPad and Mei Mei doodles in her sketch book, copying the picture of the butterfly that she took earlier on her iPad.

MEI MEI
 (pointing at the photo)
 Mom, what kind of butterfly is it?

MOM
 Hm... I'm not sure. Maybe you
 should ask your science teacher
 when the summer break is over.

Mom notices that there's a RAINBOW above the butterfly in Mei Mei's drawing.

MOM (CONT'D)
 Wow, look at this pretty rainbow!

MEI MEI
 I saw it in my dream. I had a dream
 about a valley that was full of
 butterflies and a rainbow.

MOM
 Interesting... We have an old
 fairytale in the Truku tribe that
 involves a rainbow too.

MEI MEI
 What fairytale? I want to hear
 about it!

Mom taps on Jie Jie's shoulder.

MOM
 Put the iPad down, Jie Jie. Come
 listen to the story with us.

Jie Jie reluctantly puts away her iPad and makes a funny face. Mei Mei is excited to hear the story.

MOM (CONT'D)
 Once upon a time, there was a
 couple who was madly in love. The
 man was a warrior and the woman was
 a princess. They lived a happy life
 on this side of the rainbow bridge.
 (she points to the right-
 hand side of Mei Mei's
 rainbow)
 But one day, a war broke out, and
 the warrior was taken captive by
 the enemies
 (she points to the other
 side of the rainbow)
 to the other side of the bridge and
 thrown into jail.

Mei Mei is enchanted.

MOM (CONT'D)

The enemies punished the warrior by starving him, day by day. The princess wanted to bring food to her lover, but couldn't cross the rainbow bridge to get to the other side.

MEI MEI

Why couldn't she cross the rainbow bridge?

MOM

Because normal people can't cross it.

MEI MEI

But how come the enemies could take the warrior over there?

MOM

Perhaps the war had changed the rules of the rainbow bridge...

Mom continues the story.

MOM (CONT'D)

The princess was so worried, not knowing what to do, so she went to the Shaman in the village. The Shaman told her the only way she could go across the bridge was to become a dog. So each night, the princess would turn into a dog to cross the bridge and bring food to her lover.

MEI MEI

Wow... And then what happened?

MOM

That's it. This story doesn't really have an ending.

Mei Mei looks unsatisfied.

MEI MEI

Mom, if I'm thrown into jail. Will you become a dog and come bring me food?

MOM
 (after a beat)
 Of course.

MEI MEI
 Me too. I'll do the same.

The train exits the tunnel, passing the magnificent Taroko gorge, with tall cliffs to the right and the ocean to the left.

The train slowly reaches Xincheng Station in Taroko.

EXT. TAROKO CROSS-ROAD HIGHWAY - DAY

A small car drives through Taroko gorge with the looming, foreboding mountains around them, slowly getting swallowed by nature.

We hear Mom and Jie Jie singing along with music coming from the iPad.

MOM & JIE JIE
 (singing in Truku)
Paru balay grasun ka, hakaw utux
nii (Rainbow bridge has brought us joy)
Malu balay tengsan a, hakaw utux
nii (Rainbow bridge's teaching is a blessing)
Malu balay tengsan a, hakaw utux
nii (Rainbow bridge's teaching is a blessing)

Mei Mei doodles on her own, not singing with them. Mom taps Mei Mei's shoulder.

MOM
 Mei Mei, join us. Ready to perform soon?

Mei Mei shakes her head.

MOM (CONT'D)
 No one is gonna laugh at you this time.

MEI MEI
 No!

Mom sighs. And just when she is about to start singing again, Jie Jie speaks up.

JIE JIE

Mom, if Mei Mei doesn't go on stage with me, you'll have to buy me a gift.

MOM

(reluctantly)

Just sing!

MOM & JIE JIE

*Paru balay grasun ka, hakaw utux
nii* (Rainbow bridge has brought us joy)...

Mom and Jie Jie continue practicing singing with the music from the iPad.

After a DRIVING MONTAGE through the mountains, the car arrives outside a village community center. Many cars have parked in the parking lot.

EXT./INT. VILLAGE COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

GRANDMA SHU-CHEN'S FUNERAL. The entrance is filled with beautiful flower baskets and other floral decorations. In the middle of the room, A PORTRAIT OF GRANDMA is set up with care. On both sides, there are STACKS OF CANNED FOOD AND CANDIES set on the ground as offering (a local Taiwanese funeral tradition).

A middle-aged man, the UNCLE, gives out funeral set lists and candies in the doorway.

MOM

Hey brother. It's been a long time!

UNCLE

(sarcastic)

Did you have to wait until mom died to visit?

(to Mei Mei and Jie Jie)

And look at you, you guys have grown so much! Are you guys ready to perform in a little bit?

MOM

(quietly, to Uncle)

Jie Jie is ready. But Mei Mei, I'm not so sure. She didn't do well last time at the school's singing contest. She got laughed at by her schoolmates and swears she'll never sing again in her life.

UNCLE

It's okay Mei Mei! I sing badly too. But I still sing loud and proud! That's just who we are as Truku!

Uncle gives Mei Mei a handful of MORINAGA CARAMEL CANDY boxes.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Take them! These used to be your grandma's favorite! Take more, you'll be just fine on stage!

Mei Mei takes the candies but still looks worried.

SOME TIME LATER

The funeral has begun. The ceremony is in a half Catholic style mixed with local Truku tradition. There's an URN set in front of the grandma's picture. Hung around the urn is the RED TRADITIONAL TAROKO NECKLACE that we saw on Shu-Chen's neck earlier.

An ABORIGINAL PRIEST chants the prayer in Truku. The room is filled peaceful and austere mourning.

After the prayer is done, the priest announces (in Chinese):

PRIEST

Grandma Shu-Chen had lived a fulfilled life. I believe she's walking across the rainbow bridge now. Her last wish is to have her ashes spread in the valley of Taroko. But before that, let us bring all her grandchildren to the stage and sing a song for her as we wish Shu-Chen a peaceful journey.

A HANDFUL OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN in traditional Truku clothes come to the stage and stand in front of the urn, including Jie Jie and Mei Mei. Mei Mei shoves a Morinaga Caramel Candy into her mouth before going up.

They begin to sing the Truku song:

GRANDCHILDREN

(singing in Truku)

Tai tai tai tai tai binaw wah!
(waw) hakaw utux ni(waw)
hakaw utux ni! (waw) ana bi
rabang!(waw) ana bi rabang!

As the youngsters sing gracefully and proudly on the stage, the Uncle, led by the aboriginal Priest, begins to put Shu-Chen's ashes into the pouch of the Red Traditional Taroko Necklace.

Meanwhile, as the singing begins, Mei Mei's face turns very red, unable to open her mouth to sing along. She looks embarrassed and awkward.

Jie Jie looks over her shoulder at her sister. EVERYONE IN THE AUDIENCE begins notice Mei Mei and murmur about her adorable shyness. Humiliated, Mei Mei rushes off the stage and goes straight to her mother.

The audience laughs, making Mei Mei feel even more embarrassed. She hides her head in Mom's arms. Mom calms her down while the performance continues.

GRANDCHILDREN (CONT'D)

(singing in Truku)

*paru balay grasun ka, hakaw utux
nii,
malu balay tengsan a, hakaw utux
nii,
wis~wis~wis~wis...*

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

After the funeral, all of the adults gather in the living room for the reading of GRANDMA'S WILL. Jie Jie is preoccupied with her phone texting her boyfriend Daniel while Mei Mei sits in the corner alone, still sad about her embarrassing performance earlier.

BIG UNCLE

When Mom was alive, she told me to arrange her funeral three days before the Taroko Earthquake Anniversary. Her wish was for all her offspring to come back to Taroko to attend the funeral. Because Mom believed that--
(looking over at the will)
--there would be a "chosen Shaman" among us, and that person will follow what Gaya has ordered her to do: "leading the trapped ones out of here...."

AUNT

What did she mean by "the trapped ones?"

LITTLE UNCLE

(interrupting)

Oh, what Mom meant was, we are all the "chosen Shaman" and should follow what Gaya wants us to do! In order to lead everyone out of Taroko, we need to *sell* the land Mom has left us, for a good price!

All of the adults including Mom nod their heads in agreement.

Meanwhile, Mei Mei spots a pretty TIN COOKIE BOX. She opens it and finds an OLD RIPPED PAGE FROM TIME MAGAZINE. It's the article about the American army winning the battle of Iwo Jima in WWII.

A few other old pictures are in the box as well, including one of an AMERICAN CURTIS P40 FIGHTER PLANE. Mei Mei pays no mind to those, and picks up her GRANDMA'S DIARY, written all in JAPANESE, which MEI MEI can't understand.

The adults continue their conversation.

BIG UNCLE

The realtor suggested we sell the house along with the hills behind it.

MOM

The price they offered is too low.

THIRD UNCLE

The value is only going down. We should sell it now while someone still wants it.

AUNT

He's right! Plus there are always crazy mudslides every time a typhoon hits. Can't farm it! Nothing grows on rock! It's as if the land is cursed!

MOM

Cursed? Don't be superstitious! I suggest we sell it straight to the Asia Cement Company. Those baron rocks are worth millions in gravel! They for sure will give us a good offer.

Mei Mei is distracted by A TRAIL OF ANTS by her foot, heading into a hole outside the house. She follows the ants outside.

The adults are still busy arguing about the land and Jie Jie is waiting for Daniel to call back. No one seems to notice that Mei Mei has left the house.

EXT. HOUSE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mei Mei follows the ants to an open grassy meadow and notices a group of YELLOW BUTTERFLIES. Excited, she runs back home to pick up her iPad to take pictures. But as quickly as the butterflies appeared, they are gone again.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

The adults sit silently around the table. It doesn't look like they've come to an agreement. Just then, Mom notices that Mei Mei's gone!

MOM

Where's Mei Mei?

Jie Jie, who has been consumed by a Korean drama on her iPhone, also just now notices that her sister is no longer here.

SECOND UNCLE

How about this? Listen to my new plan...

MOM

(to Jie Jie)

Go find your sister.

Jie Jie reluctantly gets up and goes to find Mei Mei, still carrying her iPhone. Mom continues to argue with all the uncles.

EXT. GORGE, NEAR THE HOUSE - DAY

Mei Mei, carrying her backpack now, spots a group of FLYING SQUIRRELS gliding down from the air and running along the tree in one direction. She turns to follow them all the way to the river.

Jie Jie catches up from behind and yells at Mei Mei.

JIE JIE

Mei Mei! Where do you think you're going?

MEI MEI

Look! Flying squirrels!

JIE JIE

Come back! You've gone way too far.
You don't even know how to swim! If
you fall in, who's gonna save you?!

MEI MEI

I'll be careful!

Mei Mei squats on the ground and takes out her sketchbook.
She begins to draw the flying squirrels on the tree.

Jie Jie's phone dings. She just got a text message from Mom:
Have you found Mei Mei yet? Make sure to keep an eye on her!

Jie Jie texts back with an attitude: *Yeah...I'm watching her.*
She adds many eye emojis.

Suddenly, Daniel is FaceTime calling. A big smile appears on
Jie Jie's face. She picks up the call in excitement.

JIE JIE

You finally called me back,
bastard! Look!
(turning the iPad around)
Isn't it pretty out here?

DANIEL

(on the iPad)
Not as pretty as you!

Jie Jie is completely immersed in the video chat, caring only
about whether she looks pretty on camera. She hasn't noticed
that Mei Mei has gone even deeper into the gorge, closer to
the edge of the gushing water.

Mei Mei puts the sketchbook in her backpack after seeing a
PRETTY BIRD on a rock in the river. She can't help but walk
down to the water to get a closer look.

In the blink of an eye, A HUGE FLOCK OF BIRDS bursts towards
the river. Mei Mei gets scared and almost slips. Jie Jie
finally looks up in shock.

SMOKE begin to rise in the distance.

GIANT CRACKS form in the earth under a thicket of bushes and
trees. Billowing BLACK CLOUDS float up through the cracks. It
seems at first to be smoke or steam... But the clouds seem to
be taking vague human shapes before they dissipate. We can
recognize the outlines and faces of the Shaman, Billy,
Captain Setsuda, Ichiro, and others that we saw in 1945. We
hear garbled whispers, and can almost make out their voices.

The camera follows these ghostly clouds up into the air to reveal the LUMBER MILL, which seems to be magically rebuilding itself from its decrepit remains.

Mei Mei and Jie Jie look at each other hopelessly.

Just then, the earth begins to *RUMBLE*.

Increasingly large rocks begin to roll down the cliffs. Everything begins to shake violently.

Jie Jie screams, trying to go save Mei Mei.

But Mei Mei has FALLEN DOWN THE EMBANKMENT into the raging water and washed down the river, completely swallowed by nature.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. TAROKO GORGE - DAY

Mei Mei is jolted awake by a BLACK FORMOSAN MOUNTAIN DOG licking her face. She spits out a mouthful of water and screams!

MEI MEI

Ahhhh!!!!!!!!!!

The Dog jumps back a few feet, but still looks curious, playful and cute.

Suddenly Mei Mei realizes she has no idea where she is. She stands up and looks around. She's on a pebbly river bank in a great stone canyon, with steep green mountains all around, and not a man-made object in sight. Mei Mei gets scared.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

MOM!!!! JIE JIE!!! Where are you?

Her lonely voice echoes through the mountains.

She takes off her backpack and clutches it tightly for security. She crouches down and begins to cry.

The Dog comes up to Mei Mei and tries to comfort her, making whining sounds to show empathy. Mei Mei chokes back her last few sobs and looks up at the big Dog.

She wipes the tears from her face and unzips her backpack. She pulls out her iPad - it's dry. On the top right of the screen, we see that the battery life is down to 17%. Mei Mei opens Skype, and then FaceTime. But there's no Wi-Fi or cell signal.

Deflated, Mei Mei notices something in the Dog's mouth. She takes a closer look. It's the same Red Traditional Taroko Necklace that was wrapped around grandma's urn.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Grandma's necklace! Why do you have this?

Mei Mei grabs the necklace from the Dog. Not wanting to lose it, she puts it around her own neck.

Suddenly, the Dog seems barks toward another direction. It turns around and rushes up the riverbank, into the woods.

And just like that, Mei Mei is utterly alone in the world. Her eyes bulge with terror. She feels a sudden chill.

A LOW AND SPOOKY GROAN emerges from the woods, like a huge monster grumbling under its breath.

Mei Mei shoves her iPad back to her backpack and runs after the Dog.

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

The noise of CICADAS fills the air.

Mei Mei cautiously enters the forest, stepping over gnarled roots and mossy fallen logs. She grabs a tree trunk for support, and a GIANT STICK BUG crawls onto her hand. Not afraid, Mei Mei tries to play with it, curious.

Then she spots a metallic MILLIPEDE slinking around a log in front of her. She looks up at the dense canopy, pierced by golden beams made visible by the heavy humidity in the air. The Dog is under a BANANA TREE just ahead of her, jumping up and down, trying to bite a bunch of bananas that hangs just out of reach.

When Mei Mei walks over, the Dog sits down and wags her tail. She whines and gestures with her paw, begging Mei Mei to pick the fruit.

MEI MEI
You like bananas?

The Dog nods as if answering.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
I like banana cakes better.

Mei Mei finds a long stick at the edge of the clearing. She picks it up and swings at the bananas, aiming for the stem, but accidentally smashing a few bananas in the process.

Mei Mei finally knocks down the bunch. The Dog begins to devour it with joy.

Mei Mei's stomach growls. She looks from the Dog back to the bountiful banana tree, reconsidering.

Munching some banana, Mei Mei notices some SHADOWY FIGURES moving through the bushes in the distance. She stands up and approaches.

They appear to be Japanese Soldiers - in fact, THE VERY SAME ONES WE SAW IN 1945. But as far as Mei Mei can tell, they are simply a group of oddly-dressed army men.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

Hey! HELP! I'm over here! Help me!

To her surprise, the Dog begins to bark and growl. She bites Mei Mei's clothes and tries and pull her away. The soldiers look up and see Mei Mei in the distance.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Who's there? Show yourself!

The Soldiers pull out their SAMURAI SWORDS and run after her.

MEI MEI

Help...

The Dog continues to pull at her clothes. She takes a few steps back, realizing these men are not going to help her. But it's already too late, as three Japanese Soldiers rush out encircling her.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Are you from the village? Why don't you have your official Takasago badge on?

MEI MEI

I don't understand Japanese...

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Was that *Shina* (an archaic Japanese name for Chinese) she speaks?

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2

Shina? Are you local from the island? Where did you come from? Speak the official language!

Intimidated by all the Japanese Soldiers speaking a foreign language to her, Mei Mei bursts into tears.

MEI MEI

Whaooooo... I want my mother!

JAPANESE SOLDIER 3

My gosh. I can't stand kids crying.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1

Check out her backpack!

(pointing at Mei Mei's
Mickey Mouse backpack)

It's that evil rat from America!

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2

Very suspicious! Take her back to
the base!

The Soldiers grab Mei Mei and drag her to the Mill. The Dog barks at them constantly from behind but has no choice but to follow them.

EXT. LUMBER MILL, JAPANESE MILITARY BASE - AFTERNOON

Three Soldiers and Mei Mei arrive at the mill with a sign for NANPO LUMBER INC. Mei Mei sees a GUARD stand austerely on an observation deck with a machine gun in his hand.

A SUPERVISOR standing in the entrance yells at the ABORIGINAL LABORERS who pause what they were doing to look at this little girl being brought in. All the Aboriginal Laborers have Takasago Volunteer Bandages tied around their arms. The Supervisors scold them while cracking a whip in the air over their heads.

SUPERVISOR

(Japanese)

What are you animals looking at!
Get back to work!

The Aboriginal Laborers submissively get back to what they were doing. Seeing this, Mei Mei gets even more scared and can't help but cry louder.

Ichiro, who was drawing a map on the ground, hears Mei Mei cry. He gets up to take a good look at her. He hasn't seen a kid his age for the longest time, and he can't stop staring.

INT. MILITARY TENT - AFTERNOON

Captain Setsuda stands before Billy, who kneels over the same map we saw in 1945. Once again wooden blocks are tied with ropes around Billy's arm.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(in English)

The American Radio! Where did you hide it? Where's your radio?

BILLY

Either turn me over to the proper authorities or let me go, but it's a crime to just keep me caged up at this mill!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(in English)

I never agreed to your Western Prohibitions! Your rules have no Place here! This is MY JUNGLE! I make the rules! You're mine to use as I wish!

He gestures to the soldiers, who solemnly TWIST THE ROPES, crushing Billy's arm again.

BILLY

AAAAAAAAGGGGGHHHH!!!!

EXT. MILITARY TENT - AFTERNOON

The Soldiers drag a barely-conscious Billy out of the tent while the other two Soldiers drag Mei Mei in. Using the last of his strength, Billy makes eye contact with Mei Mei as they pass by each other.

INT. MILITARY TENT - CONTINUOUS

Captain observes Mei Mei with confusion.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(to the soldiers)

She's the girl speaking *Shina*?

MEI MEI

(crying)

I want to find my mom!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
 (speaking Chinese with an
 accent)
 Who's your mom? Who's your dad?
 Where did you come from?

Setsuda slams his desk.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
 (Chinese)
 Tell me!

MEI MEI
 (continuing to cry)
 Waah... Mommy!!!!

Captain Setsuda loses patience and begins to dig through her backpack. He sees Mei Mei's iPad.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
 What the hell is it?

He has no idea how to use this suspicious thing. He puts it away and takes out other stuff: Flowers, sticks, weirdly-shaped rocks, her sketchbook, crayons, and finally, the box of Morinaga Caramel Candies.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
 Food is extremely scarce, not only
 on the island but also back home in
 Japan. Where the hell did she get
 luxurious stuff like this?

A Soldier next to him replies.

JAPANESE SOLDIER
 She's a spy from China?

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
 A kid spy? Are you retarded?

The Soldiers are all confused and bewildered by this little girl too. Mei Mei continues to cry.

MEI MEI
 Mommmmy!!!!!! I wanna go home!

Captain Setsuda can't stand Mei Mei anymore. He shoves everything back into her backpack and throws it to the side.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
 So annoying! Stop crying! Contact
 headquarters and ask them what to
 do with this kid!

JAPANESE SOLDIER

(hesitant)

Sorry... Captain... But we still
haven't been able to get a hold of
headquarters...

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

Well of course not! Lock her up
then!

The Soldiers drag Mei Mei to the cage.

EXT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

Ichiro peeks through the tent from outside and sees Mei Mei
being taken away. As Captain Setsuda walks past him, Ichiro
pretends nothing happened and quickly takes a bow. Then
Ichiro follows them from behind.

INT./EXT. BAMBOO CAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Soldiers throw Mei Mei into a bamboo cell next to
Billy's. She curls into a ball in the corner and continues
crying. Captain Setsuda reaches the cages and Ichiro catches
up.

Setsuda paces back and forth outside the two bamboo cages,
looking at these two prisoners, Billy and Mei Mei. Suddenly,
Setsuda notices a pile of BLACK BANANA PEELS hidden under the
leaves and dirt in Billy's cage. He goes in to grab them, his
face filled with rage.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(in English)

WHAT IS THIS?

Billy doesn't answer, and it's unclear whether he's capable
of answering in his current state. Setsuda throws a handful
of dirty banana peels into Billy's face.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

(in English)

WHO IS BRINGING YOU FOOD?!

He grabs Billy's bound hands and drives a long bamboo
splinter underneath his middle fingernail.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

(in English)

Tell me WHO IS SUSTAINING YOU!?

Billy passes out from the pain. Captain Setsuda KICKS Billy's limp body until he runs out of breath.

He turns to look at Mei Mei in the cage next door. Mei Mei is still curled in a ball with hands covering her ears.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

(to Ichiro)

You think it was from her?

Ichiro replies immediately.

ICHIRO

No. It cannot be her.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

How do you know?

ICHIRO

A timid girl like her? She wouldn't have the bravery to deliver food to the American. I just know!

Captain Setsuda takes another look at Mei Mei, who's still curled in a ball, and back to Ichiro. Maybe Ichiro is right.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(with a straight face)

Well. I saw you cover your eyes during the interrogation. I don't want to see that sort of weakness from you ever again.

ICHIRO

Yes! Uncle.

Setsuda leaves the cage. Ichiro glances at Billy, and then at Mei Mei who is still sobbing in the corner. He runs after his uncle. The Soldiers follow, locking the cage doors behind them.

EXT. LUMBER MILL / BAMBOO CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Seeing all the Soldiers are gone, the Dog trots over to Billy's cage with a banana in its mouth. Poking its head between the bars where there's hole underneath that has been dug out, the Dog squeezes itself under the cage. The Dog tucks the banana under some rotten leaves and licks Billy's unconscious face.

The Dog walks toward Mei Mei, who still looks terrified. The Dog licks her face, trying to comfort her.

MEI MEI
 (still sobbing)
 Mommy....

A FEW RAIN DROPS fall from the sky.

Mei Mei hugs the Dog tightly as the rain starts pouring heavily.

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - AT THE SAME TIME

Billy begins to regain consciousness as the rain splashes on his face. He wakes up and notices the banana that the Dog brought him. He looks around frantically.

BILLY
 Shu-Chen?

But Billy only sees the little girl, all wet, covered in mud, hugging the Dog. He notices the necklace around her neck that was from her grandmother and gets closer to Mei Mei.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Where did you get that necklace?

Mei Mei looks at Billy with no response.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Don't worry. I'm not gonna hurt you. Did you see who brought the banana to me?

Still no reply for a while.

Then, she speaks up, in Chinese.

MEI MEI
 I want to find my mother.

BILLY
 Mama? You want to find your mother?

MEI MEI
 (in broken English)
 I want my mother.

BILLY
 Okay. Where is your mother?

Not knowing how to reply back in English, Mei Mei gets frustrated and shouts out in Chinese.

MEI MEI

That's why I asked you! I don't know where she is!

BILLY

Stop crying! You're gonna piss off the guards! They are scum. If they hear you cry, they won't give you an easy time!

Mei Mei continues crying.

MEI MEI

I want to go home! I want to get back to my family!

Just then, the Dog gently grabs Mei Mei's clothes and gets up. The Dog walks to the corner of the cage. Mei Mei looks at it and notices a hole underneath the cage, big enough for a dog or a little child to get through. Mei Mei wipes off the tears from her face.

BILLY

Is that your dog?

Mei Mei shakes her head. No.

Meanwhile, the Dog has gone through the hole to the other side of the cage. The Dog rushes towards the guards.

EXT. BAMBOO CAGE, LUMBER MILL - CONTINUOUS

The Dog trots to the two GUARDS at the entrance and tries to get their attention, hopping around and wagging its tail like it wants to play.

JAPANESE GUARD 1

Shoo dog! Git!

JAPANESE GUARD 2

It just wants to play fetch.

JAPANESE GUARD 1

I'll give it something to play with!

He pulls a GRENADE off his belt and taunts the Dog with it.

JAPANESE GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

Okay, dog! You wanna fetch? You wanna fetch?!

The Dog hops from side to side, wagging its tail, wide eyes trained on the "ball." The Guard PULLS THE PIN and throws the grenade into the woods.

JAPANESE GUARD 1 (CONT'D)
GO FETCH!

The Dog comes bounding out of the weeds and bites down on the grenade, COMpressing ITS SAFETY HANDLE, then runs back to the guards.

The Guards watch the woods with their fingers in their ears. But when they don't hear the blast, their smiles fade and they exchange worried looks.

Then the Dog leaps back out of the woods, grenade in its mouth, running straight for them, tail wagging. The Guards turn and run in the opposite direction, screaming in terror.

JAPANESE GUARD 1 (CONT'D)
INU BAKAYARO! AAAAAHHHHH!!!!

JAPANESE GUARD 2
It wants to bring it back to you!

Guard 1 pulls out his PISTOL and aims it at the dog.

JAPANESE GUARD 1
I'll shoot the crazy mutt!

JAPANESE GUARD 2
Don't kill it! It's too close! If the jaw goes limp, we blow!

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - AT THE SAME TIME

Seeing his chance, Billy rushes to Mei Mei.

BILLY
The Dog seems to be helping us.
You want to leave or not?

MEI MEI
(English)
Leave?

BILLY
(gesturing)
Yeah! Leave! Get the hell out of here!

Mei Mei seems to be getting what Billy's saying. She nods.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You see the axe over there!?

Billy points to an AXE stuck in a stump nearby.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Axe! Axe! Over there!

MEI MEI
(Chinese mixed with
English)
Axe!? You want me bring you Axe?

BILLY
Get through the cage by going
underneath the hole. You can do it!
Hurry up!

Mei Mei looks at the guards who are wrestling with the Dog.
She shakes her head, scared.

MEI MEI
No... I can't.

BILLY
Hurry! We are running out of
time!!! You can do this!

MEI MEI
I can't...

BILLY
I'll take you to your mother if we
get out!

MEI MEI
(English)
You, take me, my mother?

BILLY
Yes! I'll take you to find your
mother!

Mei Mei hesitates.

MEI MEI
(English)
Promise?

BILLY
I promise! Get through here! Bring
that axe to me!

Finally brave enough, Mei Mei gets through the cage and goes to dislodge the heavy axe from the stump. She drags it toward the cage and swings it against the bamboo bars with all her might, but barely leaves a dent.

MEI MEI
I can't even pick it up!

BILLY
Give it here!

Mei Mei struggles to pass the heavy axe between the bars.

EXT. LUMBER MILL - AT THE SAME TIME

The Dog whips its head back and forth and then RELEASES THE GRENADE, sending it flying towards the guards. They scatter! It flies over their heads and lands in a WELL.

Bang! And then the well BLOWS UP!!!

CHAOS DESCENDS ON THE CAMP!

The Guards are splashed by the water bursting from the well.

JAPANESE GUARD 1
AAAhhhh!!!!

JAPANESE GUARD 2
I'm gonna kill that mangy bitch!

Captain Setsuda runs out of his bunk, shirtless.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
What the FUCK have you idiots
done?!

INT. BAMBOO CAGE - AT THE SAME TIME

Billy whacks at the bars of his cage with the axe.

REVEAL: Ichiro is a few yards away, watching. But he doesn't come any closer.

The axe is almost too heavy for Billy to swing with his withered arms, but he manages to BREAK THROUGH A CROSSBEAM, and then SQUEEZE OUT between the bars.

Ichiro picks up his bugle and plays.

ICHIRO
 (announcing)
 Prisoner has fled! Prisoner has
 fled!

Hearing Ichiro's call, Setsuda comes bolting around the corner, NAMBU PISTOL in hand.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
 HALT! NOW! Get them!

Mei Mei and Billy make it into the dense underbrush. Setsuda comes after them and just as he enters the forest HE TRIPS AND FALLS FLAT on his face, the pistol bouncing out of his hand.

He looks up from the mud to see that the Dog tripped him by dragging a big stick across the path. The Dog goes to pick up Mei Mei's backpack on the ground that the Dog had snuck into the tent and stolen earlier. The Dog gives Captain Setsuda a long-tongued smile, and then darts off.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
 BAKAYAROOOOOO!!!!!!

Captain Setsuda jumps to his feet, scoops up his pistol and FIRES BLINDLY into the underbrush, hitting only leaves.

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

The Dog catches up with Mei Mei and Billy as they run as far away from the Lumber Mill as they can. Billy glances down at Mei Mei running beside him.

BILLY
 I'm Billy, by the way.

Mei Mei looks up, not understanding. He points to himself.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Billy.

MEI MEI
 (pointing to herself)
 Mei Mei.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Some time later, Mei Mei, Billy and the Dog trudge through the woods at a slower pace, exhausted. Billy looks over his shoulder.

BILLY

I think we've lost them... Are you
okay?

Billy comes to a stop to rest. Mei Mei does the same.

MEI MEI

(in broken English)
You take me to mommy?

BILLY

Listen Mei Mei, I have to get back
to my plane. I need to radio my
people.

Mei Mei doesn't quite get what Billy just said.

MEI MEI

(in broken English)
You promised.

BILLY

Listen, I don't know why you were
caged up by the Japanese. But this
is a war between me--
(he points to himself)
--and the Japanese.
(he points to Mei Mei)
See?

Mei Mei pauses when she hears Billy say she's Japanese.

MEI MEI

(in broken English)
I'm not Japanese. I'm... from here.

Billy is getting a little impatient with Mei Mei. He spots a
mark in the trail that he made earlier with a pile of rocks.

BILLY

I'm going this way. Which way is
your village?

Billy looks at her, waiting. She doesn't seem to know where
to go next.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Okay. Well. I'm going this way.
Come along if you like.

MEI MEI

(to the Dog, in Chinese)
You think he will take me to my
mother?

The Dog barks, taking a few steps after Billy, and Mei Mei follows the Dog.

EXT. LUMBER MILL, COURTYARD - NIGHT

Standing beside Captain Setsuda, Ichiro lifts his bugle to his mouth and plays a reveille. Soldiers gather from around the camp and fall into line in front of Captain Setsuda and Ichiro.

Setsuda paces back and forth in front of his men, bubbling with frustration. The men nervously wait for his inevitable blowup.

Finally, Setsuda stops pacing. He stares at his men for a moment. Then he BELLOWS:

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

How are we supposed to win the war
if you get us blown up by a DOG!?
You're all useless, bumbling
idiots!!

The soldiers wince and avoid eye contact. He approaches Guard 1 and glares at him for an extended period.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

Soldier, can I trust you to find
the American?

JAPANESE GUARD 1

Well, sir, we're stationed on base
and don't have much experience in
these surroundings...

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

A bunch of home-body soldiers with
no experience in the field! PAH!

Setsuda spits on Guard 1's boot.

ICHIRO

I can find the missing prisoner,
Uncle.

Surprised, Setsuda whips his head around to look at the boy.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

And why should I believe that?

ICHIRO

I'm the one who's been hiking all over, drawing maps and taking inventory of all the trees to be cut for gun stocks and propellers. I know these woods better than anyone.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

Is that so?

Setsuda raises an eyebrow, impressed, but not wanting to show it. He turns back to his men.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

You hear that? A child says he can do your job for you!

The Captain turns back to Ichiro.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

Find that AMERICAN!

ICHIRO

Yes sir!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(to the soldiers)

You too, go find them! You lazy shits!

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy, Mei Mei and the Dog follow the trail marks Billy had made with stacks of rocks. Deeper into the woods, they arrive at a small canyon forking in between steep cliffs.

A thick canopy shelters them here, creating the feeling of a sanctuary. Butterflies play amongst the long vines that hang down from above. Unlike the rest of the jungle of menacing insects and jeering bird sounds, in this place we can only hear the peaceful sounds of wind chimes and twittering song birds, along with the faint babbling of a nearby stream.

In the middle of the sanctuary, as if set upon an altar, sits a TREE HOUSE made from a CRASHED AMERICAN WWII FIGHTER PLANE with a SHARK FACE painted on it. Incredibly, it hasn't aged or rusted and appears to have crashed recently - no more than a few months ago.

MEI MEI

(in broken English)

Is that your home? Interesting!

BILLY
 (surprised)
 Who did this?

Transfixed, Billy climbs the walkway up into the tree house with Mei Mei and the Dog following behind.

INT. TREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside the gutted fuselage there's barely enough space for a grown man to lay lengthwise, but is the perfect little fort for a child. Covering the gaping tail end of the fuselage, someone has built a CRUDE HUT with bamboo, mud and palm leaves. Inside, Mei Mei finds the Dog licking an open CAN OF SPAM amongst an EMERGENCY RATION KIT with a few sticks of gum, a candy bar and a half-smoked pack of PALL MALLS. She picks up the candy bar but finds the wrapper empty.

Billy searches for his RADIO and finds it under the pilot seat.

BILLY
 (to himself)
 The Japanese must have gone through
 the plane, why didn't they find it?

Billy twists the knobs of the radio, trying to get a signal. No luck.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Maybe we should get it closer to
 the coastline.

Billy notices Mei Mei sitting on the metal pilot's chair next to him. The Dog lays next to her and whines. She pretends to fly the plane, yanking on the stick and making her own sound effects.

MEI MEI
 PYOO! PYOO! PYOO!
 BBBBRRRRRRRRRERERERER! PEEW PEEW!

Billy laughs at Mei Mei being childish and playful.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
 Hey! Who are these people?

Mei Mei points at the picture set on the dashboard of the cockpit. A BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO of a CAUCASIAN FAMILY of five. Billy walks over and points at the picture.

BILLY

This is my mother, my father, my
big brother Bruce, my second
brother George, my sister Anna who
just recently got engaged. And this
is my youngest sister, Amy.

In the picture, Billy and Amy clasp hands. She looks like
she's very close to Billy.

MEI MEI

Amy?

BILLY

She's seven. How old are you?

MEI MEI

(English)

Eight!

Billy laughs. Mei Mei seems to think of something. She takes
out her iPad to show Billy some pictures of her family too,
but the iPad is dead. She returns it to her backpack.

BILLY

How did you end up here?

MEI MEI

(English)

I...

She doesn't know the words in English to explain. Then she
gets an idea. She puts a finger to her lips.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

Shhh.

BILLY

What?

MEI MEI

Shhh!

BILLY

Okay...

They're quiet for a moment. And then Mei Mei can hear the
river gurgling again. She points in the direction of the
sound, cupping her ear.

BILLY (CONT'D)

The river?

MEI MEI
(English)
Yes!

BILLY
You live in the river?

She tries to explain by rolling around on the ground, pantomiming getting washed down the river.

MEI MEI
Woosh! Woosh! Aaahhhh! Aaahhh!

Billy's eyes widen.

BILLY
You got washed down the river.
That's how you got lost out here.

Mei Mei nods.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Alright. I'll take you to the river tomorrow so that you can find your way back. Okay?

MEI MEI
...Okay.

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mei Mei sleeps in the hammock. Billy stays alert, keeping watch by the campfire outside, petting the Dog beside him.

Billy turns around to make sure Mei Mei is asleep. He sees a LUNA MOTH fly around her and land on her head. Mei Mei seems to be having a dream.

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT (MEI MEI'S VISION)

Mei Mei wakes up in the hammock.

MEI MEI
Billy?

Mei Mei notices that there is some light shining into the tree house. She moves to the entrance to peek out. She gasps.

Before her stands the Shaman. She's in A RED ROBE and A HUGE HEADPIECE MADE OF GNARLED ROOTS, her face ornamented with A LACY VAIL OF TATTOOS. She almost appears to be floating. Mei Mei rubs her eyes, wondering if she is seeing things.

From now on, the Shaman speaks in Chinese, unless noted otherwise.

SHAMAN

Come on out, little one. We won't hurt you.

MEI MEI

Where's Billy?

The Dog trots over to the Shaman, who reaches out to pet it.

SHAMAN

(to the Dog)

Thank you for bringing her to us, my dear.

(to Mei Mei)

Come to me, we are running out of time.

Mei Mei walks over to the Shaman.

MEI MEI

Running out of time? What do you mean? Is that your Dog?

The Shaman giggles.

SHAMAN

She has no master, she lives free here. She has been waiting for the right moment to bring you here to save everyone.

MEI MEI

To save everyone? What are you talking about? Where am I?

SHAMAN

Taroko, which is now in a state of limbo... In three days, the gate will be reopened. You have to learn a song to lead everyone out.

MEI MEI

What song? I don't know how to sing.

SHAMAN

Yes you can. Gaya has chosen you.

MEI MEI

Gaya? Who's Gaya?

SHAMAN

The source of our existence that we all return to in death, the rhythms of Taroko and the laws of the mountains. The ever-growing of the trees and the ever-flowing of the clouds. All these machines of nature are mastered by Gaya. She's also the teacher of the people here, guiding Taroko.

MEI MEI

All I want to know is why she chose me? I can't sing at all, not even a word.

SHAMAN

Don't be afraid, *Mssungut* will be helping you on the way.

MEI MEI

Mssungut?

SHAMAN

Yes, there will be many friends and allies accompanying you.

MEI MEI

But why me?

She's agitated, about to cry.

SHAMAN

Only you can do this!
Tai su saw mowda (Godspeed).

MEI MEI

(tears in her eyes)
Why me!!!

INT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Mei Mei wakes up from her lucid dream, still in the hammock. The sun is out. She wipes the sweat and tears from her face.

Billy is still not here. She gets up from the hammock and walks outside. She hears a sound like a tin can being knocked down and walks to where the sound is coming from.

She sees Ichiro fiddling with the empty candy tin. Ichiro turns around and sees Mei Mei.

Mei Mei runs in the opposite direction as fast as she can.
Ichiro runs after her.

ICHIRO
Stop! I won't hurt you!

Mei Mei TRIPS AND FALLS. She quickly rolls onto her back and holds a stick up in the air. Ichiro approaches, nearly just as nervous as she is.

MEI MEI
Don't come any closer.

Ichiro clutches the handle of his SMALL SAMURAI SWORD on his waist. He is nervous.

ICHIRO
I'm here for the American! Not you!

Neither one understands the other's language. But Mei Mei recognizes Ichiro as he continues to creep toward her. She climbs to her feet.

MEI MEI
You were with that bad man who was hurting Billy! Stay away!

ICHIRO
The American is an enemy of Japan.
That means he's your enemy too. You must help me catch him.

Ichiro inches toward Mei Mei as she backs away. His hand is carefully resting on the hilt of his SAMURAI SWORD. Mei Mei tries to attack Ichiro with the stick and hits his head a few times. Finally, Ichiro pulls his sword out and chops her stick in half. Mei Mei backs up, step by step.

And just then, something falls out of her pocket.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
(amazed)
Morinaga Milk Candies!?

Mei Mei is surprised to see Ichiro also know the candies. She picks them up.

MEI MEI
Want some?

Ichiro nods repeatedly.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Then put away your sword!

Even though Ichiro doesn't understand Chinese, after Mei Mei gestures for a bit, he puts away his sword.

Mei Mei playfully throws a candy to his feet. Ichiro picks it up immediately and puts it into his mouth.

Out of extreme joy, tears begin to fill Ichiro's eyes.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

How long have you not had candies?

The sweetness of candies warms Ichiro's heart, making the poor kid homesick.

ICHIRO

I want... grilled *mochi*,
tamagoyaki, *tempura*, *gyudon*! Woah.
How I miss home! I miss my grandma!

MEI MEI

Alright! Alright! Don't cry! I'll
give you another one!

EXT. TREE HOUSE - LATER

Mei Mei and Ichiro sit next to each other in the plane, sharing candies. Mei Mei looks at Ichiro, letting her guard down. Could he be the Mssungut the Shaman mentioned last night?

MEI MEI

Mssungut?

ICHIRO

Mssungut?

MEI MEI

The old lady told me *Mssungut* would
come help me? Do you know what
Mssungut is?

ICHIRO ?

Mssungut! They are *Yokai* monsters.
They don't exist! It's only
superstition, just like *kappa*.

MEI MEI

Kappa?

ICHIRO

Yes, *kappa*! You don't know what a
kappa is?

Ichiro puts a big leaf on his head, pretending to be *kappa*. He walks around hunchback and starts mimicking a frog, making weird sounds.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)

(miming)

Kappa. I'm *kappa*. I like to eat cucumber and I hate salt. I like playing pranks on kids. Wanna play sumo wrestling with me?

Mei Mei doesn't understand what he's saying but his goofiness makes Mei Mei burst into laughter.

Suddenly, A HAND appears from behind Ichiro's back. Mei Mei's eyes instinctively shift to the man behind Ichiro. Ichiro senses something wrong and turns, but Billy is too fast. In one swift motion, he grabs Ichiro's sword, shoves him to the ground, and POINTS THE BLADE AT ICHIRO'S THROAT.

BILLY

Teach you to sneak up on us, Jap!

MEI MEI

No! Don't hurt him!

Billy looks up at her, and then back down at Ichiro. The kid looks terrified. Billy might not have understood Mei Mei's Chinese, but her voice snapped him out of his warrior state. The savagery in his eyes quickly dissipates.

BILLY

(under his breath)

I'm not gonna kill a child. What kind of person do you think I am?

He seems to be trying to convince himself more than anyone else. He steps off of Ichiro and lets the kid stand up, putting his sword away.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Were you guys playing? We are at war! You can't play with your enemy!

MEI MEI

(in broken English)

We not playing. Just ask him some stuff.

Billy sighs. He seems to be convinced by Mei Mei.

BILLY
(to Ichiro)
Is that uncle of yours here too?
Huh? "Setsuda"?

Ichiro recognizes his uncle's name.

ICHIRO
Captain Setsuda sent me to find
you.
(in broken English)
He not here.

BILLY
Uh-huh.

Billy hands the sword to Mei Mei and pats Ichiro down. He pulls a MAP out of the kid's pocket. It's the same map that Shu-Chen drew with him in the bamboo cage. Billy looks at it, speechless, and then looks at Ichiro.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Why do you have this map?

Ichiro looks at Billy in silence.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Shu-Chen? Where is she?

Billy grabs Ichiro's arms.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Where's Shu-Chen?

Ichiro looks scared, about to cry.

ICHIRO

I don't know. I think... I dreamed
about pushing her into a well.

Mei Mei looks at Billy, scared too.

BILLY
(to Mei Mei)
What did he say?

MEI MEI
(in broken English)
I don't know. I don't understand
Japanese. Get rid of him!

Billy continues to wrestle with Ichiro for an answer.

BILLY

Where is she? Take me to find Shu-Chen!

He pushes Ichiro down to the ground. Ichiro nods.

Mei Mei stares at Billy, also scared by what he has done to Ichiro.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - LATER

Billy ties Ichiro's hands with gnarled roots. Mei Mei sits nearby, drawing in her sketchbook. There are drawings of Billy and Ichiro next to those of Mickey Mouse and a *Kappa* (a frog-like goblin), as well as a sketch of the Dog. She flips back to earlier pages in her sketchbook and looks at her drawings of the Shaman.

Mei Mei begins to write her new friends' names in Chinese above their drawings, but realizes she doesn't know the boy scout's name. She walks over as Billy finishes securing the kid's wrists.

MEI MEI

(pointing to herself)

Mei Mei.

ICHIRO

(pointing to himself)

Ichiro.

He looks up at Billy, who simply scoffs.

MEI MEI

(pointing to Billy)

Billy.

Billy studies the map and sees the marks for the river and the village.

BILLY

Don't reveal any more information to the enemy!

MEI MEI

I don't want to be your friend. You are so mean!

Billy looks pissed.

BILLY

What did you say?

Billy points at the rivers on the map.

BILLY (CONT'D)

The river is over there. Your mother must be over there. But before we go find your mother, he has to bring us to Shu-Chen!

EXT. MOUNTAIN GORGE - DAY

Billy leads the group along a trail through the mountains. Ichiro walks behind him, in front of Mei Mei, wrists tied. The Dog trots alongside them, sniffing Ichiro suspiciously. Billy carries his radio.

Ichiro begins to sing to himself, the same Japanese song we heard in the prologue.

ICHIRO

Momotaro, Momotaro! Those millet dumplings on your waist. Won't you give me one?

BILLY

So you were the one singing at the mill.

MEI MEI

Hey, I know that song! My grandma used to sing it to me and my sister.

ICHIRO

It's the song I sing when I'm scared.

She joins Ichiro:

MEI MEI

(singing in Japanese)

I'll give you one, I'll give you one, if you'll come with me on a quest to conquer the Oni...

ICHIRO (CONT'D)

(singing in Japanese)

I'll give you one, I'll give you one, if you'll come with me on a quest to conquer the Oni...

BILLY

You two are giving me a headache.

Ichiro looks over his shoulder at Mei Mei. She smiles. He smiles back.

EXT. WELL - DAY

They reach the well that we saw in the prologue, where the Japanese execute their prisoners. Ichiro stops, then Billy stops.

BILLY
What's happened?

Ichiro points at the well.

ICHIRO
(gesturing)
I... pushed... her.

BILLY
You pushed Shu-Chien into the well?

ICHIRO
Yes, in my dream...

Billy rushes to the well and looks down into it. He is immediately revolted by the disgusting smell of rotten flesh inside. Billy begins to sob.

BILLY
(crying out)
Shu-Chen! She-Chen!

No reply from the well. Billy looks in for a little longer, and then turns around to grab Ichiro by the neck.

BILLY (CONT'D)
When did you push her into the well?

ICHIRO
(in broken English)
I don't know. In my dream...

BILLY
In your dream? What? Stop bullshitting me!

Ichiro is almost out of breath from being choked by Billy. Mei Mei rushes to pull Billy away.

MEI MEI
Billy, don't do that! Let go of him!

Billy pushes Mei Mei away, knocking her to the ground.

BILLY
(screaming)
Which side are you on?

Mei Mei looks up at Billy, terrified. Billy tries to collect himself.

Beat.

BILLY (CONT'D)
We are allies? Friends? Right?

Mei Mei doesn't understand what "allies" means but points to Ichiro, and then to Billy and herself.

MEI MEI
(English)
Allies! Three allies.

BILLY
Oh, no.
(pointing to himself)
American. Good. Allies.
(pointing to Ichiro)
Japanese. Bad. Enemies.
(pointing to Mei Mei)
He killed an innocent woman, a good woman!

She grabs ahold of Billy's hand with her right hand and Ichiro's tied hands with her left hand.

MEI MEI
(English)
Please. Friends.

Billy pulls his hand away.

BILLY
No!

Suddenly, A STRANGE NOISE emerges from deep within the well.

Billy, Mei Mei and Ichiro slowly turn around and look at the well in fear.

UTUX, A GROTESQUE MONSTER made of human flesh, crawls out of the well. Its body is composed of a formless mass of mutilated human flesh piled atop two human legs.

Billy, Mei Mei, and Ichiro stare at the monster in shock and terror as the Dog barks at it.

They snap out of it and run as fast as they can!

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

They run for their lives until they reach a fork in the path. Billy charges ahead down the right-side path, but Ichiro stops and puts out his arms, stopping Mei Mei too.

ICHIRO

No! Stop! That's the wrong way!

Suddenly Billy's leg is swallowed by a PUNJI PIT.

BILLY

What the--Ow!

He pulls his leg out of the hole and a long WOODEN SPIKE IS DRIVEN THROUGH IT.

Mei Mei gasps!

BILLY (CONT'D)

AAAAAGGGGHHHHH!!!

Mei Mei and the Dog rush over as Billy falls to the ground. Ichiro watches from afar.

MEI MEI

(shocked, in English)

No! What to do!?

Blood is pouring out of his foot. Laying on his back in agony, Billy rips a nearby vine off a tree and loops it tightly around his thigh.

BILLY

Oh, God, it hurts... What was that thing?

He then twists a stick under the loop of vine to tighten the tourniquet even more and cut off the blood flow to his foot.

Mei Mei helps Billy to stand and hands him a long Y-shaped stick to use as a crutch. Then Billy notices-- ICHIRO IS GONE. Mei Mei looks around, shocked.

MEI MEI

Ichiro!!?

BILLY

Dammit. That son of bitch!

EXT. MOUNTAIN GORGE - DAY

Billy hobbles back to the fork in the trail with the punji still stuck through his foot.

MEI MEI
Are you okay?

Mei Mei and Billy hike along the narrow and uneven trail as it winds through the mountain woods. A STEADY TRAIL OF BLOOD follows them.

Billy is turning pale and losing strength. He collapses on the side of the trail.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Oh no!

Billy tries to crawl up the rocky trail, grunting in pain, until he finally goes limp.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
(in broken English)
You can't... keep going...

BILLY
Water... I need water...

Mei Mei looks at Billy helplessly. The Dog is barking frantically next to Mei Mei as if she is trying to tell her something.

MEI MEI
Doggie? Can you help me find water?
(turning to Billy,
speaking in English)
Let me... go grab my water bottle.

Mei Mei takes out the WATER BOTTLE and leaves her backpack on the ground. She runs off with the Dog. Billy is too weak to even lift his arm. He lays there, all but lifeless.

INT. JAPANESE MESS HALL - DAY

Setsuda and the other soldiers eat their meager meals with limited pleasure.

A SMALL PAIR OF HANDS reach up from behind the food counter and snatch a yam. Ichiro has snuck back into the cafeteria, trying to eat in secret. He looks dirty and exhausted.

Without warning, Setsuda smacks Ichiro's hand, knocking the yam to the ground.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Ichiro! When did you return?

ICHIRO
Just now, uncle.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Have you found any clues about the
missing P.O.W.?

The soldiers at the table listen in on the conversation.

ICHIRO
Yes, I know where he is. I found
him by the river in the gorge. He
captured me, but I escaped.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
You let that American capture YOU!?
What did you tell him?!?

ICHIRO
Nothing, uncle! ...But he did steal
my map and compass. I'm sorry.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
In other words, you met the enemy
face to face, and he bested you.

ICHIRO
No, I--

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
And you chose to return empty-
handed, letting him get further
away-- with a set of directions
that YOU provided to him!? Ichiro,
this is disgraceful!

ICHIRO
But I can find him again! He
stepped in a booby trap and hurt
his foot real bad!

The Captain picks up the yam from Ichiro and takes a big
bite.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
No food for you till you do your
job! Don't look at me! It's that
American who is keeping you from
eating! Think of his face every
time your stomach growls!

The Captain stuffs the rest of the yam into his mouth and yells at Ichiro.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Now take me to find the American!

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Dog has taken Mei Mei deeper into the woods. She hears the SOUND OF RUNNING WATER.

Excited, she runs over a hill toward the sound. But when she looks down into the low lying ditch on the other side there is only a DRY RIVERBED.

MEI MEI
No, no, no! There should be water
down here!

The sound of running water STOPS.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Where's the water? I heard it!

We hear someone GIGGLING in the distance.

Mei Mei looks around for the source of the laughter. Then she gasps, as tiny footprints magically appear in front of her.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Who's there?!

She runs around in circles trying to catch them, but as quickly as they appear, they are gone again!

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
My friend is hurt. He fell into a
trap! There's a lot of blood!

The laughing stops.

Suddenly, she sees many BANANA CAKES popping out from tree-stump plates. Mei Mei stares, salivating... but refuses to be distracted.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
I want water, not cakes! Don't you
guys have water?! Or a First Aid
kit?

THE SOUND OF RUNNING WATER RETURNS. Mei Mei runs towards the sound.

A GANG OF MSSUNGUT step out from behind bushes and trees. They each hold little flutes and xylophones made from sticks. They begin to play their instruments.

Mei Mei jumps with fright as cool water rises in the river bed where she stands. She begins to struggle to stay afloat, trying to paddle frantically, starting to choke on the water.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

Oh no! I don't know how to swim!
Help! Help! Help!

Above her, the giggling Mssungut begin to sing. All of their songs and dialogue are in Chinese.

MSSUNGUT

(singing)

*Don't know how to swim and dare to
come here for water! Don't know how
to sing and dare to lead everyone
out! HAHAAAAHA!
Little timid girl! Dare to be like
water and float?*

With the Mssungut laughing above her and struggling to swim, Mei Mei closes her eyes.

She imagines herself as water, becoming one with the water.

She no longer feels fear. And just then, she realizes that she is actually swimming, effortlessly.

MEI MEI

(screaming)

I'm swimming!

Mei Mei climbs out of the river, surprised to find her water bottle is filled with water. She looks at the Mssungut in awe.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)

Are you Mssungut? Was that you who
taught me how to swim?

The Mssungut keep giggling and begin to sing again.

MSSUNGUT

(singing)

*Mssungut! Mssungut! If you hurt the
forest, we will play our tricks on
you! Mssungut! Mssungut! If you are
good to the forest, we will help
you! Take this medicine to your
friend and put it on his wound.*

(MORE)

MSSUNGUT (CONT'D)

*This forest has memories and we
have memories too! If you help the
forest, the forest will help you!*

Mei Mei now holds a bamboo tube full of medicine in addition to the water bottle.

MEI MEI

I have a question!

MSSUNGUT

Stop asking questions! No time!

MEI MEI

The old lady told me to lead
everyone out. But I don't even know
how to sing! What should I do?

The Mssungut ignore Mei Mei's question and continue to sing, circling around her.

MSSUNGUT

(singing)

*Stop asking questions! Stop asking
questions! No more time! No more
time! Listen to the song that's
already in your heart! Listen to
the song that's already in your
heart! Take the medicine to your
friend now! He can't stand any
longer!*

The Mssungut slowly turn transparent as they sing.

The sounds of their singing fade away, but the giggling sounds continue to echo around the forest.

Mei Mei carefully holds her bottle and the bamboo tube and runs back to Billy.

EXT. MOUNTAIN GORGE - MORNING

A TROOP OF JAPANESE SOLDIERS march through the woods, led by Captain Setsuda and Ichiro, retracing the scout's route.

ICHIRO

This is where I left him.

Setsuda surveys their surroundings and spots Billy's radio on the ground. Then he notices a long trail of blood. He follows it to see where it leads.

Ichiro sees Mei Mei's backpack. Realizing that no one has noticed it yet, he secretly hides the backpack in a bush.

Following the trail of blood, Captain Setsuda turns a corner and sees Billy crawling along on the ground.

The soldiers surround him. Billy lashes out with the bloody punji stick in his hand, but he is quickly subdued by the Japanese soldiers.

Setsuda leers down at Billy, ecstatic that he finally caught the American.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - CONTINUOUS

Mei Mei is on her way to Billy with the medicine and water, but she stops when she hears Japanese voices in the distance. She hides behind a tree and peeks out to see what's going on. She sees Setsuda tormenting Billy.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(to Billy)

Baka! Baka! Bakayaro Bastard! I finally got you! HAHA!

(to his men)

Let's take him back and show him who wins this war!

Mei Mei is terrified, witnessing the brutal scene from the distance.

MEI MEI'S POV: Japanese Soldiers drag the half-conscious Billy away with Captain Setsuda following behind, carrying Billy's radio. They are heading back to the military base.

They pull Billy along right in front of her. Mei Mei just watches, feeling helpless.

After they have gone, Mei Mei sits down and cries, alone behind the tree. The Dog tries comfort her.

Then the Dog begins to bark. Mei Mei continues to cry out loud. The Dog turns around and rushes to the distant bushes. Mei Mei gets up in a hurry and yells at the Dog.

MEI MEI

Where are you going? You are leaving me too?

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Mei Mei runs behind the Dog, but suddenly trips and falls. She gets up, tears coming down her cheeks.

MEI MEI
Where are you going?!

Suddenly, a MUNTJAC appears in the distance, looking at her and the Dog as if waiting for them.

The Muntjac turns back into the woods. Mei Mei and the Dog follow.

Moments later, they come upon a dilapidated JAPANESE SHRINE.

EXT./INT. JAPANESE SHINTO SHRINE - NIGHT

Mei Mei and the Dog stop beside the Japanese Shinto Shrine, which is overgrown with vines, moss and weeds. Mei Mei pushes the door open.

The shrine is filled with cobwebs and its contents are mostly destroyed. No one seems to have come by for a long time. There's nothing on the altar but a TRADITIONAL TRUKU HEADPIECE - THE SHAMAN'S HAT.

Mei Mei turns to look at the Dog and notices the Muntjac is gone.

MEI MEI
Looks like we have a place to stay tonight.

Mei Mei surveys the shrine and inspects the familiar-looking Truku Headpiece. She goes to take a closer look at it when suddenly a gust of wind blows through the room and she covers her eyes.

The lighting in the room changes and the EARTH STARTS RUMBLING.

INT. GAYA ALTER - NIGHT (MEI MEI'S VISION)

When Mei Mei opens her eyes again, the Shaman stands before her, wearing the same Truku Headpiece. The Shinto Shrine fades into a beautiful forest, radiating with prismatic light beams. The altar is now lined with many human skulls.

SHAMAN
My rainbow warrior. Have you learned the song yet?

Mei MEI
What?! What song?

SHAMAN
Embrace the silence, you will hear
the song.

MEI MEI
I don't want to hear it. All I want
is to leave here.

SHAMAN
Follow the wind. Go wherever the
wind blows. When everyone hears you
sing, they will follow you. In two
days, you will lead everyone over
the rainbow bridge. In two days,
the gate will be opened again.
That's when everyone can leave the
valley.

MEI MEI
Will I be able to go back to my
family?

SHAMAN
Yes, but beware the evil *Utux*.

MEI MEI
Who's *Utux*? ...I'm only eight.

Mei Mei is clearly terrified.

SHAMAN
You are chosen by *Gaya*. You are
stronger than anyone. Only you can
sing that song to those who need to
hear it. The song is the only thing
that can defeat *Utux*.

The space between Mei Mei and the Shaman begins to extend,
pulling them further and further apart. Mei Mei still has so
many questions to ask her, but the Shaman starts to dissipate
into the mist.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. JAPANESE SHINTO SHRINE - DAWN

Mei Mei wakes up to find herself sleeping on a pile of hay.
The morning sun shines in from outside.

Mei Mei walks outside and sees an assortment of fruits stacked up like offerings by the door: bananas, mangoes, guavas, and sugarcane.

EXT. JAPANESE SHINTO SHRINE - LATER

Mei Mei and the Dog feast on the fruits. A gust of wind blows, and the Dog begins to bark at Mei Mei as if reminding her of something. Mei Mei recalls what the Shaman said last night.

MEI MEI
Follow the wind?

She throws some leaves to test where the wind is blowing. Then she takes some more fruit with her and walks in direction of the wind.

EXT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

Billy is tied up on a wooden block, being tortured by the Japanese Soldiers yet again, while Captain Setsuda angrily twists the knobs of the radio.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Why!? Why!? Why!? Not even the
American radio can get a signal!

Two Japanese Soldiers stand beside Captain Setsuda as he screams in rage.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
OUR radio still can't pick up shit!
The American can't either! How long
have we lost contact with the
OUTSIDE WORLD?!

No one dares to answer the question until Captain Setsuda slaps one of the Soldiers across the face.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
How long?!

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1
Very... Very long.

This makes Captain Setsuda even more angry. He slams the radio on the ground and steps on it.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
(screaming)
Does anyone out there know that
we're still on this hidden
mountain!?

Gasping for breath, Captain Setsuda paces around anxiously.
He lays his eyes on Billy.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Get rid of this loser!

The two Japanese Soldiers untie Billy from the wooden block
and drag him out of the tent.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Get rid of this piece of shit too!

Captain Setsuda kicks the radio at them like a soccer ball.

EXT. WELL - DAY

The two Japanese Soldiers, strapped with MACHINE GUNS, drag
Billy to the execution well.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1
So the reason why the Captain
wanted the American's radio was to
contact the outside world?

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2
How long have we lost contact with
Headquarters?

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1
I don't know. So long! I feel like
time passes strangely in these
mountains.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2
I know what you mean. I feel like
we've done this before?

When they reach the well, the Soldiers look at each other.

Then THEY DUMP BILLY AND HIS RADIO INTO THE WELL.

The Soldiers spit into it and turn around to head back.

Suddenly, A SPOOKY NOISE rises up from deep within the well.

Then, RADIO STATIC.

THEN BILLY'S VOICE ECHOES UP, somehow amplified.

BILLY (O.S.)
Not so fast!

The Soldiers stop and turn around.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 1
Did he not die?

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2
Let's finish the job.

They sling their machine guns down from their shoulders, march toward the well, and EMPTY THEIR MAGAZINES into it.

As the smoke clears, they peer into the well.

A GROTESQUE MONSTER EMERGES: UTUX VERSION 2. It's made of chunks of human flesh with BILLY'S HEAD ON TOP.

The vile monster slowly crawls out of the well. The two Japanese Soldiers scream and turn to run for their lives.

But before we can blink, the two Soldiers are already HALF-SWALLOWED by the twisted mass of throbbing gore.

And as soon as the two soldiers are consumed, THEIR MACHINE GUNS GROW OUT OF THE UTUX'S BODY LIKE ARMS.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Ichiro looks for Mei Mei's backpack that he hid in a bush earlier. He finds it while calling out her name.

ICHIRO
Mei Mei! Mei Mei!

No response. Ichiro looks sad. He puts on the backpack.

INT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

Ichiro squats on the floor at the corner of the tent, the backpack by his foot. He looks through Mei Mei's sketchbook and tears begin to fall from his face.

Suddenly, A BIG HAND takes the sketchbook away. Ichiro turns around to see his uncle Setsuda.

ICHIRO
Uncle... I was planning on giving
it to you.

Captain Setsuda notices the drawings of a happy Ichiro in the sketchbook. Ignoring Ichiro's words, Setsuda picks up Mei Mei's backpack and dumps everything on the ground.

He spots the MAP that Shu-Chen drew with Billy. Setsuda picks it up and looks at Ichiro in anger.

 CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Did you draw the map for them?

 ICHIRO
No! The Truku woman and the
American did!

Captain snatches the Morinaga Caramel candies off the ground next.

 CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Are these...?
 (looking inside)
They are!

Setsuda violently rattles the box in Ichiro's face.

 CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Did they buy you off with candy?!
THAT'S TREASON!

 ICHIRO
No, I'm not a traitor! I remember I
turned the map in right after I
found it.

 CAPTAIN SETSUDA
You turned in the map to me? When
was it?

 ICHIRO
In... my dream.

Captain Setsuda cannot help but laugh hysterically.

 CAPTAIN SETSUDA
HAHAHAHA! In the dream? So what you
are saying is that we are all in
the dream and that's why we can't
get any signals from the outside
world?

ICHIRO

But it is true. We haven't been
able to contact with the outside
world for a long time!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

Well, so what if it's all really a
dream? What you did was still
treason and needs to be punished!

Captain Setsuda harshly drags Ichiro out of the tent.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Ichiro calls for help as his uncle drags him down a long
path, deep into the forest. A few Soldiers follow.

ICHIRO

(terrified)

Wait a minute, Uncle!

Setsuda watches his men tie Ichiro to a tree. He sticks the
box of candy into his pocket and examines the map. The bridge
is circled in red.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(to his men)

They must be heading for the
bridge. We will cut them off there
tomorrow morning.

ICHIRO

Please, Uncle! I beg for your
mercy!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

I'm so disappointed in you, Ichiro!
Stay here and reflect upon what you
have done.

Setsuda marches ahead, and the Soldiers follow.

Ichiro cries, remaining tied to the tree.

ICHIRO

I'm so sorry, Uncle!

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST - DAY

Mei Mei continues following the direction of the wind. Her
surroundings are absolutely silent.

Suddenly, A MELODY emerges from the distance, and then stops.

MEI MEI
Who's singing there?

No one answers. She continues to walk forward.

The melody plays again for a moment.

Mei Mei looks around to find the source of the tune.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Is it that song?

The Dog wags its tail in agreement.

She pauses again to embrace the quietness.

And then the tune comes back again.

She closes her eyes and tries to hum along.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
(singing along with the
tune in Truku)
Gaya, you are my shelter.
Gaya, we are protected by you.
Gaya, you let us know who's the
guide.
Gaya, please take us in and let us
become part of the one.

Mei Mei sings beautifully and peacefully. Then she begins to walk again. She continues to sing the song as she walks along the mountain pass.

Mei Mei's singing ECHOES THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST, NEAR THE RIVER - DAY

Mei Mei's singing continues echoing through the woods.

Mei Mei and the Dog walk along the river. Suddenly, they see SEVERAL FIGURES emerge from the bushes.

As they get closer, they realize it's a group of TRUKU WOMEN who are catching shrimp in baskets by the river.

One of the young Truku women approaches Mei Mei. She speaks in Truku.

YOUNG TRUKU WOMAN
Was that you singing earlier?

Mei Mei doesn't understand what she is saying. The girl begins to hum the melody Mei Mei was singing.

YOUNG TRUKU WOMAN (CONT'D)
(gesturing)
Did you sing it?

MEI MEI
(nodding)
Yes.

The Young Truku Woman joyfully takes Mei Mei's hands and holds them tightly.

YOUNG TRUKU WOMAN
You are *Empsapuh* (Shaman)! You are
leading us out of here. We've
waited so long for this day!

Mei Mei looks confused. The Young Truku Woman drags Mei Mei to some other Truku women.

YOUNG TRUKU WOMAN (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Empsapuh! Empsapuh is here!

All OF THE OTHER TRUKU WOMEN come and encircle Mei Mei, looking at her with joy. They try to touch Mei Mei affectionately, making sure she's real. Mei Mei blushes, flattered.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST, UNDER THE GIANT TREE - DAY

The women take Mei Mei and the Dog to a GIANT TREE (THE OLD TAROKO SPIRIT TREE) IN A MEADOW. MANY MORE TRUKU WOMEN rush toward them, welcoming them. All of them have traditional Truku tattoos on their faces.

This is a serene place, surrounded by austere mountains and gushing rivers. Underneath the Giant Tree lay intricate roots, curvy branches, and thick leaves. The tree stands like a roof covering the sky, protecting everyone.

Many Truku women and CHILDREN take refuge here. Most of their husbands, fathers, and brothers have left home to work as slaves and soldiers for the Japanese Military. These Truku women and children have been waiting here under the Giant Tree for their return.

The women pull Mei Mei to an altar. In front of it is a stump that was cut out from a huge tree nearly a meter in diameter, with endless rings indicating that it is very, very old. The Young Truku Woman asks Mei Mei to put her HAND on the rings.

Puzzled, Mei Mei presses the palm of her hand on the rings. Her hands tingle, and LITTLE GREEN SHOOTs begin to sprout around her fingers, crisp buds popping out of the tree branches.

Mei Mei is in shock. The Truku women cheer in ecstasy. All of them speak in Truku.

TRUKU WOMEN
(shouting)
Empsapuh! She's really the
Empsapuh!

The Truku women talk amongst themselves as they carry over the ceremonial offerings, a bottle of rice wine and some betel nuts wrapped in banana leaves.

TRUKU WOMAN 1
How come *Empsapuh* doesn't speak our
language?

TRUKU WOMAN 2
Is she really one of us?

They walk to an ELDER TRUKU WOMAN who takes the offerings from them.

ELDER TRUKU WOMAN
Stop guessing! Only *Empsapuh* can
sing that song and only *Empsapuh*
can let the Giant Tree re-sprout.
Gaya has already told us in our
dreams. Gaya's decision is always
mightier than we can ever imagine.

The Elder Truku Woman brings the offerings to Mei Mei.

ELDER TRUKU WOMAN (CONT'D)
Empsapuh, please bless our husbands
and sons for a smooth return.
We pray to successfully leave the
valley and move on in peace. *Powda*
Kingal Sapax (Please perform the
blessing ritual for us).

Mei Mei looks at these offerings, confused.

MEI MEI
I'm sorry. I don't know what you
are saying.

Suddenly, the Shaman appears behind Mei Mei. She takes Mei Mei's hand and walks up to the altar.

The Shaman takes off her hat and puts it onto Mei Mei's head. It seems like Mei Mei is the only one who can see the Shaman.

SHAMAN

Powda Kingal Sapax. The ritual of blessing.

The Shaman grabs Mei Mei's hand and begins the ritual with her.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

Sprinkle the wine among the crowd to drive out bad luck and disease.

The Shaman dips Mei Mei's finger in the rice wine bottle and Mei Mei sprinkles it to the crowd.

One by one, everyone in the crowd begins to kneel down as the ritual begins.

In front of the altar, the ritual continues. The Shaman uses Mei Mei's hand to pick up the betel nuts and offers them to heaven.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

Dedicate the betel nuts to Gaya and distribute to everyone. Let everyone share Gaya's sweet creations together.

Mei Mei then follows the Shaman's movements. Everyone in the crowd comes to the altar to receive the blessing by having Mei Mei place a betel nut in each of their mouths.

Other Truku women bring out a ROASTED BOAR and carry it to the altar.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

And lastly...

The Shaman takes Mei Mei's hand, picks up the knife on the side, and begins to cut the boar. The boar is divided into plates that are made of broad leaves and shared with everyone.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

This boar symbolizes Gaya's grace and symbolizes our peaceful coexistence with nature. Now repeat after me...

Mei Mie is a little repulsed by putting the knife into the roast pig. It's her first time carving meat.

But with the guidance of the Shaman's gentle voice, she slowly becomes more skillful.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

(in Truku)

We must be grateful and enjoy
everything Gaya has given us.

MEI MEI

(repeating in Truku)

We must be grateful and enjoy
everything Gaya has given us.

SHAMAN/MEI MEI

(in Truku)

We are only the takers, not the
owners. We must restrain ourselves.
It must be shared. It must be
understood. Our lives will
eventually be the same as this
boar. Become excrement, turn it
into mud, become food for others,
Become part of nature. Because we
are part of nature. We are the
people. We are Taroko.

(The original meaning of "Taroko" in the Truku language is
"person.")

Mei Mei stares at the Shaman, a little confused, but feeling
a sense of home. She seems to accept her responsibility.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST, GIANT TREE - EVENING

The tribe has built a roaring bonfire. Many Truku women hold
hands around the fire and perform a traditional Truku welcome
dance.

Mei Mei sits by herself, doing her best to cope with
everything and trying to fully understand her mission.

The Shaman comes to sit beside Mei Mei and pets the Dog.

SHAMAN

Shu-Chen.

MEI MEI

(surprised)

Grandma?

SHAMAN

Did you know that your grandmother spent time in Taroko, when she was a teenager?

MEI MEI

Yes, my Mom told me that.

SHAMAN

What she probably did not tell you is that during that time, your grandmother befriended a young American prisoner of war.

MEI MEI

What?

SHAMAN

Shu-Chen lived a long and happy life after she left our land. But she never forgot her foreign friend, and the promise she was unable to keep, to set him free. When your grandmother finally passed on, and Gaya asked her where would she like to go, Shu-Chen felt she had unfinished business here in Taroko, and wanted to return to save her old love. But she was only allowed to return to life in a lower form, so she came back as a dog.

Mei Mei is astounded.

MEI MEI

What! This can't be true! That's just a story!

Mei Mei turns to look at the Dog and the Shaman.

SHAMAN

All truths will eventually turn into stories. Gaya has chosen you and brought you here through the earthquake. You must give an ending to this story! It's up to you now to finish what your grandmother started.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MODERN TAROKO VILLAGE - DAY

All is chaos in the village after the earthquake. Rescue workers continue their efforts. Most houses have collapsed, but Grandma Shu-Chen's house seems to be only mildly chipped from the outside. A FEW RESCUE WORKERS walk over to the house.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mom, other relatives and the Priest are waiting at home. For the first time, Mom sees the tin box left by Shu-Chen. She opens the box and finds the picture of Billy's WWII plane and a DIARY. But just when Mom opens the diary and is about to read it, the rescue workers walk in.

RESCUE WORKER 1

I'm sorry. Still no updates on Mei Mei.

MOM

Haven't even found a clue?

One rescue worker shakes his head.

MOM (CONT'D)

It's been two days. I'm begging you. Please help us to find Mei Mei.

(tears streaming down her face)

I'm begging you!

Other relatives surround Mom, trying to comfort her.

On the table, the wind blows Grandma Shu-Chen's diary open to a specific page.

We begin to hear Grandma Shu-Chen's voice, in Chinese, as an eighty-year-old woman.

GRANDMA SHU-CHEN (V.O.)

My children. I'm off to who-knows-where. I thank Gaya that I'm back in my homeland.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST, GIANT TREE - NIGHT

Back at the bonfire in the forest, the Dog snuggles next to Mei Mei.

GRANDMA SHU-CHEN (V.O.)
I know after I die, you will sell
our ancestral land. But before you
do, I want to tell you something.

The Dog looks at Mei Mei, who seems to be worried about
something, staring into the fire.

GRANDMA SHU-CHEN (V.O.)
The only person who might be able
to save our land... is Mei Mei.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

In the distance we hear the melody of the *Momotaro* song, but
now it sounds sad and lonely.

Ichiro has been tied to the tree all night and is singing the
song to himself. He is hungry, thirsty and shivering. His
hands and legs are turning purple from being tied up for so
long.

ICHIRO
(singing softly)
Momotaro, Momotaro
Those millet dumplings on your
waist.
Won't you give me one?

His voice gets quieter and weaker as he sings.

EXT. GIANT TREE - NIGHT

Ichiro's feeble singing echoes through the forest.

Mei Mei and the Dog are sound asleep, but the singing slowly
wakes her up. She recognizes the voice and jumps up
immediately.

MEI MEI
Ichiro!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Ichiro continues to sing the song to himself, in a whisper
now, almost too weak to be heard.

ICHIRO
Momotaro, Momotaro...

Suddenly, he hears SOMEONE ELSE SINGING.

MSSUNGUT
 (singing in Japanese)
*Momotaro, Momotaro~ the one who got
 tied on the tree.
 Momotaro, Momotaro~ Won't you stop
 fighting the war?*

A group of three Mssungut continue to sing as THEY UNTIE ICHIRO from the tree. They surround him and continue to sing.

MSSUNGUT (CONT'D)
*Momotaro~ the one who got
 abandoned! Momotaro~ the one who is
 about to die. We help them and tell
 them that the monster is not what
 they need to defeat but....*

Ichiro looks at the three Mssungut, a little scared.

Suddenly, the Mssungut stop singing.

ICHIRO
 What's happened?

The three Mssungut turn around to face in the same direction, TERRIFIED. Ichiro turns too but sees nothing.

SPOOKY SOUNDS emerge from somewhere in the distance.

The Mssungut panic and run away! Ichiro is confused.

The spooky sounds COME CLOSER...

UTUX APPEARS from deep inside the woods and staggers toward Ichiro. Billy's lifeless head sits on top of the monstrous mass of human flesh between 2 machine guns.

Ichiro pulls the loose ropes off his body and RUNS.

UTUX/BILLY
 Revenge! I'm here for you! You son
 of a bitch!

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Ichiro runs for his life. The Utux chases after him.

He hears Mei Mei's voice.

MEI MEI
 Ichiro!

Ichiro shouts at Mei Mei in horror.

ICHIRO
Mei Mei! Run! Monster!

Suddenly UTUX JUMPS OUT from the brushes!

Mei Mei stares at the monster - at Billy's head - in shock.

MEI MEI
(screaming)
Billy! Billy! Is that you?

Billy's head can't recognize Mei Mei. His eyes have turned all black, as if possessed by a Demon.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Wake up Billy!

The two kids turn and dash through the forest. As Mei Mei runs, she murmurs to herself.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Sing. I have to sing...

Mei Mei tries to remember the song.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
(singing, her voice
trembling)
Gaya... Utux...
No, how to sing this...

ICHIRO
Why are you singing?

MEI MEI
Gaya... You are my shelter...

Suddenly, the monster is in front of them!

Then the Dog jumps out, barking at Utux!

Billy's face stares into the eyes of the Dog as it continues to bark, loudly but affectionally.

Billy's dead possessed eyes slowly start to show some signs of life. Billy looks at the Dog. It seems to be trying to communicate with him.

And then, THE DOG MORPHS INTO A YOUNG SHU-CHEN.

SHU-CHEN

(in English)

Billy, I have always been here with you! Wake up! Wake up! We are running out of time...

Shu-Chen's voice strikes Billy like a lighting bolt, but then fades away.

But Shu-Chen's fading presence seems to touch Billy's heart in some way, softening the man trapped inside the fleshy monster.

Billy begins to regain his consciousness. His eyes turn from black to white. He struggles, painfully, trying to break himself out of the monster's body.

Finally, Utux falls to the ground.

Ichiro rushes to Mei Mei.

ICHIRO

Let's run!

MEI MEI

No! Billy has to come with us too!

Mei Mei runs back to get Billy. She tries to pull him out of the big sticky pile of flesh with all her might, but she isn't strong enough.

Ichiro comes to help too. The two kids wrestle as hard as they can to get Billy out.

And finally, Billy is pulled free from the monster's body! Chunks of flesh spill onto the ground, along with everything the monster had swallowed, including parts of weapons and Billy's broken radio.

Mei Mei struggles to get Billy to his feet. Billy's foot is still heavily injured from the punji stick. Ichiro rushes to help too, trying to hold him up.

In the midst of the chaos, Ichiro sees Billy's broken radio on the ground and picks it up.

The three kids and the Dog get away from the scene as fast as they can.

The big bloody pile of Utux's flesh and guts quivers slowly on the ground, like a dying heart.

Then suddenly, ALL OF THE CHUNKS OF FLESH BEGIN TO COME TOGETHER, composing themselves back into a faceless meat monster, ready for more blood and revenge.

EXT. MEADOW, UNDER THE GIANT TREE - DAWN

Mei Mei and Ichiro carry the crippled Billy to the Giant Tree. Many Truku women rush to them to see what's going on. Billy is extremely pale, weak, and barely conscious.

BILLY

Shu-Chen?

MEI MEI

Billy!

BILLY

Mei Mei...

MEI MEI

Billy! I've got medicine and water!

Mei Mei takes out her water bottle and pours water into Billy's mouth, and then slowly onto his foot. Then she lifts up the foot where she can see a hole straight through.

Mei Mei dips her finger into the BLACK MEDICINE in the bamboo tube that the Mussungut gave her earlier and dabs it around the wound.

Suddenly the black gloppy medicine transforms into a swarm of WRITHING MAGGOTS, feasting on the dead and infected flesh.

BILLY

AAAHHHH!!! Maggots! AAAHHH!!

He frantically tries to brush the bugs off his feet as they cover them like living socks.

Mei Mei dumps the rest of the water over his feet--

--And just like that, Billy's feet are maggot-free, clean and perfectly healed. There's not a single scratch on them.

Billy and Mei Mei look at each other, confused. He inspects his feet, wiggling his toes. He cautiously stands up, feeling a lot better.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What was that stuff?!

MEI MEI
 (in English)
 Little... little *Mssungut* gave me!

BILLY
 Little *Mssungut*...

Mei Mei pantomimes playing xylophone and imitates the funny way they walked, and how she learned to swim.

MEI MEI
 Remember, I went to find water?

Billy looks at his feet again, amazed that they are fully recovered.

Suddenly, Billy recalls what happened last night.

BILLY
 Shu-Chen! I saw her!

MEI MEI
 Shu-Chen. Grandma?

BILLY
 Yes, Shu-Chen! I saw her!

Billy tries to look for Shu-Chen among the Truku women. Then the Dog jumps onto Billy and starts to whine as if she's trying to tell him something. Billy pets the Dog.

MEI MEI
 (in broken English)
 She is with you now!

BILLY
 What?

MEI MEI
 The one you love! Shu-Chen! Even though she has left, she has always been with us!

Billy happily plays with the Dog, not fully getting the true meaning of what Mei Mei has said.

Mei Mei sees the Shaman standing near the altar under the Giant Tree. The Shaman waves her over.

SHAMAN
 We will be heading out when the sun comes out!
 (in Truku)
Smwayay! (Let's leave here!)

The Shaman gestures Mei Mei to get on top of the altar and make an announcement to everyone.

MEI MEI
(shouting)
Smwayay!

TRUKU PEOPLE
(cheering)
Smwayay!

INT. JAPANESE MILITARY BASE, TENT - DAWN

Captain Setsuda is alone in the tent. He slides the box of Morinaga Caramel Candies out of his pocket. The Captain takes one candy out, unwraps it and puts it in his mouth.

He closes his eyes and lets the flavor flood through his system.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Ahhhh. So good. Just the way I
remembered them tasting as a kid.

The sweetness of the candy makes Setsuda nostalgic. A few teardrops fill his eyes.

Suddenly, a Japanese Soldier rushes into the tent and salutes nervously.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
What's going on? What happened?

JAPANESE SOLDIER
Sir! All the laborers... They fled!

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST, GIANT TREE - DAY

TRUKU MEN AND WOMEN embrace each other joyfully with tears. The wives reunite with their husbands, and the mothers reunite with their sons. They greet each other in the Truku language, expressing deep love and regret for being apart for so long.

Billy notices Ichiro in the corner, repairing his busted radio with some simple tools.

BILLY
(surprised)
Where did you get that?

ICHIRO
I went to get it. It seemed
important to you.

Beat.

BILLY
I want to thank you for saving my
life.

ICHIRO
(in English, a little
shocked)
"Thank you?"

Billy still has a lot that he wants to say to Ichiro, but
decides to answer with the only Japanese word he knows.

BILLY
Arigato!

Billy and Ichiro join Mei Mei and the Truku people, and they
all set off for the rainbow bridge.

EXT. MOUNTAIN GORGE - DAY

Mei Mei, Ichiro and Billy hike up the gorge. Leading the way,
Mei Mei sees a group of beautiful YELLOW BUTTERFLIES dancing
in the air. One of them lands on Mei Mei's finger tip.

ICHIRO
Agehana Maraho! (Papilio Maraho, a
species of butterfly)

MEI MEI
Agehana Maraho?

ICHIRO
(in broken English, while
gesturing)
Yes. That's their name. They only,
here, in Taroko. And only in
Spring. When they come, it's like
raining.

MEI MEI
(English)
Like raining?

ICHIRO
(in a mix of Japanese and
broken English)
(MORE)

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
Yes, walawala! Butterfly rain! In
Taroko. Spring. Very beautiful.

MEI MEI
(in broken English)
Spring? Butterfly rain? Really?

Ichiro nods. Then something seems to come to his mind that makes him very sad.

ICHIRO
But... Spring seems to have not
come for a long time.

MEI MEI
(in broken English)
Spring... We come back. See
butterfly rain. Together.

ICHIRO
Okay... Only we can wait till next
spring.

Mei Mei sticks her pinky out, a promise-making hand gesture.

MEI MEI
(in Chinese)
Promise?

Ichiro recognizes the gesture and sticks his pinky out as well.

ICHIRO
(in Japanese)
Promise!

Mei Mei smiles at Ichiro and he smiles back at her. They like each other. Ichiro has never met a girl this special.

Suddenly, they hear the sound of a MILITARY HORN in the distance.

Shocked, Ichiro steps in the direction of the sound.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
Reveille.

BILLY
What is this sound?

ICHIRO
Captain Setsuda! They are coming.

BILLY
Setsuda!!?

EXT. THE PEAK OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

MANY JAPANESE SOLDIERS gather from all directions, brought to Captain Setsuda by the signal of the horn.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Let's go get them!!!!

Setsuda charges forward, leading the soldiers.

EXT. ABANDONED MINE - DAY

Mei Mei, Billy, Ichiro and the Dog follow a TRUKU ELDER MAN into the narrow mouth of a cave not far from the village.

INT. ABANDONED MINE - CONTINUOUS

A rusty HAND CAR is parked inside the abandoned mine. The Elder examines it.

ELDER MAN
(in Truku)
Yes, this should do! It should take
you all the way to the bridge. May
Gaya be with you.

Everyone pitches in to lift the heavy car onto the tracks. Then the four hop in. Suddenly, a TRUKU ELDER WOMAN rushes to them, carrying the Shaman's hat.

ELDER WOMAN
(in Truku)
You forgot this!

She places Shaman's hat on Mei Mei's head. Mei Mei thanks her.

The Elders push them along and the car begins to roll forward. They wave goodbye and the four wave back as the car continues through the tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Billy grabs a LONG STICK lying beside the track and starts rowing them forward like a gondolier. Ichiro grabs another stick and helps to row too.

Mei Mei looks around the tunnel in awe.

The cart goes over a large bump and everyone BOUNCES. Billy's radio on the floor begins to blare white noise. It must have gotten switched on accidentally.

Ichiro picks up the radio and fiddles with the knobs. Still only static.

BILLY

Even if you get it fixed, we'll
never pick up a signal in the cave.

Then the cart goes around a bend and suddenly the gentle sounds of GLENN MILLER'S "MOONLIGHT SERENADE" FLOWS OUT through the static. Billy and Mei Mei turn back to look at the radio in shock.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You fixed it!?

Ichiro nods, proudly. Ichiro looks up at the ceiling of the tunnel, then back down to the radio, confused.

ICHIRO

(in broken English)

But where does the signals come
from?

BILLY

How odd. Where's this signal coming
from? It seems like the deeper we
go in this cage, the stronger the
signal is. Who's broadcasting from
down there?

Mei Mei looks puzzled, not knowing what they are saying. The cart takes a sudden turn and Ichiro almost falls. Billy grabs him.

Then the track begins to head downhill, allowing gravity to do more and more of their work for them. As the ride gets bumpier and bumpier, Mei Mei, Ichiro and Billy hold each other tightly.

Suddenly, the cart passes under a large gap in the ceiling where daylight shines down. The kids shield their eyes from the bright sun.

ICHIRO

Look! The ocean!

In an extreme wide shot, we see that this part of the track is around the backside of the mountain. For a brief moment, the cart is traveling outside the border of Taroko.

And suddenly, a CONTEMPORARY TAIWANESE RADIO BROADCAST cuts in over the music, speaking in Chinese.

TAIWANESE BROADCASTER (O.S.)

Day Three since the devastating
earthquake that rocked Taroko
Gorge. Though most of the missing
persons have been recovered, rescue
crews are still searching for a
missing girl who was washed down
the Taroko river three days ago
today and presumed dead.

Mei Mei screams and jumps up and down with joy.

MEI MEI

Hey, that's me!!! I'm still alive!
I'm right here! I'm coming!

The broadcast is engulfed in static as the cart re-enters a dark tunnel.

BILLY

What did it say?

MEI MEI

(in broken English)
They looking... for me! My family!

ICHIRO

(pointing)
Look!

Billy and Mei Mei look. The true end of the tunnel is in sight.

The cart rolls to a stop. The track has ended.

Billy shuts off the radio and holds it under his arm as he climbs out of the cart. Mei Mei, Ichiro, and the Dog follow and they walk the rest of the way.

As they exit the tunnel, they are swallowed by the light...

CUT TO WHITE.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TUNNEL - DAY

Our heroes walk out of the tunnel. An impossibly high, rickety BAMBOO SUSPENSION BRIDGE spans a deep river canyon ahead. A rainbow stretches over it. It's the same bridge we saw in the opening shot.

BILLY

This is it. The bridge.

ICHIRO

Oh no.

Mei Mei and Billy look up to see what Ichiro and the Dog have already seen: the Japanese Army, led by Captain Setsuda, approaching through the fog.

The kids check behind them. There are MORE SOLDIERS waiting at the tunnel exit behind them. They're trapped. Captain Setsuda walks out from the fog.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(bellowing)

Ichiro!!

(looking at Mei Mei)

So this is your collaborator? Silly boy, swayed so easily by a pretty girl. I knew you were weak, but this is pathetic.

Ichiro looks at his feet.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)

Come over here, boy. Unless you want to get hit in the crossfire.

Ichiro glances at his uncle, then at his new friends.

BILLY

Whatever he's saying, don't listen to him!

Ichiro swallows and begins walking toward Captain Setsuda.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(pained)

No! Traitor!

Ichiro doesn't look back. A devilish smile spreads across Setsuda's face.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(in English)

You're right. He IS a traitor.

As Ichiro draws near, Captain Setsuda pulls out a NAMBU PISTOL. Mei Mei gasps.

But instead of pointing the gun at Ichiro, he hands it to him. Ichiro takes it, confused.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Today you will learn an important
lesson in loyalty. Prove to me that
you are worthy of your uniform!

He points his finger at Mei Mei.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Shoot her.

Ichiro's face turns to ash.

ICHIRO
I won't!

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
You will! Or I will hang you for
treason!

Ichiro trembles, the gun shaking violently in his hand. He has no idea what to do.

Captain Setsuda grabs the boy's little wrist, twists his whole body around, and points the gun at Mei Mei's face.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Kill her! Show your bravery to the
Emperor!

Ichiro robotically walks toward Mei Mei, gun pointed at her, tears welling in his eyes. Mei Mei screams.

BILLY
Don't do it!

Ichiro continues walking toward her. Setsuda loses patience.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Just shoot her! You coward little
shit!

This is the last straw. Ichiro stops, takes a deep breath, turns around, and POINTS THE GUN AT HIS UNCLE.

ICHIRO
Sorry, Uncle.

All of the soldiers immediately aim their weapons at Ichiro.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
We've done enough harm.

Captain Setsuda frowns.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
Think carefully about this, nephew.
If you pull that trigger, I may
die, but so will you and your
friends. And they were going to die
anyway.

Mei Mei bursts forth between them.

MEI MEI
No! This is not how this was
supposed to go! You guys were
supposed to leave the valley with
me, not kill each other!! Gaya told
me to bring peace back to Taroko!!!

Captain Setsuda raises an eyebrow. (Only he can understand Chinese.)

CAPTAIN SETSUDA
(in Chinese)
What was that, girl?

Mei Mei hesitates. She didn't expect him to know Chinese.

MEI MEI
There are people out there looking
for me. They could help you too!

Mei Mei gets an idea. She rushes over to Billy, grabs his radio, and turns it on.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
It's what I heard from the radio
earlier. Listen!!!

Captain Setsuda watches Mei Mei, curious. She frantically turns the knobs until she finds a broadcast. To her surprise, it's in Japanese.

In fact, it's the famous Jewel Voice Broadcast of August 1945, announcing Japan's surrender of World War 2. She turns the volume all the way up.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

(in Japanese)

*...Such being the case, how are we
to save the millions of our
subjects, or to atone ourselves
before the hallowed spirits of our
Imperial Ancestors?*

The Soldiers' jaws drop. Even Setsuda looks baffled.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

That's the Emperor.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

*This is the reason why we have
ordered the acceptance of the
provisions of the Joint Declaration
of Powers. We cannot but express
the deepest sense of regret to Our
Allied nations of East Asia, who
have consistently cooperated with
the Empire ...*

JAPANESE SOLDIER

(in shock)

We've surrendered! The war's over!

Noise and confusion erupts among everyone, including the Truku people and the soldiers. Many Japanese Soldiers fall to their knees and begin to cry. Setsuda looks around at his men, realizing he's losing his control.

ICHIRO

War... over?

BILLY

What are they saying? What
happened?

ICHIRO

(shouting in English)

War is over!

Billy's eyes go wide.

BILLY

(ecstatic)

What? The war's over!!?? Are you
kidding me!?

CAPTAIN SETSUDA

(in English, bellowing at
the top of his lungs)

(MORE)

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
 THE WAR IS NOT OVER UNTIL I SAY IT
 IS!

Setsuda swiftly walks over to Ichiro, rips the pistol out of his hand and fires it into the sky.

CAPTAIN SETSUDA (CONT'D)
 (in English)
 I AM THE WAR! FOREVER!!!

Setsuda then points the gun at Mei Mei. Terrified, Mei Mei puts both her hands up in the air, surrendering. But before Setsuda can pull the trigger--

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Setsuda gets three bullets in the back. His eyes roll back into his skull. Suddenly, his body GETS SUCKED BACKWARD by a strange force.

Behind Captain Setsuda STANDS UTUX. The monster picks up Setsuda's dead body and swallows him at once with his big mouth made of dripping guts and flesh.

The Truku people on the outermost side rush onto the bridge. The Japanese Soldiers closer to Utux begin to fire at the monster, terrified.

Unharmd, Utux easily sucks away their guns with his SUPERNATURAL MAGNETIC FORCE. It walks to the soldiers as they scream in horror. Utux picks them up and swallows them one by one.

The Elder Man shouts to Billy and Mei Mei.

ELDER MAN
 (in Truku, gesturing)
 Hurry up! It's time! Let's run!

BILLY
 (to Ichiro and Mei Mei)
 Run! Right now!

Billy, Ichiro and Mei Mei follow the Truku people, rushing onto the suspension bridge.

EXT. SUSPENSION BRIDGE - DAY

The Truku people quickly pass through the suspension bridge one by one. Billy lets Mei Mei go first, and then Ichiro. He lingers behind, making sure everyone is safe. But just when Ichiro steps onto the bridge, suddenly one of his feet is pulled by a BIG ROTTEN HAND.

Utux emerges from behind Ichiro, its body TRIPLED IN SIZE now after swallowing all of the Japanese Soldiers. The monster's grotesque body morphs into THE FACE OF CAPTAIN SETSUDA.

UTUX/SETSUDA
(in Japanese)
Nephew! Don't we belong to the same side?

Utux picks up Ichiro with its monster hand, ready to swallow him. Mei Mei screams!

Just then, Billy jumps on Utux's head and tries to wrestle Ichiro's body out of its mouth.

After a long struggle, Billy succeeds! Ichiro is released and dropped onto the bridge.

But then, ANOTHER HAND comes in. Billy is picked up by the monster and lifted into the sky.

UTUX/SETSUDA (CONT'D)
Hahaha! I caught you again, stupid American!

Ichiro and Mei Mei are terrified, not knowing what to do.

The Dog barks repeatedly and tries to bite Utux, but is quickly kicked away. Mei Mei rushes to rescue the Dog.

Billy's body is slowly being consumed by Utux's big mouth.

BILLY
(shouting in pain)
Go now! This is what I get!

ICHIRO
(crying)
Billy! No!!!!

Half of Billy's body has been swallowed. The Dog is barking nonstop on the other side. Tears fall from Ichiro's face as Mei Mei sadly shuts her eyes and tries to collect her thoughts.

Then the Shaman's words come back to her.

SHAMAN (O.S.)
You are chosen by Gaya. You are stronger than anyone. Only you can sing that song to those who need to hear it. The song is the only thing that can defeat Utux.

Mei Mei takes a deep breath.

A moment of silence.

Then Mei Mei begins to sing.

MEI MEI
(singing in Truku)
*Gaya, you are my shelter.
Gaya, we are protected by you.
Gaya, you let us know who's the
guide. Gaya, please take us in and
let us become part of the one...*

The song echoes through the canyon as the dense fog slowly dissipate.

Mei Mei's singing continues, and a BEAUTIFUL RAINBOW emerges from the light behind the fog.

As the song builds, Utux screams and begins to feel pain! The monster struggles to stand still, and suddenly many ARMS grow from different lumps of its body, covering its ears to block the music.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
(singing in Truku)
*Holy Gaya, please restore the order
of Taroko. Holy Gaya, you are the
order. Everything is born because
of you. The mountains stand today
because of you. The wind blows
because of you. The clouds float
because of you...*

On the other end of the suspension bridge, all of the Truku people slowly walk forward and begin to sing along.

MEI MEI & TRUKU PEOPLE
(singing in Truku)
*Holy Gaya, take us across the
rainbow bridge. Beautiful rainbow
bridge, the path to eternity...*

UTUX SCREAMS.

Chunks of Utux's body begin to fall like melting clay.

Ichiro begins to sing along too.

MEI MEI, ICHIRO & TRUKU PEOPLE
(singing in Truku)
Let us go! Let us go together!
(MORE)

MEI MEI, ICHIRO & TRUKU PEOPLE
*Under the guidance of Gaya, we go
 across the rainbow bridge. Let us
 go! Let us go together! Under the
 guidance of Gaya, we go across the
 rainbow bridge!*

CHK-BOOOOOM!!!!

UTUX EXPLODES! Blood and gore rain down on everyone in slow motion like cherry blossoms.

Then-- the EARTH RUMBLES. The explosion triggered another earthquake! The bridge DISCONNECTS from the cliff on the tunnel side and SWINGS DOWN against the opposite side.

MEI MEI PLUMMETS down the wood slats, screaming, hands grasping air above her head.

She manages to grab onto one of the slats and hangs against the cliff face. Her backpack soars down past her.

Mei Mei looks up -- A GHOSTLY IMAGE OF THE BRIDGE remains suspended in the air, with a full rainbow arching over it.

In the distance, dozens of ghostly figures begin to float up into the heavens from all over Taroko: Japanese Soldiers, Truku People, and anyone else who died in the earthquake of 1945 -- all finally moving on.

Billy slowly stands up in the pile of bloody gore that used to be the Utux's body and goes to help Mei Mei. But when he looks down at his own body on the spectral bridge, he sees that he's starting to glow and become translucent too.

The Dog continues barking in the distance, turning translucent as well. Then... the Dog magically fades into GRANDMA SHU-CHEN as an eighty-year-old woman, and then fades again into young Shu-Chen at eighteen, as Billy knew her.

BILLY
 Shu-Chen!

Billy, now completely translucent, races toward Shu-Chen and they embrace tightly on the rainbow bridge. Tears fill Shu-Chen's eyes as they both begin to float above.

SHU-CHEN
 I told you I would be back.

BILLY
 You kept your promise!

SHU-CHEN
 Yes. And now you're free.

Billy looks down at Mei Mei who's clinging to the edge of the bridge.

BILLY
What about Mei Mei?

SHU-CHEN
Don't worry, Gaya has her way.
We will go back to where we came
from.

Mei Mei watches Billy reuniting with Shu-Chen in amazement. Then she shouts up to Ichiro, who is floating on the bridge, half-translucent.

MEI MEI
Ichiro! Help me up!

Ichiro tries to pull her up, but his hands are fading away and Mei Mei's hands slip through his. A look of shock spreads across his face, and he begins to float up into the sky.

ICHIRO
I'm afraid I can't go with you.

MEI MEI
Didn't you say you are taking me to
see the butterflies?

ICHIRO
(in broken English)
We from... two different worlds...

MEI MEI
(in broken English)
No! War is over, we can be friends
now!!

ICHIRO
(English)
I'm sorry!
(Japanese)
I know I promised you. I want to go
see *Agehana Maraho* (butterflies)
with you. But...

Ichiro looks at Mei Mei in sorrow.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)
(in broken English)
I'm... I'm dead.

Tears pour down from Mei Mei's eyes.

Ichiro tries not to cry. But when he sees Mei Mei cry, tears can't help but flow from his eyes too.

ICHIRO (CONT'D)

Thank you for everything you've done for me. I will never forget you.

Billy calls to Ichiro from somewhere in the distance.

BILLY

Come on kid, we gotta go!

Ichiro drifts further away, becoming completely transparent.

MEI MEI

No!

Mei Mei continues to cry, helpless. Then she sees Ichiro joining Shu-Chen and Billy, and her tears subside. She seems to understand.

SHU-CHEN

Mei Mei, I'm so proud of you! Thank you for protecting Taroko. You are the blessing Gaya has given to us.

Shu-Chen, Billy and Ichiro wave to Mei Mei from above. Then they disappear into a glowing mist, leaving a dazzling rainbow shining over Mei Mei.

MEI MEI

NO!!!!!!!!!!

Her scream reverberates through the gorge. And Mei Mei is alone again.

A WALL OF WATER comes rushing down the river, washing the blood off the rocks like a purification ritual. Mei Mei clings to a piece of the bridge as it disconnects from the cliff and washes down the river.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

The river deposits Mei Mei onto the shore beneath the collapsed houses.

BILLY (O.S.)

Hey! You made it!

Mei Mei wipes the water from her eyes and looks around for Billy. But it was just her imagination.

She looks up to see Japanese WWII Soldiers and Aboriginal Truku laborers working together, digging through the wreckage. But the hallucination wears off and they fade into MODERN FIREMEN and VOLUNTEER RESCUE WORKERS.

The Black Formosan Mountain Dog trots toward her.

MEI MEI

Grandma?

But it fades into a RESCUE LABRADOR in a red vest. The Labrador sits beside her and barks.

A fireman spots her.

FIREMAN 1

Hello there! Everyone, over here!!

Rescue workers rush over with first aid medical equipment.

FIREMAN 2

What's your name?

MEI MEI

Mei Mei...

Fireman 1 pulls out a laminated computer printout of Mei Mei's missing person poster and compares the picture to the girl before him.

FIREMAN 1

We've found the last one! Call it in!

RESCUE WORKERS

It's a positive I.D.! The missing girl! She's alive!

Medical assistants examine Mei Mei's heartbeat and make sure she has no major body wounds. It's a miracle - she seems just fine.

Mei Mei closes her teary eyes.

MEI MEI

Was everything a dream?

Mei Mei's hand slowly reaches up around her neck to touch the necklace. But grandma's necklace is gone.

A few tears fall down her face.

Just then, a WWII plane flies through the sky.

She looks up and salutes it.

MEI MEI (CONT'D)
Goodbye Billy, goodbye Grandma,
goodbye Ichiro. Goodbye everyone...

Mei Mei is placed on a stretcher and rushed to the medical shelter.

INT. TEMPORARY MEDICAL SHELTER - DAY

Mom, Jie Jie and other relatives rush over to Mei Mei's stretcher, smiling at her. They are so happy to see her safe. Mom cannot stop crying, hugging Mei Mei tightly in her arms.

Mei Mei tries to comfort Mom.

MOM
It's okay mom. I'm okay.

The rescue worker turns to them.

RESCUE WORKER
It's really a miracle. Missing for
seventy-two hours and just a few
minor scratches.

Mei Mei taps her Mom on the shoulder.

MEI MEI
Mommy.

MOM
Yes?

MEI MEI
Are we still selling Grandma's
land?

MOM
Why are you asking this now?

MEI MEI
Can you not sell it? I want to move
back and stay here.

The Uncles laugh.

BIG UNCLE

Don't joke around, Mei Mei. There are no family members left in the village.

SECOND UNCLE

Yes. This is unavoidable... There's no one taking care of the house anymore. Plus, after this devastating earthquake... I'm afraid...

AUNT

The village is not livable anymore after the earthquake. What do you want to do here?

MEI MEI

I want to stay here and become the *Empsapuh*!

Everyone is clearly shocked to hear the word *Empsapuh*.

BIG UNCLE

You know what *Empsapuh* is?

MEI MEI

The Shaman. I want to stay here and become the Shaman. Gaya has chosen me.

SECOND UNCLE

Gaya has chosen you? You can't just say stuff like this.

AUNT

The last Shaman died seventy years ago. There hasn't be any *Empsapuh* in the village since then.

After a moment of silence, Mom speaks out.

MOM

I believe you, Mei Mei.

Mom takes out the diary from Grandma Shu-Chen.

MOM (CONT'D)

Here, Mom's diary. Haven't you guys already read it? Mei Mei is the only one who can protect the land.

Everyone is shocked.

MOM (CONT'D)
I'll stay here with Mei Mei.

Jie Jie stands still, speechless. Mei Mei reaches out to hold Jie Jie's hand, and begins to sing the song that she couldn't sing at the funeral.

MEI MEI
(singing in Truku)
Tai tai tai tai tai binaw wah!
(waw) hakaw utux ni(waw)
hakaw utux ni! (waw) ana bi
rabang!(waw) ana bi rabang!
paru balay grasun ka, hakaw utux
nii,paru balay grasun ka, hakaw
utux nii,malu balay tengsan a,
hakaw utux nii,malu balay tengsan
a, hakaw utux nii...

EXT. TAROKO RIVER BANK - DAY

Mei Mei's singing echoes through the gorge.

Grandma Shu-Chen's ashes fly out of the necklace, float through the wind, and land on Mei Mei's sketchbook that has washed up by the riverbank.

As the credits roll, the wind gently blows through the pages, revealing Mei Mei's drawings of various scenes from throughout her journey.

THE END.