



THE BLACK KIPA

Japan had surrendered! The war was over. That is, *we* knew it was over, but there were hundreds, maybe thousands of Japanese soldiers hidden in the wilderness of the Philippine Islands who did not know, and possibly some that do not know to this day. So it was left to us, who were still stationed there to clean them out.

I was one of the first lieutenants in charge of infantry companies, composed of two hundred-fifty men, assigned to do the job. Whenever we were able, we took prisoners, and when we came upon places in which they were living, our orders were to blow them up.

The jungles where we found Japanese fighters were so thick with plants, tall grass, and trees that we could hardly see three feet in front of us. It was oppressively hot and sticky. Aside from the machetes we needed to cut our way through, we carried our rifles, ammunition, blankets, rations, and water, altogether about forty pounds.

Occasionally a sickening stench led us to dead bodies. We were tired and tense, knowing that shots could come at us any minute.

Suddenly we came upon two rows of flimsy huts on stilts, about eighteen altogether. Whoever was inside could easily have heard us coming, but not a sound came from any of them. Following procedure, I ordered my men to place dynamite at the base of each corner of every house. Then I instructed them, "I'm going up to the first house, pull the pin on my grenade, and kick the door in. When you hear my grenade go off, you set off the dynamite."

I climbed the steps of the first shack, pulled the pin on my grenade, and kicked the door open. There stood a small, middle-age man wearing a black kipa, with his hands in the air screaming "Yid! Yid! Ich bin ein Yid!"

I was in shock, but I quickly put the pin back in the grenade. The little man handed me a paper from his pocket. It was his German passport stamped with a big "J" for Jude, German for Jew. He explained that the Japanese had thought they were allies because they had German passports. He told me there were at least two hundred Jews living in those few huts.

Of course, my men removed the dynamite immediately, and I arranged for food, milk, doctors, and medical supplies to be brought to them.

I'm convinced that, had I actually killed those Jews, I would probably be in an asylum somewhere now.