

# HIROSHIMA: PAPER CRANES AND ASHES

Written by

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Based on an original story by Joseph Holder

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HIROSHIMA: PAPER CRANES AND ASHES

FADE IN:

INT. AOI'S APARTMENT - HIROSHIMA - PRESENT DAY - MORNING

Soft morning light filters through sheer curtains. The room is modest but carefully kept. Photographs line a small shelf-- family portraits spanning decades, children, grandchildren.

ELDERLY AOI (late 80s, face lined with age but eyes still sharp) sits in a worn armchair. Before her on a low table: pressed flowers in a glass frame, a faded poetry book, and a small wooden box.

Her weathered hands tremble slightly as she opens the box. Inside: dozens of origami cranes, yellowed with age. She selects one, holding it up to the light. Scorched edges, but still intact.

The sound of a KEY in the lock.

DAVID (O.S.)  
Mother? It's me.

DAVID enters--50s, kind face, mixed Japanese-Western features subtly visible. He carries a coat over his arm.

DAVID  
(gently)  
Are you ready to go?

Aoi doesn't respond immediately. She's somewhere else, the crane still held between her fingers.

DAVID  
(closer now, concerned)  
Mother?

Aoi looks at him. Really looks. Studies his face like she's memorizing it.

AOI  
(quietly)  
You have his eyes.

DAVID

(confused, gentle smile)  
Whose eyes?

Aoi touches his cheek--a gesture both tender and sorrowful.

AOI  
I'll tell you. After. But first...  
first I need to remember.

David kneels beside her chair, patient.

DAVID  
Remember what?

Aoi closes her eyes. Her breathing slows. Her hand clutches  
the crane.

AOI  
(whisper)  
Everything.

HOLD on her face--peaceful, pained, lost in memory.

The SOUND of wind begins, soft at first, then growing. The  
rustle of cherry blossoms. Distant voices speaking Japanese. A  
university bell ringing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY - SPRING 1944 - DAY

The transition is seamless--Aoi's elderly face dissolves into  
the vibrant campus. Students in 1940s attire walk between  
buildings. Cherry blossoms drift on the breeze.

The world is in color now, alive, before the fire.

TITLE CARD:  
HIROSHIMA, JAPAN  
APRIL 1944

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Students gather in clusters, chattering. Some in uniform,  
preparing for conscription. Others clinging to normalcy. The  
war is distant but present--a tension in the air.

A BLACK CAR pulls up to the administration building. JAMES HARTLEY (30, handsome in an unassuming way, careful eyes that notice everything) steps out. He wears a modest suit, carries a worn leather briefcase.

He pauses, taking in the campus. His expression is calm, but his eyes are working--mapping exits, observing patterns, gathering intelligence.

DEAN NAKAMURA (60s, traditional, formal) approaches with a slight bow.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
Mr. Hartley. Welcome to Hiroshima  
University.

James returns the bow--perfectly executed, the right depth, the right duration.

JAMES  
(slight British accent)  
Dean Nakamura. Thank you for this  
opportunity.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
Your credentials from Cambridge were  
most impressive. We are honored to  
have a scholar of English poetry join  
our faculty.

They begin walking toward the building.

DEAN NAKAMURA (CONT'D)  
These are difficult times. Many of  
our male students have been  
conscripted. But we believe education  
must continue, even in war.

JAMES  
Especially in war, perhaps. Poetry  
reminds us what we're meant to  
preserve.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
And what is that?

JAMES  
Beauty. Humanity. The things that

transcend conflict.

Dean Nakamura looks at him approvingly.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
You will fit well here, I think.

They enter the building.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Traditional architecture blended with Western influences.  
Students pass, bowing respectfully to the Dean.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
Your first class begins in one hour.  
English Poetry, advanced level.  
Twelve students. Mostly female now.

They stop outside a classroom door.

DEAN NAKAMURA (CONT'D)  
The students are eager but cautious.  
They have learned to be careful with  
Western ideas.

A meaningful pause.

JAMES  
I understand.

DEAN NAKAMURA  
Do you?  
(beat)  
Then we will have no problems.

He hands James a key.

DEAN NAKAMURA (CONT'D)  
Your classroom. Your office is  
upstairs, third door. Welcome to  
Hiroshima, Mr. Hartley.

He bows and leaves.

James alone in the hallway. He glances around--still mapping,  
still calculating. Then enters the classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empty. Wooden desks in neat rows. A chalkboard. Windows overlooking the courtyard. James sets down his briefcase, moves to the window.

Below, students cross the courtyard. His eyes track movements, patterns. Then he sees--

A YOUNG WOMAN (AOI, 24, beautiful but not ostentatious, intelligence in her posture) walking with a FRIEND (YUKI, similar age, more animated). They're laughing about something.

James watches for a moment--not with attraction, just observation. Then turns away, opens his briefcase.

Inside: poetry books, lesson notes. And hidden beneath a false bottom: a SMALL RADIO TRANSMITTER, a CODEBOOK, maps of the city.

He touches the radio briefly, then closes the case.

JAMES  
(to himself, quiet)  
Forgive me.

The university BELL rings.

INT. CLASSROOM - ONE HOUR LATER

Students file in. Mostly women, a few younger men. They take seats quietly, respectfully.

James stands at the front, writes on the board in English:

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever." - John Keats

The students copy it into notebooks.

The door opens--AOI enters, slightly rushed, apologetic.

AOI  
(in Japanese, bowing)  
Sumimasen. I apologize for my  
lateness.

James turns, sees her properly for the first time.

JAMES  
(in English, gently)  
In this class, we speak English. It's  
how we learn.

Aoi straightens, switches to careful English.

AOI  
I apologize. The previous class ran  
late.

JAMES  
And your name?

AOI  
Tanaka Aoi.

Their eyes meet. A brief moment--nothing romantic yet, just  
recognition of intelligence meeting intelligence.

JAMES  
Please sit, Miss Tanaka.

Aoi moves to a desk near the front. YUKI, already seated, gives  
her a look that says "He's handsome." Aoi ignores it, opens her  
notebook.

James returns to the board.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."  
Can anyone tell me what Keats means?

Silence. The students are hesitant.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
(gentler)  
There are no wrong answers in poetry.  
Only interpretations.

A beat. Then--

AOI  
(carefully)  
Beauty... transcends time. Even when  
everything else fades, beauty  
remains.

James looks at her.

JAMES

Yes.

(beat)

Keats wrote this in 1818, during a time of personal suffering. He was dying. He would be dead within three years.

The class absorbs this.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And yet he wrote about eternal beauty. Why? When the world was taking everything from him?

Another student, KENJI SATO (male, 19, prideful) raises his hand.

KENJI

Perhaps he was a fool.

Some students gasp softly at the rudeness.

JAMES

(unfazed)

Or perhaps beauty was the only rebellion left to him.

(turns to class)

When the world is chaos, when war or death or loss surrounds us--what do we have but the beautiful things we choose to remember?

Aoi is writing this down, but her pen pauses. She looks up.

AOI

You believe beauty is... defiance?

JAMES

I believe beauty is survival.

Their eyes hold for just a moment.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to class)

Your assignment: find one beautiful thing in Hiroshima. Write about why

it matters. In English. Due next week.

The students make notes.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
That's all for today. Miss Tanaka,  
may I speak with you a moment?

The class files out. Yuki gives Aoi another look--this time curious, slightly worried. Aoi stays behind.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

James and Aoi alone. He's gathering papers. She stands politely, waiting.

JAMES  
(without looking up)  
Your English is excellent. Better  
than some native speakers I've met.

AOI  
Thank you, Sensei. My father believes  
education will be valuable after the  
war.

James looks up at that.

JAMES  
Your father is a practical man.

AOI  
He's a general. Practicality is  
survival.

A beat. James processing this information.

JAMES  
A general.  
(carefully casual)  
Army?

AOI  
Yes. But he encourages me to study.  
Says Japan will need educated women  
to rebuild.

JAMES

He sounds like a wise man.

Aoi smiles slightly.

AOI

He is. Even if he's stern.

Silence. Not awkward, but weighted.

JAMES

The line you quoted in class. About beauty transcending time. You believe that?

AOI

I want to.  
(pause)  
Don't you?

JAMES

(honest, forgetting himself slightly)  
I'm not sure what I believe anymore.

The vulnerability surprises them both. James corrects quickly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That's all, Miss Tanaka. I'll see you next week.

Aoi bows and leaves. James watches her go, then looks down at his attendance sheet.

He writes her name: Tanaka Aoi. Daughter of a general.

His expression troubled.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Small, sparse, traditional Japanese room. A futon rolled in the corner. A low table with papers, books. One Western-style chair by the window.

James sits at the table, the RADIO TRANSMITTER open before him. He's encoding a message using the codebook. His face is illuminated by a single lamp.

He writes in careful code, then begins tapping out Morse on the radio.

JAMES (V.O.)  
(internal monologue, as he transmits)

Contact established. Cover holding.  
University access confirmed. General Tanaka--Army, stationed locally.  
Daughter enrolled in my class.

He pauses, pen hovering.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Potential asset... or complication.

He sets down the pen, rubs his eyes. Tired. The weight of the lie settling on him.

On the table beside the radio: the attendance sheet. Aoi's name visible.

James stares at it for a long moment, then closes the radio, hides it back in the false-bottom case.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Traditional home, well-appointed but not ostentatious. GENERAL TANAKA (50s, ramrod posture, stern but not cruel) sits at the head of the table. AOI'S MOTHER (40s, gentle, anxious energy) serves rice. KENJI, Aoi's younger brother (16), eats quickly. Aoi sits properly, thoughtful.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Aoi. Your mother tells me you have a new instructor.

AOI  
Yes, Father. English poetry.

GENERAL TANAKA  
British?

AOI  
Yes. From Cambridge.

Tanaka considers this.

GENERAL TANAKA

And what does this Englishman teach  
you about poetry?

AOI

That beauty is a form of resistance.

Tanaka looks up sharply. Aoi meets his gaze calmly.

GENERAL TANAKA

Resistance to what?

AOI

To forgetting what matters. To  
becoming only what the war makes us.

A long pause. Mother watches nervously. Kenji keeps eating,  
oblivious.

GENERAL TANAKA

(finally)

An interesting philosophy. For an  
Englishman in Japan.

AOI

He's a good teacher, Father.

GENERAL TANAKA

I'm sure he is.

He returns to his meal, but his expression is thoughtful. Aoi  
exchanges a quick glance with her mother.

EXT. HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY - COURTYARD - DAY

TITLE CARD:

ONE WEEK LATER

Students cross the campus. The season is shifting--early cherry  
blossoms beginning to appear.

AOI walks with YUKI toward the main building.

YUKI

Did you finish the assignment? Find  
your beautiful thing?

AOI

Yes. Did you?

YUKI  
(sighing dramatically)  
I wrote about my mother's garden. It  
felt obvious.

AOI  
(smiling)  
Nothing wrong with obvious.

YUKI  
What did you choose?

Aoi hesitates.

AOI  
The river. At dawn.

YUKI  
Poetic.  
(teasing)  
Trying to impress Sensei?

AOI  
Don't be ridiculous.

YUKI  
He is handsome though. For a  
foreigner.

AOI  
Yuki!

YUKI  
(laughing)  
I'm just saying. Half the girls in  
class are already in love with him.

AOI  
Then they're foolish. He's our  
teacher.

YUKI  
Mm-hmm.  
(unconvinced)  
Come on, we'll be late.

They enter the building.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Students settling in. James at the front, writing on the board:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."  
- Keats

Aoi enters, takes her usual seat near the front. James glances up, a brief acknowledgment, then continues writing.

JAMES  
(to class)  
Your assignments, please.

Students pass papers forward. Aoi hands hers to James. Their fingers don't touch, but almost.

James collects the papers, sets them aside.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Today we discuss Keats's "Ode on a  
Grecian Urn." Before we begin, I want  
to ask: what is truth?

Silence. Students exchange uncertain looks.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Come now. Surely someone has an  
opinion.

KENJI SATO raises his hand.

KENJI  
Truth is what serves the Empire.

Some students shift uncomfortably. James's expression doesn't change.

JAMES  
A political answer. But is it truth?  
Or is it ideology?

KENJI  
(defensively)  
They are the same.

JAMES

Are they?

(turns to class)

If I say "the sky is blue," is that truth or ideology?

STUDENT 1

Truth. It's observable.

JAMES

But what if someone is colorblind? Is the sky still blue to them?

Students consider this.

AOI

(carefully)

Truth exists independently of perception. But our understanding of truth is always filtered through who we are.

James looks at her.

JAMES

Go on.

AOI

The sky is blue whether I see it or not. But what "blue" means to me might be different than what it means to you.

(pause)

Truth is constant. Interpretation is personal.

JAMES

And beauty?

AOI

Also personal. One person's beauty might be another's...

(searches for word)

JAMES

Mundane?

AOI

Yes. Mundane.

James smiles slightly--the first real smile the class has seen from him.

JAMES

Excellent. Now, Keats writes "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." If beauty is subjective and truth is objective, how can they be the same thing?

The class debates. James guides the discussion, but his attention keeps drifting to Aoi, who argues passionately with another student about whether objective truth can exist at all.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

Students file out. Aoi gathers her things slowly. Yuki lingers by the door.

YUKI

(to Aoi)

Coming?

AOI

I'll catch up. I want to ask Sensei about the assignment.

Yuki raises an eyebrow but says nothing, leaves.

Aoi approaches James's desk. He's reading through the submitted papers.

AOI

Sensei?

James looks up.

JAMES

Miss Tanaka.

AOI

I wanted to ask... the assignment. Should we focus on visual beauty or conceptual beauty?

James sets down the paper he's reading--happens to be hers.

JAMES

What did you write about?

AOI

The river. The Motoyasu River. At dawn.

JAMES

Why dawn?

AOI

Because that's when it's most itself. Before the city wakes. Before people impose meaning on it. Just water, catching light.

James studies her.

JAMES

That's visual beauty.

AOI

But I also wrote about what it represents. Continuity. The river was here before the war. It will be here after.

JAMES

And that's conceptual beauty.

AOI

So... which is more important?

JAMES

(thoughtful)

I think they're inseparable. We need the visual to anchor the conceptual. Otherwise beauty becomes too abstract. Too easy to dismiss.

Aoi nods, considering this.

AOI

Do you walk by the river, Sensei?

JAMES

Sometimes. In the evening.

AOI

It's better at dawn.

A pause. Something unspoken passes between them.

JAMES

Perhaps I'll try dawn sometime.

AOI

Perhaps you should.

Another pause. Aoi realizes she's lingering, pulls back.

AOI (CONT'D)

(quickly)

Thank you, Sensei. I should go.

She bows and leaves. James watches her go, then looks down at her paper.

He begins reading. Her handwriting is careful, elegant. The essay is beautiful--poetic but precise.

He reaches the last line:

"The river remembers what we forget: that beauty and sorrow flow together, and both are necessary."

James sits back, something shifting in his expression.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - DAY

Aoi walks home, lost in thought. She's almost smiling.

YUKI catches up with her.

YUKI  
Well? What did you ask him?

AOI  
About the assignment.

YUKI  
Just the assignment?

AOI  
(defensive)  
What else would there be?

YUKI  
Aoi, I saw how he looked at you  
during class.

AOI  
You're imagining things.

YUKI  
Am I?

Aoi stops walking.

AOI  
(seriously)  
Yuki, he's our teacher. A foreigner.  
Even talking like this is--

YUKI  
I know, I know. I'm just teasing.  
(then, more gently)  
But be careful. Your father wouldn't  
approve.

AOI  
There's nothing to approve or  
disapprove. We talk about poetry.  
That's all.

Yuki nods, but doesn't look convinced.

YUKI  
By the way, I got a letter from  
Hiroshi today.

Aoi's expression softens.

AOI  
How is he?

YUKI  
(trying to sound brave)  
He says he's fine. Training is hard  
but he's managing. They might send  
him to the Pacific soon.

AOI  
I'm sorry, Yuki.

YUKI  
(forcing a smile)  
He'll come back. He has to.  
(pause)  
Promise me something?

AOI  
What?

YUKI  
If Kenji gets drafted... promise  
you'll write to me. Even if I'm too  
sad to write back.

AOI  
Yuki--

YUKI  
Promise.

AOI  
(taking her hand)  
I promise.

They walk on together, the weight of war settling around them.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James at his table again, radio open. He's transmitting.

JAMES (V.O.)  
(internal, as he codes)  
Tanaka's daughter--intelligent,  
observant. Potential access to  
household information. Father's

schedule, movements, visitors.

He pauses.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Recommend cultivation of relationship  
for intelligence purposes.

He stares at what he's written. Then crosses it out violently.

Starts again.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Tanaka household unlikely to yield  
useful intelligence. Daughter is  
civilian, student. No tactical value.

He sends the message, then sits back.

On the table: Aoi's essay. He reads it again, lingering on that  
final line.

JAMES  
(aloud, to himself)  
What are you doing?

No answer but the wind outside.

MONTAGE - THE WEEKS PASS:

A) INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Aoi arrives early, helps James arrange books on his desk. Their  
hands brush accidentally. Both pull back quickly.

B) INT. CLASSROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Class discussion. Aoi challenges James's interpretation of a  
Wordsworth poem. He smiles, argues back. The class watches  
their intellectual sparring like a tennis match.

C) EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - DAY

Aoi and Yuki walking. James passes going the opposite  
direction. He and Aoi make eye contact. Both nod slightly.

Nothing more. But Yuki notices.

D) INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

Aoi stays behind again. This time brings James tea in a small cup.

AOI  
You mentioned you haven't tried  
Japanese tea properly prepared.

James accepts it, surprised by the gesture.

JAMES  
Thank you.

He sips. Makes an appreciative sound.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's good.

AOI  
My mother makes it better. But I'm  
learning.

A moment of comfortable silence.

E) EXT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Aoi browses shelves in a small, dusty bookshop. Reaches for a volume of Blake. Another hand reaches for the same book--

James.

They both freeze, hands on the same spine.

JAMES  
Miss Tanaka.

AOI  
(flustered)  
Sensei. I didn't know you came here.

JAMES  
I could say the same.

Awkward pause.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
You take it. I've read Blake.

AOI  
Are you sure?

JAMES  
I insist.

She takes the book. The ELDERLY SHOP OWNER watches from behind the counter, a knowing look.

SHOP OWNER  
(in Japanese, to Aoi)  
Your teacher has good taste.

Aoi blushes.

#### F) INT. CLASSROOM - ANOTHER DAY

James hands back essays. When he gives Aoi hers, there's a note written in the margin:

"Your insights continue to surprise me. - J.H."

Aoi reads it, tries not to smile.

#### G) EXT. STREET NEAR UNIVERSITY - DUSK

Aoi walks home. James is ahead of her, walking the same direction. She catches up.

AOI  
Sensei.

He turns, surprised but pleased.

JAMES  
Miss Tanaka. Heading home?

AOI  
Yes. You?

JAMES  
The same direction, it seems.

They walk together. Proper distance maintained. But walking.

AOI

Did you ever try the river at dawn?

JAMES

I did, actually.

AOI

And?

JAMES

You were right. It's better.

Aoi smiles.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MOTOYASU RIVER - DAWN

The river is still, mist rising. Cherry blossoms have fully bloomed along the banks. The city is quiet.

AOI stands on the riverbank, watching the water. She's alone-- or so she thinks.

JAMES approaches from behind, stops a respectful distance away.

JAMES

I thought I might find you here.

Aoi turns, surprised but not displeased.

AOI

You remembered.

JAMES

You said it was better at dawn. I wanted to see for myself.

They stand side by side, watching the river.

AOI

What do you think?

JAMES

I think you were right.

(pause)  
About many things.

Aoi glances at him. He's not looking at the river--he's looking at her.

She looks away, heart beating faster.

AOI  
Sensei, I--

JAMES  
James. When we're alone, you can call me James.

AOI  
(testing the name)  
James.

JAMES  
Yes.

AOI  
That feels... improper.

JAMES  
I know.

Silence. The river flows.

AOI  
Why did you really come to Japan?

James tenses slightly.

JAMES  
For the position. To teach.

AOI  
No. Really.

She turns to face him fully.

AOI (CONT'D)  
I watch you in class. You're always watching. Always observing. Like you're looking for something specific.

James's guard goes up.

JAMES

You're very perceptive.

AOI

You're very evasive.

A beat.

JAMES

Maybe I came looking for something I didn't know I was missing.

AOI

Like what?

JAMES

(honestly)

I'm still figuring that out.

They're closer now. Not touching, but the air between them is charged.

AOI

James... this-- whatever this is--

JAMES

I know.

AOI

My father would--

JAMES

I know.

AOI

And the university--

JAMES

I know.

(pause)

We should stop. Before this becomes something neither of us can take back.

AOI

(softly)

What if I don't want to stop?

James closes his eyes briefly, fighting himself.

JAMES

Aoi... you don't understand what you're asking.

AOI

Then help me understand.

He looks at her--really looks. The want, the danger, the impossibility of it all.

JAMES

I can't.

AOI

Can't or won't?

JAMES

Both.

A patrol of SOLDIERS passes on the road above. Both James and Aoi step back instinctively, creating proper distance.

The moment breaks.

The soldiers pass without noticing them.

JAMES

(when they're gone)

You should go. Before someone sees us.

AOI

James--

JAMES

Please.

Aoi nods reluctantly. Begins to leave. Stops.

AOI

(without turning back)

I'll be here tomorrow. Same time.

She walks away.

James watches her go, then looks down at his hands--they're

shaking slightly.

JAMES  
(to himself)  
God help me.

He turns away from the river.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - BREAKFAST - MORNING

Aoi enters, slightly disheveled from her early morning walk.  
Her mother is preparing breakfast. Kenji is already eating.  
General Tanaka reads a newspaper.

MOTHER  
Where have you been?

AOI  
Walking. By the river.

MOTHER  
Alone?

AOI  
(lying)  
Yes.

General Tanaka looks up from his paper, studies her.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You've been distracted lately.

AOI  
Just thinking about my studies,  
Father.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Your English teacher. Hartley. What  
do you know of him?

Aoi's heart skips.

AOI  
(carefully casual)  
He's British. From Cambridge. An  
excellent scholar.

GENERAL TANAKA

Has he asked about me? About my work?

AOI

No, Father. Why would he?

GENERAL TANAKA

No reason.

(returns to paper)

Just curious.

But his expression suggests otherwise. Aoi and her mother exchange worried glances.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James pacing. The radio is open but he hasn't transmitted yet.

He sits, begins coding a message, stops. Starts again.

JAMES (V.O.)

(internal)

I'm compromised. Not by investigation. By feeling.

He doesn't send it. Instead, closes the radio.

Goes to the window. Looks out at the city lights.

Somewhere out there, Aoi is doing the same.

EXT. MOTOYASU RIVER - DAWN - NEXT DAY

Aoi stands at the same spot. Waiting.

Minutes pass.

She's about to leave when--

JAMES appears.

They look at each other across the distance.

Neither speaks.

James walks to her. Stops. Still proper distance, but less than yesterday.

JAMES  
I shouldn't have come.

AOI  
But you did.

JAMES  
I keep telling myself to stay away.

AOI  
And yet here you are.

James almost smiles.

JAMES  
Here I am.

They stand in silence, watching the river.

AOI  
What are we doing, James?

JAMES  
Something dangerous.

AOI  
I know.

JAMES  
Something that can only end badly.

AOI  
I know that too.

JAMES  
And yet--

AOI  
And yet.

The first rays of sun break over the mountains. The river turns gold.

James reaches out--stops just before touching her hand.

Aoi turns her hand over. Palm up. An offering.

James takes it.

Their fingers intertwine.

Neither speaks. They just stand there, holding hands as the sun rises over Hiroshima.

Everything has changed.

INT. BOOKSHOP - BACK ALCOVE - DAY

TITLE CARD:  
TWO WEEKS LATER

The dusty shop from before. A small, private space surrounded by shelves. JAMES sits on a wooden stool, reading. Looks up when AOI enters.

JAMES  
I wasn't sure you'd come.

AOI  
I almost didn't.

She sits on the opposite stool. They're close in the confined space.

JAMES  
Your friend. She knows?

AOI  
She suspects. And she's right to warn me.

JAMES  
We should stop. Stop meeting like this.

AOI  
Is that what you want?

JAMES  
(honestly)  
No.

AOI  
Then why?

JAMES  
Because I'm trying to protect you.

AOI  
From what?

JAMES  
(can't answer)  
From... everything.

Aoi reaches out, takes his hand. It's becoming easier now.

AOI  
James, I need you to be honest with  
me. About something.

James tenses.

AOI (CONT'D)  
Do you feel what I feel?

Long pause.

JAMES  
Yes.

AOI  
Then that's all I need to know.

JAMES  
Aoi, it's not that simple--

AOI  
Why not? Why can't it be simple?

JAMES  
Because--  
(struggling)  
Because there are things about me you  
don't know. Things I can't tell you.

AOI  
Then don't tell me. Just... be here.  
With me. For as long as we can.

James looks at her--the impossibility of it, the danger, the  
way she's looking at him like he's worth the risk.

JAMES  
You're asking me to be selfish.

AOI

I'm asking you to be honest.

He cups her face. First intimate touch beyond holding hands.  
She leans into his palm.

JAMES

(whispered)

I wish I'd met you in a different  
world.

AOI

We only have this one.

They're inches apart. About to kiss when--

The SHOP OWNER coughs loudly from the front.

They spring apart. Moment broken.

SHOP OWNER

(calling back)

Customer coming!

Aoi and James move to separate corners of the alcove,  
pretending to browse. A CUSTOMER enters the front, browses  
briefly, leaves.

When it's safe, they both laugh--nervous, relieved.

AOI

We can't keep doing this.

JAMES

I know.

AOI

Meeting in secret. Pretending there's  
nothing between us.

JAMES

I know.

Pause.

AOI

So what do we do?

JAMES

We're careful. We're patient. And  
we--

He stops himself.

AOI  
And we what?

JAMES  
(quietly)  
And we steal whatever time we can.

MONTAGE - STOLEN MOMENTS:

A) EXT. UNIVERSITY GARDENS - DUSK

Aoi and James sit on a bench by a koi pond, proper distance apart. Books open, pretending to discuss literature. But really just talking.

AOI  
Tell me something true about you.  
Something real.

JAMES  
What do you want to know?

AOI  
Your childhood. Your family.  
Something that made you who you are.

James considers.

JAMES  
My mother used to read to me. Poetry,  
mostly. Said it would teach me to see  
beauty in hard times.

AOI  
Was she right?

JAMES  
I'm beginning to think so.

B) INT. BOOKSHOP - BACK ALCOVE - DAY

James teaches Aoi to fold origami cranes. His hands guide hers through the intricate folds.

JAMES

One thousand cranes grant a wish,  
they say.

AOI

(concentrating on the folds)  
What would you wish for?

JAMES

A world where your name and mine  
could exist in the same sentence  
without danger.

Aoi looks up at him.

AOI

That's a beautiful wish.

Their hands are still touching over the paper crane.

JAMES

What would you wish?

AOI

To know your real name.

James freezes.

AOI (CONT'D)

James Hartley. It sounds...  
constructed. Like you're wearing it.

JAMES

(carefully)  
What makes you say that?

AOI

The way you hesitate before  
introducing yourself. The way you  
touch your chest when you say it,  
like you're reminding yourself.

(pause)

I'm not asking you to tell me. I just  
want you to know... I see you.  
Whoever you really are.

James sets down the crane.

JAMES

You're too perceptive for your own good.

AOI

Is that a bad thing?

JAMES

It's a dangerous thing.

C) EXT. MOTOYASU RIVER - DAWN

They meet at the river regularly now. Stand side by side, watching the water.

JAMES

Tell me about your father.

AOI

Why?

JAMES

Because he's important to you. I want to understand.

AOI

He's... complicated. Stern. Traditional. But he loves us, in his way.

JAMES

Does he frighten you?

AOI

Sometimes. Not because he's cruel. Because his love comes with conditions. Duty. Honor. Obedience.

JAMES

And you?

AOI

I try to be the daughter he wants. But sometimes I think about who I might be if I could choose.

JAMES  
Who would you be?

AOI  
(smiling)  
I don't know yet. But I'd like to  
find out.

D) INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

Aoi brings James tea again. He's grading papers.

AOI  
You work too hard.

JAMES  
Duty of the position.

She sits on the edge of his desk--bolder now.

AOI  
Is that all you are? Duty?

JAMES  
(looking up at her)  
Once upon a time, yes.

AOI  
And now?

JAMES  
Now I'm not sure anymore.

He sets down his pen, takes the tea from her hands. Their  
fingers brush.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
You're changing everything, you know.

AOI  
Good.

END MONTAGE

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DINNER - NIGHT

Family dinner. Tense atmosphere. General Tanaka has been quiet all meal.

GENERAL TANAKA

Aoi. I spoke with Dean Nakamura today.

Aoi's heart stops.

AOI

Oh?

GENERAL TANAKA

He mentioned your English has improved remarkably. Says you're the top student in your class.

AOI

(cautious relief)

Sensei Hartley is an excellent teacher.

GENERAL TANAKA

Yes. He mentioned that as well. Said Mr. Hartley speaks very highly of you.

Aoi's mother watches nervously.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

I invited him to dinner. Next week.

Aoi's chopsticks clatter against her bowl.

AOI

What?

GENERAL TANAKA

Is there a problem?

AOI

No, I just-- that's very... generous of you, Father.

GENERAL TANAKA

I like to know the people who influence my children.

(pointed look)

It's important to understand who we

invite into our lives.

Kenji, oblivious, chimes in.

KENJI

Will there be sukiyaki, Mother?

MOTHER

(flustered)

Yes, of course.

But Aoi and her father are locked in a silent standoff.

GENERAL TANAKA

You'll inform Mr. Hartley of the invitation?

AOI

Yes, Father.

GENERAL TANAKA

Good.

He returns to eating. Aoi can barely breathe.

INT. BOOKSHOP - BACK ALCOVE - NEXT DAY

Aoi bursts in, finds James waiting.

AOI

(panicked)

My father wants you to come to dinner.

JAMES

What?

AOI

Next week. He invited you. He knows-- I don't know what he knows, but he suspects something.

James stands, pacing the small space.

JAMES

Calm down. Maybe he's just being polite.

AOI

You don't know my father. He doesn't do polite without purpose.

JAMES

Then I'll go. I'll be perfectly professional. The respectful teacher.

AOI

James, if he asks the wrong questions--

JAMES

I've handled worse.

Aoi grabs his arm.

AOI

This isn't a game. If he discovers who you really are--

James covers her hand with his.

JAMES

I know.  
(looks at her)  
Do you trust me?

AOI

Yes.

JAMES

Then trust that I can handle your father.

AOI

And if he asks about us?

JAMES

There is no 'us.' Not that anyone can prove. We're teacher and student. That's all.

But even as he says it, the lie feels heavy.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - DAY

James walking to class. KENJI SATO intercepts him.

KENJI

Sensei Hartley. May I speak with you?

JAMES

Of course, Mr. Sato.

KENJI

I wanted to ask about Miss Tanaka.

James's guard goes up.

JAMES

What about her?

KENJI

She seems... distracted lately. Her work is still excellent, but her focus has shifted.

JAMES

Students go through phases. It's normal.

KENJI

Is it normal for a student to visit her teacher's apartment?

James goes cold.

JAMES

(carefully)

I'm not sure what you're implying.

KENJI

I saw her. Near your building. Late evening.

JAMES

Perhaps she was passing by. It's a public street.

KENJI

Perhaps.

(pause)

Or perhaps there's more to your relationship than poetry.

JAMES

(steel in his voice)  
Mr. Sato, I would be very careful  
about the accusations you make. Miss  
Tanaka is a dedicated student.  
Nothing more.

KENJI  
Of course. Forgive me, Sensei. I was  
merely... concerned for her  
reputation.

JAMES  
Your concern is noted.

Kenji bows and walks away, but his expression is calculating.

James watches him go, jaw clenched.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Class in session. The atmosphere is tense.

Aoi notices James is different--more formal, more distant.

After class, she tries to approach. He shakes his head subtly.  
Not here.

EXT. STREET BEHIND UNIVERSITY - DAY

Aoi waits in a quiet spot. James arrives, looking around  
carefully.

AOI  
What's wrong?

JAMES  
Kenji Sato. He saw you. Near my  
apartment.

AOI  
(panicked)  
When? I haven't--

JAMES  
It doesn't matter if you did or  
didn't. He's watching. And if he's  
watching, others might be too.

AOI  
What do we do?

JAMES  
We're more careful. No more meetings unless absolutely necessary. No more lingering after class. And the dinner with your father--I need you to be the perfect dutiful daughter.

AOI  
I'm always the perfect dutiful daughter.

JAMES  
Then be more perfect.

It comes out harsher than intended. Aoi flinches.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
(softer)  
I'm sorry. I'm just-- I'm trying to protect you.

AOI  
By pushing me away?

JAMES  
If that's what it takes.

AOI  
And after the dinner? If my father is satisfied?

JAMES  
Then maybe... maybe we can figure something out.

AOI  
What if he's not satisfied?

James has no answer for that.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT (ONE WEEK LATER)

Aoi and her mother preparing for dinner. The house is immaculate.

MOTHER  
You're shaking.

AOI  
I'm fine.

MOTHER  
Aoi, if there's something you need to  
tell me--

A KNOCK at the door.

Both women freeze.

GENERAL TANAKA (O.S.)  
Our guest has arrived.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

General Tanaka opens the door. JAMES stands there, holding a  
small wrapped gift (bottle of sake), dressed formally.

JAMES  
(bowing deeply)  
General Tanaka. Thank you for the  
kind invitation.

GENERAL TANAKA  
(measuring him)  
Mr. Hartley. Please, come in.

James enters. Removes his shoes. Follows proper protocol  
perfectly.

Aoi appears from the kitchen. Their eyes meet briefly--a world  
of unspoken communication.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
You know my daughter, of course.

JAMES  
(formal)  
Miss Tanaka. Good evening.

AOI  
(bowing)  
Sensei.

The formality is painful. But necessary.

GENERAL TANAKA  
My wife, and my son, Kenji.

Aoi's mother bows. Young Kenji (16) looks at James with curiosity.

KENJI  
(the brother)  
Are you really from England?

JAMES  
I am.

KENJI  
What's it like?

JAMES  
Cold. And very green.

Kenji grins. General Tanaka observes this interaction closely.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Come. Let us eat.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Traditional meal. Everyone seated properly. Sukiyaki steaming in the center.

The conversation is polite, careful. James navigates every question perfectly--about Cambridge, about teaching, about his views on the war (neutral, diplomatic).

GENERAL TANAKA  
And your family, Mr. Hartley? Do they worry for you here?

JAMES  
I have no family, General. My parents passed some years ago.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I'm sorry to hear that. Then you are alone?

JAMES

I have my work. My students. That's enough.

Aoi looks down at her plate.

GENERAL TANAKA

My daughter speaks very highly of your teaching.

JAMES

She's an exceptional student. Her insights into poetry are quite mature.

GENERAL TANAKA

Yes. She's always been... perceptive.

The subtext is clear: I see what you're doing.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

Tell me, Mr. Hartley. Why poetry? In a time of war?

JAMES

Perhaps especially in a time of war, General. Poetry reminds us what we're meant to preserve.

GENERAL TANAKA

And what is that?

JAMES

Beauty. Humanity. The things that transcend conflict.

GENERAL TANAKA

A pretty sentiment. But ultimately naive, don't you think?

JAMES

Perhaps. But naivety and hope are often the same thing.

General Tanaka almost smiles.

GENERAL TANAKA

You're a clever man, Mr. Hartley.

JAMES  
I try to be, sir.

Dinner continues. The tension is suffocating.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY - LATER

After dinner, General Tanaka invites James to his study.  
Private conversation.

Aoi and her mother clean the kitchen, but Aoi is straining to hear.

Shelves lined with military texts, family photographs. General Tanaka pours sake for both of them.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You handled that well. The dinner.  
The questions.

JAMES  
Thank you, General.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Almost too well.

James says nothing.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
I've been a soldier for thirty years,  
Mr. Hartley. I know how to read men.  
And you... you're very good at being  
what people expect to see.

JAMES  
I'm not sure I understand, sir.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I think you do.  
(pause)  
My daughter. You care for her.

Not a question. A statement.

JAMES  
(carefully)  
I respect her greatly as a student.

GENERAL TANAKA  
That's not what I asked.

Long silence.

JAMES  
With respect, General, whatever I  
feel is irrelevant. I would never  
compromise her honor or your family's  
reputation.

GENERAL TANAKA  
That's the right answer. But is it  
the true one?

James meets his gaze directly.

JAMES  
I give you my word. As a man of  
honor. I will never do anything to  
harm your daughter.

General Tanaka studies him for a long moment.

GENERAL TANAKA  
See that you don't. Because if you  
do, British or not, teacher or not--I  
will kill you myself.

JAMES  
I understand, sir.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Good.  
(drinks sake)  
Now. Let us speak of other things.

But the threat hangs in the air.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - ENTRANCE - LATER

James is leaving. Aoi brings his coat. Their fingers touch  
briefly as she hands it to him.

AOI  
(whispered)  
Are you alright?

JAMES  
(whispered back) I'm fine. You?

AOI  
Terrified.

JAMES  
Don't be. It went well.

General Tanaka appears.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Mr. Hartley. Safe journey home.

JAMES  
(bowing)  
Thank you again for your hospitality,  
General. Mrs. Tanaka. Miss Tanaka.

He leaves. The door closes.  
Aoi and her father stand in silence.

GENERAL TANAKA  
He's a good man. I think.

AOI  
He is, Father.

GENERAL TANAKA  
But he's hiding something. I can feel  
it.

Aoi's blood runs cold.

AOI  
What do you mean?

GENERAL TANAKA

I'm not sure yet. But I intend to  
find out.

He walks away, leaving Aoi frozen in fear.

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - NIGHT

James walks home, hands shaking slightly now that he's alone.

He survived. But barely.

And General Tanaka suspects something.

The trap is getting smaller.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TITLE CARD:  
THREE WEEKS LATER

James at his table, radio open. He's just finished transmitting a coded message. His face is drawn, exhausted.

He closes the radio, hides it. Stands, stretches.

Goes to the window. The city is quiet below. A few lights still burning.

He's about to turn away when he sees--

A FIGURE approaching the building. Familiar gait.

Aoi.

James's heart races. He watches her enter the building below.

Footsteps on the stairs. Getting closer.

A soft KNOCK at his door.

James stands frozen. He knows he shouldn't open it.

Another knock. More urgent.

He crosses to the door. Opens it.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

AOI stands there, soaked from rain he hadn't noticed was falling. Her hair is plastered to her face. She's shaking-- whether from cold or emotion, unclear.

JAMES  
(urgent whisper)  
Aoi, what are you--you can't be here.

AOI  
I know.

JAMES

If anyone sees you--

AOI  
I don't care.

She steps inside. James glances down the hallway--empty--then closes the door quickly.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Aoi stands in the center of the small room, dripping. James keeps his distance, hands clenched at his sides.

JAMES  
What happened?

AOI  
Kenji. My brother. He received his draft notice today.

Her voice breaks on the last word.

JAMES  
Oh, Aoi. I'm sorry.

AOI  
He's sixteen. Sixteen years old. And they're sending him to--  
(can't finish)

James moves toward her instinctively, stops himself.

JAMES  
When?

AOI  
Two weeks. He reports for training in two weeks.

Silence. The weight of it settling.

AOI (CONT'D)  
My mother... she hasn't stopped crying. My father is trying to be strong, but I saw his hands shaking when he held the notice. And Kenji, he's pretending to be brave, but he's terrified. He's just a boy.

Tears streaming down her face now.

AOI (CONT'D)

And I realized... everyone I love is being taken by this war. My brother. Yuki's brother. And you--you're going to leave too, aren't you?

JAMES

Aoi--

AOI

Don't lie to me. Not tonight. You're planning to leave. I can feel it.

James can't meet her eyes.

AOI (CONT'D)

That's why I came. Because I can't-- I can't lose everyone without--

She stops, trying to compose herself.

JAMES

(gently)

Without what?

AOI

Without knowing what this is. What we are.

She steps closer.

AOI (CONT'D)

I'm tired of being careful. Tired of stolen moments and unfinished sentences. If you're going to leave, if the war is going to take you too, then I need-- I need--

JAMES

What do you need?

AOI

(whispered)

You. Even if it's just for tonight.

James closes his eyes, fighting himself.

JAMES

You don't know what you're asking.

AOI

Yes, I do.

JAMES

Your father would kill me. Literally.

AOI

I know.

JAMES

Your reputation--

AOI

I don't care.

JAMES

You should care.

AOI

Why?

(voice rising)

Why should I care about reputation  
when my brother might die? When you  
might disappear? When everything I  
know might be gone tomorrow?

Her voice echoes in the small space.

AOI (CONT'D)

(quieter, broken)

I just... I need something to be  
real. Something to be mine. Before it  
all gets taken away.

James's resolve is crumbling.

JAMES

Aoi, there are things about me you  
don't know. Things I can't tell you.  
If you knew--

AOI

I don't care who you were. I care who  
you are. Right now. With me.

JAMES  
I'm not a good man.

AOI  
I don't believe that.

JAMES  
I've done things. Lied. Deceived--

AOI  
Do you love me?

The question stops him cold.

JAMES  
That's not--

AOI  
Do you love me? It's a simple  
question.

Long silence. The rain pounds against the window.

JAMES  
(barely audible)  
Yes.

AOI  
Say it properly.

JAMES  
(louder, clearer)  
I love you.

Aoi's breath catches.

AOI  
Then that's all I need to know.

She crosses the distance between them. Reaches up, cups his  
face.

AOI (CONT'D)  
I love you too. Whatever you are.  
Whatever you've done. I love you.

James's hands finally move--cupping her face, tangling in her  
wet hair.

JAMES  
God forgive me.

He kisses her.

MONTAGE - THE NIGHT (HANDLED WITH TASTE AND INTIMACY):

A) INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The kiss deepens. Desperate, hungry, like they're drowning and each other is air.

James pulls back slightly.

JAMES  
(whispered)  
Are you sure?

AOI  
I've never been more sure of  
anything.

She begins unbuttoning her blouse with shaking hands. James's hands cover hers.

JAMES  
Let me.

He unbuttons it slowly, reverently. Like unwrapping something precious.

B) INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - LATER

Shadows and lamplight. The rain continues outside.

James and Aoi on the futon. Clothes discarded. Skin against skin.

Their lovemaking is tender, not rushed. Every touch says what words can't.

Aoi's hand pressed against his chest, feeling his heartbeat.

James kissing her tears.

JAMES

(whispered)  
You're trembling.

AOI  
I'm not afraid.

JAMES  
What are you?

AOI  
Alive. For the first time in so long,  
I feel alive.

They come together, and it's both an ending and a beginning.

### C) INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - LATER STILL

After. They lie tangled together, Aoi's head on James's chest.  
His fingers trace patterns on her shoulder.

The lamp has burned low. Rain has softened to a drizzle.

AOI  
(quietly)  
Tell me something true. Something  
you've never told anyone.

James is silent for a long time.

JAMES  
I'm afraid.

AOI  
Of what?

JAMES  
Of how much I need you. Of what I'd  
do to keep you safe.

AOI  
That's not frightening. That's love.

JAMES  
Love makes us vulnerable. Vulnerable  
gets us killed.

Aoi props herself up on her elbow, looks down at him.

AOI

Then we'll be vulnerable together.

James touches her face.

JAMES

I don't deserve you.

AOI

Too bad. You have me anyway.

She kisses him again. Softer this time.

D) INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NEAR DAWN

Aoi is dressing. James watches from the futon, sheet wrapped around his waist.

JAMES

Stay a little longer.

AOI

I can't. I need to be home before my parents wake.

She finishes dressing, sits beside him on the futon.

AOI (CONT'D)

No regrets?

JAMES

Only that it took us this long.

AOI

And tomorrow? What happens tomorrow?

JAMES

Tomorrow we're careful. We go back to being teacher and student. We protect each other by pretending nothing has changed.

AOI

But everything has changed.

JAMES

I know.

She stands. He catches her hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Aoi. If anything happens--if there's ever a time when I have to leave suddenly--

AOI

Don't. Don't talk about leaving.

JAMES

I need you to know. Whatever happens, wherever I go, this was real. You are real. The realest thing in my life.

Aoi bends down, kisses him one last time.

AOI

I'll see you in class.

JAMES

I'll see you in class.

She goes to the door. Pauses.

AOI

James?

JAMES

Yes?

AOI

Thank you. For tonight. For making me feel... less alone.

JAMES

You're never alone. Not anymore.

She slips out. The door closes softly.

James sits in the quiet apartment. Touches his lips where she kissed him.

Then his eyes fall on the hidden compartment where the radio is stored.

The weight of what he's done--the line he's crossed--settles over him.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - DAWN

Aoi hurries through empty streets. The rain has stopped. The sky is beginning to lighten.

She touches her lips, remembering. A small smile despite everything.

But as she turns the corner toward home, the smile fades.

Reality returning.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - AOI'S ROOM - DAWN

Aoi slips in through the window (her usual method of sneaking out). Changes quickly into sleeping clothes. Slides into bed just as--

Her door opens.

Her MOTHER stands there, in her night robe.

They stare at each other.

MOTHER  
(quietly)  
Where were you?

AOI  
I couldn't sleep. I went for a walk.

MOTHER  
In the rain?

AOI  
Yes.

Her mother crosses to her, sits on the edge of the bed.

MOTHER  
(gently)  
Aoi. I'm your mother. I know.

Aoi's defenses crumble.

AOI  
(whispered)  
I'm sorry.

MOTHER  
Do you love him?

AOI  
Yes.

MOTHER  
Does he love you?

AOI  
He says he does.

MOTHER  
Do you believe him?

AOI  
With everything I am.

Her mother sighs deeply.

MOTHER  
Your father can never know.

AOI  
I know.

MOTHER  
If he finds out, he'll--

AOI  
I know, Mother. I know.

Her mother touches Aoi's wet hair.

MOTHER  
Be careful, my daughter. Please. The  
war makes everything dangerous. Even  
love. Especially love.

AOI  
It's too late to be careful.

MOTHER  
I was afraid of that.

She kisses Aoi's forehead, stands to leave.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(at the door)

Get some sleep. And dry your hair  
before your father sees you.

She leaves. Aoi lies back, staring at the ceiling.

Her hand moves to her stomach--an unconscious gesture.

She doesn't know yet. But something has begun.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

TITLE CARD:

MAY 1945

James preparing for class. More careful now. More paranoid.

A KNOCK at the door. He tenses, hides anything suspicious.

Opens the door--it's his CONTACT (50s, Japanese, posing as a shopkeeper).

CONTACT

(low voice)

We need to talk. Not here.

EXT. ALLEY NEAR DOCKS - DAY

James and the Contact in a shadowed alley.

CONTACT

There's been increased Kempeitai  
activity. They're looking for spies.

JAMES

They're always looking.

CONTACT

This is different. Someone reported a  
suspicious foreign national. Near the  
university.

James's blood runs cold.

JAMES  
Description?

CONTACT  
British. Teaches English.  
(pause)  
Sound familiar?

JAMES  
How credible is the source?

CONTACT  
Credible enough that they've started  
a file. They're watching you.

JAMES  
How long?

CONTACT  
Maybe a week. Maybe less. We're  
arranging extraction. Be ready to  
move within 72 hours.

JAMES  
I can't leave yet. There's--

CONTACT  
There's nothing more important than  
staying alive. Get your affairs in  
order. Say your goodbyes. Because you  
won't be coming back.

The Contact leaves. James stands alone in the alley.

Trapped between duty and love.

INT. UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Class in session. James is teaching, but his mind is elsewhere.

Aoi notices. She's worried.

After class, she lingers as usual. The other students file out.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER CLASS

Once they're alone, Aoi approaches.

AOI  
What's wrong?

JAMES  
(keeping his voice steady)  
Nothing.

AOI  
Don't lie to me. Not after--

She stops herself, glances at the door.

JAMES  
We need to be more careful. Someone's  
been watching me.

AOI  
Who?

JAMES  
I don't know. But we can't meet like  
this anymore.

AOI  
James--

JAMES  
I mean it, Aoi. No more bookshop. No  
more river. No more coming to my  
apartment.

Aoi's eyes fill with tears.

AOI  
Are you ending this?

JAMES  
I'm trying to keep you safe.

AOI  
By pushing me away?

JAMES  
If that's what it takes.

The door opens. YUKI enters, stops when she sees them.

YUKI

Oh. Sorry, I didn't mean to--

JAMES

(quickly professional)

It's fine, Miss Hayashi. Miss Tanaka and I were just discussing her recent essay.

But Yuki's not fooled. She sees Aoi's tears.

YUKI

Aoi, can I speak with you? Outside?

Aoi nods, wipes her eyes, follows Yuki out.

James is left alone, jaw clenched.

EXT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Yuki pulls Aoi into an empty corner.

YUKI

What happened?

AOI

Nothing.

YUKI

Aoi, you're crying.

AOI

I'm fine.

YUKI

(gently)

Is it him? Did he hurt you?

AOI

No! He would never--

YUKI

Then what?

Aoi can't answer. Yuki's expression shifts--understanding.

YUKI (CONT'D)

(whispered)

Oh, Aoi. You didn't.

Aoi's silence is answer enough.

YUKI (CONT'D)

When?

AOI

It doesn't matter.

YUKI

Does your father know?

AOI

Of course not.

YUKI

Aoi, if anyone finds out--

AOI

No one will find out. It's over. He's ending it.

YUKI

Maybe that's for the best.

Aoi looks at her sharply.

YUKI (CONT'D)

(carefully)

I got news yesterday. About Hiroshi.

Aoi's anger deflates immediately.

AOI

What news?

Yuki's lip trembles.

YUKI

He's dead. Killed at Okinawa three weeks ago. It took this long for the notice to reach us.

AOI

(stricken)

Oh, Yuki. No.

She pulls Yuki into an embrace. Yuki sobs against her shoulder.

YUKI

They said he died honorably. Fighting the Americans. But what does that even mean? He's gone. My brother is gone.

They hold each other in the empty hallway.

YUKI (CONT'D)

(pulling back, wiping her eyes)

I'm telling you this because... because James is one of them.

AOI

One of who?

YUKI

The enemy. He's British, but Britain is allied with America. The people who killed my brother.

AOI

James didn't kill Hiroshi.

YUKI

Not directly. But his country did. His people.

(pause)

I loved Hiroshi. And you love James. I understand. But Aoi... love doesn't change what side of the war someone is on.

Aoi has no response to that.

YUKI (CONT'D)

Be careful. That's all I'm asking. Because I can't lose you too.

She walks away, leaving Aoi alone in the hallway.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - KENJI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Young KENJI (16) is packing his bag. His draft orders on the bed beside him.

Aoi stands in the doorway, watching.

KENJI

You don't have to watch me pack.

AOI

I want to.

KENJI

(trying to sound brave)  
I'll be fine, sister. They say the  
training makes you strong.

AOI

You're already strong.

KENJI

Not like Father. Not yet.

Aoi enters the room, sits on his bed.

AOI

You don't have to be like Father.

KENJI

I'm a soldier now. I have to be.

AOI

You're my little brother. That's what  
you have to be.

Kenji sits beside her.

KENJI

Are you scared for me?

AOI

(honest)  
Terrified.

KENJI

Me too.

(pause)  
But don't tell Mother. She's worried  
enough.

Aoi puts her arm around him.

AOI

Come back to us. That's all I ask.

KENJI

I'll try.

They sit in silence, the weight of the war finally touching their family directly.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James at the window, staring out at the city.

The radio is packed. His few belongings organized.

Ready to run at a moment's notice.

But he can't bring himself to actually leave.

A soft KNOCK at the door.

His heart leaps--Aoi?

He opens it.

It's the CONTACT again.

CONTACT

Tomorrow night. Be at the docks at midnight. A fishing boat will take you south.

JAMES

I need more time.

CONTACT

There is no more time. The Kempeitai are closing in. If you're not on that boat, you're a dead man.

JAMES

I have to--there's someone I need to--

CONTACT

Say goodbye?

(harsh)

You think you're the first agent to fall for a local? Leave a note. Don't

leave a note. But don't stay here.  
Because if they catch you, they'll  
torture you. And then they'll torture  
anyone you've had contact with.  
Including her.

That lands.

JAMES  
Tomorrow night.

CONTACT  
Midnight. Don't be late.

He leaves.

James closes the door, leans against it.

He has less than 24 hours.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE NEAR DOCKS - NIGHT

TITLE CARD:  
AUGUST 4, 1945

James meets with his CONTACT and another man--an AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (40s, tired eyes, carrying the weight of terrible knowledge).

They speak in hushed, urgent tones.

CONTACT

This is Major Reynolds. He has information you need before extraction.

JAMES

What information?

MAJOR REYNOLDS

You're being pulled out because of what's coming. Not just because your cover is blown.

JAMES

What's coming?

Reynolds exchanges a look with the Contact. Takes a breath.

MAJOR REYNOLDS

A new weapon. Unlike anything the world has seen. We've been working on it for years--the Manhattan Project.

JAMES

I've heard rumors. Atomic research.

MAJOR REYNOLDS

Not rumors anymore. We tested it successfully three weeks ago in New Mexico. One bomb. Entire desert turned to glass.

James goes very still.

JAMES

How powerful?

MAJOR REYNOLDS

Equivalent to twenty thousand tons of TNT. One bomb. One plane. One city... gone.

The words hang in the air.

JAMES

(quietly)

When?

MAJOR REYNOLDS

Orders came through yesterday. First target: Hiroshima. August 6th. Two days from now.

James staggers back slightly.

JAMES

That's--that's impossible. The civilian population--there are over 300,000 people--

MAJOR REYNOLDS

I know.

JAMES

Children. Schools. Hospitals--

MAJOR REYNOLDS

I know.

(pause)

They chose Hiroshima because it's been largely untouched. They want to measure the full effect. Pure data.

JAMES

Jesus Christ.

MAJOR REYNOLDS

The brass thinks it'll end the war. Force Japan to surrender.

JAMES

By murdering hundreds of thousands of civilians?

MAJOR REYNOLDS

I don't make the decisions. I just gather intelligence.

(pause)

That's why we're pulling all assets out. Anyone within fifty miles of the city needs to be gone by tomorrow night.

JAMES

Can you warn them? The Japanese military? Give them a chance to evacuate--

MAJOR REYNOLDS

We can't. The weapon is classified at the highest level. If we warn them, they'll know we have it. They might try to develop their own. Or worse, they won't believe us and we'll have compromised the mission for nothing.

JAMES

The mission? You're talking about human beings!

MAJOR REYNOLDS

I'm talking about ending a war that's killed millions already. You think I like this? I have nightmares about what I saw in New Mexico. But orders are orders.

JAMES

I can't just leave. There are people--

CONTACT

There's nothing you can do. If you try to warn anyone, you'll be arrested. And they'll still die.

JAMES

How can you ask me to do nothing?

MAJOR REYNOLDS

I'm not asking. I'm ordering. Be on that boat tomorrow night. That's final.

Reynolds leaves. The Contact stays behind.

CONTACT

(quietly)

The girl. General Tanaka's daughter.  
That's who you're thinking about.

James doesn't deny it.

CONTACT (CONT'D)

If you tell her, you compromise  
everything. The mission. Your life.  
Hers.

JAMES

If I don't tell her, she dies.

CONTACT

Maybe. But at least she dies not  
knowing her lover was a spy. Not  
knowing he lied about everything.

JAMES

That's supposed to comfort me?

CONTACT

It's supposed to keep you alive.

(pause)

Love is a luxury we can't afford in  
this work. You knew that when you  
signed up.

He leaves.

James alone in the warehouse. The weight of impossible  
knowledge crushing him.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James pacing. The radio sits open on the table.

He's written a message, erased it. Written another, erased that  
too.

Finally, he writes:

"Cannot leave civilians to die. Will attempt limited evacuation

of key contact's family. Advise."

He transmits. Waits.

The response comes back quickly:

"NEGATIVE. MISSION SECURITY PARAMOUNT. PROCEED TO EXTRACTION AS ORDERED. NO CONTACT WITH LOCALS."

James stares at the message.

Then deliberately begins encoding a different message:

"Understood. Will comply. ETA extraction point 2400 hours August 5th."

He transmits. A lie.

Then he closes the radio. Hides it.

Makes his decision.

EXT. MOTOYASU RIVER - DAWN - AUGUST 5TH

James waits at their spot. He hasn't slept.

The sun rises over the mountains. One more sunrise before--

He can't finish the thought.

AOI appears, surprised to see him there after he'd said they couldn't meet.

AOI

James? What are you--

JAMES

We need to talk. Really talk.

Something in his voice frightens her.

AOI

What's wrong?

JAMES

Not here. Somewhere private. The bookshop?

AOI

It doesn't open for another hour.

JAMES

I know the owner. He'll let us in.

INT. BOOKSHOP - BACK ALCOVE - MORNING

The elderly SHOP OWNER let them in, disappeared to the front, leaving them alone.

James and Aoi sit facing each other. The space feels smaller now. Suffocating.

JAMES

I need to tell you something.  
Everything. And I need you to listen  
until I'm finished.

AOI

(nervous)  
You're scaring me.

JAMES

I know.  
(takes a breath)  
My name is James Hartley. That part  
is true. But I'm not from Cambridge.  
I'm not British.

Aoi goes very still.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm American. I'm a spy. Intelligence  
officer. I was sent here eight months  
ago to gather information on military  
movements, troop deployments,  
strategic targets.

The color drains from Aoi's face.

AOI

(whispered)  
No.

JAMES

Everything about my background is a  
lie. The credentials, the teaching

position--all of it was cover.

AOI  
(standing)  
No. No, you're lying. This is some  
kind of--

JAMES  
I wish it was.

AOI  
(backing away)  
My father. You got close to me to get  
information about my father.

JAMES  
At first, yes. That was part of the  
mission.

Aoi's hand flies to her mouth, physically ill.

AOI  
Oh god. I'm going to be sick.

JAMES  
(standing)  
Aoi, please--

AOI  
Don't touch me!

She backs into the shelves, books tumbling.

AOI (CONT'D)  
(tears streaming)  
Everything? All of it was a lie?

JAMES  
Not us. Never us. That was real--

AOI  
How can you say that? You're a spy!  
You're the enemy! My country is at  
war with yours and you-- you--

She can't finish. Sobbing now.

AOI (CONT'D)  
That night. When I came to you. When

we--

She can't say it.

AOI (CONT'D)

Was that part of the mission too?  
Sleep with the general's daughter?  
Get her to pillow talk about her  
father's secrets?

JAMES

No! God, no. Aoi, I love you--

AOI

Don't you dare! Don't you dare say  
that word to me!

She moves toward the exit. James blocks her path.

JAMES

I know you hate me. I know I've  
destroyed everything. But I need you  
to listen. Because there's more.

AOI

More? What more could there possibly  
be?

JAMES

I'm telling you this because  
something is coming. Something  
terrible. And I can't leave without  
trying to save you.

AOI

(bitter laugh)  
Save me? From what?

JAMES

A bomb. A new kind of weapon. The  
Americans--my people--are going to  
drop it on Hiroshima. Tomorrow.  
August 6th.

Aoi stares at him.

AOI

You're insane.

JAMES

I wish I was.

AOI

One bomb? You expect me to believe  
one bomb could--

JAMES

It's not like other bombs. It uses  
atomic power. Splits atoms. Creates  
an explosion unlike anything the  
world has ever seen. One bomb can  
destroy an entire city.

AOI

(shaking her head)

No. That's impossible.

JAMES

They tested it. In America. Three  
weeks ago. One bomb turned miles of  
desert to glass. The heat was so  
intense it created a new kind of  
material.

AOI

You're lying. This is some kind of  
trick to--

JAMES

Why would I lie about this? I'm  
already confessing to being a spy. If  
I wanted to manipulate you, I'd just  
leave!

His desperation is palpable.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Aoi, I know you don't trust me. I  
know I've destroyed any right to ask  
anything of you. But I'm begging  
you--get your family out of the city.  
Today. Right now.

AOI

My father would never--

JAMES

Then you leave. Take your mother and

Kenji. Go to your cousin's house in the countryside. As far from the city as you can get.

AOI

And what? Leave my father to die?

JAMES

He's a soldier. He won't leave his post. But you're civilians. You can leave.

AOI

Based on the word of a man who's lied to me about everything?

James reaches into his jacket, pulls out official-looking papers--intelligence documents.

JAMES

These are classified. If anyone finds them on me, I'll be executed. But I'm showing you because I need you to believe me.

He spreads them on the table. Technical diagrams, code words, target lists. HIROSHIMA circled at the top.

AOI

(reading, translating the English)

"Primary target... weather permitting... estimated casualties..."  
(her voice trails off)

She looks up at him, realization dawning.

AOI (CONT'D)

These are real.

JAMES

Yes.

AOI

You're really a spy.

JAMES

Yes.

AOI  
And this bomb...

JAMES  
Is coming tomorrow morning. Early.  
Between 8 and 9 a.m.

Aoi sinks into a chair, the papers falling from her hands.

AOI  
(numb)  
How many will die?

JAMES  
Tens of thousands. Instantly. More in  
the days and weeks after from burns,  
radiation sickness.

AOI  
Radiation?

JAMES  
The bomb releases invisible particles.  
They poison everything. Water, air,  
soil. People will die from it even if  
they survive the blast.

Aoi looks at him with horror.

AOI  
And you knew. How long have you  
known?

JAMES  
I found out yesterday. I was supposed  
to be extracted last night. Taken  
south, away from the city.

AOI  
Then why are you still here?

JAMES  
Because I couldn't leave without  
warning you. Without trying to save  
you.

AOI  
(bitter)  
How noble. The spy with a conscience.

JAMES

I know I don't deserve forgiveness. I know what I've done is unforgivable. But Aoi, please--none of that matters if you're dead.

Silence. Aoi staring at the documents.

AOI

Why Hiroshima? Why not Tokyo? Why not a military base?

JAMES

Because it's been largely untouched by conventional bombing. They want to measure the full effect. Pure data.

AOI

(looking up sharply)  
We're an experiment?

JAMES

Yes.

Aoi stands abruptly, paces.

AOI

I need to tell my father. Warn him. He can evacuate the military, the hospitals--

JAMES

You can't.

AOI

What?

JAMES

If you tell him how you know, he'll realize I'm a spy. He'll have me arrested and executed. And then he'll assume you're lying because you're trying to protect me.

AOI

So what do I say? "Father, we need to evacuate because I have a feeling"?

JAMES

Say you heard rumors. Say a friend's brother in the military mentioned unusual American plane activity. Say anything but the truth.

AOI

He won't believe me without proof.

JAMES

Then don't tell him. Just get your mother and Kenji out. Make up an excuse. Say your cousin is sick and needs help. Say anything.

AOI

And leave my father to die?

JAMES

He's a general. He chose his duty. You don't have to choose the same.

Aoi whirls on him.

AOI

Don't you dare tell me about duty! You lied about everything! You used me! You slept with me while spying on my family!

JAMES

I know! I know what I am! I know I'm a liar and a manipulator and everything you think I am! But I love you, Aoi. That was never a lie. And I would rather you hate me and live than forgive me and die!

His voice echoes in the small space.

Aoi's tears fall silently.

AOI

(quietly)

How can I believe anything you say?

JAMES

You can't. But you can look at those papers. You can see the truth.

She looks down at the documents again.

AOI

If I leave... if I convince my mother  
and Kenji to leave... what about you?

JAMES

I'm supposed to be at the docks  
tonight. A boat south.

AOI

Will you go?

JAMES

I don't know.

AOI

James--

JAMES

If your father stays, I can't just  
leave him. Not after everything.

AOI

You'd go back for him? After he  
threatened to kill you?

JAMES

Because you love him. And I love you.

Aoi closes her eyes.

AOI

This is insane. All of it.

JAMES

I know.

AOI

I should hate you.

JAMES

You should.

AOI

I should turn you in. Let my father  
execute you for treason.

JAMES  
You should.

She looks at him--really looks.

AOI  
Why did you tell me? You could have just left. Saved yourself. No one would ever know.

JAMES  
Because I'd rather die knowing I tried to save you than live knowing I let you burn.

The rawness of it breaks something in her.

AOI  
(whispered)  
I can't do this. I can't--

She moves toward the door again. This time James doesn't stop her.

JAMES  
The boat. At the docks. Fishing boat with a blue sail. It leaves at midnight tonight. If you can convince your mother and Kenji to go, I'll arrange transport.

AOI  
(at the door, not turning)  
And my father?

JAMES  
I'll try. I'll go to him. Try to convince him. But Aoi--if he won't leave, you have to go anyway. Promise me.

Long pause.

AOI  
I can't promise that.

JAMES  
Aoi--

AOI  
My father is my family. I can't just  
abandon him because--

She stops.

JAMES  
Because what?

AOI  
(turning to face him, tears  
streaming)  
Because I love him. Despite  
everything you've done, despite the  
lies, despite hating myself for it--I  
still love you. And that makes me a  
traitor too.

She leaves before he can respond.

James stands alone among the books, the classified papers  
spread before him.

He's set everything in motion.

Now he just has to hope she believes him enough to run.

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - DAY

Aoi walks in a daze. People pass her--mothers with children,  
elderly vendors, students.

All going about their lives, unaware.

She looks up at the sky. Clear blue. Beautiful.

In less than 24 hours, that sky will become hell.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DAY

Aoi enters. Her MOTHER is preparing lunch. Young KENJI is home  
on brief leave before reporting for training.

MOTHER  
Aoi! I was beginning to worry. Where  
have you been?

AOI  
(trying to keep her voice  
steady)  
Mother, I need to speak with you.  
Privately.

Her mother reads the urgency.

MOTHER  
Kenji, go practice your drills in the  
garden.

KENJI  
But I'm hungry--

MOTHER  
Now, please.

Kenji leaves, grumbling.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
(turning to Aoi)  
What's wrong?

Aoi takes a breath. Decides.

AOI  
We need to leave the city. Today.  
Right now.

MOTHER  
What? Why?

AOI  
I can't explain everything. But  
something is coming. Something  
terrible. We need to go to Cousin  
Hana's house in the countryside.

MOTHER  
Aoi, you're not making sense--

AOI  
Mother, please. I'm begging you.  
Trust me. We need to leave.

MOTHER  
(understanding dawning)  
This is about him. The teacher. He

told you something.

Aoi doesn't deny it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What did he tell you?

AOI

That Hiroshima is in danger. That we need to evacuate.

MOTHER

There are always rumors during war--

AOI

This isn't a rumor!

(desperately)

Mother, I saw papers. Official documents. The Americans are planning something for tomorrow. Something that will destroy the entire city.

MOTHER

That's impossible. One bombing raid can't--

AOI

It's not a raid. It's one bomb. A new kind of weapon.

Her mother stares at her.

MOTHER

You're serious.

AOI

Completely.

MOTHER

And this teacher--James--he's...

AOI

American. A spy. I know how it sounds. But Mother, he has no reason to lie about this. He's risking his life telling us.

MOTHER

Or he's trying to create panic.

Chaos.

AOI

To what end? If he wanted to hurt us, he could have just left. But he came to me. Warned me. Begged me to get you and Kenji away from the city.

Her mother sits down heavily.

MOTHER

Your father. Does he know about the bomb?

AOI

No. And James says we can't tell him. He won't believe it without evidence we can't provide.

MOTHER

So you're asking me to take your brother and flee the city based on the word of an enemy spy you've been...

(can't finish)

AOI

Yes. That's exactly what I'm asking.

Silence.

MOTHER

And your father?

AOI

James said he'll try to convince him to leave. But if Father won't go...

MOTHER

You want me to leave my husband to die.

AOI

I want you and Kenji to live!

Aoi kneels in front of her mother, takes her hands.

AOI (CONT'D)

Mother, please. I know this sounds

insane. I know you have no reason to trust anything I'm saying. But I'm your daughter. And I have never been more certain of anything in my life. If we stay here tomorrow, we will die.

Her mother looks into her daughter's eyes--sees the truth there.

MOTHER  
(finally)  
How much time do we have?

AOI  
We need to be gone by tonight. James is arranging transport. A fishing boat at midnight.

MOTHER  
And you? Will you come with us?

Aoi hesitates.

AOI  
I can't leave Father.

MOTHER  
Then neither can I.

AOI  
Mother--

MOTHER  
You're asking me to abandon my husband. I won't do it. But I'll send Kenji. He's too young to die for duty he doesn't understand.

AOI  
That's not enough--

MOTHER  
It's all I can give.  
(standing)  
I'll pack Kenji's things. Make up an excuse. Say Hana's husband is sick and needs help with the farm. He'll believe that.

AOI  
Mother, please come with us--

MOTHER  
My place is with your father. Just as  
yours would be with the man you love,  
if circumstances were different.

She cups Aoi's face.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
But know this, my daughter. Whether  
you stay or go, whether you love this  
American or hate him, I will always  
be proud of you. You are braver than  
I ever was.

She kisses Aoi's forehead, then goes to pack.

Aoi stands alone in the room, the weight of everything crushing  
her.

She's just condemned her mother and father to death.

Unless James can work a miracle.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - KENJI'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Aoi's MOTHER is helping young KENJI (16) pack a bag. He's confused.

KENJI

I don't understand. Why do I have to go now? I'm supposed to report for training next week.

MOTHER

Cousin Hana's husband is very ill. They need help with the harvest.

KENJI

But Father said--

MOTHER

Your father understands. Family duty comes first.

Kenji looks at his sister, who stands in the doorway, pale.

KENJI

Aoi, what's really going on?

AOI

(forcing steadiness)  
Exactly what Mother said. We need to help Cousin Hana.

KENJI

"We"? You're coming too?

Aoi and her mother exchange glances.

MOTHER

Yes. All three of us. Just for a few days.

KENJI

And Father?

MOTHER

He has duties here. He'll join us when he can.

Kenji doesn't look convinced, but he's too young to push back against his mother.

KENJI

When do we leave?

MOTHER

Tonight. After dinner.

KENJI

Tonight? That's so sudden--

MOTHER

(firm)

Tonight.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY - SAME TIME

GENERAL TANAKA at his desk, reviewing military reports. There's a KNOCK at his door.

GENERAL TANAKA

Enter.

His WIFE enters, closing the door behind her.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

(without looking up)

What is it?

WIFE

I'm taking the children to stay with Hana for a few days.

Tanaka looks up, surprised.

GENERAL TANAKA

Now? Why?

WIFE

Her husband is ill. They need help with the farm. And... I think it would be good for Kenji to spend time in the countryside before his training. One last chance to be a boy.

Tanaka studies his wife carefully. She's not a good liar.

GENERAL TANAKA  
What aren't you telling me?

WIFE  
(meeting his eyes)  
That I love you. That I have always  
loved you. And that sometimes a wife  
must make decisions even when she  
cannot explain them.

A long pause.

GENERAL TANAKA  
This is about the Englishman.  
Hartley.

WIFE  
(carefully)  
No. This is about our family.

GENERAL TANAKA  
He's told you something. Or told Aoi  
something.

WIFE  
I'm taking the children to the  
countryside. That's all you need to  
know.

Tanaka stands, approaches her.

GENERAL TANAKA  
If there's intelligence about an  
attack--

WIFE  
There's nothing you can do. Your duty  
is here. Mine is with our children.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You're asking me to let you go  
without explanation.

WIFE  
Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA

And if I order you to stay?

WIFE

Then I will disobey you. For the first time in twenty-five years of marriage, I will disobey you.

Tanaka looks at his wife--the steel in her eyes he's rarely seen.

GENERAL TANAKA

How long have you known? About Aoi and the teacher?

WIFE

Long enough.

GENERAL TANAKA

And you said nothing.

WIFE

I said what I needed to say. When it mattered.

Tanaka returns to his desk, sits heavily.

GENERAL TANAKA

Go. Take the children. But you will return in three days. All of you.

WIFE

(quietly)  
If we can, we will.

She turns to leave.

GENERAL TANAKA

Wife.

She stops, doesn't turn.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

Tell Aoi... tell her I understand.  
Better than she thinks.

His wife's hand touches the doorframe--a moment of grief.

WIFE

I'll tell her.

She leaves.

Tanaka sits alone in his study, staring at nothing.

He knows. Somehow, he knows this is goodbye.

EXT. HIROSHIMA DOCKS - LATE AFTERNOON

James meets with the CONTACT and a FISHERMAN (60s, weathered, sympathetic eyes).

JAMES

You can take four passengers?

FISHERMAN

Three. Maybe four if they're small.

JAMES

Three women. One teenage boy.

FISHERMAN

When?

JAMES

Tonight. Midnight. Can you take them south? Away from the coast?

FISHERMAN

How far south?

JAMES

As far as you can by dawn tomorrow.  
Then keep going.

The Fisherman looks at the Contact, who nods.

FISHERMAN

This has to do with what's coming,  
doesn't it?

JAMES

Yes.

FISHERMAN

My grandson is in the city. Should I  
warn him?

JAMES  
(pained)  
I can't tell you what to do. But if  
he can leave... yes.

The Fisherman nods grimly.

FISHERMAN  
Blue sail. Eastern dock. Midnight.  
I'll be waiting.

He leaves. The Contact turns to James.

CONTACT  
You're not coming, are you?

JAMES  
I have something I need to do first.

CONTACT  
The girl's father.

JAMES  
If I can convince him to leave--

CONTACT  
He won't. He's a general. They don't  
abandon their posts.

JAMES  
I have to try.

CONTACT  
You'll die.

JAMES  
Probably.

CONTACT  
(shaking his head)  
Love makes fools of us all.

He hands James a small packet.

CONTACT (CONT'D)  
Cyanide capsule. If you're captured.  
It's faster than what the Kempeitai  
will do to you.

James takes it. Pockets it.

JAMES

Thank you. For everything.

CONTACT

Don't thank me. Just survive.

(pause)

And if you see that girl again, tell her she's lucky. Not many men would throw away their lives for love.

He leaves.

James alone on the docks, watching the sun lower toward the horizon.

One more sunset.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DINNER TABLE - EVENING

A tense, quiet meal. Everyone eating but no one tasting.

General Tanaka watches his family--really looks at them. Memorizing.

GENERAL TANAKA

Kenji. You will help Cousin Hana with honor. Work hard.

KENJI

Yes, Father.

GENERAL TANAKA

And you will return ready for your training. Ready to serve.

KENJI

Yes, Father.

Tanaka turns to Aoi.

GENERAL TANAKA

Daughter. You have always made me proud. Even when you thought you disappointed me.

Aoi's eyes fill with tears.

AOI  
Father--

GENERAL TANAKA  
No. Let me finish.  
(pause)  
You are stronger than you know.  
Braver than I gave you credit for.  
Whatever choices you make... I trust  
they come from honor.

Aoi can't speak. Just nods.

Tanaka stands.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
I have work to attend to. Travel  
safely. All of you.

He bows to his wife--a deep, formal bow. She returns it, tears  
streaming.

Then he bows to his children.

And leaves the room.

The family sits in silence, the empty chair like a wound.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRUCK - NIGHT

A borrowed TRUCK drives through darkness. Aoi's mother driving,  
Kenji beside her, Aoi in the back with their few bags.

They pass through checkpoints--Aoi's mother using her husband's  
name and rank to avoid questions.

The city lights fade behind them.

EXT. COUSIN HANA'S HOUSE - COUNTRYSIDE - LATE EVENING

A modest farmhouse, lanterns burning. COUSIN HANA (40s, kind  
face) comes out to greet them, confused.

HANA  
Sister! What are you doing here? Is  
something wrong?

MOTHER

May we come in? I'll explain inside.

INT. COUSIN HANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family gathered. Aoi's mother has explained--vaguely--that they need to stay for a few days. Something about safety.

Hana is skeptical but hospitable.

HANA

Of course you can stay. But Sister, you're worrying me. What's really happening?

MOTHER

I can't explain. Not yet. But please, trust me.

Kenji has already fallen asleep on a mat in the corner--exhausted from the journey and the stress.

Aoi stands outside, looking back toward where Hiroshima lies in the distance.

Her mother joins her.

MOTHER

You should rest.

AOI

I can't. Every time I close my eyes I see Father. Alone in that house.

MOTHER

He chose to stay.

AOI

Because we didn't tell him the truth!

MOTHER

(gently)

Would he have believed us if we did?

Aoi has no answer.

AOI

I can't just leave him there to die.

MOTHER

Sometimes love means letting go.

AOI

Is that what you're doing? Letting him go?

MOTHER

I'm honoring his choice. Just as he honored mine by letting us leave.

They stand in silence.

AOI

The boat. James said there's a boat leaving at midnight. We're supposed to go farther south.

MOTHER

How far is it from here?

AOI

About an hour. We'd need to leave soon.

MOTHER

Then we should wake Kenji--

The sound of an ENGINE approaching.

Both women tense.

A vehicle pulls up. Someone gets out.

AOI recognizes the silhouette immediately.

AOI

(whispered)

James.

EXT. COUSIN HANA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JAMES approaches, looking exhausted. His clothes dusty from travel.

Aoi runs to him before she can stop herself.

AOI

What are you doing here? How did you find us?

JAMES

Your mother mentioned Cousin Hana once. The countryside. I took a guess.

(looks at Aoi's mother)

Mrs. Tanaka. I'm glad you made it out.

MOTHER

Mr. Hartley. Or should I call you something else?

JAMES

James is fine. It's my real name, at least.

(pause)

Where's Kenji?

AOI

Inside. Sleeping. Why?

JAMES

The boat leaves in an hour. We need to go now.

AOI

"We"? You're coming with us?

James looks away.

JAMES

I'm taking you to the boat. Making sure you're safe. Then...

AOI

Then what?

James turns to face her.

JAMES

Then I'm going back for your father.

Silence.

AOI

What?

JAMES

I promised you I'd try to save him.  
I'm keeping that promise.

AOI

(grabbing his arm)

James, you can't. He'll have you  
arrested. Executed.

JAMES

Maybe. Or maybe he'll listen.

AOI

He won't! You know he won't!

JAMES

I have to try.

MOTHER

Mr. Hartley. My husband is a proud  
man. He will not abandon his post for  
anyone. Not even you.

JAMES

Perhaps. But I can't live knowing I  
didn't try.

(looks at Aoi)

You'd never forgive me. I'd never  
forgive myself.

AOI

(tears streaming)

And what about me? What about us?  
You'll just throw your life away?

JAMES

I'm giving your father a chance.  
That's all.

AOI

By committing suicide!

JAMES

If he arrests me, so be it. At least  
I tried. And you'll be safe. That's  
what matters.

AOI

I don't want to be safe! I want--

She stops herself.

JAMES

What do you want?

AOI

(breaking)

I want you. I want my father. I want this nightmare to end. I want to wake up and have none of this be real.

James pulls her into his arms. She sobs against his chest.

JAMES

(into her hair)

I know. I know.

MOTHER

(quietly)

If you go back for him... if somehow you convince him to leave... how will you get out?

JAMES

There might be time. If I move fast. If he listens quickly.

MOTHER

And if he doesn't?

James doesn't answer.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Then you die with him.

JAMES

Yes.

AOI

(pulling back)

No. No, I won't let you.

JAMES

Aoi--

AOI

If you go back, I'm coming with you.

JAMES

Absolutely not.

AOI

He's my father! If anyone should--

JAMES

No!

(grabs her shoulders)

This is not negotiable. You are getting on that boat. You, your mother, your brother. You're going south. Away from the city. Away from what's coming.

AOI

I can't leave you both!

JAMES

You have to!

AOI

Why? Why do I have to choose?

JAMES

Because someone has to survive this!  
Someone has to remember! Someone has to live!

His voice echoes in the night.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(quieter, desperate)

Aoi, please. If you die tomorrow, everything I've done--everything I've risked--means nothing. I need you to live. I need to know that something good came from all this.

AOI

I can't-- I can't just leave both of you--

JAMES

You're not leaving. You're surviving. There's a difference.

He cups her face, thumbs wiping her tears.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I need you to trust me. One last time. Get on that boat. Go as far south as you can. Wait. And if by some miracle I convince your father to leave, if by some miracle we make it out--I will find you. I swear it.

AOI

And if you don't make it?

James kisses her forehead.

JAMES

Then you live. You live for both of us. You live and you remember. And you tell the world what happened here.

Aoi is shaking, crying so hard she can barely stand.

AOI

I love you. I hate you and I love you and I don't know how to do this.

JAMES

I love you too. More than I thought I could love anything.

He holds her for a long moment.

Then gently pushes her toward her mother.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to Mother)

Take her. Please.

Aoi's mother takes her daughter's arm.

MOTHER

(to James)

My husband... tell him we waited as long as we could. Tell him I never stopped loving him.

JAMES

I will.

MOTHER

And Mr. Hartley? Thank you. For trying to save us. Despite everything... thank you.

She leads Aoi toward the house to wake Kenji.

Aoi looks back at James one last time.

AOI

(through tears)

Come back to me. Both of you. Please.

JAMES

I'll try.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRUCK - NIGHT

The borrowed truck drives toward the coast. James driving, Aoi beside him, her mother and Kenji in the back.

No one speaks.

The road is dark, illuminated only by the truck's weak headlights.

EXT. FISHING DOCK - REMOTE COVE - NIGHT

The truck pulls up to a small, isolated dock. A FISHING BOAT with a blue sail bobs in the water. The FISHERMAN waits.

FISHERMAN

You're late. I was about to leave.

JAMES

I'm sorry. Had to make sure they got here safely.

James helps Aoi's mother and Kenji onto the boat. Their few bags passed down.

Aoi stands on the dock, frozen.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Aoi. You need to go.

AOI  
I can't do this.

JAMES  
Yes, you can.

AOI  
Come with us. Please. Forget my  
father. Just come with us and we'll--

JAMES  
You'd never forgive me. And I'd never  
forgive myself.

He takes something from his pocket--a small ORIGAMI CRANE,  
carefully folded.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Remember? You said you'd wish to know  
my real name?

He presses it into her hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
My real name is written inside. Don't  
open it unless--unless you need to.  
But know that whatever name I use,  
whoever I pretend to be... with you,  
I was always just James. The man who  
loves you.

Aoi clutches the crane, tears streaming.

AOI  
If you don't come back--if the worst  
happens--

JAMES  
Then you keep living. You hear me?  
You live and you love and you find  
joy even in the ashes. You don't let  
them take that from you.

He helps her onto the boat.

Their hands linger together.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There's something else. I don't know  
if it matters, but... if I don't make  
it back, if something happens...  
there might be--

He stops himself.

AOI  
What?

JAMES  
Just... take care of yourself. That's  
all.

He doesn't tell her about the possibility of pregnancy. Can't  
add that weight to everything else.

The Fisherman starts the engine.

FISHERMAN  
We need to go. Now.

James steps back onto the dock.

The boat begins to pull away.

Aoi stands at the rail, watching him.

AOI  
(calling out)  
James!

JAMES  
Yes?

AOI  
I forgive you! Do you hear me? I  
forgive you!

James's face crumples for just a moment.

JAMES  
(calling back)  
I don't deserve it! But thank you!

The boat moves farther into the darkness.

Aoi's MOTHER holds her as she sobs.

Young KENJI finally understands something terrible is happening, but doesn't know what.

KENJI

(to his mother)

What's going on? Why is Aoi crying?  
Who was that man?

MOTHER

(holding both her children)

Someone brave. Someone trying to save  
us all.

The boat disappears into the darkness.

On the dock, James stands alone.

He watches until the blue sail is completely gone.

Then turns toward the truck.

Toward Hiroshima.

Toward General Tanaka.

Toward almost certain death.

But he made a promise.

And for the first time in his life of lies, he's going to keep  
one.

INT. FISHING BOAT - NIGHT

Aoi at the rail, staring back toward where the dock was. Now  
just darkness.

Her mother sits beside her.

MOTHER

He'll try his best.

AOI

It won't be enough.

MOTHER

Perhaps not. But he'll try. That's  
what love does.

Aoi opens her hand, looks at the origami crane.

Wants to open it, read his real name.

But doesn't.

Not yet.

She tucks it carefully into her pocket.

The boat moves south, carrying them away from everything they know.

Away from home.

Away from death.

But toward what?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRUCK - NIGHT

James driving back toward Hiroshima. Fast.

He checks his watch: 1:47 AM, August 6th.

Less than seven hours until--

He presses the accelerator harder.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. HIROSHIMA OUTSKIRTS - PREDAWN - AUGUST 6TH, 1945

The truck's headlights cut through darkness. James drives fast, reckless.

The city appears in the distance--lights sparse, most people still sleeping.

He checks his watch: 4:23 AM.

Less than four hours.

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - DAWN

James abandons the truck several blocks from the Tanaka home. Approaches on foot.

The streets are nearly empty. A few early risers. A milk delivery man. Life continuing, oblivious.

James walks past them like a ghost.

He's crossing into death, and they don't even know.

EXT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DAWN

James stands outside the gate. The house is dark except for one light--Tanaka's study.

He takes a breath. This is it.

Reaches for the gate, then stops.

There's a KEMPEITAI OFFICER standing in shadow across the street, watching the house.

James's blood runs cold.

They're already here. Waiting.

But waiting for what? For him?

He could turn back. Run. Make it to the extraction point still.

But he made a promise.

James walks to the gate. Opens it.

The officer sees him but doesn't move. Just watches.

James walks to the front door. Knocks.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Footsteps inside. The door opens.

GENERAL TANAKA stands there, in full uniform. He's been awake all night.

He looks at James. No surprise in his eyes.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Mr. Hartley. Or is it something else?

JAMES  
James. Just James.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I thought you might come.

JAMES  
You knew I would?

GENERAL TANAKA  
My wife doesn't flee in the night  
without reason. My daughter doesn't  
look at a man the way she looks at  
you without cause. And a foreign  
teacher doesn't risk his life  
returning to an enemy city  
unless...  
(pause)  
Unless he's either very foolish or  
very brave.

JAMES  
Probably both.

Tanaka almost smiles.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Come in. Before the Kempeitai decide

to act.

JAMES

You know they're watching?

GENERAL TANAKA

Of course. They've been watching for three days. Waiting to see if you'd lead them to other agents.

(steps aside)

Come. We should talk before they lose patience.

James enters. Tanaka closes the door.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

The room where Tanaka threatened to kill James weeks ago. Now it feels different. Final.

Tanaka gestures to a chair. James sits. Tanaka pours tea for both of them.

GENERAL TANAKA

My wife and children. They reached safety?

JAMES

Yes. They're on a boat heading south. Far from the city.

GENERAL TANAKA

Good.

(sips tea)

And you came back. For me.

JAMES

Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA

Why?

JAMES

Because your daughter loves you. And I love her.

Tanaka sets down his cup.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You're American. A spy.

JAMES  
Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA  
How long?

JAMES  
Eight months. Since I arrived.

GENERAL TANAKA  
And my daughter... when did she  
become part of it?

JAMES  
She was never part of it. Not the  
mission. What happened between us  
was--

He struggles for words.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
She was the only real thing in a life  
built on lies.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Pretty words. But you used her. To  
get close to me.

JAMES  
At first, yes. That was the plan.

GENERAL TANAKA  
And then?

JAMES  
Then I fell in love with her. And  
everything became complicated.

Tanaka studies him for a long moment.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I should kill you where you sit.

JAMES  
You should.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I could call those officers outside.  
Have you arrested. Tortured for  
information.

JAMES  
You could.

GENERAL TANAKA  
But you came back anyway. Knowing all  
of this.

JAMES  
Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Why?

JAMES  
(leaning forward)  
Because something is coming, General.  
Something that will end this city.  
This morning. And I can't leave you  
here to die without trying to save  
you.

Tanaka's expression doesn't change.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Your wife told me. Vaguely. A new  
weapon.

JAMES  
An atomic bomb. Built by American  
scientists. One bomb with the power  
of twenty thousand tons of  
conventional explosives.

GENERAL TANAKA  
That's impossible.

JAMES  
They tested it. In New Mexico. One  
bomb created a crater a quarter mile  
wide. The sand turned to glass. The  
heat was hotter than the sun.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You expect me to believe this?

JAMES

General, I have spent eight months lying to you. To everyone in this city. But I am not lying now. In approximately three hours, an American B-29 will fly over Hiroshima. It will drop one bomb. And everything--everyone--in a radius of several miles will be instantly vaporized.

Tanaka stands, walks to the window.

GENERAL TANAKA

And you came to warn me? Out of love for my daughter?

JAMES

Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA

Or to create panic. Chaos. Weaken our defenses.

JAMES

To what end? General, if I wanted to harm you, I would have let you stay here and die. I wouldn't have risked my life coming back.

Tanaka turns from the window.

GENERAL TANAKA

Show me proof.

JAMES

I can't. The mission is classified at the highest levels. I only found out myself two days ago.

GENERAL TANAKA

Then you're asking me to abandon my post based on the word of an enemy spy who seduced my daughter.

James stands.

JAMES

I'm asking you to trust that a man doesn't throw away his life for a lie. I could be on a boat south. I could be safe. Instead, I'm here. Because your daughter would never forgive me if I didn't try. And because--

He stops.

GENERAL TANAKA

Because what?

JAMES

Because you're a good man. And good men shouldn't die like this.

Silence.

GENERAL TANAKA

You're very eloquent, Mr. Hartley. But I am a soldier. My place is with my men. With my city.

JAMES

Your city is going to be ash in three hours.

GENERAL TANAKA

Then I will be ash with it.

JAMES

And your daughter? Your wife? Your son? You'd leave them without a father because of pride?

GENERAL TANAKA

(steel in his voice)

Not pride. Duty.

JAMES

Duty to what? A war that's already lost?

GENERAL TANAKA

Careful.

JAMES

It's the truth and you know it. Japan

is starving. Your cities are burning.  
Your navy is destroyed. Your air  
force is grounded. The Americans have  
won. This bomb--it's just them making  
sure you surrender.

GENERAL TANAKA

Then let them drop it. Let them do  
their worst. We will rebuild.

JAMES

General, you're not listening. There  
won't be anything left to rebuild.  
The radiation alone will poison the  
earth for decades. Nothing will grow.  
The water will be contaminated.  
Anyone who survives the blast will  
die slowly from invisible poison.

Tanaka's facade cracks slightly.

GENERAL TANAKA

You're describing hell.

JAMES

Yes.

(quietly)

That's exactly what I'm describing.

Tanaka sits back down, suddenly looking older.

GENERAL TANAKA

If what you say is true... why  
Hiroshima? Why not Tokyo? Why not a  
military base?

JAMES

Because Hiroshima has been largely  
untouched by conventional bombing.  
They want to measure the full effect.  
Pure data.

Tanaka's hands clench.

GENERAL TANAKA

We're an experiment.

JAMES

Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA  
My people. My city. An experiment.

He stands abruptly, paces.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
If I believed you--if I evacuated the  
city--the panic alone would kill  
people. And if you're wrong, if this  
is some elaborate deception, I would  
have destroyed civilian morale for  
nothing.

JAMES  
And if I'm right, you'll have saved  
thousands of lives.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Or hundreds of thousands will die in  
the evacuation. Crushed in crowds.  
Trampled. The elderly. The sick.  
Children.

James realizes the impossible position.

JAMES  
Then save yourself. Just you. Come  
with me now. We can still make it  
out.

GENERAL TANAKA  
And abandon my post? Abandon my men?

JAMES  
Your men will die whether you're here  
or not!

GENERAL TANAKA  
Then I die with them! That's what  
honor demands!

JAMES  
Honor?  
(bitter laugh)  
What good is honor if everyone who  
would witness it is dead?

GENERAL TANAKA

Honor isn't performed for witnesses.  
It's performed for ourselves.

They stare at each other--two men on opposite sides of an unbridgeable gap.

JAMES  
(quieter)  
General... Aoi is carrying my child.

Tanaka freezes.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
She doesn't know yet. It's too early.  
But I'm certain. That night--the  
night before I found out about the  
bomb--we...  
(stops)  
You're going to be a grandfather.  
Your family will continue. Your blood  
will survive.

Tanaka's face is unreadable.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
But that child will grow up without  
knowing you. Without hearing your  
voice. Without learning your  
strength. Unless you come with me  
now.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You would use an unborn child to  
manipulate me?

JAMES  
I would use anything. Everything.  
Because I love your daughter more  
than I love my own life. And she  
loves you. And if you die here, it  
will destroy her.

Tanaka turns away.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Get out.

JAMES  
General--

GENERAL TANAKA

Get out of my house. Before I call those officers outside and have you arrested.

JAMES

I'm not leaving without you.

GENERAL TANAKA

Then you'll die here too.

JAMES

Fine.

(sits back down)

Then we die together.

Tanaka whirls on him.

GENERAL TANAKA

You're a fool!

JAMES

Yes!

(standing)

I'm a fool! I'm a fool who fell in love with your daughter! Who threw away his mission, his career, his life--for her! For you! Because she asked me to save you and I can't tell her no!

His voice echoes in the room.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(quieter, exhausted)

So yes. I'm a fool. But I'm a fool who keeps his promises.

Long silence.

Tanaka looks at this man--this enemy--who came back to die rather than break a promise to his daughter.

GENERAL TANAKA

You really love her.

JAMES

With everything I am.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Even though it's cost you everything.

JAMES  
Especially because of that.

Tanaka moves to his desk. Opens a drawer. Takes out a bottle of sake and two cups.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Sit. If we're going to die together,  
we should at least drink first.

James sits. Tanaka pours.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
To fools.

JAMES  
To fools.

They drink.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY - LATER

The sun has risen. Light streams through the windows.

The bottle is half empty. They've been talking for over an hour.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Tell me about America. The real  
America. Not propaganda.

JAMES  
It's... complicated. Beautiful and  
ugly. Free and constrained. We claim  
to believe in liberty while denying  
it to many. We speak of equality  
while perpetuating injustice.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Much like Japan, then.

JAMES  
Much like everywhere, I think. People  
are people. Wherever we are.

GENERAL TANAKA  
And yet we kill each other over  
differences that mean nothing.

JAMES  
Yes.

Tanaka refills their cups.

GENERAL TANAKA  
My daughter. She was happy? With you?

JAMES  
I hope so. I tried to make her happy.

GENERAL TANAKA  
She wrote poetry. Did you know? When  
she was a child. Beautiful little  
poems about cherry blossoms and rain.  
I told her to focus on practical  
things. Mathematics. Languages. I  
thought poetry was... frivolous.

JAMES  
It's not.

GENERAL TANAKA  
No. I see that now.  
(pause)  
She learned that from you. To value  
beauty even in darkness.

JAMES  
She already knew it. I just reminded  
her.

They drink in silence.

GENERAL TANAKA  
This child. You're certain?

JAMES  
As certain as I can be.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Boy or girl?

JAMES

I don't know. Does it matter?

GENERAL TANAKA

No.

(almost smiling)

Though a grandson would be--

He stops himself.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

I won't meet them. Will I?

JAMES

Not if you stay here.

Tanaka stands, walks to the window. Looks out at the city.

GENERAL TANAKA

It's a beautiful morning.

JAMES

Yes.

GENERAL TANAKA

The sky is so clear. Perfect weather.

James checks his watch: 7:42 AM.

Less than an hour.

JAMES

General. We need to go. Now. If we leave now, we might make it far enough--

GENERAL TANAKA

No.

JAMES

General--

GENERAL TANAKA

I'm not leaving. My decision is made.

James stands, desperate.

JAMES

Then you're choosing death. You're choosing to leave your daughter

without a father. Your grandchild  
without a grandfather.

GENERAL TANAKA  
I'm choosing honor. It's all I have  
left.

JAMES  
Honor won't keep you warm. Won't hold  
you. Won't--

GENERAL TANAKA  
It's enough!

His voice cracks slightly.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)  
(continuing, quieter)  
It has to be enough. Because it's all  
I can control.

James realizes he's lost.

JAMES  
Then I'm staying with you.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Don't be ridiculous. You have a  
chance--

JAMES  
I told your daughter I'd bring you  
back. If I can't do that, then the  
least I can do is not let you die  
alone.

GENERAL TANAKA  
You owe me nothing.

JAMES  
I owe you everything. I took your  
daughter's innocence. I betrayed your  
trust. I spied on your country. The  
least I can do is sit with you at the  
end.

Tanaka looks at him--really sees him.

GENERAL TANAKA

You're a strange man, James Hartley.

JAMES  
So I've been told.

Tanaka returns to his chair. Pours more sake.

GENERAL TANAKA  
Then we wait together.

JAMES  
Together.

EXT. HIROSHIMA - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MONTAGE

The city waking up. People going about their morning routines, unaware.

- A mother hanging laundry
- Children walking to school
- An old man tending his garden
- A young couple holding hands
- Workers heading to factories
- A baby crying, being soothed

Life. Normal. Beautiful. Fragile.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. B-29 ENOLA GAY - HIGH ALTITUDE

The bomber crew in flight. Tense but focused. The bomb--  
nicknamed "Little Boy"--sits in the bay.

The bombardier checks coordinates.

The pilot adjusts course.

Hiroshima below, clear and visible.

Perfect conditions.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY

James and Tanaka sit in silence now. The sake finished.

Both men feel it--something shifting in the air.

James checks his watch: 8:10 AM.

Any moment now.

JAMES

General. There's still time--

The SOUND. Distant but distinct. Different from normal planes.

Both men hear it.

They stand simultaneously, move to the window.

In the clear blue sky, high above--a single B-29.

GENERAL TANAKA

One plane?

JAMES

One is all they need.

They watch it. A tiny silver speck against infinite blue.

Tanaka opens the window wider. The morning air is warm, pleasant.

Perfect weather for dying.

GENERAL TANAKA

James.

JAMES

Yes?

GENERAL TANAKA

Tell my daughter... tell her I understood. In the end, I understood what she felt. What you both risked.

JAMES

You can tell her yourself. We can still--

GENERAL TANAKA

No.

(turns to face him)

This is my choice. My city. My

people. If they die, I die with them.

James's eyes fill with tears.

JAMES

She'll never forgive me. For not saving you.

GENERAL TANAKA

Then you tell her the truth. That I wouldn't be saved. That I was stubborn. Foolish.

(almost smiling)

That I chose honor over life.

JAMES

That won't comfort her.

GENERAL TANAKA

No. But it's the truth. And truth is all we have at the end.

The plane directly overhead now.

Something falling from it. Too small to see clearly.

But they both know.

GENERAL TANAKA (CONT'D)

You were a good teacher. For what it's worth. Aoi learned much from you.

JAMES

She was a brilliant student.

GENERAL TANAKA

Take care of her. And the child. Give them the life I could not.

JAMES

I will. I promise.

Tanaka turns back to the window. Stands at attention. A soldier to the end.

James stands beside him. Not at attention. Just... present.

GENERAL TANAKA

It's been an honor, James Hartley.  
Even if you are the enemy.

JAMES  
The honor was mine, General.

They stand together, watching the sky.

The bomb--43 seconds after release--reaches detonation  
altitude.

1,890 feet above the city.

Directly over the Aioi Bridge.

Eight-fifteen AM.

August 6th, 1945.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - OFFSHORE - SAME MOMENT

Miles away, moving south through gentle waves.

AOI stands at the rail, staring back toward where Hiroshima  
lies beyond the horizon.

Her MOTHER and KENJI are below deck, resting.

Aoi hasn't slept. Can't sleep.

Just staring. Willing James and her father to appear somehow,  
miraculously.

The FISHERMAN at the helm notices her.

FISHERMAN  
You should rest, miss. Long journey  
ahead.

AOI  
I can't.

FISHERMAN  
Waiting won't bring them back faster.

AOI  
I know.

She touches her stomach unconsciously. Doesn't realize yet.

The morning sun warm on her face.

And then--

THE FLASH

Brighter than a thousand suns.

Whiter than white.

A light that turns the world to negative.

For one endless moment--

Pure, absolute illumination.

INT. TANAKA FAMILY HOME - STUDY

James and Tanaka bathed in impossible light.

Their shadows searing into the wall behind them.

One final second.

General Tanaka bows.

James bows in return.

Two enemies acknowledging each other's humanity.

At the very end.

When nothing else matters.

THE SOUND

Not an explosion.

A roar.

The universe tearing itself apart.

EVERYTHING GOES WHITE

SILENCE

EXT. FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The shockwave hits the boat seconds after the light.

Rocks it violently.

Aoi thrown against the rail.

Her mother and Kenji scramble up from below, screaming.

The Fisherman fights the wheel.

And then the MUSHROOM CLOUD begins to rise.

Monstrous.

Unnatural.

Wrong.

Rising and rising, spreading like a cancer across the sky.

Aoi's mother sees it. Collapses.

Kenji stares, unable to process.

The Fisherman crosses himself, whispers prayers.

Aoi just stares.

Everything she knew.

Everyone she loved.

Under that cloud.

AOI  
(whispered, barely audible)  
No.

THE MUSHROOM CLOUD CONTINUES TO RISE

Reaching higher and higher into the perfect blue sky.

A pillar of death.

A monument to human achievement and human horror.

The end of one world.

The beginning of another.

FADE TO BLACK.

HOLD BLACK FOR 10 SECONDS.

SILENCE.

END OF ACT SIX

FADE IN FROM BLACK:

EXT. OCEAN - FISHING BOAT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The mushroom cloud dominates the horizon. Still rising.  
Spreading.

AOI stands frozen at the rail. Her face blank. Shock beyond  
tears.

Her MOTHER has collapsed onto the deck, sobbing  
uncontrollably. KENJI holds her, his young face aged by horror.

The FISHERMAN cuts the engine. No point running anymore.  
Everyone just stares at what humanity has done.

FISHERMAN  
(whispered)  
Merciful Buddha... what have they  
done?

Aoi's hand moves to her pocket. Pulls out the ORIGAMI CRANE  
James gave her.

She stares at it. Her hands trembling.

Opens it slowly.

Inside, written in careful English:

"James William Hartley. Born Boston, Massachusetts, 1915. Died  
loving you. - J"

The past tense. Like he knew.

Aoi's face crumples. The crane falls from her hands.

Her mother reaches up, pulls her down to the deck.

They hold each other as the cloud continues its terrible bloom.

The world has ended.

And they survived it.

TITLE CARD:  
TWO WEEKS LATER

EXT. HIROSHIMA - RUINS - DAY

Devastation beyond comprehension.

The city is gone. Not bombed. Not destroyed. Gone.

Buildings vaporized. Trees carbonized. Stone melted.

What remains is a hellscape of twisted metal, charred wood, and ash.

Ash that was once people.

Bodies everywhere. Some intact but burned beyond recognition. Others just... shadows. Imprints on stone where people stood when the light came.

Survivors wander like ghosts. Skin hanging off in sheets. Eyes burned white. Hair gone. Moaning. Begging for water that will kill them faster.

Makeshift hospitals in the ruins--just tarps and blankets. The dying and the dead indistinguishable.

Medical personnel overwhelmed, unable to help, just watching people die.

AOI (V.O.)

We waited two weeks before we could return. The radiation--though we didn't know to call it that yet--kept rescue teams away. When they finally let us back, I wish they hadn't.

EXT. RUINS OF TANAKA FAMILY HOME - DAY

Aoi stands where her house once was. Only the foundation remains. Everything else--ash.

Her MOTHER and KENJI are with her, all wearing masks against the dust and decay.

Her mother sifts through the ruins with her hands, searching for anything. A photograph. A piece of jewelry. Anything.

Finds nothing. Everything incinerated.

Kenji sits on what was once a step, staring at nothing. Shell-shocked.

Aoi walks through the footprint of the house. Her feet knowing where each room was.

Stops where her father's study stood.

Kneels.

Digs through ash with bare hands.

Finds something solid. Pulls it out.

A SWORD--her father's ceremonial blade. Partially melted, blackened, but recognizable.

She clutches it to her chest.

AOI (V.O.)

My father's sword. The only thing that survived. Even the bones were ash. There was nothing to bury. Nothing to burn. Nothing to remember them by except this twisted piece of metal.

## MONTAGE - THE SEARCH

### A) EXT. UNIVERSITY RUINS - DAY

The building collapsed. Aoi climbs through rubble.

Finds the classroom where they met. The desks are melted slag.

She sits where she used to sit. Imagines James at the front, teaching poetry.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

She breaks down crying.

### B) EXT. THE BOOKSHOP - DAY

Completely destroyed. The elderly owner's body found in the

ruins--he never escaped.

Aoi searches the back alcove where they used to meet.

Finds a single charred book. Opens it. The pages crumble to ash in her hands.

Nothing remains.

C) EXT. THE RIVER - DAY

The Motoyasu River still flows, but it's filled with bodies. Thousands of them. People who jumped in to escape the fire and drowned or died from radiation poisoning.

Aoi stands on the bank where they used to meet at dawn.

The water that was once beautiful is now a mass grave.

She whispers:

AOI  
I forgive you. I forgive you. I  
forgive you.

Over and over. Like a prayer.

D) INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL - DAY

Aoi volunteers, tending to survivors. Her mother beside her.

A young GIRL, maybe 8, burns covering her body. Dying.

GIRL  
(weakly)  
Am I going to die?

Aoi wants to lie. Can't.

AOI  
Yes.

GIRL  
Will it hurt?

AOI  
Not much longer.

She holds the girl's hand until she stops breathing.

Then moves to the next patient.

And the next.

And the next.

There are too many. Always too many.

END MONTAGE

AOI (V.O.)

I thought if I searched long enough,  
I'd find something. Some trace of  
James. Some proof he existed. But the  
heat was so intense that people  
simply... vanished. Evaporated. Like  
they were never there at all.

EXT. RUINS NEAR TANAKA HOME - DAY

TITLE CARD:  
ONE MONTH AFTER THE BOMBING

Aoi still searching. Obsessively now. Refusing to give up.

Her mother approaches, looking worried.

MOTHER

Aoi. You need to stop. You've barely  
eaten. You're exhausting yourself.

AOI

I can't stop. Not until I find  
something.

MOTHER

There's nothing to find. They're  
gone.

AOI

(snapping)  
Don't say that!

MOTHER  
It's been a month--

AOI  
I don't care! I have to find  
something! I have to--

She staggers suddenly. Dizzy.

Her mother catches her.

MOTHER  
When did you last eat?

AOI  
I don't know. Yesterday. The day  
before.

MOTHER  
You're ill. We need to get you to a  
doctor.

AOI  
I'm fine. I just need--

She vomits suddenly. Violently.

Her mother holds her hair back.

MOTHER  
(quietly, knowing)  
How long?

AOI  
What?

MOTHER  
How long have you been sick in the  
mornings?

Aoi wipes her mouth, looks at her mother.

Understanding dawns.

AOI  
(whispered)  
No.

MOTHER

Aoi--

AOI

No. Not now. Not in this. Not--

She touches her stomach.

Life growing in the midst of death.

James's child.

MOTHER

We need to see a doctor. Make sure  
you're--

AOI

I can't. Not yet. I need to find--

She collapses into her mother's arms, finally breaking  
completely.

AOI (CONT'D)

(sobbing)

I'm carrying his child and he doesn't  
know. He died not knowing. And I  
never got to tell him. I never--

Her mother holds her as she sobs.

MOTHER

He knew. Somehow, he knew.

AOI

How could he?

MOTHER

Because love knows.

(touches Aoi's stomach  
gently)

This is his legacy. And your father's.  
This child carries both of them  
forward.

AOI

How do I do this? How do I raise a  
child in this?

She gestures at the ruins around them.

MOTHER

The same way I raised you. The same way every mother has raised a child after every war. With love. With hope. With the belief that tomorrow can be better than today.

TITLE CARD:

SIX MONTHS LATER - FEBRUARY 1946

INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A converted building, one of the few still standing. Basic medical supplies. Overwhelmed staff.

AOI in labor. Her MOTHER beside her. KENJI waiting outside with other anxious family members.

A MIDWIFE (50s, exhausted but kind) helps.

MIDWIFE

Push. That's it. Push.

Aoi screams. Pushes.

The sound of a BABY CRYING.

MIDWIFE (CONT'D)

It's a boy! A healthy boy!

She places the baby on Aoi's chest. Tiny. Perfect. Mixed features already visible--hints of James in the shape of his eyes, the set of his mouth.

Aoi stares at him. Tears streaming.

Her mother leans over, looking at her grandson.

MOTHER

(whispered)

He has his eyes. James's eyes.

AOI

Yes.

MOTHER

What will you name him?

Aoi thinks. Touches the baby's tiny hand.

AOI

David. It means "beloved" in Hebrew.

MOTHER

It's perfect.

Aoi holds her son close.

AOI

(to the baby)

Your father was brave. Your  
grandfather was honorable. And you--  
you are the proof that love survives.  
Even when everything else turns to  
ash.

The baby grasps her finger.

Life. Continuing.

AOI (V.O.)

I never told David the full truth. Not  
when he was young. I said his father  
was Japanese. A soldier who died in  
the war. It was easier. Safer. The  
hatred toward Americans--toward  
anything foreign--was too strong. I  
couldn't risk my son being outcast.  
Being hated for blood he didn't  
choose.

MONTAGE - THE YEARS PASS:

A) 1950 - HIROSHIMA REBUILDING

The city slowly rising from ruins. New buildings. New streets.

Aoi working at a hospital. DAVID (4 years old, clearly mixed  
heritage) playing in the corner with wooden blocks.

Patients stare at him. Whisper.

Aoi ignores them. Focuses on her work.

B) 1955 - DAVID'S FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Aoi walks David (9) to school. Other children point, whisper.

CHILD 1

Why does he look different?

CHILD 2

His eyes are weird.

David's face falls. Aoi kneels down.

AOI

You are exactly as you should be.  
Don't let anyone tell you different.

DAVID

But Mother, why don't I look like the  
other children?

AOI

Because you're special. You carry two  
worlds in your blood.

DAVID

What does that mean?

AOI

Someday I'll explain. For now, just  
know you are loved. So, so loved.

C) 1960 - DAVID AS A TEENAGER

David (14) comes home with a bloody nose. Aoi's mother (now  
elderly) tends to him.

GRANDMOTHER

Who did this?

DAVID

It doesn't matter.

GRANDMOTHER

Was it because of how you look?

David doesn't answer. Doesn't need to.

Aoi enters, sees her son's face. Her jaw clenches.

AOI  
Who?

DAVID  
Mother, don't--

AOI  
Who?

DAVID  
Some boys at school. They called  
me... names.

Aoi's hand trembles with rage. But she controls it.

AOI  
What names?

DAVID  
(ashamed)  
Half-breed. American bastard.

Aoi kneels in front of her son.

AOI  
Listen to me. Those boys are afraid.  
Afraid of what they don't understand.  
But you--you are not what they say  
you are. You are the son of two brave  
men. And you will not let fear define  
you.

DAVID  
Who was my father? Really?

Aoi hesitates.

AOI  
Someone very brave. That's all you  
need to know. For now.

D) 1965 - AOI MARRIES DR. HIROSHI

A quiet wedding. Aoi (40) marrying HIROSHI (45), a kind doctor  
who worked with her at the hospital.

He's always known David isn't his son. Doesn't care.

HIROSHI  
(at the altar)  
I will love your son as my own.

AOI  
That's all I ask.

But that night, alone, she looks at the hidden photograph of James she's kept all these years.

Whispers:

AOI (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I couldn't wait forever.  
But I never forgot. I will never  
forget.

E) 1975 - DAVID AS A YOUNG MAN

David (29) is a teacher. Like James was.

Aoi watches him teach a class through a window. The way he moves, the way he gestures--echoes of James.

Her husband Hiroshi joins her.

HIROSHI  
He's a good teacher. Natural.

AOI  
Yes. Like his father.

HIROSHI  
The American?

Aoi looks at him, surprised.

HIROSHI (CONT'D)  
(gentle)  
I've always known. The timing. The way you looked at him as a baby. The features.  
(pause)  
I never asked because it wasn't my place. But I knew.

AOI  
And you still--

HIROSHI  
I still loved you. Still love you.  
Still love David. Blood doesn't make  
family. Love does.

Aoi kisses him. Grateful.

AOI  
Thank you. For accepting us.

HIROSHI  
Thank you for letting me.

#### F) 1985 - DAVID'S WEDDING

David (39) marrying a Japanese woman, YUKI (named after Aoi's  
childhood friend).

Aoi watches, crying happy tears.

Her mother (now very elderly) beside her.

GRANDMOTHER  
Your father would be so proud.

AOI  
Both of them would.

GRANDMOTHER  
You've carried them well. All these  
years.

AOI  
I've tried.

GRANDMOTHER  
And the child? David? You'll tell him  
someday?

AOI  
When the time is right.

GRANDMOTHER  
Don't wait too long. The truth has

value. Even painful truth.

#### G) 1992 - HIROSHI'S DEATH

Aoi (67) at her husband's bedside. He's dying peacefully.  
Cancer.

HIROSHI  
(weak)  
Promise me something.

AOI  
Anything.

HIROSHI  
Tell David. About his real father. He  
deserves to know.

AOI  
I will. Soon.

HIROSHI  
Don't wait for "soon." Do it while  
you still can.  
(pause)  
And Aoi? When you see James again--  
and you will--tell him thank you.

AOI  
For what?

HIROSHI  
For loving you so much that you had  
enough love left over for me.

He dies. Peacefully.

Aoi holds his hand long after he's gone.

#### H) 2000s - AOI AS AN ELDERLY WOMAN

Aoi (75+) at the Peace Memorial every August 6th. Placing  
origami cranes.

David (50s) beside her. His own children (Aoi's grandchildren)  
running around.

One of them, a boy (8), looks remarkably like James.

DAVID

Mother, are you alright?

AOI

Just remembering.

DAVID

You've been coming here every year  
for as long as I can remember.

AOI

I made a promise. To remember. To  
never forget.

DAVID

Who did you lose? Besides Grandfather?

Aoi looks at her son. Really looks.

AOI

Someone very important.

(pause)

David, I need to tell you something.  
Something I should have told you  
years ago.

DAVID

What is it?

AOI

Not here. At home. When you're ready.

END MONTAGE

RETURN TO PRESENT DAY

INT. AOI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

We're back where we started. Elderly AOI (late 80s) has just  
told DAVID everything.

The PHOTOGRAPH of young James on the table between them.

David holds it with shaking hands.

DAVID  
(stunned)  
This man. James. He's my father?

AOI  
Yes.

DAVID  
An American spy.

AOI  
Yes.

DAVID  
Who died trying to save Grandfather.

AOI  
Yes.

David stares at the photograph. Sees his own features reflected.

DAVID  
Why didn't you tell me? All these years--

AOI  
Because after the war, the hatred was too strong. You would have been ostracized. Attacked. I couldn't--

Her voice breaks.

AOI (CONT'D)  
I couldn't lose you too. You were all I had left of him. Of both of them.

David sets down the photograph. Stands. Paces.

DAVID  
My entire life. I thought my father was Japanese. A soldier. Someone honorable but distant.

AOI  
He was honorable. Both of them were.

DAVID

But one of them I could have known about! You could have told me!

AOI

And what would you have done with that knowledge as a child? As a teenager? In a country that hated Americans? That saw them as demons?

David has no answer.

DAVID

(sitting back down)

Did he know? About me?

AOI

No. I didn't know myself until after he died.

DAVID

Would he have wanted--

AOI

He would have loved you.

(touching David's face)

Every day I see him in you. The way you move. The way you think. Your kindness. Your stubbornness.

(almost laughing)

God, you're just like him.

David's eyes fill with tears.

DAVID

I have children. Grandchildren you've met. Do they--

AOI

They carry his blood too. Yes.

DAVID

My son. Kenji. The one who looks different--

AOI

Looks like James. Yes. Your father's features skipped a generation.

David absorbs this. Looks at the photograph again.

DAVID

Tell me about him. Everything. What he was like. How you met. All of it.

Aoi smiles through tears.

AOI

We met in a classroom. He was teaching poetry...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - 1944 - FLASHBACK

Young Aoi entering late, apologizing.

Young James turning, seeing her for the first time.

That first spark of recognition.

The beginning of everything.

AOI (V.O.)

He taught me that beauty was resistance. That love was worth dying for. That honor and duty could exist alongside mercy and compassion.

SERIES OF QUICK FLASHBACKS:

- James and Aoi by the river
- The bookshop alcove
- Folding origami cranes
- Their first kiss
- The night they made love
- The boat departure
- James returning to the city
- The bow between James and Tanaka
- The flash

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. AOI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Aoi has finished the story. David is crying.

DAVID

He came back. Even knowing he would die. He came back for Grandfather.

AOI

Because he loved me. And because it was right.

DAVID

And Grandfather?

AOI

Chose honor. Chose his city. Chose to die a soldier.

DAVID

Were they brave or foolish?

AOI

Both. Always both.

(pause)

The bravest people are often the most foolish.

David picks up the photograph again.

DAVID

Can I keep this?

AOI

It's yours. You should have had it years ago.

DAVID

What was his real name? You said he wrote it in the crane.

Aoi reaches for the WOODEN BOX on the table. Opens it.

Inside: the original scorched origami crane. Still intact after all these years.

She hands it to David.

He unfolds it carefully. Reads:

DAVID  
(aloud)  
"James William Hartley. Born Boston,  
Massachusetts, 1915. Died loving  
you."

He looks up at his mother.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I have family. In America.

AOI  
Perhaps. If any of them survived. If  
they knew about you.

DAVID  
Should I try to find them?

AOI  
That's your choice. I can't make it  
for you.

David carefully refolds the crane. Hands it back to her.

DAVID  
No. You keep it. It's yours.  
(pause)  
But someday, when you're gone... I'd  
like to have it. To pass to my  
children. So they know where they  
came from.

AOI  
All of it? The spy? The bomb? The--

DAVID  
All of it. The truth. Even the hard  
parts.  
(standing)  
Come on. We should go. The ceremony  
will be starting soon.

He helps her stand. She's slower now. Frailer.

AOI  
David?

DAVID

Yes, Mother?

AOI

Thank you. For listening. For understanding.

DAVID

Thank you for finally telling me.

(pause)

And Mother? I'm proud. Of you. Of him. Of Grandfather. Of all of it.

Aoi touches his face.

AOI

You are the best of both of them.  
Never forget that.

EXT. HIROSHIMA STREET - DAY

Modern Hiroshima. Rebuilt. Thriving. Alive.

Children playing. Couples walking. Life continuing.

Aoi and David walk slowly toward the Peace Memorial Park.

Around them, the city that rose from ashes.

AOI (V.O.)

They say Hiroshima is a symbol of destruction. Of the worst humanity can do. And it is. But it's also a symbol of resilience. Of hope. Of the stubborn refusal to let death have the final word.

EXT. PEACE MEMORIAL PARK - DAY

Crowds gathered. August 6th ceremony. Survivors, families, dignitaries.

The Peace Memorial--the preserved dome--stands as witness.

The eternal flame burns.

Thousands of origami cranes hang in colorful chains.

Aoi and David approach the memorial. She carries one crane--the scorched one from James.

DAVID  
Are you ready?

AOI  
Yes.

They walk together to the memorial.

Aoi places the crane among thousands of others.

Whispers:

AOI  
(to the memorial, to James,  
to her father, to everyone  
lost)  
I kept my promise. I remembered. I  
lived. I loved. I survived. And I  
made sure the world knew what  
happened here.

She bows deeply.

David bows beside her.

They stand in silence.

AOI (V.O.)  
James William Hartley was an American  
spy. A liar. A man who built his life  
on deception. But he was also the man  
who came back when he could have run.  
Who kept his promises even when it  
cost him everything. Who loved me  
enough to die for it.

Aoi looks at the memorial. At the names carved in stone.

Her father's name among them.

AOI (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
My father, General Tanaka Masaru, was  
a soldier. Bound by duty and honor.  
Stubborn. Traditional. But he let his  
family go. He gave us life by  
choosing death. That is a kind of

love too.

David helps Aoi to a bench. They sit.

She looks out at the memorial. At the city beyond. At the life that continues.

AOI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have spent seventy-nine years carrying them both. The enemy and the general. The spy and the soldier. The American and the Japanese. And I have learned that love is bigger than nations. Stronger than war. More enduring than death.

A young couple walks past, holding hands. A child chases pigeons. An old man feeds birds.

Life. Simple. Beautiful. Precious.

AOI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is my dedication. To James, who gave me love. To my father, who gave me honor. To everyone who died that day. And to everyone who lived after. We are the witnesses. We are the memory. We are the proof that beauty survives. Even in ashes.

Aoi closes her eyes. The sun warm on her face.

David beside her. Her son. James's son.

Living proof.

DAVID

(quietly)

Mother, are you alright?

Aoi opens her eyes. Smiles.

AOI

Yes. For the first time in a very long time... yes.

She stands. David helps her.

They begin to walk back through the park.

DAVID  
Where to now?

AOI  
Home. I'm tired.

DAVID  
Are you sure you're alright?

AOI  
(stopping, looking at him)  
David, I'm an old woman. I've lived  
longer than I had any right to.  
Longer than almost everyone I knew.  
I'm tired. But I'm also... complete.  
I told you the truth. I kept my  
promises. I'm ready for whatever  
comes next.

DAVID  
(worried)  
Mother--

AOI  
It's alright.  
(touching his face)  
You have your own children now. Your  
own life. You don't need me hovering.

DAVID  
I'll always need you.

AOI  
That's sweet. But not true.  
(smiling)  
Come. Walk me home. Tell me about  
your grandson. The one who looks like  
James.

They walk together through the park.

Past the memorial.

Past the flame.

Past the cranes.

Into the living city.

CAMERA PULLS BACK SLOWLY:

Aoi and David growing smaller.

The memorial behind them.

The city stretching beyond--modern, rebuilt, alive.

The mushroom cloud long gone but never forgotten.

SUPERIMPOSE - ORIGAMI CRANE

A glowing paper crane floats upward through the frame.

Delicate. Beautiful. Defiant.

Rising toward the sky.

FINAL TITLE CARDS:

"Over 140,000 people died in Hiroshima by the end of 1945."

"Tens of thousands more died in the following years from radiation-related illnesses."

"This story is fiction. But the love, the loss, and the choice to remember are real."

"For those who loved across impossible divides."

"For those who stayed when they could have run."

"For those who were lost in the fire."

"For those who carried them forward through the ashes."

"And for the children born from tragedy,"

"who became the proof that love survives."

FINAL IMAGE:

The photograph of young James.

Slowly dissolving into David's face.

Then David's children.

Then David's grandchildren--including the boy who looks so much like James.

Legacy.

Memory.

Love continuing.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END