

CHERRY BLOSSOM

By

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FADE IN:

OVER BLACK

SUPER: "Dear Mr. President:

For better or worse I regret to inform you, the Trinity test has failed."

Henry L. Stimson Secretary of War.

Letter delivered to Harry Truman Potsdam Conference April 24, 1945

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - US PACIFIC FLEET - DAY

SUPER: STUDEBAKER BEACH NOVEMBER 1, 1945

American fighter planes tear through the sky in dark blue streaks. Below them, a massive flotilla of Marine landing craft relentlessly drives towards Kyushu, the southern island of Japan, which looms in the distance.

EXT. LANDING CRAFT - DAY

SUPER: Operation Olympic: X-DAY

Crouched to tighten his boots, Private STACKS (22) stands among 29 other MARINES, who brace themselves, shoulder to shoulder against the turbulent ride. Some steel themselves for the battle ahead. Others fake it.

The roar of the boat's engine amid the thunderous explosions in the distance deafens the ears.

At the rear of the boat SGT. HILLS (29) stands tall and in charge despite the choppy ride.

SGT. HILLS

Marines! Listen up! You all have one job! Get the fuck off this boat and the fuck off that beach! Don't stop for anything or anyone!

Green throws up in his mouth but catches it with a swallow.

SGT. HILLS (O.S.)

This is their home now and they'll fight like a rabid dog to protect it! Fight harder!

GREEN
(to Stacks)
Jesus Christ. Are you ready for
this?

STACKS
Are you?

SGT. HILLS (O.S.)
Get your heads down!

A YOUNG MARINE in the rear points towards the sky in terror.

YOUNG MARINE
Kamikazes!

From above hundreds of Japanese planes of all types descend
towards the landing craft.

Some tumble out of the sky shot down by American fighters.
Others pierce through and rain down into the water. The
chaos devolves the landing wave into a demolition derby.

Out of nowhere the ear piercing shriek of a MISSILE flies
directly overhead. Terrified, the men instinctively duck.

GREEN
Are we hit?

STACKS
No! It's heading for the Missouri!

At the last second the missile turns and slams into the
sides of the USS MISSOURI in a ball of fire.

Stunned by the carnage, Green looks on. Stacks grabs him by
the shoulder.

STACKS
Hey! Green! Nothing we can do!

Behind Hills, the boat's COXSWAIN (25) distracted by the
Kamikaze attack does a double take towards the coast.

COXSWAIN
What are those?

Up ahead, small silhouettes of speed boats race from the
cliffs of the beach towards the remaining landing craft.

SGT. HILLS
Suicide boats!

COXSWAIN

Jesus Christ! Where the hell did
those come from?

SGT. HILLS

Hang onto something Marines! We're
going through this!

Like dominoes, the Marines fall into each other as the
Coxswain swerves the boat hard.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

A typhoon of fire and steel on the ocean. Landing craft
explode into flames as the deadly combination of kamikaze
boats and planes slam into their targets.

INT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Fifty SCHOOLGIRLS sleep in tightly packed rows of bedrolls
on the floor. Low BOOMS of distant explosions gently rattle
the windows.

One of the BOOMS wakes HANAKO (14) in her bed. She rubs the
sleep from her eyes in a tired daze until another THUNDEROUS
BOOM jolts her wide awake.

She sits straight up and turns to her nearby friend ASUKA
(16) hair in pigtails, sound asleep. Shakes her awake.

HANAKO

Asuka! Asuka!

ASUKA

Breakfast already? Oh good. I'm so
hungry again.

HANAKO

No! The Americans are here!

On cue, a loud SIREN breaks the stillness. All the girls
wake up in a mix of confusion and sheer panic.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FORTIFICATION - DAY

SUPER: X-DAY PLUS 7

War is everywhere.

Suppressed groups of MARINES assault the dug in Japanese positions built into the mountain. The CRACK of GUNFIRE is constant and indistinguishable as it drowns out the desperate SHOUTS of men in battle.

A GRUFF MARINE on the run falls dead, shot into a shell hole occupied by Stacks, Green and SHOES (21). Small impacts from small arms fire kick up dirt around the two large flamethrower fuel tanks Shoes carries on his back.

Shoes pushes the lifeless body of the gruff marine aside.

SHOES

Where's the damn armor?

STACKS

Shoes, get down god dammit!

GREEN

What do we do?

STACKS

Keep eating dirt!

Through hand motions, Stacks communicates with a LINE OF MARINES entrenched 30 yards behind their position. Their SQUAD LEADER answers back with a thumbs up.

Stacks reaches into his vest and pulls out a grenade. Covering fire from the entrenched Marines fills the air around him as he pulls the pin, takes a deep breath, stands up and strong arm throws it towards a line of sandbags stacked onto the base of the mountain ahead.

The grenade explodes on the Japanese position.

STACKS

Haul your asses up there!

Stacks and Green grab Shoes by the arms and help pull him up to his feet. They hurtle forward towards the base of the mountain over the strewn bodies of Japanese soldiers.

They reach the sandbags and the steep sides of the mountain behind it. For cover they press their backs up against the earth, the mouth of a cave to their left.

STACKS

Shoes you ready? Green?

GREEN

Hell yeah.

Shoes catches his breath but nods. Stacks and Green grab grenades and pull the pins. They turn to the cave and toss them inside. Seconds later an explosion of debris blows out.

With fake gusto Shoes runs in front of the entrance and streams a trail of fire deep inside.

Suddenly a stray bullet hits the back of Shoes fuel tank and he disappears, engulfed in a ball of fire.

The blast knocks Stacks and Green back and off their feet. Both their pants on fire.

Stacks quickly pats the small flames out then throws his helmet to the ground in anger.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

In silent unison, the schoolgirls, in gym attire and armed with sharpened bamboo poles, move through drill. A short stab. A full thrust. A swipe. Then a stab again followed with a YELL.

Atop a wooden stand before the girls, a DRILL INSTRUCTOR (40) models each precise motion and barks out commands.

Concerned, two ARMY OFFICERS watch from afar.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

You must stand tall and ready to
kill the devil invading your home!

In the middle of the formation, Hanako and Asuka's brows drip with sweat while they mimic their instructor.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)

For the devil will not kill you!
The American won't hesitate to rape
and torture you at the first chance
he gets!

ASUKA

(quietly to Hanako)
I'm going to kill forty Americans
all by myself! Just watch!

HANAKO

(quietly)
Quiet! He'll hear you and take away
our rations again!

DRILL INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)
 Is that the fate you want for
 yourselves? To let the filthy
 imperial dogs colonize your honor?

ASUKA
 (quietly)
 Hanako, I'm ready to fight. Are
 you?

INT. RUINED WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Through a bombed out wall a cool breeze blows over a handful of EXHAUSTED MARINES. Their war temporarily on hold, they all attempt to rest and relax in the sounds of BIG BAND JAZZ piped in softly from a portable radio set.

On his back, Green looks out at the stars through a hole in the roof. Nearby, Stacks savors every drag of his cigarette.

As the song ends the seductively sultry voice of a woman comes on over the broadcast.

TOKYO ROSE (O.S.)
 Greetings everybody. This is your
 number one enemy, your favorite
 playmate, Orphan Ann from Radio
 Tokyo.

A few of the Marines perk up at her voice. One especially, ZAPADA (19) more so than the others.

ZAPADA
 There she is! Hurry! Turn it up!

TOKYO ROSE (O.S.)
 Are you getting closer GI? Have you
 come to find me? I've been waiting
 so long for this day. Haven't you?
 To welcome you in my warm embrace.
 Finally meet face to face. Aren't
 you curious? Hurry up. Don't be
 late. I know you're dying to meet
 me.

Another SONG comes on as the men go relax again.

ZAPADA
 I wouldn't mind assaulting a piece
 of that when I find her. You guys
 know what I mean?

STACKS

Just make sure you're not last in line.

A chuckle of LAUGHTER breaks out among the Marines.

GREEN

What about you Stacks? You wouldn't want that?

STACKS

Nah. I already got a girl back home.

GREEN

Oh really? Never pictured you as the romantic type.

STACKS

Well, you never asked. Sweetheart.

GREEN

She a good looking dame?

Stacks pulls a worn and folded up paper from his pocket. His guard down, he opens it up with a slight smile. A black and white photo of a newborn baby girl.

STACKS

Yeah. She is.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Lead eagerly by Asuka, Hanako trudges through the grass under a full moon.

ASUKA

Just a bit father, Hanako. Over here!

HANAKO

I told you if we get caught this time we're in big trouble for sure! Sneaking out at night is forbidden! Asuka, there is a war going on! What if the Americans find us?

ASUKA

They won't.

HANAKO
How do you know?

ASUKA
Because of these!

The girls crouch to hide behind a tree.

Ahead of them a column of 4 flat bed trucks drive down the road, lights off. Each carries an OHKA rocket propelled kamikaze plane in their beds. Little more than a manned missile with wings, each "plane" has a cherry blossom painted on the nose.

ASUKA
I told you it'd be worth it.

HANAKO
What are they?

ASUKA
Our secret weapon for our brave pilots to beat the Americans back and win the war. They can fly faster than any plane and each one is powerful enough to sink an American ship all by itself!

HANAKO
Oh. I see. Can we go back now?

ASUKA
I can see why I'm your only friend.
OK. Let's go.

Begrudgingly, Asuka begins to head back with Hanako in tow.

HANAKO
Asuka? Why were there flowers painted on the nose of those planes? Don't you think that's odd?

ASUKA
They call the planes cherry blossoms because the falling blossom never returns to the tree. Just like our brave pilots. Hanako, just like us!

EXT. GRASSY HILL - DAY

SUPER: X-DAY PLUS 8

Stacks, Green and Sgt. Hills crawl up the crest of a grassy hill. The rest of their MARINE PATROL kneels below at the base of the hill.

In the distance stands the city of Nagasaki. Nearly intact.

SGT. HILLS

That's it. Nagasaki. HQ says the Japs have set up a small installation near the rear of the city to launch those rocket powered kamikaze's that have been wrecking all kinds of hell on the Navy's supply efforts.

STACKS

The ones that sunk the Missouri?

SGT. HILLS

The same. Damn things are next to impossible to stop once in the air. So we need to get them on the ground.

GREEN

Sarge? How come this city isn't all bombed out like the other ones?

SGT. HILLS

Who knows. Let's just get this reconnaissance over with before the main force rolls in and let the historians figure it out after.

Sgt. Hills moves down the back of the hill.

STACKS

Something's wrong.

EXT. NAGASAKI - ABANDONED STREET - DAY

Eerily quiet as the squad moves down the street. Two columns of men down the side of the road, rifles aimed at the ready as they bound from cover to cover in jittery silence.

EXT. NAGASAKI - URAKAMI CATHEDRAL TOWER - DAY

Through the window, a JAPANESE LOOKOUT peers out into city below, a grave look etched into his face.

INT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Seated at the lunch table, Hanako eats a breakfast of rice balls surrounded by the other schoolgirls. As the girls eat, Asuka indignantly sweeps the floor as punishment.

In a frantic panic, the Japanese lookout rushes in through the cafeteria doors.

EXT. NAGASAKI - ABANDONED STREET - DAY

Stacks and Green rush to take a knee behind a short brick wall as members of their squad advance around them to the next bit of cover.

GREEN

Where is everybody? It's like everybody in this city just disappeared. Poof!

STACKS

Do you always have to ask so many questions?

GREEN

Speaking of. What the hell is that?...

In the distance ahead, the towers of the Urakami Cathedral.

GREEN

... and what business does a Catholic cathedral have doing here? Since when did the Japs take confession?

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Ready for battle with their bamboo spears at the ready, the schoolgirls all stand assembled.

Fear and terror across everyone's face except Asuka's, who is wrapped in a sense of calm determination. At her side, Hanako seems more worried for her friend than for her own safety.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)
Remember your homes! Remember your
brothers!

At the head of the schoolgirl soldiers the Drill Instructor stands perched for a final review. A handful of JAPANESE INFANTRY behind him.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR
Remember your fathers! Your
families! Your ancestors! And most
of all, remember your honor and our
beloved Emperor who fights to
protect it!

EXT. NAGASAKI - ABANDONED ALLEY - DAY

On one knee, Sgt. Hills studies a folded paper map. Stacks and DOUGLAS (23), a non-commissioned officer, hunch over Hills to get a better look.

SGT. HILLS
I'm ready to radio in there's
nothing here and just hold up in
cover before the main force
arrives. How long have we got?

DOUGLAS
Three hours still, sir.

SGT. HILLS
Shit. That's practically tomorrow.

DOUGLAS
There's no one here sir. They must
have pulled back to a more
defensible position.

STACKS
And just abandon a major city? And
one that's fully intact at that?

For a brief second Hills mulls the situation over.

SGT. HILLS
Or.... It's a god damn Jap trap.

STACKS
Bingo.

SGT. HILLS

Fuck me upside down and sideways.... Douglas take your men and clear out that hotel to the west. Stacks, move up to check out that school just ahead. Make sure there's no hidden armor division just popping a squat, waiting around for targets of opportunity. Like a poor squad of lonely lost Marines. Rendezvous at the hotel once you're done and we'll observe from there until the Calvary is sure to arrive, on time, at twenty-one hundred I'm sure.

STACKS

Sir.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

Still in formation, Hanako leans in towards Asuka

HANAKO

Asuka?

In the zone, Asuka gives no response.

EXT. NAGASAKI - SMALL SHOP - DAY

With Green and Zapada at his side, Stacks leads his men towards the safety of the shop's walls. The high school off in the distance.

Through hand signals he orders Zapada to sprint to the next closest building.

INT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM 8 - DAY

Two Japanese Infantry hide just out of sight of an open windowsill in the classroom. Rifles up at the ready, a breeze playfully sways the curtains.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Frustrated, Zapada shakes the front entrance of the school.

ZAPADA
No bueno. It's chained.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - BREEZEWAY - DAY

Shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the girls, Hanako and Asuka stand ready for battle as the Drill Instructor reviews the girls one more time.

HANAKO
(whispering)
Asuka. I don't know if I have the
courage.

ASUKA
(whispering)
You must. It's our duty.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - WALKWAY - DAY

The Marines cautiously advance down the broad walkway formed between two long buildings. A long corridor of brick and glass windows.

INFANTRY P.O.V. - THE WINDOW - CLASSROOM 8 - DAY

Through a crack in the curtain one of the infantry gently aims his rifle at a marine that's walked into view.

EXT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - WALKWAY - DAY

With a raised fist, Stacks orders his men to halt. They take knees beside the walls of the classrooms while him, Green and Zapada duck behind a nearby lunch table.

Just ahead, the breeze flaps a window curtain from one of the buildings out into the open.

Like thunder, the CRACK of a gunshot shatters the silence.

Hit hard, Zapada falls holding his bloody neck.

STACKS
Ambush!

Every marine lets loose with a volley of rifle fire that shatters every window ahead of them.

The sound of GUNFIRE and BREAKING GLASS fills the air.

Green checks Zapada. Already dead.

More Marines take hits and slump to the ground.

From around the corner, the mass of schoolgirls pour out into the corridor from ahead. Bamboo poles held down, they charge.

SCHOOLGIRLS

BANZAI!

Every able marine stands to unload into the girls.

Gunfire mows the young girls down by the dozens. Panicked Marines reload and fire in a frenzied hurry.

More girls fall down as the gunfire tears their ranks apart.

The Marines fire until every girl has fallen. Strewn about the ground in heaps, not a single one within ten yards of the Marines.

At a loss, the Marines stand silent before the mass of young bodies. Shock and horror on each survivor's face as he personally grasps the insanity of the situation.

GREEN

Jesus Christ! What the fuck was that?

Eyes wide, frozen in the horror, Stacks looks on disgusted with himself. It takes a hard shake from Green to bring him to his senses.

GREEN

Stacks? Stacks! Just what the hell do we do now?

Among the pile of dead girls, Asuka, her hair still in pigtails, lies dead on her stomach, in a pool of blood

INT. NAGASAKI HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN BUILDING - DAY

BAM! A door shakes, slammed hard from the outside. BAM! BAM! The door breaks open. Stacks leads the surviving Marines in.

STACKS

Split up and clear this building out! Room by room. No more dead Marines. Not today.

HALLWAY

Clear and move. Stacks and Green stalk the long corridor of open doors and empty classrooms. Stacks takes the right side, Green the left.

CLASSROOM 15

Eyes wide and terrified, Hanako clutches her bamboo pole, back against the wall.

CLASSROOM 8

Green enters and scans the room. Two Japanese infantry lay dead by the blood spattered curtain of the open window.

HALLWAY

Careful steps from Stacks past the room 14 marker plate towards 15.

CLASSROOM 15

Forcefully, Stacks enters the room, but is startled to find Hanako. A slight hesitation as he raises his rifle that allows Hanako to charge towards him spear first.

With a violent furry, Hanako drives the spear, up to her fists, straight through Stacks' chest.

STACKS

Ugh!

Gasped breaths and blood slip from Stacks' mouth as he stares down at Hanako shocked.

He slumps back against the wall. Drops his rifle. Fades away.

All Hanako can do is stare at her trembling hands.

Green's FOOTSTEPS echo in from the hallway.

GREEN (O.S.)

Stacks?

Hanako reaches for Stacks' rifle. Despite her shaky hands she attempts to shoulder it. She draws a long breath...

...Then charges out into the hallway.

Thunderous GUNFIRE echos into the classroom.

FADE OUT:

THE END