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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRANS-PACIFIC TUNNEL

At the noodle shop, I wave the other waitress away, waiting for the American woman: skin pale and freckled as the moon; swelling breasts that fill the bodice of her dress; long chestnut curls spilling past her shoulders, held back with a flowery bandanna. Her eyes, green like fresh tea leaves, radiate a bold and fearless smile that is rarely seen among Asians. And I like the wrinkles around them, fitting for a woman in her thirties.

“Hai.” She finally stops at my table, her lips pursed impatiently. “*Hoka no okyakusan ga imasu yo. Nani wo chuumon shimasu ka?*” Her Japanese is quite good, the pronunciation maybe even better than mine—though she is not using the honorific. It is still rare to see Americans here in the Japanese half of Midpoint City, but things are changing now, in the thirty-sixth year of the Shōwa Era (she, being an American, would think of it as 1961).

“A large bowl of *tonkotsu* ramen,” I say, mostly in English. Then I realize how loud and rude I sound. Old Diggers like me always forget that not everyone is practically deaf. “Please,” I add, a whisper.

Her eyes widen as she finally recognizes me. I’ve cut my hair and put on a clean shirt, and that’s not how I looked the past few times I’ve come here. I haven’t paid much attention to my appearance in a decade. There hasn’t been any need to. Almost all my time is spent alone and at home. But the sight of her has quickened my pulse in a way I haven’t felt in years, and I wanted to make an effort.

“Always the same thing,” she says, and smiles.

I like hearing her English. It sounds more like her natural voice, not so high-pitched.

“You don’t really like the noodles,” she says, when she brings me my ramen. It isn’t a question.

I laugh, but I don’t deny it. The ramen in this place is terrible. If the owner were any good he wouldn’t have left Japan to set up shop here at Midpoint City, where the tourists stopping for a break on their way through the Trans-Pacific Tunnel don’t know any better. But I keep on coming, just to see her.

“You are not Japanese.”

“No,” I say. “I’m Formosan. Please call me Charlie.” Back when I coordinated work with the American crew during the construction of Midpoint City, they called me Charlie because they couldn’t pronounce my Hokkien name correctly. And I liked the way it sounded, so I kept using it.

“Okay, Charlie. I’m Betty.” She turns to leave.

“Wait,” I say. I do not know from where I get this sudden burst of courage. It is the boldest thing I’ve done in a long time. “Can I see you when you are free?”

She considers this, biting her lip. “Come back in two hours.”

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From *The Novice Traveler’s Guide to the Trans-Pacific Tunnel*, published by the TPT Transit Authority, 1963:

*Welcome, traveler! This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the completion of the Trans-Pacific Tunnel. We are excited to see that this is your first time through the Tunnel.*

*The Trans-Pacific Tunnel follows a Great Circle path just below the seafloor to connect Asia to North America, with three surface terminus stations in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Seattle. The Tunnel takes the shortest path between the cities, arcing north to follow the Pacific Rim mountain ranges. Although this*

course increased the construction cost of the Tunnel due to the need for earthquake-proofing, it also allows the Tunnel to tap into geothermal vents and hot spots along the way, which generate the electrical power needed for the Tunnel and its support infrastructure, such as the air-compression stations, oxygen generators, and sub-seafloor maintenance posts.

The Tunnel is in principle a larger—gigantic—version of the pneumatic tubes or capsule lines familiar to all of us for delivering interoffice mail in modern buildings. Two parallel concrete-enclosed steel transportation tubes, one each for westbound and eastbound traffic, 60 feet in diameter, are installed in the Tunnel. The transportation tubes are divided into numerous shorter self-sealing sections, each with multiple air-compression stations. The cylindrical capsules, containing passengers and goods, are propelled through the tubes by a partial vacuum pulling in front and by compressed air pushing from behind. The capsules ride on a monorail for reduced friction. Current maximum speed is about a 120 miles per hour, and a trip from Shanghai to Seattle takes a little more than two full days. Plans are under way to eventually increase maximum speed to two hundred MPH.

The Tunnel's combination of capacity, speed, and safety makes it superior to zeppelins, aeroplanes, and surface shipping for almost all trans-Pacific transportation needs. It is immune to storms, icebergs, and typhoons, and very cheap to operate, as it is powered by the boundless heat of the Earth itself. Today, it is the chief means by which passengers and manufactured goods flow between Asia and America. More than 30% of global container shipping each year goes through the Tunnel.

We hope you enjoy your travel along the Trans-Pacific Tunnel, and wish you a safe journey to your final destination.

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I was born in the second year of the Taishō Era (1913), in a small village in Shinchiku Prefecture, in Formosa. My family were simple peasants who never participated in any of the uprisings against Japan. The way my father saw it, whether the Manchus on the mainland or the Japanese were in charge didn't much matter, since they all left us alone except when it came time for taxes. The lot of the Hoklo peasant was to toil and suffer in silence.

Politics were for those who had too much to eat. Besides, I always liked the Japanese workers from the lumber company, who would hand me candy during their lunch break. The Japanese colonist families we saw were polite, well-dressed, and very lettered. My father once said, "If I got to choose, in my next life I'd come back as a Japanese."

During my boyhood, a new prime minister in Japan announced a change in policy: natives in the colonies should be turned into good subjects of the Emperor. The Japanese governor-general set up village schools that everyone had to attend. The more clever boys could even expect to attend high schools formerly reserved for the Japanese and then go on to study in Japan, where they would have bright futures.

I was not a good student, however, and never learned Japanese very well. I was content to know how to read a few characters and go back to the fields, the same as my father and his father before him.

All this changed in the year I turned seventeen (the fifth year of the Shōwa Era, or 1930), when a Japanese man in a Western suit came to our village, promising riches for the families of young men who knew how to work hard and didn't complain.

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We stroll through Friendship Square, the heart of Midpoint City. A few pedestrians, both American and Japanese, stare and whisper as they see us walking together. But Betty does not care, and her carelessness is infectious.

Here, kilometers under the Pacific Ocean and the seafloor, it's late afternoon by the City's clock, and the arc lamps around us are turned up as bright as can be.

"I always feel like I'm at a night baseball game when I go through here," Betty says. "When my husband was alive, we went to many baseball games together as a family."

I nod. Betty usually keeps her reminiscences of her husband light. She mentioned once that he was a lawyer, and he had left their home in California to work in South Africa, where he died because some people didn't like who he was defending. "They called him a race traitor," she said. I didn't press for details.

Now that her children are old enough to be on their own, she's traveling the world for enlightenment and wisdom. Her capsule train to Japan had stopped at Midpoint Station for a standard one-hour break for passengers to get off and take some pictures, but she had wandered too far into the City and missed the train. She took it as a sign and stayed in the City, waiting to see what lessons the world had to teach her.

Only an American could lead such a life. Among Americans, there are many free spirits like hers.

We've been seeing each other for four weeks, usually on Betty's days off. We take walks around Midpoint City, and we talk. I prefer that we converse in English, mostly because I do not have to think much about how formal and polite to be.

As we pass by the bronze plaque in the middle of the Square, I point out to her my Japanese-style name on the plaque: Takumi Hayashi. The Japanese teacher in my village school had helped me pick the first name, and I had liked the characters: "open up, sea." The choice turned out to be prescient.

She is impressed. "That must have been something. You should tell me more about what it was like to work on the Tunnel."

There are not many of us old Diggers left now. The years of hard labor spent breathing hot and humid dust that stung our lungs had done invisible damage to our insides and joints. At forty-eight, I've said good-bye to all my friends as they succumbed to illnesses. I am the last keeper of what we had done together.

When we finally blasted through the thin rock wall dividing our side from the American side and completed the Tunnel in the thirteenth year of the Shōwa Era (1938), I had the honor of being one of the shift supervisors invited to attend the ceremony. I explain to Betty that the blast-through spot is in the main tunnel due north of where we are standing, just beyond Midpoint Station.

We arrive at my apartment building, on the edge of the section of the City where most Formosans live. I invite her to come up. She accepts.

My apartment is a single room eight mats in size, but there is a window. Back when I bought it, it was considered a very luxurious place for Midpoint City, where space was and is at a premium. I mortgaged most of my pension on it, since I had no desire ever to move. Most men made do with coffinlike one-mat rooms. But to her American eyes, it probably seems very cramped and shabby. Americans like things to be open and big.

I make her tea. It is very relaxing to talk to her. She does not care that I am not Japanese, and assumes nothing about me. She takes out a joint, as is the custom for Americans, and we share it.

Outside the window, the arc lights have been dimmed. It's evening in Midpoint City. Betty does not get up and say that she has to leave. We stop talking. The air feels tense, but in a good way, expectant. I reach out for her hand, and she lets me. The touch is electric.

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From *Splendid America*, AP ed., 1995:

*In 1929, the fledgling and weak Republic of China, in order to focus on the domestic Communist rebellion, appeased Japan by signing the Sino-Japanese Mutual Cooperation Treaty. The treaty formally ceded all Chinese territories in Manchuria to Japan, which averted the prospect of all-out war between China and Japan and halted Soviet ambitions in Manchuria. This was the capstone on Japan's thirty-five-year drive for imperial expansion. Now, with Formosa, Korea, and Manchuria incorporated into the Empire and a collaborationist China within its orbit, Japan had access to vast reserves of natural resources, cheap labor, and a potential market of hundreds of millions for its manufactured goods.*

*Internationally, Japan announced that it would continue its rise as a Great Power henceforth by peaceful means. Western powers, however, led by Britain and the United States, were suspicious. They were especially alarmed by Japan's colonial ideology of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," which seemed to be a Japanese version of the Monroe Doctrine and suggested a desire to drive European and American influence from Asia.*

*Before the Western powers could decide on a plan to contain and encircle Japan's "Peaceful Ascent," however, the Great Depression struck. The brilliant Emperor Hirohito seized the opportunity and suggested to President Herbert Hoover his vision of the Trans-Pacific Tunnel as the solution to the worldwide economic crisis.*

The work was hard and dangerous. Every day men were injured and sometimes killed. It was also very hot. In the finished sections, they installed machines to cool the air. But in the most forward parts of the Tunnel, where the actual digging happened, we were exposed to the heat of the Earth, and we worked in nothing but our undershorts, sweating nonstop. The work crews were segregated by race—there were Koreans, Formosans, Okinawans, Filipinos, Chinese (separated again by topolect)—but after a while we all looked the same, covered in sweat and dust and mud, only little white circles of skin showing around our eyes.

It didn't take me long to get used to living underground, to the constant noise of dynamite, hydraulic drills, the bellows cycling cooling air, and to the flickering faint yellow light of arc lamps. Even when you were sleeping, the next shift was already at it. Everyone grew hard of hearing after a while, and we stopped talking to each other. There was nothing to say, anyway; just more digging.

But the pay was good, and I saved up and sent money home. However, visiting home was out of the question. By the time I started, the head of the tunnel was already halfway between Shanghai and Tokyo. They charged you a month's wages to ride the steam train carrying the excavated waste back to Shanghai and up to the surface. I couldn't afford such luxuries. As we made progress, the trip back only grew longer and more expensive.

It was best not to think too much about what we were doing, about the miles of water over our heads, and the fact that we were digging a tunnel through the Earth's crust to get to America. Some men did go crazy under those conditions and had to be restrained before they could hurt themselves or others.

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From *A Brief History of the Trans-Pacific Tunnel*, published by the TPT Transit Authority, 1960:

*Osachi Hamaguchi, prime minister of Japan during the Great Depression, claimed that Emperor Hirohito was inspired by the American effort to build the Panama Canal to conceive of the*

*Trans-Pacific Tunnel. “America has knit together two oceans,” the Emperor supposedly said. “Now let us chain together two continents.” President Hoover, trained as an engineer, enthusiastically promoted and backed the project as an antidote to the global economic contraction.*

*The Tunnel is, without a doubt, the greatest engineering project ever conceived by Man. Its sheer scale makes the Great Pyramids and the Great Wall of China seem like mere toys, and many critics at the time described it as hubristic lunacy, a modern Tower of Babel.*

*Although tubes and pressurized air have been used for passing around documents and small parcels since Victorian times, before the Tunnel, pneumatic tube transport of heavy goods and passengers had only been tried on a few intracity subway demonstration programs. The extraordinary engineering demands of the Tunnel thus drove many technological advances, often beyond the core technologies involved, such as fast-tunneling directed explosives. As one illustration, thousands of young women with abacuses and notepads were employed as computers for engineering calculations at the start of the project, but by the end of the project electronic computers had taken their place.*

*In all, construction of the 5,880-mile tunnel took ten years between 1929 and 1938. Some seven million men worked on it, with Japan and the United States providing the bulk of the workers. At its height, one in ten working men in the United States was employed in building the Tunnel. More than thirteen billion cubic yards of material were excavated, almost fifty times the amount removed during the construction of the Panama Canal, and the fill was used to extend the shorelines of China, the Japanese home islands, and Puget Sound.*

Afterward we lie still on the futon, our limbs entwined. In the darkness I can hear her heart beating, and the smell of sex and our sweat, unfamiliar in this apartment, is comforting.

She tells me about her son, who is still going to school in America. She says that he is traveling with his friends in the southern states of America, riding the buses together.

“Some of the friends are Negroes,” she says.

I know some Negroes. They have their own section in the American half of the City, where they mostly keep to themselves. Some Japanese families hire the women to cook Western meals.

“I hope he’s having a good time,” I say.

My reaction surprises Betty. She turns to stare at me and then laughs. “I forget that you cannot understand what this is about.”

She sits up in bed. “In America, the Negroes and whites are separated: where they live, where they work, where they go to school.”

I nod. That sounds familiar. Here in the Japanese half of the City, the races also keep to themselves. There are superior and inferior races. For example, there are many restaurants and clubs reserved only for the Japanese.

“The law says that whites and Negroes can ride the bus together, but the secret of America is that law is not followed by large swaths of the country. My son and his friends want to change that. They ride the buses

together to make a statement, to make people pay attention to the secret. They ride in places where people do not want to see Negroes sitting in seats that belong only to whites. Things can become violent and dangerous when people get angry and form a mob.”

This seems very foolish: to make statements that no one wants to hear, to speak when it is better to be quiet. What difference will a few boys riding a bus make?

“I don’t know if it’s going to make any difference, change anyone’s mind. But it doesn’t matter. It’s good enough for me that he is speaking, that he is not silent. He’s making the secret a little bit harder to keep, and that counts for something.” Her voice is full of pride, and she is beautiful when she is proud.

I consider Betty’s words. It is the obsession of Americans to speak, to express opinions on things that they are ignorant about. They believe in drawing attention to things that other people may prefer to keep quiet, to ignore and forget.

But I can’t dismiss the image Betty has put into my head: a boy stands in darkness and silence. He speaks; his words float up like a bubble. It explodes, and the world is a little brighter, and a little less stiflingly silent.

I have read in the papers that back in Japan, they are debating about granting Formosans and Manchurians seats in the Imperial Diet. Britain is still fighting the native guerrillas in Africa and India, but may be forced soon to grant the colonies independence. The world is indeed changing.

“What’s wrong?” Betty asks. She wipes the sweat from my forehead. She shifts to give me more of the flow from the air conditioner. I shiver. Outside, the great arc lights are still off, not yet dawn. “Another bad dream?”

We’ve been spending many of our nights together since that first time. Betty has upset my routine, but I don’t mind at all. That was the routine of a man with one foot in the grave. Betty has made me feel alive after so many years under the ocean, alone in darkness and silence.

But being with Betty has also unblocked something within me, and memories are tumbling out.

If you really couldn’t stand it, they provided comfort women from Korea for the men. But you had to pay a day’s wages.

I tried it only once. We were both so dirty, and the girl stayed still like a dead fish. I never used the comfort women again.

A friend told me that some of the girls were not there willingly but had been sold to the Imperial Army, and maybe the one I had was like that. I didn’t really feel sorry for her. I was too tired.

From *The Ignoramus’s Guide to American History*, 1995:

*So just when everyone was losing jobs and lining up for soup and bread, Japan came along and said, “Hey, America, let’s build this big-ass tunnel and spend a whole lot of money and hire lots of workers and get the economy going again. Whaddya say?” And the idea basically worked, so everyone was like: “Dōmo arigatō, Japan!”*

*Now, when you come up with a good idea like that, you get some chips you can cash in. So that’s what Japan did the next year, in 1930. At the London Naval Conference, where the Big Bullies—oops, I meant “Great Powers”—figured out how many battleships and aircraft carriers each country got to build, Japan demanded to be allowed to build the same number of ships as the United States and Britain. And the US and Britain said fine.<sup>1</sup>*

*This concession to Japan turned out to be a big deal. Remember Hamaguchi, the Japanese prime minister, and the way he kept on talking about how Japan was going to “ascend peacefully” from then on? This had really annoyed the militarists and nationalists in Japan because they thought Hamaguchi was selling out the country. But when Hamaguchi came home with such an impressive diplomatic victory, he was hailed as a hero, and people began to believe that his “Peaceful Ascent” policy was going to make Japan strong. People thought maybe he really could get the Western powers to treat Japan as an equal without turning Japan into a giant army camp. The militarists and nationalists got less support after that.*

*At that fun party, the London Naval Conference, the Big Bullies also scrapped all those humiliating provisions of the Treaty of Versailles that made Germany toothless. Britain and Japan both had their own reasons for supporting this: They each thought Germany liked them better than the other and would join up as an ally if a global brawl for Asian colonies broke out one day. Everyone was wary about the Soviets, too, and wanted to set up Germany as a guard dog of sorts for the polar bear.*<sup>11</sup>

#### *Things to Think About in the Shower*

1. Many economists describe the Tunnel as the first real Keynesian stimulus project, which shortened the Great Depression.
2. The Tunnel’s biggest fan was probably President Hoover: He won an unprecedented four terms in office because of its success.
3. We now know that the Japanese military abused the rights of many of the workers during the Tunnel’s construction, but it took decades for the facts to emerge. The bibliography points to some more books on this subject.
4. The Tunnel ended up taking a lot of business away from surface shipping, and many Pacific ports went bust. The most famous example of this occurred in 1949, when Britain sold Hong Kong to Japan because it didn’t think the harbor city was all that important anymore.
5. The Great War (1914–1918) turned out to be the last global “hot war” of the twentieth century (so far ). Are we turning into wimps? Who wants to start a new world war?

After the main work on the Tunnel was completed in the thirteenth year of the Shōwa Era (1938), I returned home for the first and only time since I left eight years earlier. I bought a window seat on the westbound capsule train from Midpoint Station, coach class. The ride was smooth and comfortable, the capsule quiet save for the low voices of my fellow passengers and a faint *whoosh* as we were pushed along by air. Young female attendants pushed carts of drinks and food up and down the aisles.

Some clever companies had bought advertising space along the inside of the tube and painted pictures at window height. As the capsule moved along, the pictures rushing by centimeters from the windows blurred together and became animated, like a silent film. My fellow passengers and I were mesmerized by the novel effect.

The elevator ride up to the surface in Shanghai filled me with trepidation, my ears popping with the changes in pressure. And then it was time to get on a boat bound for Formosa.

I hardly recognized my home. With the money I sent, my parents had built a new house and bought more land. My family was now rich, and my village a bustling town. I found it hard to speak to my siblings and my parents. I had been away so long that I did not understand much about their lives, and I could not explain to them how I felt. I did not realize how much I had been hardened and numbed by my experience, and there were things I had seen that I could not speak of. In some sense I felt that I had become like a turtle, with a shell around me that kept me from feeling anything.

My father had written to me to come home because it was long past time for me to find a wife. Since I had worked hard, stayed healthy, and kept my mouth shut—it also helped that as a Formosan I was considered superior to the other races except the Japanese and Koreans—I had been steadily promoted to crew chief and then to shift supervisor. I had money, and if I settled in my hometown, I would provide a good home.

But I could no longer imagine a life on the surface. It had been so long since I had seen the blinding light of the sun that I felt like a newborn when out in the open. Things were so quiet. Everyone was startled when I spoke because I was used to shouting. And the sky and tall buildings made me dizzy—I was so used to being underground, under the sea, in tight, confined spaces, that I had trouble breathing if I looked up.

I expressed my desire to stay underground and work in one of the station cities strung like pearls along the Tunnel. The faces of the fathers of all the girls tightened at this thought. I didn't blame them: Who would want their daughter to spend the rest of her life underground, never seeing the light of day? The fathers whispered to one another that I was deranged.

I said good-bye to my family for the last time, and I did not feel I was home until I was back at Midpoint Station, the warmth and the noise of the heart of the Earth around me, a safe shell. When I saw the soldiers on the platform at the station, I knew that the world was finally back to normal. More work still had to be done to complete the side tunnels that would be expanded into Midpoint City.

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"Soldiers," Betty says, "why were there soldiers at Midpoint City?"

*I stand in darkness and silence. I cannot hear or see. Words churn in my throat, like a rising flood waiting to burst the dam. I have been holding my tongue for a long, long time.*

"They were there to keep the reporters from snooping around," I say.

I tell Betty about my secret, the secret of my nightmares, something I've never spoken of all these years.

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As the economy recovered, labor costs rose. There were fewer and fewer young men desperate enough to take jobs as Diggers in the Tunnel. Progress on the American side had slowed for a few years, and Japan was not doing much better. Even China seemed to run out of poor peasants who wanted this work.

Hideki Tōjō, Army Minister, came up with a solution. The Imperial Army's pacification of the Communist rebellions supported by the Soviet Union in Manchuria and China resulted in many prisoners. They could be put to work, for free.

The prisoners were brought into the Tunnel to take the place of regular work crews. As shift supervisor, I managed them with the aid of a squad of soldiers. The prisoners were a sorry sight, chained together, naked, thin like scarecrows. They did not look like dangerous and crafty Communist bandits. I wondered sometimes how there could be so many prisoners, since the news always said that the pacification of the Communists was going well and the Communists were not much of a threat.

They usually didn't last long. When a prisoner was discovered to have expired from the work, his body was released from the shackles and a soldier would shoot it a few times. We would then report the death as the result of an escape attempt.

To hide the involvement of the slave laborers, we kept visiting reporters away from work on the main Tunnel. They were used mainly on the side excavations, for station cities or power stations, in places that were not well surveyed and more dangerous.

One time, while making a side tunnel for a power station, my crew blasted through to a pocket of undetected slush and water, and the side tunnel began to flood. We had to seal the breach quickly before the flood got into the main Tunnel. I woke up the crews of the two other shifts and sent a second chained crew into the side tunnel with sandbags to help with plugging up the break.

The corporal in charge of the squad of soldiers guarding the prisoners asked me, "What if they can't plug it?"

His meaning was obvious. We had to make sure that the water did not get into the main Tunnel, even if the repair crews we sent in failed. There was only one way to make sure, and as water was flowing back up the side tunnel, time was running out.

I directed the chained crew I'd kept behind as a reserve to begin placing dynamite around the side tunnel, behind the men we had sent in earlier. I did not much like this, but I told myself that these were hardened Communist terrorists, and they were probably sentenced to death already, anyway.

The prisoners hesitated. They understood what we were trying to do, and they did not want to do it. Some worked slowly. Others just stood.

The corporal ordered one of the prisoners shot. This motivated the remaining ones to hurry.

I set off the charges. The side tunnel collapsed, and the pile of debris and falling rocks filled most of the entrance, but there was still some space at the top. I directed the remaining prisoners to climb up and seal the opening. Even I climbed up to help them.

The sound of the explosion told the prisoners we sent in earlier what was happening. The chained men lumbered back, sloshing through the rising water and the darkness, trying to get to us. The corporal ordered the soldiers to shoot a few of the men, but the rest kept on coming, dragging the dead bodies with their chains, begging us to let them through. They climbed up the pile of debris toward us.

The man at the front of the chain was only a few meters from us, and in the remaining cone of light cast by the small opening that was left I could see his face, contorted with fright.

"Please," he said. "Please let me through. I just stole some money. I don't deserve to die."

He spoke to me in Hokkien, my mother tongue. This shocked me. Was he a common criminal from back home in Formosa, and not a Chinese Communist from Manchuria?

He reached the opening and began to push away the rocks, to enlarge the opening and climb through. The corporal shouted at me to stop him. The water level was rising. Behind the man, the other chained prisoners were climbing to help him.

I lifted a heavy rock near me and smashed it down on the hands of the man grabbing onto the opening. He howled and fell back, dragging the other prisoners down with him. I heard the splash of water.

"Faster, faster!" I ordered the prisoners on our side of the collapsed tunnel. We sealed the opening, then retreated to set up more dynamite and blast down more rocks to solidify the seal.

When the work was finally done, the corporal ordered all the remaining prisoners shot, and we buried their bodies under yet more blast debris.

*There was a massive prisoner uprising. They attempted to sabotage the project, but failed and instead killed themselves.*

This was the corporal's report of the incident, and I signed my name to it as well. Everyone understood that was the way to write up such reports.

I remember the face of the man begging me to stop very well. That was the face I saw in the dream last night.

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The Square is deserted right before dawn. Overhead, neon advertising signs hang from the City's ceiling, a few hundred meters up. They take the place of long-forgotten constellations and the moon.

Betty keeps an eye out for unlikely pedestrians while I swing the hammer against the chisel. Bronze is a hard material, but I have not lost the old skills I learned as a Digger. Soon the characters of my name are gone from the plaque, leaving behind a smooth rectangle.

I switch to a smaller chisel and begin to carve. The design is simple: three ovals interlinked, a chain. These are the links that bound two continents and three great cities together, and these are the shackles that bound

men whose voices were forever silenced, whose names were forgotten. There is beauty and wonder here, and also horror and death.

With each strike of the hammer, I feel as though I am chipping away the shell around me, the numbness, the silence.

*Make the secret a bit harder to keep. That counts for something.*

“Hurry,” Betty says.

My eyes are blurry. And suddenly the lights around the Square come on. It is morning under the Pacific Ocean.

1. <sup>I</sup> The Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 had set the ratio of capital ships among the US, Britain, and Japan at 5:5:3. This was the ratio Japan got adjusted in 1930.
2. <sup>II</sup> Allowing Germany to re-arm also let the German government heave a big sigh of relief. The harsh Treaty of Versailles, especially those articles about neutering Germany, made a lot of Germans very angry and some of them joined a group of goose-stepping thugs called the German Nationalist Socialist Party, which scared everyone, including the government. After those provisions of the treaty were scrapped, the thugs got no electoral support at the next election in 1930, and faded away. Heck, they are literally now a footnote of history, like this one.