

2014

Audio Link 7.4

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Recommended Citation

Anckorn, Fergus and Eldredge, Sears, "Audio Link 7.4" (2014). *Audio Clips for Captive Audiences / Captive Performers*. 24.
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Fergus Anckorn Remembers a Korean Guard Who Wanted to Learn Magic Tricks

But, did I tell you about the Korean who got hold of me one day? Walked over to me and said -- he spoke a few words of English—in the whole time I only met two who knew anything of English. And he came over, and he said to me, “You magic man?”

I said, “Yes.”

And he said to me, “You have beautiful hands.” I thought, yeah, you know that. What’s this?

And I said, “I don’t know you.”

0.39 He said, “I see you in Wampo.” So he must have seen me doing some of these things and remembered me.

And I said, “How do you know me?”

He said, “I see you. I magic man, too.”

I said, “Are you?”

He said, “Yes. You teach me magic?”

I said, “Yes.” His name was Tomimoto. One word, Tomimoto.

So he said, “You, tonight, come to my house.” He called it “my house.”

So I said, “Oh, I don’t think I can do that.”

“You come, you’re my guest.”

1.21 So, I went over to his barracks. Now, the whole of the camp area was air raid trenches, because we used to get bombed a lot. You couldn’t walk without having to step over one, in any direction. So I went to him—I asked the Colonel [Toosey] first, “Is it alright that I go? Because he says he’s a magician.”

And he said, “Anything you can do to foster a little bit of feeling, fine.” I wanted to make quite certain that I didn’t get a reputation of being “Jap Happy,” ’cause that’s a terrible thing. So I went.

2.00 And he was in the hut alone, the barrack hut, which would hold about 20 of them I suppose. And he had prepared a little meal for me, with some fish cakes, and he gave me a package of cigarettes and I taught him some tricks-- he wasn’t all that good but I was able to show him some things he could do. And we were just two magicians talking to each other-- him in his halting English and me, he could understand what I was saying. And then about 11 o’clock at night his mates came back, and instantly there was a blazing row with him and them and I could see what the tenure of it was: “What the hell are you doing with this bloke in here?” you know.

And I said “I’ll go” and he said “No, no you’re my guest, you sit down.”

And I said “I ought to go,” and he said, “No you’re my guest.” He had another furious argument, and one of them stuck a bayonet right through his stomach, there and then.

3.05 Now, this hut was up on stilts, and I just lept out of the window. Now, this leg was no good, why I didn’t break my ankle I don’t know. And I got this hand like this and I just flew out of that

window in the darkness and ran like hell back to my hut. And I didn't fall down one trench. I couldn't see it-- you couldn't see anything because it was black, because there were no lights anywhere. So [unknown] must have got the track worked out, I didn't fall down anywhere. I got into the hut and I got Colonel Toosey and told him what happened and he moved me out of the hut and put me in the hospital, because he thought they would come looking for me. But they didn't. Because if you killed someone for being untidy, tough, shouldn't have been untidy. So it was just, they killed him 'cause he was fraternizing, I suppose.

4.10 And I got back to my hut and one day one of the sentries, who was standing there with his rifle, he came over to me and he said, "You friend, paradise go." That's the way they used to say he died. Paradise go. And he said "You friend, paradise go." And that's what happened to Tomimoto for being so kind to me that night.