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Dramatic Publishing



NAGASAKI DUST

A Play in Two Acts

by

W. COLIN MCKAY

Story Idea

by

W. COLIN MCKAY and JIM ISHIDA



Dramatic Publishing

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challenge, he went on to say that comparing Military Justice to real justice was like comparing Military Music to real music. (*Chuckles.*) He was offering me my choice of metaphors to defend or attack. He was not a rigid man. And if I had passed on either one of those, I'm sure he would've had three or four others for me to choose from. I mean, Pop would've been disappointed if we hadn't have spent my last night home arguing. I would've, too. So, as military music was slightly less theoretical than standing in the middle of a twister, I chose the music metaphor. And we spent most of that night arguing about Beethoven... John Philip Sousa... Oliver Wendell Holmes...and finally, somehow, trying to decide if the "Stars and Stripes Forever" did indeed present a Clear and Present Danger to the listener. It was a hell of a night. (*Laughs.*) But I remember that during the entire argument what really intrigued me was the neglected metaphor of me standing in the middle of a twister and pissing...and trying to decide if I actually would get wet or would the water just circle around me splattering everything else while I stayed dry. (*Laughs.*) It was one of those questions which I thought would always remain theoretical. (*Beat.*) Christ, who would've guessed?

(The special on RANDOLPH snaps out and the American flag drops, revealing the rest of the stage which is dimly lit, almost dark, except for small, glittering rows of uneven red lights, like embers burning in the darkness. As this happens, a faint shaft of moonlight cuts into the cell revealing JOHN OKUI, dressed in a shabby World War II Japanese Army officer's uniform, huddled

in the far corner of the cell. Suddenly, a WOMAN IN BLACK, seems to hang in the air above JOHN. He stares at her, partially in horror, partially in desire. He slowly, almost reluctantly reaches up for her when abruptly there's a blinding explosion of light, silence, then suddenly, grotesque DANCERS seem to rise, Butoh-like, from the floor outside the cell. They twist in strange and terrible contortions. JOHN, still huddled in a corner of the cell, stares at the figures in the dimly lit dark. The DANCERS are dressed in different clothes: some in Japanese soldier uniforms, some in civilian clothes of the time, but all the clothes are torn and dirty. JOHN's attention is riveted on the DANCERS. Abruptly—the light snaps on in his cell. The DANCERS fade away. AN AMERICAN SOLDIER—wearing the identification of an Army Guard—unlocks JOHN's cell door and steps inside, one hand on his gun, the other holding a plate of food.)

GUARD. Sooeey, you Nip bastard. Chow time!

(JOHN barely acknowledges him, still staring into the now vacant darkness as the GUARD brusquely puts the food on the floor and slides it toward JOHN with his foot, then exits. The cell light snaps off, leaving only the shaft of moonlight. JOHN finally sees the food, picks up the plate, looks at it, tries to eat, but it's obvious he's sick. He puts the plate back down and pushes it toward the cell door with his foot. He crosses back to the corner of the cell and squats down. A slow, steady drumbeat fills the air. JOHN puts his hands over his ears, trying to ignore the growing volume of the drum. After a moment, the music changes and a beautiful young Japanese

girl—KIMIKO—dances to the middle of the floor. She is beautifully attired. While she dances, JOHN sits, transfixed. He doesn't notice the GUARD and ANOTHER SOLDIER, their faces masked, slip into the cell through the unlocked door. The moment they do, the music stops and the light goes out on KIMIKO. JOHN looks up just in time to get a kick to the chest. He grunts, falls backward. The SOLDIERS are on him. The GUARD lifts him to his feet, holds him, as the OTHER SOLDIER drives a fist into him, over and over. They release him, letting him fall to the floor. The GUARD lifts JOHN, while the OTHER SOLDIER pulls down JOHN's pants. The SOLDIER reaches down to his boot, pulls out a knife. He moves, ready to slice JOHN when abruptly a whistle sounds. They freeze. They drop JOHN and run, the GUARD locking the door behind him. JOHN lies, hurt, groaning in pain, his pants down, in the middle of the cell. He tries to stand up. With great effort, he pulls his pants up and buckles his belt. He leans against the bars, gasping, holding his body, trying not to fall. Abruptly, the cell light snaps on, CHUCK RANDOLPH enters.)

RANDOLPH. John Okui? (JOHN looks at him, nods.) I'm Lieutenant Chuck Randolph. I'm a lawyer...

JOHN (still slightly disoriented). Lawyer? For what?

RANDOLPH. Well, for the Nagasaki Ad Hoc Military Commission... which doesn't mean a hell of a lot to you. It's really more an inquiry, but, under the circumstances...

JOHN. What circumstances?

RANDOLPH. I think they should be pretty obvious. An American serving in the Imperial Forces...as an offi-

cer...in a prisoner-of-war camp...where allies died. Ring any bells? (*Waits, but JOHN remains silent.*) Anyway, here I am. If that's okay with you, I'll be by first thing tomorrow morning and we can begin trying to sort this thing out. (*Waits for reply, getting none, continues.*) And if it's not okay with you, I'll drive back to Tokyo and tell the Army to try to find you some Jap civilian lawyer, if there's any left alive in this damned country. Because, pal, if you want an American lawyer, I'm all you've got. Everybody else turned it down. So, what's it going to be? Army lawyer or civilian? (*JOHN turns away.*) Do you accept me as your lawyer? Can I assume your silence indicates a "yes"? (*JOHN remains turned away.*) Good. I'll be by tomorrow morning.

(*RANDOLPH exits into the dark. As he does, the lights shift and JOHN, confused, still disoriented, spins to see a young man, PETER, step out from the dark.*)

PETER. Well, looks like you've really got your ass in a sling. (*He's holding a water polo ball.*)

JOHN (*looks at PETER, rises, moving to him*). Don't rub it in.

PETER (*tosses JOHN the ball*). You could have been playing water polo, lying around the pool deck, ogling all the chicks. But, oh no, you had to take off a semester. (*JOHN tosses the ball back...hard.*) Hey, don't get pissed at me. I'm not the one who left school.

JOHN. Sorry. It's...it's just...

PETER. Yeah, I know. You don't want to pay the ten you owe me. You think as long as you're over there you won't have to pay me back. Look, tell you what. You don't get shot, you come back to the good ol' U.S. of

And without his testimony all Okui has to say is that he didn't shoot him and there'll be nobody to say different.

BOWMAN. We'll find him. Don't worry.

RANDOLPH (*beat*). Sir, may I ask why you don't want to testify?

BOWMAN (*thinks before answering—then*). After we finish with him here, he's going to come before the Far East Tribunals in Tokyo. We're going to let the whole world see what we had to deal with back home. (*Steps closer to RANDOLPH.*) I've been invited to sit on those Tribunals. I intend to hang that traitor. And I don't want anybody disqualifying me because I testified at this Ad Hoc hearing. I pulled a lot of strings to get on the Tribunal and I'm not going to do anything to jeopardize it. Okay, Lieutenant?

RANDOLPH. Yes, sir. But...

BOWMAN. No "buts." There are enough witnesses to put Okui in front of the Far East Tribunal seven times over.

RANDOLPH. Yes, sir, but...

BOWMAN. You don't need me. You don't get me. Final.

RANDOLPH. Yes, sir.

BOWMAN. Good.

RANDOLPH (*starts to leave—stops*). Colonel Bowman, does Okui know there's a witness to the shooting?

BOWMAN. I'm not sure. Maybe not. Why?

RANDOLPH. I'm going to try save us all a lot of trouble and goose Okui into pleading guilty. If he thinks we have a witness to the shooting, he may give in whether we produce the witness or not.

BOWMAN. It's worth a try. And what about questioning the camp commandant? Colonel Sato.

RANDOLPH. He's still at large.

BOWMAN. Bullshit. He's in jail in Tokyo.

RANDOLPH (*reacts, excited*). Great. I'd like to question both Okui and Sato back to back. Uh...can you get him to Nagasaki?

BOWMAN. Hell, I'll have him there tomorrow night. Eighteen hundred, at the latest.

RANDOLPH. And a translator.

BOWMAN. You got it. Anything else?

RANDOLPH (*smiles*). You want to change your mind about testifying?

BOWMAN (*laughs*). Anything else you're not going to get?

RANDOLPH (*thinks for second, realizes that BOWMAN really means what he says*). Thank you, sir. I appreciate you taking this time. (*Turns to leave.*)

BOWMAN. By the way, Lieutenant, I know what you're doing has made you unpopular around here. But, if you do a good job of defending this bastard, after he's found guilty there will be some very happy people. And you know how it is when the brass is happy with someone.

RANDOLPH (*knowing smile*). Well, I'd be lying if I said when I took Okui's case the thought of...serving the Army well...hadn't crossed my mind.

BOWMAN. They said you were smart. Good luck. See you at the hearing. And don't worry. We'll bury that son of a bitch. Keep up the good work. And keep Okui healthy for me.

RANDOLPH. Yes, sir. Alive and well.

(The lights go out on the TWO MEN. The light in JOHN's cell snaps on. RANDOLPH is let into the cell by the GUARD. The GUARD remains by the cell door.)

RANDOLPH. You can leave now. Just lock the door behind you.

GUARD. You know, if I shot him, it'd save you a lot of trouble.

RANDOLPH. Not necessarily.

GUARD. Yeah?

RANDOLPH. Yeah. They'd probably assign my office to prosecute you and I'd feel real bad recommending you to be hanged.

GUARD. That traitor? I'd get a medal for bumping him off.

RANDOLPH. Maybe. But they'd have to pin it on your corpse after you were hung. Murder, even the murder of a traitor, is against the law. *(The GUARD gives RANDOLPH a snort, then turns to leave. RANDOLPH as superior officer:)* Private! *(The GUARD sees the change in demeanor, snaps to.)* If what happened to Okui the other night, happens again, I'll personally see to it you visit the stockade. Dismissed. *(The GUARD salutes, then angrily exits as RANDOLPH crosses over, sits next to JOHN.)* All right, Okui. I've been looking your case over and here's what I recommend. Let me go to the hearing, plead you guilty and see what kind of deal I can get before the trial in Tokyo. It'd save everybody a lot of time and energy and, maybe, I can get something for you. What do you say? Plead guilty? *(JOHN glares at RANDOLPH, gets up, crosses to far end of cell.)* I know you don't like to talk. You don't have to say anything but two words. "I'm guilty." Two magic words and we'll stop bothering you. *(JOHN still says nothing. RANDOLPH, frustrated, pulls a sheaf of paper from his briefcase, reads from it.)* Served as an officer in the

Japanese Army. Beat allied prisoners during interrogation. Participated in the execution of an allied soldier.

JOHN (*breaking in*). I didn't shoot the pilot.

RANDOLPH (*beat, looks up*). I didn't say he was a pilot. (*JOHN freezes, says nothing. RANDOLPH pauses, sighs.*) Why prolong the agony? (*JOHN remains silent.*) Look, the Army really wants you. Now, if they can get you without a struggle they'll be so damned grateful they may be willing to make some concessions. (*Beat, leans in.*) Such as keeping you alive.

JOHN (*rubs his head in exhaustion, turns, sits down wearily*). Do what you want. (*Beat.*) But, I'm not a traitor. (*RANDOLPH's excited that JOHN's talking, but tries to hide it from JOHN.*)

RANDOLPH. It kind of defeats everything if you say that. (*Pauses, chuckles, trying to explain.*) It can't look like you were railroaded. Everybody has to believe you were treated fairly.

JOHN. Why?

RANDOLPH. To be honest, you're kind of...special. (*JOHN looks at RANDOLPH, disbelieving.*) Look, I don't know whether you know or not, but while you were over here playing soldier in the Imperial Army, the Japs at home were being shuffled off to internment camps. Christ, they had to be. You prove that, don't you see. A Jap kid, raised in America, who hightails it to Japan at the first opportunity. Well, some of the bleeding hearts at home didn't like the way the Japs were treated. They've raised a lot of stink. You could put a stop to that, get the Army and the politicians at home off the hook. All you have to do is plead guilty.

JOHN. Then it's true.

RANDOLPH. What is?

JOHN (*pause*). Is my father in trouble because of me?

RANDOLPH (*shrugs*). I don't know. So what do you say?
Plead guilty?

JOHN (*ironic*). If I betray the Japanese at home I'll be betraying my father also, is that right?

RANDOLPH. I'm not talking about betraying anyone! All I'm saying is that it'd be worth your while to plead guilty.

JOHN. If I cooperate with you will it help my father?

RANDOLPH. Goddamn it, I don't know a thing about your dad, okay? And even if I did, I couldn't tell you that pleading guilty would help him because that'd sound like... we're holding him hostage to force you to cooperate. You have to go along with this of your own free will.

JOHN. My father lives in South Gate, California. His name is Yoshiro Okui. I want to know what happened to him.

RANDOLPH (*beat, slightly exasperated*). Fine. I'll try to find out. In the meantime, think over everything I've said and give me your answer this afternoon. (*RANDOLPH turns to exit.*)

JOHN. I'm not a traitor.

RANDOLPH (*stops*). What about Robert Price?

JOHN (*surprised, beat*). Who's he?

RANDOLPH. The airman you shot.

JOHN (*long beat*). I didn't shoot him.

RANDOLPH. The Army has an eyewitness who says you did.

JOHN. He's lying. Sato shot him. Question Colonel Sato.

RANDOLPH. If he did shoot the guy, do you think he'd admit it?