MALAYA CMD.

Return to Malaya Command, Singapore.

CLASSIFIED

MALAYA COMMAND

EYES ONLY

THE MALAYA FILES



PLATE 001 / JUNGLE PATROL — ILLUSTRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION

SUBJECT	**2ND ARGYLLS / THE "WHITE GHOST"**
COMPILED	D. SINCLAIR
STATUS	DECLASSIFIED

FILE MC / ARG / 02

A COMPANION FILE TO THE NOVEL

THE LAST SWADDIE

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

If you are reading this, you have joined the ranks. Thank you.

When I wrote *The Last Swaddie*, I was haunted by the stories my village elders told me about the occupation of Malaya. I wanted to write a novel that felt like a documentary: spare, brutal, and true to the men who fought in the jungle.

This dossier is my gift to you. Inside, you will find:

- The real history behind the fiction
- The personnel files of the people you will meet, and the man hunting them
- A deleted scene from the enemy's point of view
- A coded message that never reached its destination

Welcome to the jungle.

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FICTION / ARCHIVAL NOTICE:
Characters, scenes, reports and dialogue may be fictional or dramatized. Images are artistic reconstructions, not archival photographs or official records unless stated. This is not an official military publication.

PLATES IN THIS FILE ARE ARTISTIC RECONSTRUCTIONS,
NOT ORIGINAL ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

Keep your head down.

D. Sinclair

PERSONAL

AUTHOR / PRIVATE ENCLOSURE

FACT VS. FICTION

THE JUNGLE BEASTS

THE REAL 2ND ARGYLLS



ARGYLL JUNGLE PATROL / ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

FACT

- The 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, reached Malaya in 1939.
- Their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Stewart, was regarded by much of Malaya Command as an eccentric. He believed the jungle was not an obstacle but a battlefield.
- He drilled his men relentlessly: tracking, silent movement, night fighting, hand signals instead of radios.
- Other units mocked them. The nickname "Jungle Beasts" stuck anyway.
- When Japan invaded in December 1941, the Argylls were among the very few units in Malaya truly prepared for jungle war.

FICTION

- Duncan MacLachlan and his section are invented. The men of the real battalion are not.

They laughed until the war came.

VERIFIED

THE AMBUSH AT GRIK ROAD



ROAD INTO THE JUNGLE / ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

FACT

- DATE: First contact 16 December 1941. The wider Battle of the Grik Road ran to 23 December.
- LOCATION: The narrow, jungle-walled road from Kroh towards Grik in northern Perak.
- ENEMY: Japanese infantry advancing south in strength, expecting an easy road.
- OUTCOME: The Argylls punished the advance at close range, slowing it, then withdrew in good order.

FICTION

- In *The Last Swaddie*, Duncan's section springs the ambush. The section is invented. The kind of fight, fast, close and in thick jungle, is real.

Seventy-five yards. You can see their faces.

ACTION REPORT ON FILE

THE BATTLE OF SLIM RIVER



TYPE 97 ADVANCE / ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

FACT

- DATE: 7 January 1942, around Trolak and the Slim River bridge.
- Japanese tanks and infantry struck down the road at first light.
- The British defences had no fixed anti-tank obstacles, little anti-tank firepower and no air cover. Communications failed.
- The 2nd Argylls were hit hard in the open. The battalion was shattered, and survivors had to find their own way south.
- Many were captured, killed or hid in the jungle for years. Only a small fraction could be mustered afterwards.

FICTION

- Duncan stays behind to blow the bridge. This is the novel's invention, a way to give one man a choice in a battle where most men had none.

The jungle was the only way out.

DISASTER · 7 JAN 1942

THE ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL MASSACRE



MILITARY HOSPITAL / ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

FACT

- On 14 February 1942, as Japanese forces closed on Singapore, the Alexandra Hospital was a British military hospital, a Red Cross building packed with wounded soldiers, doctors, nurses and staff.
- Japanese troops entered the hospital. They bayoneted patients in their beds, killed medical staff, and shot at people who tried to flee.
- Survivors were herded into a small room that night. Many did not live to see morning.
- Estimates put the dead at around 200. Only a handful survived, by hiding or by lying still among the dead.

FICTION

- Mei Tan is invented. Her survival is fiction, but it is built on the reality of those hours: chaos, panic, and a few seconds in which a soldier's snap judgement decided who lived.
- In the novel, her mixed heritage makes the soldiers hesitate. She is not what they expect, and that hesitation saves her while the woman beside her dies.

Some things should not be softened.

14 FEB 1942

PERSONNEL DOSSIER

SUBJECT / DUNCAN MACLACHLAN

NAME: MacLACHLAN, Duncan

RANK: Corporal

SERVICE NO.: 2978471

UNIT: 2nd Bn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders

ORIGIN: Loch Fyne, Argyll, Scotland

LANGUAGES: Gaelic, English

ALIAS: HANTU PUTIH (The White Ghost)



RECONSTRUCTED PORTRAIT

PERSONAL / OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND

- A crofter's son
- Enlisted at age twenty-three
- Before the war, his life was bound to the land and the seasons

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

- Exceptional ability to operate alone in dense jungle
- Quiet, watchful, high tolerance for hardship
- Troubling detachment after combat: does not glory in killing, does not shy from it
- The men trust him implicitly. A natural leader in survival situations.

Not a hero. A man who keeps going.

PERSONNEL: RESTRICTED

PERSONNEL DOSSIER

SUBJECT / MAJOR HIROSHI TANAKA

NAME: TANAKA, Hiroshi

RANK: Major

SERVICE NO.: 0841-K

UNIT: 2nd Field Kempeitai (Military Police)

ORIGIN: Kyoto, Japan



RECONSTRUCTED PORTRAIT

PERSONAL / OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND

- Career military officer
- Intense discipline, rigid order
- Believes implicitly in the superiority of the Empire

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

- Methodical. Does not drink. Does not smoke.
- Keeps his uniform immaculate, even in the field
- Views the resistance not as a military threat but as a stain on the order of the Empire
- OBSESSION: The "White Ghost". He does not believe in myths, but he recognises a pattern. He will not stop until he has the man he holds responsible for the deaths of his soldiers.

The most dangerous kind: patient.

ENEMY OFFICER: KNOWN

PERSONNEL DOSSIER

SUBJECT / MEI TAN

NAME: TAN, Mei

SERVICE NO.: Civilian / Agent (attached to Force 136)

UNIT: Malayan Resistance / Papan Network

ORIGIN: Singapore / Penang

LANGUAGES: English, Malay, several Chinese dialects



RECONSTRUCTED PORTRAIT

PERSONAL / OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND

- Eurasian. Father a wealthy Chinese merchant, mother English.
- Educated in Singapore. Trained as a nurse at the Alexandra Hospital.

SKILLS

- Moves between the British colonial world and local Asian communities without drawing suspicion
- Fluent in four or more languages
- Medical training; extremely composed under pressure

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

- Survived the Alexandra Hospital massacre by passing as a local Malay
- Severe survivor's guilt
- A deep, cold hatred of the Kempeitai
- Highly intelligent, observant, and deeply dangerous when cornered

She does not forgive. She does not forget.

AGENT: DO NOT CONTACT

THE HUNTER'S EYES

DELETED SCENE / MAJOR TANAKA / OCTOBER 1942

REDACTED / DELETED

From the enemy's point of view.

This scene does not appear in the novel. It takes place in Ipoh, in October 1942, from the point of view of Major Tanaka.

The rain had not stopped for three days.

It drummed on the tin roof of the Kempeitai office in Ipoh, a steady, maddening rhythm, and beyond the shuttered window the Kinta Valley had turned the colour of weak tea. Major Hiroshi Tanaka stood with his hands clasped behind his back and did not look at the water. He looked at his own reflection in the glass. Collar straight. Buttons aligned. Not a thread out of place. Disorder began with small things. He had learned this as a boy in Kyoto, and the war had only proved it.

"Major."

Sergeant Okabe stood in the doorway, rain dripping from his cap. He bowed and held out a folder. "The report from Kuala Kangsar."

Tanaka took it without turning around.

A railway bridge. Cut at two in the morning. Two sentries dead, throats opened from behind. No shots fired. No footprints; the rain had taken care of that. The relief guard had found the bodies at dawn, laid side by side, their rifles stacked neatly beside them.

Tanaka read it twice. The second time he read more slowly.

"Neatly," he said.

"Major?"

"Someone stacked their rifles. Why would a man do that?"

Okabe had no answer. Tanaka had not expected one. "You may go."

THE HUNTER'S EYES

DELETED SCENE · CONTINUED / SHEET 2 OF 4

When the door closed, Tanaka sat. He opened the bottom drawer and drew out a thick folder, its corners soft from handling. He laid it beside the map of the Perak river system pinned flat on his desk. The map was already marked in red ink, a scatter of small circles from Kuala Kangsar down towards Tapah.

There were forty-one reports in the folder now. He knew each one by heart.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLATE

- A railway bridge, cut
- A fuel dump, burned
- A patrol of six, found in a rubber estate
- A truck convoy, halted by a felled tree and emptied
- A sentry post, silenced in the middle of a card game

All of it at night. All of it in the rain. And never a wasted shot.

He took a fresh page and wrote what he knew, in a hand as neat as print.

- *Alone, or very few. A larger party leaves more trace.*
- *Trained for the jungle. He moves through it like a native.*
- *Not a guerrilla. A guerrilla is hungry and careless. This man is disciplined.*
- *A blade for the close work, a rifle for the long. Rifle brass is missing from every scene. He picks up his own cartridge cases.*

Tanaka put the pen down. In nine years of service he had met two kinds of men who tidied up after a kill. Professionals, and men with something to prove. He did not yet know which this was.

THE HUNTER'S EYES

DELETED SCENE · CONTINUED / SHEET 3 OF 4

Last week the Kempeitai had brought in a rubber tapper from the Grik side. Okabe had suggested the usual methods. Tanaka had declined. A man with a broken jaw says only what will end the pain. A man given tea and silence will say what he fears.

The old man had talked for two hours, looking at his hands. In the villages they called the shape in the jungle *hantu putih*, the white ghost. He was tall. Pale as a drowned man. He made no sound. The Malays left rice at the edge of the forest and told their children he was the spirit of a soldier who would not lie down.

"And you?" Tanaka had asked. "Do you believe this?"

The tapper had looked up then, and the fear in his face was not of Tanaka at all. "The rice is always gone in the morning, Tuan."

A ghost does not eat rice.

Tanaka rose and went back to the map. His finger found the Grik Road, then the long way south that every broken British unit had walked. Slim River. Tanjong Malim. Kuala Lumpur. He knew those names from the files of his own staff, and he knew which regiment had been broken at the first of them and scattered into the jungle. The Argylls. The ones who had been trained to fight in this green dark when everyone else had laughed.

The Argylls, who had died on the road at Slim River.

"No," he said to the empty room. "The dead do not cut throats."

Somewhere in this country, a soldier of that battalion had never reached Singapore, had never marched into the camps. He had chosen the trees instead, and for ten months he had bled the Empire one bridge and one sentry at a time.

THE HUNTER'S EYES

DELETED SCENE · CONTINUED / SHEET 4 OF 4

Tanaka thought of the two sentries at Kuala Kangsar. Nineteen, perhaps twenty. The same age as his nephew in Kyoto. Laid out side by side, their rifles stacked beside them, and the dead boys' faces turned politely to the sky.

That was what he could not forgive. Not the killing. The courtesy. It was the insolence of a man who believed he could take life and still keep his hands clean.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLATE

He sat down and opened his journal. He wrote slowly, the way he always did.

The ghost is not a legend. He is a man. He is bleeding. He is tired. And he is alone.

He paused, then added one more line.

I will find him.

He blotted the ink, closed the journal, and set it squarely in the centre of the desk. Outside, the rain kept falling on the roof of Ipoh. He listened to it for a long time, patiently, the way a hunter listens to a forest.

END OF DELETED SCENE

He never doubted he would win.

WEAPONS & TACTICS

THE TOOLS OF SURVIVAL



SMLE / ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY

SHORT MAGAZINE LEE-ENFIELD

CALIBRE: .303 British

ACTION: Bolt-action, 10-round magazine

The standard rifle of British and Commonwealth infantry. Reliable, accurate, hard-hitting. It demanded manual bolt-work between every shot, which made a trained rifleman deadly and a panicked one slow.



BREN GUN / ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY

BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUN

CALIBRE: .303 British

ACTION: Gas-operated, top-mounted 30-round magazine

Slower-firing than a heavy machine gun but remarkably accurate. The section's main source of firepower, and the weapon every ambush was built around.

The Bren never jammed. The men did.

STEWART'S DOCTRINE



PARANG / ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY

THE PARANG

TYPE: Heavy-bladed jungle machete

The most vital tool of the campaign. Used to cut undergrowth, clear paths, open coconuts, and in the close work. A silent weapon in a war where silence mattered.

NOBODY HIDES

Lt-Col Stewart taught the Argylls a simple lesson: a soldier who hides is still a soldier. A soldier who disappears becomes part of the jungle.

- Move in dispersed files, never bunched on the road
- Stay off the trails when you can
- Use hand signals; the jungle carries voices
- Strike fast. Vanish faster.



TROPICAL JUNGLE / ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY

The jungle is not your enemy. Fear is.

AGENT TAN'S REPORT

DECLASSIFIED INTERCEPT / 12 OCT 1943

MOST SECRET

This is a coded message sent by Mei to Force 136 in Ceylon, intercepted and filed by British intelligence.

WIRE / CIPHER / TRANSMISSION SLIP

XQVLM ROTEA PIHNS KWDBU GHCYE
ZUMTF OLRAN JBQXV

TO: HQ, CEYLON
FROM: M. TAN (PAPAN)
DATE: 12 OCTOBER 1943

Am compromised. Kathigasu arrested. Kempeitai patrols have increased. They are looking for a woman who moves between the towns. I am moving to the coast.

Before I go, I must report on the man they call the White Ghost. He is real. I have seen him operate. The Malays say he cannot be killed. The Japanese are terrified of him.

But he is not a ghost. He is tired. He is carrying too much weight. He needs rest, but he will not take it.

If this message reaches HQ, tell MacLachlan to stay alive. Tell him I am waiting.

I am not afraid anymore. I am just tired of running.

– M.T.

She made it to the submarine. Just barely.
— Mackenzie

INTERCEPTED

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

HANTU PUTIH

(Malay) White Ghost. *Hantu* means ghost or spirit; *putih* means white. The name villagers and soldiers gave to a pale, silent figure who haunted the Japanese in the jungle.

SWADDIE

(British Army slang) A common soldier, especially a private. The word was long used for a soldier in the ranks. In this story it follows Duncan MacLachlan, a Scottish soldier of the Argylls.

KEMPEITAI

(Japanese) The military police of the Imperial Japanese Army. In occupied territories it also served as secret police and counter-intelligence, and was feared for its brutality in interrogations.



MALAYA / PERIOD-INSPIRED ILLUSTRATION

Learn these words. The jungle will not translate.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MPAJA

(Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army) The guerrilla force that fought the Japanese through the occupation. It was largely Chinese and led by the Malayan Communist Party, and later worked with the British through Force 136.

SOOK CHING

(Chinese: “purge through cleansing”) A systematic massacre of Chinese civilians, mostly men, by the Japanese military after the fall of Singapore in February 1942. Estimates of the dead range from several thousand to many tens of thousands.

CHANGI

A district at the eastern end of Singapore. After the surrender it became the main prison camp for Allied prisoners of war, with a separate civilian internment centre at Changi Gaol.



MALAYA / PERIOD-INSPIRED ILLUSTRATION

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

MAP OF THE RETREAT

GRIK ROAD — SINGAPORE / DEC 1941 – FEB 1942



THE CAMPAIGN IN MALAYA, 7 DECEMBER 1941—15 FEBRUARY 1942

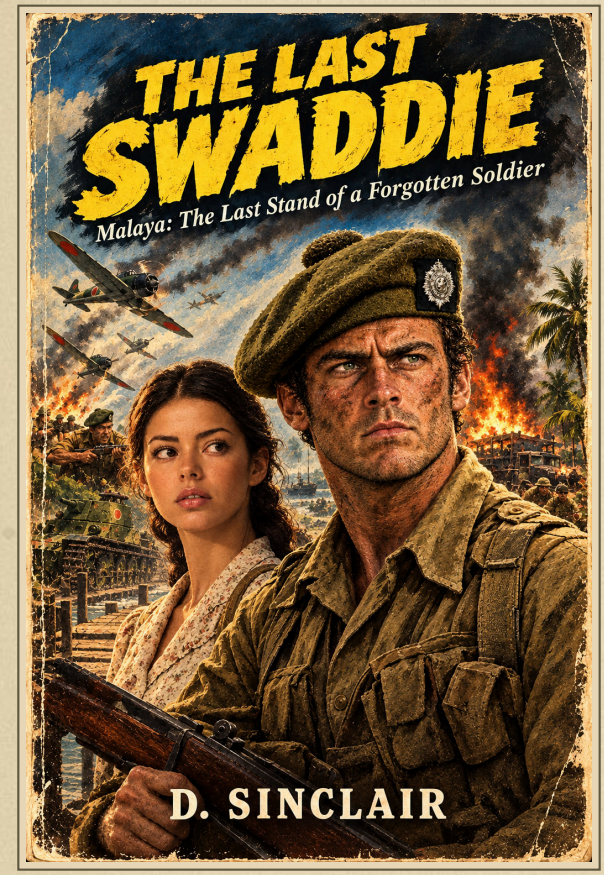
Every mile cost a man.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE STORY CONTINUES

You have read the files. You know the men. You know the hunter.

Now follow Duncan MacLachlan into the jungle: from the ambush at Grik Road to the slaughter at Slim River, and the brutal guerrilla war that followed.



KINDLE

PAPERBACK

HARDCOVER

AVAILABLE NOW

SCAN TO EXPLORE

VISIT THE LAST SWADDIE WEBSITE

https://thelastswaddie.netlify.app

THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE RANKS.

— D. Sinclair