



# **SEED**

**"THE BEGINNING OF THE END"**

**written by  
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SEED  
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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

A quiet open space in the jungle. A shallow river runs center in front of us. The sun setting in the distance. Peaceful.

SUPER: **Solomon Islands - 1942**

Suddenly, WE HEAR GUNFIRE. Then two Japanese ZEROS fly OVERHEAD, followed by the sound of a low-pitched WHINE. It is soft at first, but getting louder and louder. Then...

CRASH! Pieces of AIRPLANE DEBRIS, DIRT and a SPRAY OF WATER come from behind to land in the shallow river before us. After it all settles, WE PULL BACK to see a crashed GRUMMAN TBF AVENGER. On the side, just under the pilot's window is the name, "**LT. JARED CAINE.**"

INT. AVENGER COCKPIT - DUSK

LIEUTENANT CAINE (20's), a classic "all American flyboy" type you might see on a "Join the War Effort" poster during World War II slowly lifts his head, which is bleeding from impact. Breathing heavily and feeling the pain, he checks it with his trembling hand. Stunned and pumped full of adrenaline, he tries to shake it off. Then turns back.

LT. CAINE  
Thompson? Paonessa? You guys  
still with me?  
(beat)  
Hey! Anybody?

He receives no response from his crew as smoke slowly begins to fill the cockpit making him cough. Desperately, he begins unbuckling himself and trying to open his window to exit.

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Trees whip by as WE TRUCK alongside THREE JAPANESE SOLDIERS running through the jungle.

INT. AVENGER COCKPIT - DUSK

Lieutenant Caine's window is jammed. He bangs on the latch.

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

The three Japanese soldiers run toward and away from us as we hear the SOUNDS OF WAR in the distance... and something else - a THUD - THUD - THUD and the BREAKING of tree limbs.

EXT. AVENGER COCKPIT - DUSK

Lieutenant Caine manages to finally break out of his cockpit.

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

The three Japanese soldiers run at full speed, jumping over logs and pushing aside brush as the THUD - THUD - THUD and BREAKING of tree limbs gets closer and louder.

EXT. JUNGLE - AVENGER CRASH SITE - DUSK

Lieutenant Caine quickly makes his way to the side of his aircraft. Finding the side hatch, he opens it and sees CREWMAN PAONESSA dead. He leans in and yells up to the turret gunner.

LT. CAINE  
Thompson! Thompson!

Nothing. He quickly pulls himself out and looks toward the jungle at the other end of the clearing in front of his plane as he hears the sound of something coming. Eyes wide, breathing heavy and gritting his teeth he aims his shaking pistol at whatever it is.

EXT. JUNGLE/AVENGER CRASH SITE - NIGHT

The three Japanese soldiers run as fast as they can. As soon as they emerge from the cover of the jungle into the clearing, Lieutenant Caine fires several rounds at them. One fires back, but the other two turn around and begin firing into the jungle - aiming higher and higher as the THUD - THUD - THUD sound gets louder.

Lieutenant Caine seeks cover behind what's left of his airplane as bullets ricochet off the metal around him. He returns fire and kills the one Japanese soldier that was shooting at him. He fires once more and then he's out of bullets.

It doesn't seem to matter though as the remaining Japanese soldiers are not shooting at him.

Suddenly, his plane bursts into flames and he jumps away from it, landing in the shallow river.

(CONTINUED)

The two Japanese soldiers also run out of bullets, so they turn to run toward him.

Lieutenant Caine ducks into some vegetation for cover. Then his eyes grow wide as his gaze begins to turn upward and WE HEAR a STRANGE ROAR followed by the SCREAM of one of the Japanese soldiers and the sound of BONES BREAKING.

LT. CAINE  
Holy sh...

KA-BOOM! His plane explodes and pieces of FIERY DEBRIS come falling down all around him as he lies face-down covering his head and WE HEAR a BEASTLY SHRIEK followed by the THUD - THUD - THUD and BREAKING OF TREE BRANCHES trail off into the distance.

After a moment, Lieutenant Caine lifts his head to see what's going on. All is quiet again, except for the crackling of the fires around him. He stands back up then slowly turns to his right and sees the remaining Japanese soldier standing very close by.

For an instant, both he and the other soldier look as though they may fight each other. But instead, wide-eyed, breathing heavily and being in mutual shock at what they had just seen, they both slowly back away from each other, then run off in different directions as we progress into the...

**SEED OPENING TITLE MONTAGE - ENDING WITH THE EPISODE TITLE:**

**"S.E.E.D."**

END OF TEASER



# SEED

## THE BEGINNING BOOK 1 OF THE END



### ROB SKIBA

WITH CHRISTOPHER WHITESTONE

# SEED

## — Prologue —

### ATTACK IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

The soft sunlight was sinking low in the northwest sky, as it does during the dry season, on the oceanic islands of Australasia. Its waning beams created pleasing hues of pink light and shadow, which still penetrated the evergreen jungle canopy of fruit-filled Matoa, flowering Molave, and Teak-wood trees. The dimming rays highlighted the ripened clusters of Brush Cherry and gently illuminated the green leaves and dense undergrowth of Shefflera, Ficus and Rhododendron rooted in the rich volcanic soil on either side of a shallow river.

Monkey-faced bats began to emerge from their daytime hiding places in search of their nightly portions as the evening symphony of calls, tweets, chirps and coos of the crested cuckoo-doves, lorikeets, honeyeaters, leaf warblers

and thicketbirds began to fill the air.

In this land that time forgot, renamed by gold-hungry Spanish explorers as the Solomon Islands, the tropical sounds and floral scents that are found nowhere else on Earth herald the coming night. The idyllic beauty of this place had yet to be defiled by the noise and destruction of the raging conflict in the South Pacific.

The stillness in the forest opening was violently ended by the nearby reports of two Japanese Arisaka 99 rifles. At the sound of the gunfire, the frightened fauna ceased their communal songs just as the angry buzz of two Mitsubishi Zeros suddenly sliced through the dusky sky above.

Immediately, the guttural growl of a 1700 horsepower radial aircraft engine welled up louder and louder above the clearing, followed by a thunderous crash. A shower of water, dirt, rocks and mud, combined with metal, fabric, and plastic debris from the downed Grumman TBF Avenger rained down for what seemed like an eternity into the river bed and clearing in front of the impact zone. As the dust and spray finally settled, the pilot's name, "Lt. Jared Caine", became fully visible where it was neatly stenciled below the greenhouse-style cockpit canopy.

Lieutenant Caine, an all-American flyboy if there ever was one, had been stunned into a state of shock by the crash impact and his thoughts began to drift into a tangled mess of memory and pain. He remembered his flight orders, to hunt the narrow straits and waterways between smaller islands for Japanese surface ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy, under the command of Admiral Yamamoto. He remembered the tingling apprehension he felt as he flew low and slow by an unidentified jungle-covered island. He remembered Gunner 3rd Class William Thompson Jr's horrified call over the intercom,

"Bandits...bandits!...6 o'clock high, Lieutenant...looks

like two Zekes coming back from Guadalcanal.” Thompson’s excited voice went up in pitch as he shouted again from his rear-facing ball turret position, “They’re nosing over...it looks like they’re gonna jump us!”

He remembered Radioman 2nd Class Michael (Mac) Paonessa’s eternally optimistic voice returning over the comm , “Don’t worry Junior, they’re probably out of fuel and just wanna make it back to Rabaul. They’ll just get one swipe at us. Heck, they’re prob’bly outta ammo anyway.”

Thompson shouted back, “Yeah Mac... and if they flame us and we’re captured, maybe they’ll give us a rice bowl of Saki before they chop our heads off”.

“Cut the chatter, guys,” He remembered yelling back into the comm mic, “They’ll probably try a scissor as they pass and catch us in their crossfire. You just get ready on that .50, Johnson. Let’s let ‘em know they messed with the wrong bird.”

He remembered the hard-hammering “Blat-blat-blat-blat-blat-blat” from Johnson’s “Ma Deuce” machine gun, until a small piece of steel debris in the ammo feed hopper caused it to jam.

“Misfire! ...Misfire!,” Screamed Thompson, desperately trying to clear the gun’s receiver as his terrified eyes got wider and wider at the approaching attackers.

He remembered hearing the *ZIP! ZIP!.. ZING!... ZIP! ZIP! ZIP!* sound of small arms hits tearing through the wings and tail section and thinking, ’Those are just machine gun hits...maybe they are out of cannon rounds.’

He remembered the loud *TANG* and *POP* of the aircraft’s control linkage cables being severed as the Zeros shot past, their 7.7mm machine guns continuously firing until they were well ahead of the ambushed Avenger.

He remembered the bomber’s nose snapping up into near-stall as the stick got heavy and his control of the

aircraft went dead.

He remembered the creeping feeling of panic as he futilely fiddled with the flap and aileron tabs and spurted into the intercom,

“Where going in, Boys! ...Where going in! Hang on, you guys!”

He remembered the ground and trees approaching...

After a few seconds of wallowing in near stupor, he became conscious of the fact that his head was resting on the instrument cluster panel and lifted it up only to feel the freshened shock of pain in his forehead. He opened his eyes and realized that his flight goggles were missing. Raising up his right hand, he felt the wetness of his own blood, and gathered that he was badly wounded. With his other hand, he jerked open the chin-strap buckle of his khaki flight cap and felt again. He lowered his hand back and stared at the bright red gore covering his palm and fingers as the warm blood began to fill the rubber ear cup and comm receiver and trickle down his right cheek. His thoughts turned to the two men in the plane with him. Turning toward the rear of the plane, he called out through the starboard tunnel to the rest of his crew,

“Thompson! ...Paonessa! You guys still with me?”

There was no response. He called out again,

“Hey! Anybody?”

Again...silence. Electrical smoke started to fill up the cockpit and he began to choke and cough. He snapped off the battery and ignition switches, and groping alongside his seat, he found the fire extinguisher. Unable to see anything, he realized he had to get out. He laid the fire extinguisher in his lap and tried to slide the port-side cockpit hatch back, but it was jammed.

A short distance away three Japanese soldiers had heard

the aerial encounter in the skies above, followed by the crash. The Japanese occupation had left small units or even single intelligence officers on each of these islands which had usually been given the standing orders to “Hold until they were relieved”. For almost a year, beginning just before the invasion of Malaya, the three-man detail had fought together in the South Pacific, as part of the 18th Division of the Imperial Japanese Army under their Supreme Commander-in-Chief, “His Majesty”, the Emperor Hirohito. Led by Gunsō (meaning Sergeant) Hoshi Nakamura, the unit included Heichō (or Lance Corporal) Taku Fujiwara and Nitōhei (or Private) Yukio Kondou.

The detail had spent the day patrolling the island, and gathering what they could find for food before returning to their palm and fern leaf-covered, basha-style lean- to. It was time to prepare their meager meal of one small rainbowfish, which they would share along with sea urchin and ngali nut soup over rice. Nitōhei Kondou had just begun to build the small fire which was always kept hidden beneath the cover of their native-material-camouflaged shelter.

The non-commissioned officer in charge quickly re-buckled his pistol belt which he had been about to remove, and adjusting his samurai sword and sheath barked out, “...Azuma...Hinode ni mukatte! Sore o mitsukeru!” (meaning, “...East...toward the rising sun! Find it!”)

Hastily gathering their weapons, the two men under him both paused and turned their heads for a split second toward the direction of *something* they both briefly thought they might have heard in the jungle forest. Hearing nothing else, they turned and glimpsed for an instant at each other before snapping to attention as their leader shouted, “Isoge! ... Idō!!!” (“Hurry up! ...Move!!!”)

Un-holstering his Nambu 14 semi-auto, he headed out first and was immediately followed by the senior of the two

soldiers under him, with the lowest ranked soldier bringing up the rear, and now the three of them ran as fast as they could toward the direction of the crash site.

At the same moment inside the cockpit, time stretched out like a knife-edge as Lieutenant Caine's hearing was overwhelmed by the pounding of his own pulse. "This is not happening," Caine said out loud, as he repeatedly tried with both hands to force the starboard hatch, smearing a gory finger-paint pattern of blood on the inside of the Perspex canopy glass. Grabbing the fire extinguisher with both hands, Lt. Caine began to hammer at the stuck release lever until it finally gave way and he was able to slide the hatch open. A cloud of thickening smoke billowed out as he unbuckled his safety belt and slipped his arms out from under the shoulder straps. Throwing the fire extinguisher out first, he winced from the pounding pain in his head, as he climbed out of the cockpit onto the crushed wing stub.

An olive green Solomon Island Gecko became alarmed at the sound of the approaching soldiers and scurried up under the pink flowers of a large clump of Hibiscus. The Gecko licked its eyes and watched as Gunsō Nakamura deftly weaved through the rattan-overgrown jungle carpet of lush fern leaves and palm fronds, rapidly approaching the frightened reptile's temporary hiding place.

With his pistol arm pointing the way, Nakamura raced past the gecko's vantage point, followed at a full run by Heichō Fujiwara and Nitōhei Kondou, both with their Arisakas held at port arms. As the three of them disappeared through the bush toward the American bomber, the muffled sound of distant naval gunfire could now be heard.

The Gecko's prehensile tail squeezed tighter on the hibiscus stems as yet another sound, a more frightening

sound, began to build from the direction the Japanese soldiers had come, as the farthest visible jungle canopy began to sway, whip around, and fall.

The plane had diagonally cut its way through the heavy stand of trees on the north side of the river and had belly crashed, wheels up, into the river bed with its nose half-buried in a pushed up mound of mud and rock. The violent impact had immediately stopped the 2600 RPM spin of the supercharged Wright twin cyclone engine and twisted the propeller blades into comically gnarled hooks. The locking pins of the starboard wing had sheared as it collided with a massive tree trunk on the way down, and on impact in the clearing, the folding wing assembly had jammed up too tightly alongside the shredded Avenger's fuselage, making it difficult for the now-free pilot to stand. Pressing his way aft, he balanced on the trailing edge of what was left of the wing and tried to peer into the ball turret. River mud had spattered all over the outside of the plane, including the ball turret canopy, and combined with the thickening smoke from the growing fires inside, made it impossible for Lieutenant Caine to make out whether Thompson was still alive.

An enigmatic sense of inner dread and private terror began to swell in each of the running soldiers. Nakamura, Fujiwara, and Kondou were awash with fear and adrenaline as they swiftly side-skirted around the obstruction of a tightly-spaced stand of Banyan trees. All three men in turn hurdled over two hefty, fallen Spurwood trunks. As they hastened to close in on the position of the downed American plane in the clearing still ahead, the surging sense of alarm that each of them felt made it so they could only hear their own, and their comrades, running footfalls. Spurred on by the hounding sense of uneasiness, which was beginning to

catch all three of them, they ran even harder. Drawing from a deep and ancient well of national pride and self-discipline, each of the three of them forced himself to overcome his own secretive fear and press fervently ahead.

Following their advancing corridor, at a distance behind the Japanese troops, mixed flocks of tropical birds flooded out of trees and flapped away for their lives. The startling din grew louder and closer from the crunching, thudding, tearing, and cracking of stand after stand of jungle forest as it was being demolished. *Crack! ... Swoosh... Crash!* went branch after breaking branch of heavily-leaved Native Elm and falling Ficus trees. Natangura Palms spilled their nearly ripe fruits, which they can only bear once in their lifespan and which had taken them eight years to produce, as their trunks were explosively splintered by the advancing force of an unseen destroyer. Stands of tall, canopy-piercing Calappa Palm trees whipped back and forth before suddenly falling like river canes before the harvester's scythe.

The soldiers still had not reckoned what peril was chasing them and so it had not broken their regimented focus on capturing their objective. Not yet it hadn't, but a very large something was nearing and would soon get their full attention.

Wiping mud with the left forearm sleeve of his flight suit, the downed American flyer cleared the turret glass well enough to make out that Thompson wasn't moving at all. Pivoting away from the ball turret on the edge of the wing stub, he immediately dropped, toes-first over the side, momentarily landing his buttocks on the wing edge before sliding off into piles of torn up mud and plant life. Clambering through a wide clump of dismembered fern boughs, the Lieutenant reached the crew's hatch and flung it open.

He grimaced as the clearing smoke revealed what he had feared most. Paonessa's lifeless body was shot clean through and slumped, facing aft over the stinger belly gun, with his hands still clenched tightly on the M1919 Browning machine gun trigger handles. Caine yelled up into the turret, "Thompson! ... Thompson!!" but heard nothing.

He stepped up into the fuselage tunnel and from a one-knee stance, craned up into the turret to see that Thompson had strangely been shot from somewhere below and was indeed gone as well. The young petty officer's body was sitting upright with his head slightly facing upward. Caine wondered why he was still alive, while the rest of his crew was dead, and felt suddenly tired as he stared at Thompson in the last rapidly fading light. It occurred to him as being tragically ironic that his friend, "Billy" Thompson Jr., who Caine had felt like an older brother to, had possibly been killed by the toughness of their own airplane as a machine gun round from one of the Zeros ricocheted back up from the deck inside of the Avenger.

A great puff of acrid smoke engulfed him in black soot and rasped his throat as he accidentally inhaled his next breath. As his eyes instantly began to water, he coughed hard, his head hurting again from the force of it, before beginning to back out. He set foot back outside the airplane, mopping at the soot in his eyes with a dirty sleeve. That is when he heard it for the first time.

A fresh surge of adrenaline made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up as he pulled his trusty 1911A1 Colt .45 from the holster pocket he had sewn inside his survival vest and climbed back through the pile of fern leaves. Ducking under the remains of the wing, he flicked down the safety lever on his cocked-and-locked .45 and started toward the nose in the direction of the sound that had produced the hyper-alert sense of fear which now crept all through his body.

Lighting up the darkening shadows below the other side of the aircraft, burning gasoline now drizzled from the ruptured port fuel tank and began to run down the lower panels of the wing. It wicked into the fuselage, highlighting the trail it was taking in thin lines of yellow flame, before finally leaking down into the bomb bay. The spreading fire began to heat the 2000 lb. "fish", which the Mark 13 torpedo bombs had affectionately been dubbed by Avenger crews and support personnel, and the building heat threatened to detonate the live ordinance. It was only a sliver of time before it would be seen whether the fuel tanks or the torpedo would blow first.

The noise was growing as he reached the front of the plane. Looking downstream across the clearing ahead of his crashed aircraft, Lieutenant Caine was momentarily frozen in his tracks by the unreal image before him.

At the end of the hollow in front of him, an advancing column of destruction headed toward him as the forest canopy ahead collapsed, disappearing from behind. It was as if an impossibly large mower was cutting a tunnel through the jungle straight toward the clearing.

Snapping out of it, He shakily raised up his sidearm. Gritting his teeth, he pointed his pistol at the noise and ruckus ahead. The noise of it welled higher, as whatever was making it pierced a nearby veil of thick, tangled, jungle overgrowth.

Suddenly, the three Japanese cleared the edge of the jungle, emerging into the clearing ahead of Caine.

Seeing the three of them, his gaze fixed on the outstretched pistol of Gunsō Nakamura. Caine steadied his Colt with both hands and fired, but Nakamura dropped to one knee and was barely grazed. The crashing in the forest behind

him did not break Nakamura's fanatical concentration as he rapid-fired back with his 8mm Nambu.

Fujiwara, and Kondou, the other two Japanese soldiers, had both turned around at the crashing sound and faced toward the jungle from which they had just emerged. Shouldering their rifles, they strained to see what in the jungle behind them was making the impossible noise.

Nakamura's first round ricocheted off of the plane's engine cowl and hit behind the Lieutenant. Trying to correct his aim as he fired, Nakamura hit the luxuriant broad green leaves of the blossoming Orchids that grew waist-high on either side of where Caine now stood.

With wide-open eyes, Caine returned a couple of rounds, mainly as cover fire, before darting back toward the rear of the plane. Dodging around the wing, he dove back through the fern frond hedge, tucking and rolling to an upright kneeling position in the muddy loam under the tail section.

Using the moment to his advantage, Gunsō Nakamura had sprang up into a sprint toward the American pilot's impromptu tail-section foxhole. As he approached the smoking wreck, he fired twice as he ran toward Caine's new position. The rounds slammed into the tail elevator and rear fuselage of the now-expended American torpedo bomber, pinning Caine down in his defensive position.

The monkey-faced bats had been irresistibly drawn to the sickly-sweet nectar of the gold-tipped, white and pink pompom flowers of a stand of fish-poison trees, but at the sound of the smashing jungle, they took flight all together in a leathery black-winged cloud of audible squeaks, and the chirps and whistles that only bats can hear. They roiled and coiled in a dense, moving flock as they flew across the meadow before dissolving into the jungle on the other side. All four of the men in the clearing were overcome by

skin-chilling goose-flesh as they heard an echoing roar.

*Car-unch! ...Smash!* Down went the remaining trees at the end of the clearing. Horrified at the sight that now towered before them, Fujiwara, and Kondou began backing across the clearing as they fired in turns up at the thing in front of them as fast as they could operate their bolt-action rifles. Heichō Taku Fujiwara had only one round left and decided that he needed to deploy his bayonet first, rather than try to reach for another strip clip of ammo, as his 99 was particularly tricky to reload. While back-pedaling as fast as he could, he attached the long, grooved bayonet to its lug on the end of his rifle, without ever taking his eyes off of the monstrosity at the edge of the clearing.

“Gunsō! ...Gunsō! ...RUKKU!!” (“Sergeant! ...Sergeant! ...LOOK!!”), screamed Heichō Fujiwara across the clearing at his preoccupied Leader, as he aimed up and fired his last round.

Nakamura’s single-minded path was set and he would not let himself look back at the thing that had emerged from the jungle until he was sure that he had neutralized the American. He ran directly toward Lieutenant Caine and fired twice again. Both shots narrowly missed the pilot and ricocheted off of the landing hook assembly so close to Caine’s head that he was hit by a stinging spray of powdered lead.

Caine ducked in reflex from the splinters of bullet as Nakamura now stopped alongside the tail and aimed again. Caine slowly stood, his pistol aimed directly at his attacker, and for several quick heartbeats, the two looked at each other face to face.

Nakamura’s disdainful scowl relaxed slightly, as he began to squeeze the trigger on his final bullet, but Caine fired first. The Colt .45 slug went precisely into Nakamura’s forehead, killing him instantly, but his trigger finger involuntarily

fired anyway. The slide on his Nambu stuck open in the spent magazine position as he fell straight backward still pointing his empty pistol.

Caine looked over at the port wing of the plane and seeing the building fire, he knew that the Avenger was about to explode. He ran out from the burning plane as fast and far as he could, down into the meadow and toward the direction that the bayonet-wielding Heichō Fujiwara was now back-stepping from. Fujiwara backed, holding his rifle in a defensive posture with the bayonet held in front of his face. Hearing the last of the rifle fire into the jungle, Caine looked up again, and his soot-covered face drained of blood at the evil sight. He aimed his .45 auto upwards and fired, first two rounds ...and then another... and another, until he too was out of ammo.

Nitōhei Yukio Kondou's rifle was empty and he was frantically trying to reload, when the blood-curdling roar sent him into sheer panic, and pure animal instinct took over. He dropped his rifle and turned to run, just as he was grabbed up into the air. At the sound of Kondou's screams, Lieutenant Caine and Heichō Fujiwara, who now only stood feet from each other, both grimaced, baring tightly gritted teeth. The cracking of Kondou's bones echoed across the clearing.

"Holy Shi.....", was all that Caine managed to get out before, like a strike of lightning...

*Ba- BOOM!!*

The fire had finally climbed inside the left tank, igniting the mixture of av-gas fumes in the airspace inside. The detonating fuel inside the left tank had lit off all of the fuel, in all of the tank. The blast sent a fiery shockwave across the open field, knocking the two enemies into the muddy bank of a tiny feeder creek that drained into the small river.

Surrounded by scores of small, scurrying sand crabs,

they both lay motionless, face down in the mud, paralyzed from the jolt of the blast and fall. Not one second later...

*Ba-duh-PHOOM!! BOOM!*

The unused Mark 13, which was filled with over 600 Lbs. of high explosive Torpex, and which bore the hand-painted names of several of the largest Japanese warships, underscored by the Kanji letters for "Sayonara", exploded in the belly of the fallen airship. The concussion completely obliterated the aircraft, mincing it into metallic shreds, as it simultaneously cratered out a hollow in the mud and rock, while heaving the plane's shattered remains high into the air. The rumble of it penetrated deep into everything within its radius.

Immediately, a pain-filled, horrific scream reverberated across the opening in the jungle.

Gravel and sand that had been under the plane hit the men first. That was followed by what was most of the port landing gear, which landed, with the tire still burning, just inches away from Caine, who was inches away from Fujiwara. Pieces of structural steel, which had once been part of the airplane's skeleton, splash landed or stuck at odd angles in the mud around them.

Another wailing roar made the puny-feeling men cringe again. Whatever had made it, turned and shook the very ground with each step, as it loped away into the jungle, tearing up another swath in a new direction. The crunching and crashing of falling trees began to diminish as the wailing roar continued off into the distance.

Shards of burning sheet metal rained down all around them. The clearing was now silent except for the crackling of dozens of small fires burning in clumps of both green and dry vegetation that had been lit by red-hot debris. Their flames illuminated the clearing and revealed the effect of the detonation.

As their hearing recovered more completely, they could hear each other breathing hard, and began to get up on their feet. They both climbed up and out of the ditch only a few feet from each other. They both still held low their empty weapons, as they looked each other over.

Heichō Fujiwara suddenly realized that this man standing before him had prevailed in the shoot-out with his *Gunsō*, the greatest pistol shooter he had ever known. He raised up his rifle, holding the bayonet blade between his eyes in front of him, as he faced Lieutenant Caine. Caine unsnapped the handle strap on his survival knife, as he watched the young Japanese man's eyes squint and relax. He wondered what he was thinking. He wondered if they were going to fight.

A final barely-audible crash was heard far off in the jungle, which instantly brought back to both of their minds the mortifying experience they had just mutually survived. They both had heard from their childhood of the tales from antiquity, but now they shared a knowing....a knowing that the myths and legends from the past are indelibly part of the present...and of the future. They looked at each other and both began to wonder whether this man...this other man...that was looking right back at them, was actually the enemy. They both wondered, 'where is the real war?'

Fujiwara looked down at his empty rifle, and bowed his head at the American, as he threw it to the ground.

Caine held up his Colt .45 toward the Japanese soldier, and nodded deeply and slowly in return, before slinging it away sideways.

Looking at the explosion's carnage around them, they both slowly shook their heads as they deeply felt the meaninglessness of this scene of destruction. In the havoc, they saw what had been a place of tropical island bliss, devastated all around them. They knew they did not belong

here. Looking down the broken tunnels through the jungle made by the monster, they knew that it did not belong here either. They both began to back away from each other before slowly turning to run off in different directions.

Deep in the collective primal memory of Earth is the flickering knowledge that things are not as they once were.

Paradise is lost.