

# NAVAJO CODE TALKERS



BY EMILY SCHLESINGER



# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1

Unbreakable.....4

## CHAPTER 2

Keeping Secrets ..... 8

## CHAPTER 3

The Navajo Answer ..... 16

## CHAPTER 4

From Reservation to War .....22

## CHAPTER 5

A Secret Project ..... 28

## CHAPTER 6

The Alphabet Code.....32

## CHAPTER 7

Code in Action ..... 36

## CHAPTER 8

Risk ..... 40

## CHAPTER 9

Winning the Pacific ..... 46

## CHAPTER 10

Returning Home ..... 54

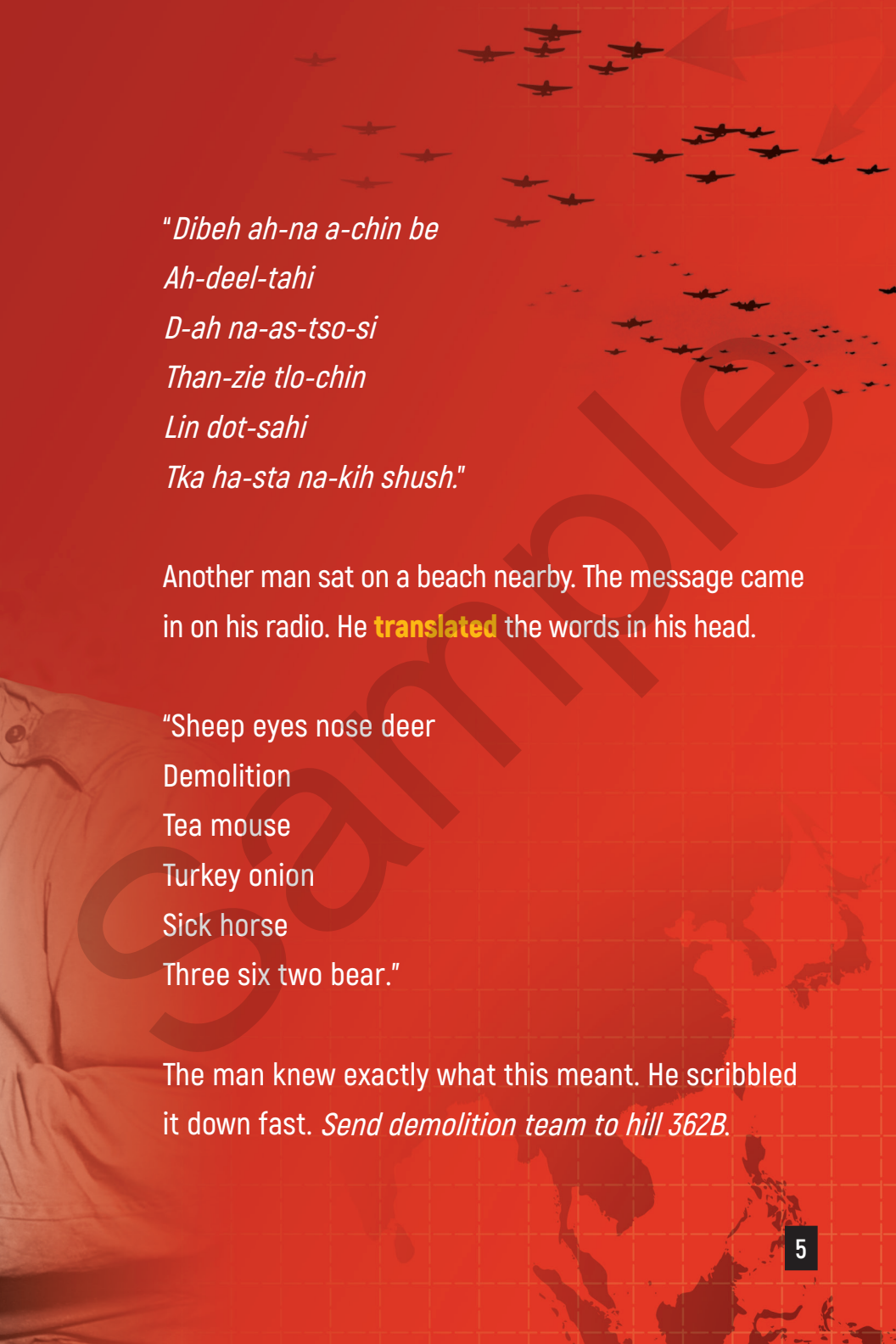
Glossary .....58



# Unbreakable

U.S. Marines had just landed on a tiny island. The unit was in big trouble. Japanese forces were firing at them. Troops needed help fast. The leader gave an order. One of his soldiers sent an **urgent** message by radio. It sounded like this.





*"Dibeh ah-na a-chin be  
Ah-deel-tahi  
D-ah na-as-tso-si  
Than-zie tlo-chin  
Lin dot-sahi  
Tka ha-sta na-kih shush."*

Another man sat on a beach nearby. The message came in on his radio. He **translated** the words in his head.

*"Sheep eyes nose deer  
Demolition  
Tea mouse  
Turkey onion  
Sick horse  
Three six two bear."*

The man knew exactly what this meant. He scribbled it down fast. *Send demolition team to hill 362B.*



On the front line, the leader paced. Soon he saw help coming. Flame tanks rolled in. A demolition team took over. They saved the lives of the men under fire.

This was World War II. Fighting raged across the globe. Lives hung in the balance. But a top-secret program had been formed. It involved an unbreakable **code**.



**FAST FACT:** A flame tank has a flamethrower attached to it. These could shoot fire at enemies up to 120 yards away.

A group of men worked behind the scenes. Others did not know what they did. Their work saved thousands of lives. But this secret stayed buried for decades.



# Keeping Secrets

Conflict ripped nations apart. Bombs rained over Europe. There was fighting in Asia. World War II had begun.

The U.S. did not want to get involved. But it could not stay out forever. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes bombed an American base. This was at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The next day, the U.S. declared war on Japan.

America was not fully ready for war. Supplies had to be built up. More soldiers were needed. Something else was missing too. Troops did not have a good way to communicate.





# Events Leading Up to the Attack at Pearl Harbor

**1931**

**SEPTEMBER**

Japan invades China

**1933**

**MARCH**

Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany

**1930**

-

**1939**

**1939**

**SEPTEMBER**

Germany begins invading neighboring countries

Great Britain and France declare war on Germany, beginning World War II

**1940**

**SEPTEMBER**

Japan invades Indochina (Southeast Asia)

Japan joins pact with Germany and Italy to form Axis Powers

**1941**

**AUGUST**

U.S. cuts off oil supplies to Japan, leaving Japan short of fuel

**DECEMBER**

Japan attacks the U.S. at Pearl Harbor

**1940**

-

**1949**

U.S. begins sending aid and supplies to help China and the Allied Powers in Europe

Today it's easy to send fast messages. This was not true back then. There were only a few ways. Telephone was one. Radio was another. Both could be tapped. Others could listen in.

This was a big problem. What if enemies heard military messages? It could put troops in danger.

## The Need for Codes

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Armies have tried to solve this problem. They used codes. These are a way to keep messages secret.

Codes were used during the American Revolution in the 1700s. George Washington's men had several. One was the Culper Code. It used numbers in place of words. Some messages were sent in invisible ink. A message could be held near a flame. Then the ink would change color.



## CAESAR'S CODE

Julius Caesar's ancient Roman army used a simple code to communicate. It's called a shift code. In this type of code, each letter in the alphabet shifts over a certain number of places. Suppose the shift is two. *A* becomes *C*. *B* turns to *D*. *C* is *E*.

SHIFT 2 →	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
	↓	↓	↓										
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N

"CAESAR'S CODE" would be written "ECGUCT'U EQFG."



# NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

In the midst of World War II, a unique team of soldiers fought to help the U.S. win using an unusual weapon—language.

Native Americans from the Navajo tribe were recruited by the U.S. military to create a code that no enemy could break. These men were called Navajo code talkers. This is their story of bravery.



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