

blades so that the front end loader could put it on the military dumps. one side of the hill all ready had a slot bulldozed out of it leading into an empty lot where the front end loader and dump trucks had been working. around on the left side, houses had been built tight against the hill. none of the dirt could be allowed to fall down onto the fragile wooden homes, nor into the head-high sugar cane that surrounded the rest of the hill. "i think that we should take the afternoon off and have some 1 & 2 after all, it is friday. what do you guys think?" it was about two in the afternoon when johnny stump had showed up on the hill removing project. off and on throughout spring and early summer, brad and dan had been working on the project for the army whenever their chief would let them off. they had cut down the hill of hard gray clay until it was now less than one quarter of its original height and the two seabees had built up a massive stockpile between two of the tiny okinawan houses at the base of the hill. the pile held so many yards of tipped up clay that it would take the loader operator and two military dump trucks several days to haul it all down the hill and onto the sports complex's future parking lot. "you're about out of room on the stockpile. unless of course you had in mind to buy a house or two. i really don't think that's a good idea though." johnny was in a good mood, and it was obvious that though it was early in the afternoon he had already consumed a beer or two. "great idea. brad and i can shower and be ready in about 30 minutes johnny. yumi doesn't go to work until 3, so i can stop and tell her where we're going." dan spoke as he headed around the huge stockpile of gray clay to where he and brad had parked the two d8 bulldozers. as he walked the fine powdered clay rose in a light gray dust cloud about his feet and legs. it had not rained any appreciable amount since they had started tearing the hill down and the hot baking semi-tropical sun had sucked all of the moisture from the clay as the seabees torn it from the hill. "i found the top of the cave john. a small hole in the roof that looks like the very top of the cave. we can dig it out and go into it on monday." brad told stump while dan shut down both dozers. "do you want the eod out here when you do it brad? maybe we'd better let them go in it instead of any of us." "yeah, you're probably right johnny. it could be booby trapped. or it might be empty. i don't have a clue. i pushed a big blade full of dirt back over it so no kids would find it. i think it will be okay until we open it all the way." "sounds good to me brad. do you want to get the navy eod to come out?" "i'll call them before we come out the first of the week. we can work around it for a couple of days if we have to." "but if dan or i don't get out next week you may want to wait rather than have your okinawan operators out here since they don't know where the hole is." "if i have to do that why don't i have shorty, my best okinawan operator, come by your shop and talk to you before he starts?" "that will work for dan and me. one of us or both of us, maybe able to break loose and help shorty to find it if we have too." "we're also very near to the level of the tomb on the north side of the hill. i talked to papa-san and he said that he would take care of getting the priest here whenever i tell him that we're going to start caving it in." "good. he's a nice old guy. especially since the americans tried to blow him up during the invasion." "what happened to him?" dan asked having come back from the dozers into the middle of the conversation. "he had been impressed into the japanese army to help defeat the terrible, raping, invading americans. he and his two neighbors were told to dig a trench near the front of the cave brad found, and defend it with their lives. a gi dropped a fragmentation grenade in on top of them from up on the hill. killed his two neighbors outright and papa-san had the tendons cut around his right knee which is why he limps." "damn. you'd think he would hate us. he doesn't seem resentful at all." "it's really typical of many of the okinawans who were lied to and forced to fight for the japanese. it didn't take long for the americans to show that they weren't the hordes of genghis khan the japanese made us out to be. brad, the okinawans are intelligent people, and they're very intuitive about people and people's motives. the first couple of years after the invasion was really rough on them until the army replaced the military governor and congress came across with some bucks to help them." "dan, why don't you and brad take my car to the barracks and pick me up after you get ready to go. i'll shower and change while you guys are gone." stump had driven them north almost 15 miles up island from naha, past the front gate of kadena air force base and around the kadena traffic circle, before taking a narrow but paved side road amongst a scattering of bars and restaurants. all of which were obviously there to serve