
Operation Pigsty

6th of April 1942 outside of Parang, Luzon

The long column snaked its way back along the trail from the village of Samal, where the Japanese had recently established a supply base. The men looked tired and haggard, struggling along; each carrying at least two large bags of rice. The only sounds were the relentless struggle of men crossing the grueling terrain and the constant buzzing of remorseless insects. In the dark it was hard to discern who was who. Out of the gloom, a lanky man holding a 45-caliber automatic approached a taller officer wearing a WWI style helmet and holding a clipboard. His uniform was outlined in sweat marks and other unpleasant looking jungle stains. The approaching soldier looked even more poorly dressed than his superior. Shirtless, his pants were in tatters. In better light you'd be able to make out a single feather tied to the man's long hair and twin lines of war paint under each exhausted eye.

Indian Bob Reynolds paused to catch his breath in the middle of the dense foliage, "Captain, Sir, there's a farm back there with of respectable number of what appears to be healthy pigs."

"Are they Japanese pigs, Bob?" Captain Woodbury Kane inquired.

"I believe the owner is a local, sir," the wiry native replied.

"Well, then they'll have to say where they are," determined the captain.

"Shame sir, I wouldn't want to let them fall into the hands the Japanese."

Captain Kane looked directly at the native. "We came here to protect the Philippine people, Bob, not rob them blind. Besides, we still need to get through the Japanese lines. Are you prepared to cross the lines leading a group of squealing pigs?"

"I see your point," he replied.

Kane seemed to drift away in thought, lost in contemplation.

"You change your mind Captain?"

"No," Kane mused, "I'm thinking about the advice my father gave me before I shipped out."

"Did you follow it?"

"Am I standing in the middle of the Philippine jungle?"

"Last time I looked sir, that's where we are."

"Well, then ... I didn't follow it."

Captain Kane's previous posting had been in Miami Florida. As a young lieutenant he had been placed in charge of the Army golf course there in October 1941. He left the posting with the promise of a promotion, but never imagined it would land him in this backwater. The captain trudged off into the

jungle. His boots sucked into the swamp-like terrain with every step. He slid down a slope into a foul-smelling little stream and instantly plunged into water up to his waist. Holding his clipboard and Park Avenue pen over his head, he slowly slid along with the flow of the water. As he left, a third tired figure appeared wearing a brown 1883 campaign hat with an extra wide brim. It appeared to have seen better days, but the man clearly wore it with pride.

“You’d think General Parker would have picked someone else for this mission,” remarked Sgt. Hamilton Fish, late of New York City. “Not some straight laced, pencil-pushing desk jockey with a record for following rules and regulations.”

“The general seemed to think he had the right qualifications,” the warpainted private declared.

“The general would have thought he was qualified if he was walking around on crutches with an eye patch,” the Sergeant mocked.

“I believe you’ve interpreted situation correctly there, Sergeant.” Indian Bob laughed.

The column slowly meandered its way back to the American lines on the Bataan peninsula, fighting not only the invading Japanese but the pressures of the surrounding tropical jungle. The second seemed far more willing to kill them than the forces of the Imperial Army. Not only was it willing, but so far, it had managed to be strangely effective. Captain Kane’s forces had struggled over thirty miles and lost eight men. Six to exhaustion and two to malaria, but not anyone from Japanese forces, who had them trapped in this part of the Pacific.

The air was flooded with 30-caliber machine gun bullets as the men scrambled for cover. Dirt and water shot up into the air like the splashing of raindrops in a thunderstorm. The noise of firing pins and the rattle of spent shells were the only sound in this part of the island which could drown out the incessant insect drone.

“Castillo,” Sgt. Fish screamed, “Will you cut that out?”

“Is that you Sarge?” the Cuban’s voice floated over the swamp.

“No,” Fish screamed back sarcastically, “It’s your mother. Who do you think it is?”

“Castillo, go get the rest of the platoon and get out here on the double.”

“We going somewhere, Sarge?”

“No, you’re going to help me carry these damn rice sacks.”

More emaciated men in American army uniforms, most based on the last war, appeared as if from nowhere and helped their struggling comrades back to the relative safety of their own lines. It was at this point Captain Kane expected the Japanese to open up with everything they had, but the jungle remained quiet. Either the Japanese were still asleep in the predawn light, or they were suffering from the same infuriating supply problems the Americans were facing. Kane only hoped the Japanese were hungrier than his men were.

Kane didn’t remember much about his arrival back at headquarters, he had gone too long without sleep to be truly coherent. He did, however, remember a bright-eyed second lieutenant stopping him before

he could reach his rack. He was ordered to General Parker's dugout. Inside the II Corps headquarters, Parker's officers were lined up like a line of hobos in a soup kitchen.

"Gentlemen," The General announced, "We remain at one quarter rations."

"What about Captain Kane's rice expedition, sir?" a major, who looked like he hadn't shaved in a week, asked.

"It's because of Captain Kane we are at one quarter rations ... otherwise we'd be at zero. What's the ammunition situation like?"

"We're down to ten rounds a man," another officer announced.

"Outstanding," the general declared, "this means we still have some left. Gentlemen over the next three days things are going to happen which will test you. Each of you will have what amounts to three options. You can end up killed, wounded or promoted." There was a pause while the General waited for comments, but his officers were far too drained. Parker saw it in their eyes, these men were spent. They had given everything they had, and there was nothing more for them to give. Even in a briefing. "Alright, keep your heads down and conserve ammunition. Dismissed."

The officers shuffled their way to the door slowly. As they left, General Parker called to Kane, "Not you captain. I'd like a word. The captain stood frozen, still facing the door as the other officers gradually left the room. Once the room was empty, Kane sluggishly turned around to face the general.

"First off, let me congratulate you on a successful raid. I shouldn't have to tell you how much the rice you brought back is needed. I want you to take half of what you brought in and give it to your platoon."

"Sir?"

"I have another mission for you, captain," the General continued, "Command is going to surrender this position in the next few days. I'm sending you and your men up into the hills. I want you to organize a resistance. Harry the Japanese. I don't want them to feel safe the entire time they are on this island."

"Sir?" Kane not only looked bedraggled, but he looked confused.

"You have a problem Captain?" the general snorted.

"Why me sir?" he replied, "You have much better fighters here than myself."

"Agreed," the General snapped. Kane was a bit taken aback. He was hoping for a little more argument from the General. "That's my problem. I can't depend on any of these others to conduct a gorilla war. If they get caught by the Japanese they'll stay and fight it out. I need someone who knows when to get out of a tight spot. That's you Kane."

"Now, don't take this the wrong way," the general approached the weary junior officer, "I'll need all my fighting officers. In a few days they will all be prisoners of the Japanese Empire. We all know what that means. I'll be needing them to fight to survive. You ... well Kane ... you won't do as well. If the Japanese don't kill you for all the raids you've led on their supply system, they will spend an inordinate amount of time trying to make you wish you had never been born. No, you're the right man for the job."

“Collect the 23rd battalion’s rifle ammunition, but leave the machine gun rounds here. Take half of the rice and your platoon and get out of here tonight.” The general held out his hand for the Captain to shake. For a moment, Kane stared at it with empty eyes, then he painfully held out his hand. The general grasped it and held on to it for some time.

Finally, he released the Captain’s hand and gave him a crisp salute. Kane returned it, slowly and without any snap. Then the Captain turned and headed for the door. “Oh, and Captain,” the General added, “Don’t come back. No matter what you hear. No matter what rumors are floating around. There won’t be anything you can do for us. Understood?”

“Yes, sir.” Kane strode out into the light. The sun was defiantly up now and he had to squint to stagger to his rack. He fell into it, face first, slept for the rest of the morning and afternoon, right up until dinner. Which, as it turned out was the only meal being served. When he returned to the platoon area there was a pile of equipment: ammunition, packs, medical supplies and even a mortar.

“What’s this Zelazny?” Kane asked a private sitting by the pile. He was feeling better after a snooze and a meal, but he was still only partially awake.

“The regiment has been filing in all day,” the private replied, “leaving us equipment, ammo, the works. There’s even a cart.” Zelazny pointed to a beat-up bamboo affair with two rubber tires. Although the tires were mostly without any tread.

“Did they say why?”

“Rumor has it were going up into the hills to fight the Japs.”

“Well,” Kane responded, “For once the rumors are true. We’re going to up into the hills and hold out until Dugout Doug brings us reinforcements for Australia.”

The night was dark enough, but Kane waited until the last sliver of the moon set before heading off into the jungle. Only the annoying buzzing of the insects remained, which made the Captain suspicious. He motioned his men forward one at a time. He watched as each man slipped off into the jungle. After the last man left a rather desperate looking Lieutenant stepped forward.

It was Harris, late of the 2nd Platoon. Late, not because Harris was dead, but everyone else in the 2nd platoon was. He took the Captain’s hand, “Give’m hell” he remarked. Kane started off into the bush, turning at the last moment with Harris still standing there. “You too,” was all Kane could think of to say.

Kane’s men marched for six days and six nights. They noticed the gunfire had stopped after the first two days, except for sporadic fire from Corregidor, which was now on the other side of the bay. But once they got to the main valley between the mountain ridges on Luzon, they headed north. They kept to the east side of the valley. On the fourth day they crossed the Pampanga river and then headed straight for Mt. Pulog. Finally, they stopped at the village of Balete at the base of the mountains.

“When are we going to stop running, captain,” asked Sgt. Fish snidely.

“When I can’t smell the Japanese any more, Fish, that’s when.”

Kane understood they were at the end of their rope. If they didn't stop soon, exhaustion would halt them by default. They held up in Balete, to rest for the last leg of their journey.

Kane stood next to an oddly dressed native. "He says they will send supplies from the village," Rafael Castillo translated for the Captain, "but you can't stay in the village. The Japanese search it from time to time. He says you need to go up into the Huallanto jungle."

"Can they provide us with a guide?" Castillo rattled off a few words to the native and he replied with a long stretch of dialog Kane didn't understand. For all he knew the man was spouting poetry.

Finally, Castillo translated, "He says he can't give us a guide. His people don't go up there. Apparently, the mountain is occupied by a tribe of headhunters."

How are they going to supply us, if no one will go up there?" Kane asked incredulously.

"He says he can show us a spot at the base of the mountain. He'll leave supplies there and we can pick them up anytime we want." Castillo paused as the chief rambled on. "He says the Nips have been raiding the village for weeks looking for supplies. They've been hiding their crops in this spot and the Japs haven't found anything."

The chief let loose with a long discourse of chattering. Castillo looked at the Captain, "He wants to know if we are going to kill the Japs."

"Tell him," Kane dictated, "that's the general idea."

Castillo translated and the chief's face lit up like a lantern. After a long rattle of words, "he says he was never fond of Americans until today."

The trip up the mountain was rough going. There was no road, not even a water buffalo path. Every inch had to be hacked out of the jungle by hand. It was slow going. About half way up the slope, a large group of natives appeared out of the foliage. They were armed with what looked for all the world like English long bows. They wore animal skin loin cloths and shaved the sides of their heads above the ear. Around their foreheads they wore a painted band on their skin. Some were red, a few green and one or two were blue.

They pointed at Indian Bob and chattered.

"What did he say, Castillo?" Captain Kane inquired.

"How the hell should I know," the corporal responded. "I know Spanish and some of the local lingo. I don't speak headhunter."

They kept chattering and using odd clicks while pointing frantically at Indian Bob. One stood forward and tugged on Indian Bob's sleeve. Then they held up a group of animal skins and chattered some more. The sleeve puller pointed at Indian Bob's war paint and then at his own forehead.

"Well, Bob, they seem to think you're one of them," Kane explained.

“Wrong tribe,” Indian Bob shook his head. This seemed to upset them and they tugged on Indian Bob’s sleeve again and held up even more pelts.

“Bob,” the captain announced, “take off your shirt.”

“What?”

“Shut up and do it.”

Indian Bob began to unbutton his shirt and the natives got eerily quiet. They released the tension on their bows; which Kane saw as a good sign. “I hope they are not inviting me to dinner.” Indian Bob muttered. Once he had his shirt off, Indian Bob turned to the natives, “Too gamey. Not good to eat.” He pointed to himself. The natives simply held up the pelts and pointed at his shirt.

Kane pointed at one of the natives. “Give him your shirt Bob.”

“Excuse me, sir?”

“Give him your shirt.” Kane repeated, a bit more forcefully.

“Damn,” said Indian Bob, “I don’t mind being friendly, but I’m not much for giving strange headhunters the shirt off my back.” He held out the uniform and the native took it. In return he stuffed four pelts into Indian Bob’s empty hand. Bob stood there. Another native tugged on Bob’s trousers and held up more animal pelts.

In an instant the bows were down and out jumped animal skins to replace them. The scene was alive with chattering natives pulling on the American’s uniforms.

“I guess we are going native boys,” Kane announced. “Take off your uniforms.”

In a few moments Kane’s platoon was standing in its shorts as the local natives donned their uniforms. It was like a picture of the after match of the Little Big Horn. Natives danced around excitedly in uniform, balancing steel helmets on their heads. Kane understood how early explorers considered their behavior to be like small children, but these were skilled warriors beyond doubt. They had surrounded them without any of his men even noticing it.

Then as soon as it began, it was over. The natives disappeared into the bush as if they had never been there. As the quiet returned to the jungle, Indian Bob looked at Sgt. Fish. “I think I liked it better when you folks traded us whisky for beads and trinkets.”

“I’d think you would enjoy this,” the Sergeant glanced at Indian Bob, “It’ll let you get back to your native roots.”

“Like I told the Captain,” the American Indian smiled, “these boys are not my tribe.” He gave the Sergeant an even bigger grin as he stood there in only his white shorts and boots. “Although I do admire the way they treat white men.” He made a slicing motion across his throat.

“Keep it up Bob. I’ll have you digging latrines for a week,” the sergeant snapped.

The platoon proceeded to cut their way up the hill, looking more like a group of local tribesmen than once gallant soldiers of the US Army. Kane found the outfit strangely comfortable as he hacked through

the low underbrush. Perhaps he would recommend it as a local service uniform. Although he knew Washington would never go for it. No place to hang your medals.

They settled into making a camp half way up the mountain on a little plateau. They spent the next few days building a crude set of huts. Each hut was carefully built at the base of a tree, to make it difficult to spot from the air. One of the first things they did was to build a make shift table. Indian Bob kept bringing in the native lizards and they cut them up on this table. They weren't too bad to eat if you cooked them right. Otherwise they tended to be a shoe-leather tough.

Despite the extra protein rations provided by the regional reptiles, Kane noticed his men still appeared to be losing weight. Some of the cause might have been the news of the fall of Corregidor. The last stronghold of the US Army in the Philippines. Now they were cut off from home, not only by miles of impenetrable jungle, but also half a world away by sea. They were also starting to run out of quinine. If they didn't replenish their supply soon, this was going to be the shortest guerilla war in history.

With their base camp established, it was time to leave their first calling card with the Japanese.

Thompson machine gun bullets thudded into the Japanese sentries as an alarm went up. Henry Bradshaw threw a grenade into a building which looked like it had once been a farm house. The night quiet was broken by a flash and then screams in the language of the followers of the emperor. The Nips tried to get a machine gun manned, but Corporal Castillo cut down the crew with a machete. One officer rushed into the middle of the square brandishing a samurai sword and a nambu pistol. He screamed a couple of exhortations, but then fell with a nice Springfield-made hole tucked neatly between his eyes.

It was all over in a few short minutes. Sgt. Fish was smiling, holding the officer's sword in one fist as if it was some sort of grand prize.

"How'd we do?" Kane asked.

"We'll we found their quinine supply and what looks like a stock of vitamin supplements," the sergeant declared gleefully.

"Sir." Indian Bob was actually saluting. It seemed, in addition to capturing supplies the men had seized a little of their spirit back. Kane returned the salute. "Sir, beg to report we've found a corral full of pigs. Not a local farmer in sight sir."

"So, you take them for ..."

"Jap pigs' sir. Slanty-eyed devils if I may say so sir."

"Well, we can't leave such a bounty unmolested. Indian Bob, I'm putting you in charge of the pig herd."

"Yes, sir!" Indian Bob yelled, "Thank you sir!"

"Any casualties?" the Captain asked Sgt. Fish.

"We lost Johnson," the Texan replied.

Henry Nash Johnson had come over with Woodbury on the same transport in '41. He been a clerk at a New York law office before he came to the island. Not the sort of place where his parent where expecting him to end up, but war has a funny way of messing with your plans. He wasn't looking forward to writing Johnson's parents. But it would have to wait. If he was lucky the Japanese would get him before he had to write it. He only hoped whoever came after him would know how Henry went down.

On the other hand, maybe it was better no one knew Henry Nash Johnson met his end in a pigsty rescuing 40 pigs so far from home his parents wouldn't be able to pronounce the name of the place.

For the next several weeks Calamity Kane ... as they began to call themselves ... fell on the Japanese Imperial Army. The only problem with their success was ... it brought them attention. Attention from all the wrong people. The Japanese stepped up patrols in the area and even moved in a company of Type 95 Ha-Go tanks. Fortunately for Kane's men they simply spread the tanks out between all their garrisons, leaving only one tank per emplacement.

Sgt. Fish had a wonderful time when one of these tanks went unguarded. He, Indian Bob and a private named Craig Wadsworth, decided to become its temporary crew. They ran the tank up and down Highway 7, destroying Japanese installations as they went. They even knocked out two other tanks. In the end though, they had to abandon their little toy when it ran out of fuel.

"You want to push it into the river, Sarge?" Castillo asked pointedly.

"With what?" Sgt. Fish replied, "you have a spare bulldozer up your sleeve I'm not aware of? This isn't your mother's Desoto you know."

"Water Buffalo, sarge. We got water buffalo." Castillo whistled and about 15 Filipinos appeared on the road. After Castillo exchanged some chatter with them, a group of farmers arrived with three sets of yoked water buffalo. After some screaming and prodding the buffalo were assembled on one side of the tank, pushing it over the high bank. It not only landed with a splash, but the turret rolled off as it fell in sideways. It rolled downstream for a bit until the gun dug into the mud.

After the tank incident, the Japanese stepped up their reprisals in the area, burning village after village. Not long after, recruits started to pour into the camp. At this point ammunition and arms were running extremely low and the majority of Kane's men were armed only with machetes, knives and the occasional meat cleaver. This was supplemented by a supply of weapons dropped off for the guerillas to use from a submarine on the east side of the island. The US Navy had arranged to supply Kane's men on a quarterly basis, but the amount wasn't even close to meeting the unit's needs.

The result was less action and more time laying low from constant Japanese searches. By the fall of 1942 the group had created several bases in the mountains and stealthily moved from one to the other. This inactivity turned out to be a drain on morale. Nobody like hiding, except for Kane. General Parker's intuition had been correct. Kane knew when it was time to run away. But inevitably, the Japanese came up with a ruse to locate them.

They burned down an entire village, which was one of the group's best recruiting methods. About 40 men of the village set off to find the band, and the Japanese followed them. When the villagers found them, so did the Japanese. Surrounded, Kane's men did put up a firefight for the next few hours, but it was pointless. There was no way to get out. All they could hope for was nightfall. But the Japanese kept

up the pressure. To his credit Kane never raised a white flag, but when the last of the ammunition ran out the Japanese moved in, using their rifle butts as clubs. By 3PM the entire outfit was in enemy hands.

They were marched down to the local supply base. The first one they had raided. His men were bound and left in the now empty pigsty. Several of the Japanese troopers laughed outrageously as the Americans were pushed face down into pig excrement.

The Japanese officer in charge was a bit of a martinet. In short order his men dragged a desk to the edge of pigsty and he was seated behind it. They dragged Captain Kane before him, beating him with bamboo sticks to force him to kneel in the muck. He remained beaten and bloody as the officer shuffled papers on his desk.

“Mr. Kane, it’s a pleasure to finally meet you,” the Japanese officer announced in perfect English.

“Sorry, I can’t say the same.” Kane replied, spitting blood. Kane rattled off his name, rank and serial number as had been drummed so often into each of the men in Kane’s command. The Staff Sergeant who normally drilled you in such affairs at boot camp did so with only slightly less violence than the Japanese were using now. Kane rattled off the answers now like they were in a script he had memorized. But the officer wasn’t buying it.

“You’ll notice,” the officer replied, “I do not address you by rank, Mr. Kane. As far as the Japanese government is concerned, you are a bandit. A criminal who will be treated as such.”

“The Geneva Convention ...” Kane slurred his words.

“Does not apply to you. Japan is not a signatory of your European, imperialist treaty. Even if we were, it wouldn’t apply to you. Where is your uniform?”

“At the cleaner’s,” Kane joked.

“As the local magistrate for this region I find you all guilty of crimes against the state.” The officer smiled. “You imperialists. Are you aware how much suffering you caused? How many villages I had to burn. Have you no shame? Think of all my brother Asians you have left without a home, Mr. Kane. Your illegal army of occupation has been driven out of these islands. The imperialist American army has surrendered. They at least still had their uniforms. Yet like animals they refused to fight to the last man. That is why we will win Mr. Kane. We are experienced fighters and we will never give in. You imperialists run at the first sign of trouble.”

“You Americans think you are heroes,” the officer pontificated. “You are nothing more than common thieves. You stole these islands from the Spanish, who stole them from the local natives. You are not even respectable thieves. You merely steal from other thieves.”

Kane smiled. Actually, it was a half-smile as his closed and swollen right eye did not allow for him to curve the other side of his lip. “Although I’m loathe to do it, I have to throw in with McArthur on this point. You people don’t exactly dazzle anybody with your intelligence.”

“Arrogance, Mr. Kane, is the second downfall of you imperialists. You share that trait with the crews of the Arizona and the Oklahoma. And you will also share their fate. I will now march you down to Manila, where I will hang your men one at a time while you watch. Then you will join them. But I’ll arrange for a

special knot for your men, Mr. Kane. No simple broken necks. I want my fellow Asians to watch as you struggle for air. I want your feet to kick as you are cut off from the air. Like your government tried to strangle the Japanese Empire. We now have all the oil, rubber and steel we will ever need, Mr. Kane. It is no longer in the hands of you stinking imperialists to exploit and send to factories in Europe.”

The officer leaned over, putting his face right in front of Captain Kane. “You been robbing Asia for years. I want them to see you strang ...” He had a certain amount of trouble pronouncing the last word. This was probably the result of the stone arrowhead which slammed into the back of his neck and was protruding from between his teeth. The officer fell right on top of Kane and then slid to the ground. Five or six more arrows projected from his back. Shots rang out and pandemonium ensued. Japanese soldiers rushed from one position to the next, only to fall prey to the most primitive weapon they could imagine, the bow and arrow.

By nightfall the affair was over. As the officer had claimed, they fought right up to the last man. Several times during the engagement, a sub-officer armed with a sword attempted to lop the heads off the prisoners, only to find himself face down in the muck, looking like a pin cushion.

After it had quieted down, the head hunters arrived and released the Americans. As Kane stood, rubbing his sore hands, Castillo and Indian Bob approached.

“I really have to learn this lingo,” Castillo snorted.

The native swarmed around the injured men whooping and hollering. Some were still wearing a steel helmet or two. Most were still dressed in American uniforms, but they were now adorned with bird feathers and belts made from turtle shells. Kane spotted one native wearing two silver bars on his epaulets. Bars which had once been his, but he could now scarcely remember wearing them ... or the shirt they were on.

“Sir,” Indian Bob saluted his commander, “I have to apologize.”

“Apologize? For what?”

“Well, sir, I was wrong,” Indian Bob smiled broadly, “these boys are my tribe.”