

ONE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES

Based on a true story

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Based on the book
"One Thousand Paper Cranes"
by Takayuki Ishii

Ian Bryce Productions

INT. SADAKO'S BEDROOM, 1945 - DAY

A piece of PAPER, a pair of HANDS... They begin to fold the paper and it starts to take shape: a long neck, tail, wings...

ELEANOR (V.O.)
Thirteen steps. Twenty-four folds.

FUJIKO SASAKI (20s), hangs a completed PAPER CRANE over an empty crib and smiles, her stoic exterior briefly cast aside by the tranquil magic of the suspended origami crane.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
The orizuru, or paper crane, is the most popular of all origami.

Fujiko looks next to the crib where a toddler plays with a wooden KOKESHI DOLL. This is SADAKO SASAKI (2).

ELEANOR (V.O.)
In Japan, the crane is believed to be a magical creature that can live for a thousand years.

Fujiko crouches next to her daughter and plays with another doll. Sadako laughs with delight.

Behind them, in the corner, GRANDMA MATSU sits on a stool and sews a garment. She smiles at Sadako.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
A legend promises if a person folds one thousand orizuru, they will be granted a wish...

Beside her is a FAMILY PHOTO OF THE SASAKIS: Shigeo, Fujiko, Grandma Matsu and the children, Masahiro and Sadako.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
This is called Senbazuru... One Thousand Paper Cranes.

MASAHIRO (O.S.)
Mama! Come quick!

Fujiko quickly heads downstairs, leaving Sadako with Matsu.

A BIRD CALL gets Sadako's attention and she goes to the window overlooking the street. She sees Fujiko walk out to MASAHIRO (5), who's with a NEIGHBOR. They point at the sky...

But Sadako is focused on the roof of the opposite house where a SINGLE CRANE is perched; white body, red head, and black wings against the blue sky. The bird captivates her.

On the horizon past the crane, the HIROSHIMA EXHIBITION HALL, with its distinct DOMED ROOF, glistens in the morning sun.

The crane CALLS OUT AGAIN then flaps its wings and jumps into the air. Sadako MIMICS the movements, waving her arms and playing with the crane.

SUDDENLY THERE IS A HUGE BURST OF BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT.

Sadako covers her eyes as the light FLARES then--

A DEAFENING SONIC BOOM. The WINDOW SHATTERS. The WOOD SPLINTERS and CRACKS.

The smiling face of Sadako's kokeshi doll DISINTEGRATES.

Sadako is LIFTED off the ground and THROWN BACKWARDS--

EXT. POND - DAY

Sadako lands in the KOI POND with a SPLASH. She sinks below the surface. GOLDEN FISH swim around her. All is silent. She looks up from in the water...

A COLOSSAL MUSHROOM CLOUD ERUPTS ACROSS THE SKY.

It silhouettes her small frame. From her submerged perspective, it is hauntingly serene.

She kicks to the surface and --

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

-- emerges from the water, gasping for air. Sadako looks around but does not recognize anything.

Hiroshima as she knew it has disappeared and been replaced with a fierce whirlwind of destruction and chaos. Her two-year-old mind tries to make sense of this new world...

FUJIKO (O.S.)

Sadako?!

Her mother's voice cuts through the roar of the nuclear tornado. It's difficult to see, harder to hear, but then--

Fujiko appears through the dust! She scoops Sadako in her arms and desperately checks her for injury. She's miraculously unharmed.

Shielding her eyes from the heat and dust, Fujiko carries Sadako to what is left of their home... A MOUND OF DEBRIS.

FUJIKO
Masahiro!

Fujiko places Sadako on the ground and digs, frantically searching for her other child...

MASAHIRO (O.S.)
Mama...

Fujiko runs across the rubble to uncover Masahiro. He's battered but okay. Fujiko pulls him into her arms.

That's when they see Grandma Matsu, buried in the same rubble as Masahiro. She's not moving.

Fujiko checks her pulse... She's gone.

The shadow of the MUSHROOM CLOUD grows larger overhead. The family are all in a state of shock.

FUJIKO
We have to go.

Fujiko straps Sadako to her back with a cloth, then takes Masahiro and climbs over the rubble down onto the street.

EXT. FLATTENED MAIN STREET / OTA RIVER - DAY

Fujiko and her children inch through the smoldering debris. The devastation is overwhelming. No houses are left standing.

OTHER PEOPLE stumble around them. A SOUND from behind them gets LOUDER and LOUDER and they turn to see...

THREE HORSES emerge out of the SMOKE and gallop towards them. One of them REARS UP on its hind legs.

Fujiko pulls the children with her to the ground. The horses narrowly miss them and gallop into the distance. She looks behind them and sees what the horses were running from: A TOWER OF FIRE HEADED THEIR WAY.

As fast as they can, they scramble over to the OTA RIVER.

They join OTHER SURVIVORS at the RIVER'S EDGE, all threatened by the fire roaring behind them.

Fujiko desperately fights to keep her children from falling in among the CRUSH OF PEOPLE.

BOATS come down the river, taking in as many people as they can. A BOAT MAN recognizes Fujiko and waves to her.

Fujiko quickly hands Masahiro to him then climbs on herself with Sadako and pushes off to the center of the river.

As the boat begins it's trek down-river, they round a corner and see the new horizon...

The Hiroshima Exhibition Hall reduced to a CHARRED SHELL of a building, its domed roof now just a WEB OF STEEL BEAMS.

EXT. BOAT - OTA RIVER - LATER

Time passes as the fires die down. The SMOKE is thick and impossible to see through. But they hear CRIES from all around them. MANY at first, but they die down....

After a while there's just ONE...

Then SILENCE.

Fujiko holds Masahiro and Sadako close. They sleep. The rocking of the boat is lulling her towards sleep too.

But A THUNDERCLAP OVERHEAD startles her.

RAIN begins to fall and clears the smoke away, but there is something wrong with this rain. Fujiko holds out her hand and collects a couple DROPS...

The rain is BLACK.

Fujiko does everything she can to shield her children from the black rain but it falls on everyone and gathers in BLACK PUDDLES in the bottom of the boat.

EXT. BOAT - OTA RIVER - LATER

The boat moors and the family steps safely onto shore. BLACK DUST covers the land like a shroud. PEOPLE lay still on the ground. Not moving.

FUJIKO

*They are sleeping. Resting until
it's safe to go onto the park.*

Fujiko takes Masahiro by the hand and leads him away. Sadako stares as she is carried away on her mother's back.

EXT. OHSHIBA PARK - DUSK

The family reach a park on the outskirts of the city, which has become a refugee camp for THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

Fujiko leads her children to a BURNT TREE STUMP, destroyed and splintered open. They collapse, weak from exhaustion.

EXT. OHSHIBA PARK - DAWN

The family is awakened by the SOUND OF TRUCKS.

RESCUE TEAMS arrive to help the people, overwhelmed. Fujiko's husband, SHIGEO (29) is among them. He looks all around for his family but can not find them.

SHIGEO

Fujiko!?

Fujiko hears Shigeo's distant voice. She fights to her feet.

FUJIKO

Shigeo... Shigeo!

Shigeo hears her and stops. He charges in her direction and fights his way through a sea of people to find his family. He finally spots Fujiko and runs to her.

Fujiko collapses into his arms. He checks her for injuries and looks to his children, then back to Fujiko...

SHIGEO

Matsu?

Fujiko's face says it all. Shigeo, upset, holds her close. Sadako and Masahiro wake up and see him. Shigeo pulls them into his embrace as well.

SHIGEO

It's going to be okay. We are together. We have survived. Everything will be alright.

As the family stays huddled together, something on the ground catches Sadako's attention in the morning light...

Behind the burnt tree stump is the SILHOUETTE of the once magnificent tree etched into the ground as a CHARRED IMPRINT.

Sadako stares at the haunting image...

Nothing will ever be the same.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: ONE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES

EXT. WASHINGTON SUBURBS - MORNING

A PAPERBOY rides his bike past one identical home after another in an idyllic 1950's American Suburb. He throws out NEWSPAPERS and one lands on the driveway. The headline reads: "THE BIGGEST BOMB YET" over a picture of a MUSHROOM CLOUD.

DATE: FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA. 1957

INT. COERR HOME - ROBBIE'S ROOM - DAY

A FAMILY PORTRAIT shows a man in uniform (HICKS) alongside a vibrantly stylish woman (ELEANOR) and a smiling boy (ROBBIE).

Next to the photo is A FOLDED AMERICAN FLAG.

ROBBIE HICKS (9) lies awake in bed, staring at the display. He's got his father's all-American looks but is shrouded in a thick fog of sadness. FOOTSTEPS approach outside the room and he pretends to be asleep.

In walks ELEANOR COERR (late 30s), already dressed to the nines and ready for the day. She has an unbeatable energy to her that's perhaps a bit more forced than natural these days.

ELEANOR

Alright, Captain. It's that time again. Rise and shine.

Robbie lets out a groan.

ELEANOR

I know, I know. It's so hard to be nine. Come on, Wym made pancakes.

Robbie couldn't care less. Eleanor picks up some DIRTY CLOTHES from the ground and leads us out of the room into--

INT. COERR HOME - CONTINUOUS

The rest of the house is still being unpacked. Eleanor makes her way through the maze of boxes into the kitchen--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

WYMBERLY "WYM" COERR (40s) has the aura of a great college professor, kind of admirably uncool. He wears a colorful apron over his shirt and tie while he flips pancakes.

Eleanor comes in and smiles at the sight of him in her apron.

WYM

I hope you don't mind...

ELEANOR

Not at all. It suits you. Thanks again for making breakfast.

WYM

Don't thank me yet. I don't actually know what I'm doing here.

ELEANOR

Could have fooled me.

She exits into the--

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor walks up to the washing machine and throws Robbie's clothes in. Now that she's by herself, the Mary Poppins routine fades away and she takes a moment to collect herself. Clearly, it's been a difficult transition.

ELEANOR

Okay.

One more deep breath and she heads back inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Eleanor, Wym and Robbie sit at the table and eat pancakes in painful silence. Wym boldly attempts to break the tension...

WYM

What time is it when an elephant sits on your fence?

Robbie is unsure of what to say.

WYM

Time to get a new fence.

Wym smiles, as does Eleanor, but nothing from Robbie.

WYM

What time is it when a giraffe sits on your fence?

Robbie shrugs.

WYM

Time to go look for your elephant.

Crickets.

ROBBIE
I should get going.

ELEANOR
Your lunch is on the counter. Do
you want me to walk you to the bus?

ROBBIE
No, I'll be fine.

ELEANOR
Okay then, I'll just see you at
school this afternoon.

ROBBIE
You don't have to come if you don't
want to.

ELEANOR
Well I do want to so I'll see you
there. Now what do you say to Wym
for breakfast?

ROBBIE
Thanks.

WYM
My pleasure. Have a great day at
school.

Something about him saying that weirds Robbie out. He grabs
his lunch and quickly leaves from the front door.

ELEANOR
Love you!

He's already gone. Eleanor gives Wym a consolatory look.

WYM
I guess I need some new jokes.

ELEANOR
He'll get there.

WYM
I've seen Soviet spies crack easier
than that kid.

She places her hand on his, appreciative of his efforts.

WYM
These pancakes are terrible.

Eleanor can't contain her laughter.

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - DAY

The main floor of the newspaper is abuzz with the clacking of TYPEWRITERS. Sunlight fills the office, but only after it passes through the thick fog of cigarette smoke.

Eleanor is hard at work, pounding the keys of her typewriter. She stands out in every way, the lone woman on the floor, and a lone spot of life in the otherwise drab environment. Then:

JERRY (O.S.)
Eleanor!

The typewriters suddenly stop. The other JOURNALISTS turn to Eleanor as she stands and crosses the deathly still room en route to the big office marked "EDITOR".

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Eleanor comes in to find JERRY BOWER, (50s), with STACKS OF ARTICLES over his desk. She overdoes it with a chipper smile.

ELEANOR
Morning, Jerry.

JERRY
How's "Dear Lily" coming along?

ELEANOR
Wonderful. Helping the modern woman one domestic problem at a time.

He fakes a smile then reads from a PIECE OF PAPER.

JERRY
"Dear Lily, with the threat of nuclear war looming ever larger and news that Russia may have built a bomb five times the size of those used in Japan, I find it difficult to go on with my daily routine. Can you please discuss this issue and perhaps quell my fears with fact?"

Jerry looks up to her, not amused. Eleanor doesn't break.

ELEANOR
I know what you're thinking... That poor woman.

JERRY

I warned you about this.

ELEANOR

I hope you're not suggesting *I wrote that* because I would never compromise the integrity of the Dear Lily column in such a fashion--

JERRY

Stop. Just stop. God help us if there's another broad in town saying shit like this.

He CRUMPLES THE PAGE and tosses it in the trash. It's a clear blow to her morale to see it go.

JERRY

You begged me for Dear Lily--

ELEANOR

I begged you for an assignment--

JERRY

And I gave you one! The advice column! You want to run for President, best of luck to you! But if you want to work at my newspaper, you write what I tell you to write. Got it?

Defeated, Eleanor nods in compliance.

ELEANOR

Sorry, Jerry. Won't happen again.

She retreats from his office.

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - DAY

Eleanor sits back at her desk and looks to the STACK OF ENVELOPES addressed to "DEAR LILY C/O THE DISTRICT POST." She opens the top one and reads. Her low morale sinks even lower.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

Dear Lily, my husband said he'd fix the dishwasher but... Dear Lily, my mother thinks my kids misbehave... Dear Lily...

She tears out her current article and inserts a BLANK PAGE.

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - LATER

Eleanor TYPES away. She finally takes a break and stretches her hands. As she does, she catches sight of her watch...

ELEANOR
Oh no... No, no, no, no...

She quickly gathers her things and leaves.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The FINAL BELL RINGS as EMPTY BUSES outside drive away in a single file line.

Eleanor hurries up to the front door. She noticeably does not have any shoes on, just her stockings.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A door flings open and Eleanor bursts in the hallway. She runs down the hall until she's outside the right classroom.

She peeks through the window and sees a full class, with not only CHILDREN (ages 9-10) but their DADS, seated beside them.

CAREER DAY is written on the blackboard, in front of which stands DALE (30s), giving his spiel to the room.

Eleanor pulls HIGH HEELS from her purse, slips them on and heads into the class...

INT. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dale stops mid-sentence. Everyone's attention shifts to Eleanor. MRS. WINTERS, an older, very stern woman clearly disapproves of the interruption.

Eleanor cuts through the class and takes a seat next to Robbie, who slumps low in his chair, embarrassed by her entrance. She gives him a kiss and he slumps even further.

MR. DALE
Anyway, when I was your age, I
never could have dreamed I would
one day end up the manager at the
number one television retail outlet
in the Nation's Capitol--

Eleanor whispers to Robbie.

ELEANOR
Sorry I'm late, work was--

Mrs. Winters CLEARS HER THROAT and glares at them both.

ROBBIE
Mom, please...

Dale finishes up front and the class politely applauds. Mrs. Winters stands up from her desk.

MRS. WINTERS
Thank you, Dale. Who knew there were so many ways to sell a television? Now, since she made such an effort to join us, let's hear from Robbie's mother, Mrs. Coerr.

Not the greatest introduction. Still, Eleanor heads to the front of the class and smiles warmly.

ELEANOR
Alright, good morning everyone.
Thank you so much for having me. As Mrs. Winters said, I'm Robbie's mom, Eleanor, and I am a writer at The District Post.

A BOY'S hand shoots into the air.

ELEANOR
A question already. Yes, dear?

BOY
Why is your name different than Robbie's?

Not a question Eleanor was prepared for. She stumbles over her words as the BOY'S FATHER whispers something to his son and gives Eleanor an apologetic look.

Robbie puts his head on his desk. This is terrible.

Eleanor sees Robbie and falters further. But for his sake, she digs deep and pulls out her most convincing smile...

ELEANOR
Do you guys know that there are caves in Europe that are over forty thousand years old? Explorers discovered them, went inside and do you know what they found?

The children are immediately interested.

ELEANOR

Drawings. Painted onto the walls of the caves there are pictures of animals and ancient people and all kinds of things. Now, why would these ancient people do that? What would they do with those drawings?

Robbie lifts his head off his desk. He looks around and sees the interest of his classmates. Even he wants to know.

ELEANOR

Tell stories.

Eleanor starts to move around the room. The kids' eyes follow her along, as do the dads'.

ELEANOR

You see, as long as there have been people, there have been stories. From those caves to Ancient Greece to Shakespeare to your parents at bedtime. It is mankind's greatest tradition. We use them to teach, to entertain, to comfort... A good story is a very powerful thing.

Eleanor looks to Robbie, who finally smiles. She's done it.

ELEANOR

Now, as a journalist, my job is to tell true stories about what's happening in the world around us--

Suddenly AN ALARM SOUNDS. There's PANIC in the classroom.

MRS. WINTERS

Duck and cover, children. Duck and cover! Just like we practiced! Just like Bert the Turtle!

The kids GET UNDER THEIR DESKS and brace themselves in the FETAL POSITION. The dads help out and crouch next to them.

Eleanor freezes. She looks on the wall at the BERT THE TURTLE CARTOON: a friendly turtle who sees a bright light then hides in his shell. Big words say DUCK AND COVER over him.

MRS. WINTERS

Very good! We arranged this drill to show your daddies what we do in the event of an atomic bomb.

Even Mrs. Winters takes shelter under her desk now.

MRS. WINTERS

But remember, in a real attack,
there may not be an alarm to warn
us, so if you ever see a bright
flash of light fill up the sky,
what do you do?

CLASSROOM

Duck and cover!

Eleanor, the only one left standing, locks eyes with her son
as he cowers under his desk...

INT. COERR HOME - DAY

Eleanor sits at her typewriter, still reeling from the events
of the day and unable to write anything.

A KNOCK at the door startles her. She walks to the front door
and opens it to see THE MAILMAN.

MAILMAN

Eleanor Hicks?

No one has called her that in a while.

ELEANOR

Formerly, yes.

MAILMAN

Apologies this didn't arrive
sooner. We had a heck of a time
tracking you down.

He hands her a LETTER and leaves.

Brown envelope, wrapped in twine, addressed to Eleanor Hicks
with JAPANESE STAMPS all over it. Eleanor knows immediately.

ELEANOR

Mieko...

She opens it and pulls out a FLYER with a PHOTOGRAPH of
twelve-year-old Japanese girl, dressed in a formal kimono:

This is SADAKO SASAKI.

She then notices something else in the envelope--

AN ORIGAMI PAPER CRANE.

Flattened during its journey to America, Eleanor leans in to the bird and blows into it, puffing it back to life.

She looks back to Sadako's picture and begins to read...

FADE TO:

INT. SASAKI HOUSE, 1954 - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A SLIVER OF SUNLIGHT cuts through closed shutters in the cramped attic of the SASAKI'S REBUILT HOME.

SADAKO SASAKI (now 12) lies awake on her bed mat, staring up at the damp wood on the ceiling.

DATE: 1954

She looks to see her brothers, MASAHIRO (14) and EIJI (9), and her sister MITSUE (6). They are all still asleep.

Sadako sneaks to the window and opens the sliding shutters...

HIROSHIMA IS BEING REBUILT, but there is still a long way to go. The Exhibition Hall, now known as the Genbaku (Atomic Bomb) Dome, still stands, a skeleton of a landmark and proud reminder of what the city has survived.

While Sadako warms herself in the morning sun. Masahiro is awakened by the light spilling into the room.

MASAHIRO

Sadako! It's too early.

SADAKO

I can't sleep any longer. I'm too excited about my race.

MASAHIRO

Well the rest of us are more excited about sleeping!

He throws a pillow at her. She laughs and runs out.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

FUJIKO (now mid-30s) prepares breakfast over the stove. One at a time, her children come into the kitchen. Masahiro, Sadako, Mitsue and Eiji all routinely sit at the table.

FUJIKO

Is everyone ready for school today?

SADAKO/MASAHIRO/MITSUE/EIJI

Yes, mama.

MASAHIRO

I would be more ready if Sadako had let me sleep longer.

SADAKO

That doesn't make sense. Being awake earlier should have given you more time to be ready.

MASAHIRO

You don't make sense! I'm tired.

FUJIKO

Enough. If you two keep that up, you're not getting any Ochazuke.

The children perk up.

SADAKO

Ochazuke?!

FUJIKO

Your favorite on your big day.

Fujiko places a pot of sweet rice and a bowl of tea in front of Sadako. Her siblings stare at the treat with envy.

MITSUE

We all get ochazuke, right? Not just Sadako?

FUJIKO

Ask your sister...

Mitsue and Eiji look to Sadako with begging, puppy eyes.

SADAKO

Everyone but Masahiro.

Masahiro pretends to laugh. Sadako laughs for real with her siblings.

INT. SASAKI BARBER SHOP - DAY

Sadako and Masahiro come downstairs dressed for school and walk into their father's BARBER SHOP. It is at the front of their house, which has been rebuilt with old rotting wood.

SHIGEO (mid 30s now) is at work with a CUSTOMER in his chair.

SHIGEO

Good morning, my children.

MASAHIRO

Great news, Oto-san, Mama said I could skip school today and instead stay here with you!

SHIGEO

Did she really?

Masahiro nods. Sadako shakes her head. Masahiro pushes her.

SHIGEO

Go. Both of you. You must go to school and learn everything you can. This city needs all the intelligent young people it can get. Don't you agree, Sensei?

The customer in the chair grumbles. Shigeo makes a face to Sadako and she smiles. Masahiro trudges out of the store.

SHIGEO

Sadako, I must work and can't make it to the race, but I look forward to hearing all about it at dinner.

SADAKO

Yes, Oto-san.

SHIGEO

Remember, the results don't matter as long as you compete with integrity and honor.

SADAKO

Yes, Oto-san.

She bows to her father who bows in return.

SHIGEO

But winning is a wonderful bonus.

Sadako laughs as she runs out.

EXT. SASAKI HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Sadako catches up to Masahiro. They crouch into a starting position.

SADAKO

One... Two...

EXT. NOBORICHO PLAYING FIELDS - DAY

THE STARTING PISTOL CRACKS! The relay race has begun.

TOMIKO is first to take off. Sadako stands off the track with the rest of the team and their enthusiastic teacher, MR. NOMURA (30s, with round spectacles).

MR. NOMURA
Bamboo class! Work as a team!

Sadako looks for her family in the CROWD that has gathered.

EXT. CROWD - CONTINUOUS

Fujiko pushes her way through the crowd with Masahiro, Mitsue and Eiji. They reach the front and Masahiro points out--

MASAHIRO
There's Sadako!

EXT. PLAYING FIELDS - CONTINUOUS

Sadako catches sight of her family in the crowd and waves. She turns back to the relay race as--

The second runner, HIROKO, gets in position. Tomiko completes the first lap and hands off the baton...

But Hiroko DROPS IT.

Sadako can't believe it. Hiroko quickly picks up the baton and races on, but they have dropped many strides behind the main pack.

Sadako watches the baton pass to the third runner, MIYOKO.

SADAKO
Run your heart out!

Bamboo class is in last place. Sadako takes her position on the line. She looks to the runners coming up behind her and holds out her hand.

But she starts to feel DIZZY. She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and shakes it off, focusing back on the race.

Sadako takes off as Miyoko slams the baton into her palm.

Fujiko, Masahiro, Mitsue and Eiji cheer her on.

SADAKO FLIES LIKE THE WIND and closes the gap on the LEADER. She's focused on the finish line, inching into the lead...

Her DIZZINESS returns. Her breathing becomes labored. The sun starts to BLIND HER. The world SPINS...

She hears a LOW GROWL, as if an animal was there. She's afraid and runs as if she's being chased by something...

She runs faster, more desperate. Only ONE RUNNER left in front of her. Sadako inches in front. Then FALLS BACK a couple steps. It's going right to the wire.

SADAKO WINS!

Fujiko and the kids jump for joy!

Sadako falls to her knees. She's dizzy again.

BAMBOO CLASS run to Sadako and help her to her feet. Everyone is so happy. Everywhere she looks, Sadako sees the smiling faces of her friends and teachers.

INT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Sadako has changed back into her uniform and hurries outside. On her way out, she pauses in front of a DISPLAY on the wall. PICTURES OF CHILDREN, fourteen of them, arranged in memoriam:

"IN MEMORY OF OUR CLASSMATES LOST TO A-BOMB DISEASE."

FUJIKO (O.S.)

Sadako! Come now!

Sadako runs off to join her mother.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Sasaki family sits together in the living room. Shigeo reads a newspaper. Fujiko mends a dress while Eiji sleeps against her. Masahiro helps Mitsue with homework.

SADAKO

*Otou-san, can I play my Misora
Hibari record?*

SHIGEO

It's late, Sadako...

SADAKO

Please. Just once?

Shigeo shares a look with Fujiko.

SHIGEO
Just once.

Sadako excitedly goes to the record player and drops the needle. "KANASHIKI KUCHIBUE" by Misora Hibari fills the room. It's a slow, melancholic tune.

Sadako sits on the floor and looks at the record sleeve. A picture of MISORA HIBARI, a twelve year old movie star, on the cover. Sadako idolizes the album.

MASAHIRO
Why must we listen to such a sad song?

SADAKO
I think it's beautiful.

Sadako clutches the album to her chest, closes her eyes and sways with the music.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sadako is restless and can't sleep. Eventually she gets up and tiptoes out of her room.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sadako shuffles in to find Fujiko on the final leg of cleaning the kitchen.

SADAKO
Mama?

FUJIKO
Sadako? Why are you not asleep?

SADAKO
I'm scared.

FUJIKO
Of what?

Sadako is scared to say it aloud... But does.

SADAKO
During the race today, I felt dizzy. I almost couldn't finish.

FUJIKO

You were running very hard. I'm not surprised you felt sick.

Fujiko can see she is worried. She takes her hand.

FUJIKO

Sadako, you've just had your check-up and you're fine. You do not have A-Bomb Disease. I know you are afraid of it, so am I. But that's why we get our regular tests. To keep our fear locked away.

Sadako nods, reassured.

FUJIKO

Now off to bed with you. You must get some sleep if tomorrow is ever going to come.

Sadako smiles and leaves. Once Fujiko is alone, her strong face falters. It is a terrifying thought.

EXT. NOBORICHI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

A FEW MONTHS HAVE PASSED. Snow blankets the track and field.

INT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Sadako sits in class. Tomiko leans over.

TOMIKO

Guess what. Nasu likes you.

SADAKO

Be quiet.

TOMIKO

It's true. Chizuko overheard his friends saying so.

Sadako looks to CHIZUKO (12) a bigger girl, who nods gravely. She then looks to NASU (12), the "cool boy" in class. Their eyes briefly meet then they both look away. She smiles.

Mr. Nomura steps to the front of the class.

MR. NOMURA

Good morning, Bamboo class. Who can tell me what day it is today?

Tomiko shoots her hand up, excited at an easy question.

TOMIKO
February, 19th, Sensei.

MR. NOMURA
*Thank you, Tomiko, but I was hoping
 for more than just the date.*

Disappointed, she quiets down. There is no further answer.

MR. NOMURA
*Today is the birthday of Toge
 Sankichi. Like all of us, he was
Hibakusha.*

The word unsettles the children.

MR. NOMURA
*But Sankichi took his pain and
 anger and put it into poetry. He
 died two years ago from A-Bomb
 disease, but left us with a
 wonderful gift in his words.*

Nomura holds up a copy of the book, GENBAKU SHISHU, "Poems of the Atomic Bomb."

MR. NOMURA
*Who would like to read one of
 Sankichi's poems for the class?*

Sadako looks across the class again at Nasu. She wants to be noticed and knows a way. She raises her hand.

MR. NOMURA
Thank you, Sadako.

As she stands at the front of the class, Nomura opens the book and hands it to her. She looks out over her classmates. They're all watching her. Especially Nasu. With great pride and a strong voice, she begins to read.

SADAKO
*Give back my father,
 Give back my mother...
 Give grandpa back, grandma back;
 Give our sons and daughters back.*

It's an emotional poem and one Sadako doesn't completely yet understand. As she reads, her voice falters.

SADAKO
*Give me back myself.
 Give back the human race.
 As long as this life lasts,
 Give peace back to us,
 Peace that will never end.*

Mr. Nomura APPLAUDS her reading. The rest of the class joins in the APPLAUSE. Sadako bows and hurries back to her seat.

EXT. SADAKO'S HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Sadako and Masahiro, still in their school uniform, run out of their house and dart down the narrow street. They turn a corner and head along the RIVER.

EXT. STEPS OVERLOOKING HIROSHIMA - SHRINE - DAY

Sadako races up steps, which lead to a large TORI GATE AND SHRINE. Masahiro struggles to keep up. Sadako reaches the gate and jumps victoriously into the air, delighted.

SADAKO
Sadako wins again!

Masahiro slows to a walk, and joins her, defeated.

MASAHIRO
My leg cramped. That's why you won.

SADAKO
*Your leg has been cramping a lot,
 Masahiro. I hope it's not serious.*

MASAHIRO
*Careful, Sadako, I can still beat
 you up.*

SADAKO
You'll have to catch me first.

Sadako laughs and runs away to the SHRINE. Masahiro chases. She is quickly far in front of him and rounds a corner.

She FREEZES at the sight of something in her path...

A WOLF. Big, grey, majestic.

Sadako is scared. The breath leaves her body. Her knees grow weak. Her vision blurs. The world spins. SHE FALLS.

Masahiro catches up, alarmed to find his sister keeled over.

MASAHIRO

Sadako!

SADAKO

Did you see that?

MASAHIRO

See what?

SADAKO

Honshu wolf.

Masahiro looks, but there's nothing there. His alarm grows.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DR. HATAGAWA (50s) finishes a series of tests. He looks behind her ears. The area is RED and SWOLLEN.

Sadako winces when his finger touches her. He struggles to give her a smile then stands. With a look to Shigeo, he walks to the kitchen. Fujiko takes Sadako's hand.

FUJIKO

*Don't worry. The doctor will help.
How about we listen to your record?*

Sadako nods. Fujiko stands and puts on the record. MISORA HIBARI'S VOICE calls out from the speaker. The record drowns out the voices from the other room.

Fujiko closes the partition. Sadako is suddenly very alone.

EXT. SADAKO'S HOUSE - STREET - DAWN

The street is quiet. Fujiko and Shigeo help Sadako outside. Masahiro watches from the doorway as they leave hand in hand.

EXT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL, HIROSHIMA - DAY

Fujiko and Shigeo lead Sadako into the RED CROSS HOSPITAL.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR/EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Sadako and her parents are led through the hospital by DR. NUMATA (50s) and NURSE SATOMI (20s).

As they pass open doors, Sadako catches glimpses of PATIENTS. So many of them, some with horrible scars. Her grasp tightens around her mother's hand. They arrive at the EMERGENCY ROOM.

DR. NUMATA
This will be Sadako's room.

It's about as cold and frightening as a room could be.

SHIGEO
Doctor, this is the emergency room.

DR. NUMATA
Unfortunately, we don't have any other available rooms. And we must begin treatment immediately.

Fujiko steps in the room, putting on a brave face.

FUJIKO
It's only temporary. Sadako will get better and we will be out of here soon. Thank you, doctor.

Dr. Numata bows and walks away, followed by Nurse Satomi.

Sadako looks at the bed but won't go near it. Shigeo sits on it while Fujiko begins to unpack Sadako's belongings.

SHIGEO
Sit, Sadako. Get off your feet. Make yourself comfortable.

Sadako refuses. She grabs her belongings from her mother, shoving them back in the bag.

SADAKO
I don't want to be comfortable here. I will not be here long. I'm going to get better and I'm going to go home, right? I will go back to school?

She looks to her parents who say the only thing they can...

FUJIKO
Of course, Sadako.

SHIGEO
If you are strong and do as the doctors say, you will get back to school in no time. Can you do that?

Still hesitant, Sadako walks over to the bed and sits down. Her mother strokes her hair while Shigeo steps forward with a GLASS OF WATER and PILLS, WRAPPED IN A SMALL PAPER POUCH.

Sadako stares at the pills. She shakes her head.

SHIGEO
You must, Sadako.

Fujiko can see she is scared and gets an idea. She takes the paper pouch, tips the pills out and sets them aside. She begins to FOLD THE PAPER, very carefully.

FUJIKO
Your grandmother always said that a paper crane was good luck. Senbazuru she would say. Fold a thousand cranes and make a wish... When you were a baby, I would fold one every night and hang it over your crib. I made a wish that you would be safe, happy and live a thousand years, just like the crane himself. The day you survived Pikadon, I couldn't help but wonder if the crane was watching over you.

Fujiko reaches the last step and blows into the breast of her paper crane, expanding its wings. She hands it to Sadako.

FUJIKO
Make a wish. I think the Crane might have a special ear just for you, Sadako.

Sadako takes the PAPER CRANE from her mother. She feels as if anything might be possible. She closes her eyes and whispers:

SADAKO
I wish to get better.

She opens her eyes and smiles at her mother. Fujiko offers her the pills and Sadako takes them. Her focus turns back to the paper crane in her hand.

SADAKO
Nine hundred and ninety-nine to go.

CUT TO:

INT. COERR HOME - ATTIC - NIGHT

A LIGHT GOES ON above Eleanor in a tight, dusty attic. BOXES line the walls, another life's worth of stuff stashed away.

She searches through it all until she finds A BOX MARKED WITH JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY. With a bittersweet smile, she opens the box and searches through mementos from her time in Japan...

DRAWINGS. A TRAIN TICKET. A well-worn, dog-eared copy of the NEW YORKER with John Hersey's HIROSHIMA on the cover.

Then below that she sees what she came for:

Lastly, at the bottom is a thick, well-worn journal with "THINK JAPANESE" by ELEANOR HICKS scrawled on the outside.

She flips through PAGES AND PAGES of her old writing...

FADE TO:

EXT. FRIGATE - NIGHT

HUGE WAVES crash against a FRIGATE called "WAR HAWK". The ship inches closer to CAPSIZING with each violent collision.

DATE: 1946

INT. FRIGATE - CABIN - NIGHT

ELEANOR HICKS (mid 20s now but feels even younger) smiles while she WRITES IN HER JOURNAL. Dressed too fashionably for the moment, she pulls up the bottom of her skirt to keep it from the LARGE POOLS OF WATER sloshing around her HIGH HEELS.

With her in the tight bunk room are THREE MALE MISSIONARIES, in their Sunday best with BIBLES clutched to their chest.

FRANCIS prays to himself. WALTER wipes tears from his cheeks. DOMINIC, on the edge of a breakdown, screams at a LARGE JOLT. He then looks to Eleanor, happily scribbling away...

DOMINIC

Mrs. Hicks, I've got to ask, what the hell are you smiling about?!

If impending death can't wash the smile from her face, Dominic's harsh tone definitely doesn't faze her.

ELEANOR

Listen: "As the men of God around me called out to their maker, I realized He was in fact calling back. He was the typhoon battering our hull. He was the infinite Pacific. He was the brutal, beautiful force of nature from which we were helpless. And He was calling us home."

She looks up from the notebook to see stunned faces.

ELEANOR
What do you think? Too much?

DOMINIC
I think you're a looney.

FRANCIS
Dom--

DOMINIC
She is! If not for God or country,
why would a woman even be on this
ship, traveling into a war-zone, by
herself? Because she's a damned
lunatic! You heard her, Francis,
she wants to die!

ELEANOR
Of course I don't want to die, I
would much rather go on living. But
if I have to die, I'd like it to at
least make for good reading.

Eleanor grabs an empty wine bottle, rips out the page from
her note book and begins to roll it up.

ELEANOR
And while I may be crazy, in what
could be my final moments on this
Earth, I'm smiling and you're not.
So, no offense, but I think I'll
stay the way God made me.

Dom has no response. Walter, the silent missionary, has
stopped crying. For the first time, he speaks.

WALTER
Amen.

ANOTHER VICIOUS IMPACT shakes them up.

Eleanor puts the rolled up story in the bottle and corks it.
Nervously, she taps her WEDDING RING on the glass.

DOMINIC
You must be an absolute nightmare
for your husband.

ELEANOR
Finally, something we agree on.

EXT. FRIGATE / YOKOHAMA HARBOR - JAPAN - DAY

The skies are clear as the SHIP safely pulls into the PORT OF YOKOHAMA. From the deck, Eleanor stares in awe as the CITY OF TOKYO, devastated from the war, grows before her eyes.

EXT. YOKOHAMA HARBOR - DAY

Eleanor walks down the ramp of the ship, her legs unsteady from the long voyage. As soon as her feet touch the ground, she kneels down and touches it... She's actually in Japan.

She looks up to see a group of WORKERS glaring at her. Eleanor picks up her luggage and shrugs off their gaze.

INT. HALLWAY - U.S. BASE - DAY

MAJOR ROBERT HICKS, late 30s, handsome in an old-fashioned, proud member of "The Greatest Generation" way, walks down the hallway to his office, enjoying his morning cup of coffee.

A PRIVATE salutes him as he passes. Hicks gives him a nod and they carry on. Hicks reaches a corner and rounds it to see...

ELEANOR

Hi honey.

The coffee cup falls from his hand and SHATTERS.

INT. MAJOR HICKS OFFICE - U.S. BASE - DAY

Hicks hurries Eleanor into his office and closes the door behind them. He forces a smile to his ASSISTANT as he pulls down the SHADE and turns to Eleanor. All smiles are now gone.

HICKS

Eleanor, what the hell are you
doing in God Damn Japan?!

ELEANOR

I'm on assignment writing about
life after the war.

HICKS

Assignment for whom?

ELEANOR

Well, freelance at the moment but
there's no doubt in my mind someone
will snatch it up when I'm done.

HICKS

How did you even get here? We cut off all civilian transport.

ELEANOR

You cut off all American civilian transport. But you, Major, married a card-carrying Canuck and there's no rules against a Canadian hitching a ride on a Dutch frigate with some Christian missionaries.

He has to sit down. Everything she says angers him further.

ELEANOR

After months apart, I thought you would be happy to see me!

HICKS

I am happy to see you, Dear...

Eleanor is almost relieved...

HICKS

But you're still getting on the next transport back to the States, or Canada, or Greenland for all I care. Anywhere but Japan.

ELEANOR

Robert, please--

HICKS

No, Eleanor! I don't know what you thought was going to happen here! It's against the rules for you to stay on the base and there's not a chance in hell I could allow a western woman, especially one I'm married to, to wander the streets of Tokyo by her damn self!

ELEANOR

That's fine! I didn't come to report on Tokyo.

HICKS

Then where do you want to go?

She tentatively reaches into her bag and pulls out a well-worn copy of the NEW YORKER MAGAZINE with the article HIROSHIMA by John Hersey on the cover.

Hicks' expression becomes even more stern.

HICKS

Out of the question.

ELEANOR

Why?

HICKS

Those people are defeated, Eleanor. They are in a constant battle to reclaim some small fraction of the life they had and they should be allowed to do so without you mining their lives for entertainment.

The accusation pisses her off to no end. He knows it.

ELEANOR

Don't trivialize my intentions. You know me better than that. This article is the only account of the aftermath of the bomb, but when it ends, it feels like we're nowhere near the end of the story. How did those people recover? How did they rebuild? I sure as hell want to know. Don't you?

Hicks considers, briefly.

HICKS

No. You're going home.

Eleanor rises to her feet to make her final plea.

ELEANOR

They asked me to be a secretary, Robert. After writing about the war for two years, they gave my job to a veteran and asked me to be his secretary. I am a writer, dammit. And if they won't give me the stories, I will go get them myself.

The husband takes over from the Major again as he listens to his wife's plea/ultimatum. Frustrated, he gives in.

HICKS

Give me a minute.

Hicks picks up the phone and flips through his ADDRESS BOOK.

HICKS

I said give me a minute, Eleanor.

Eleanor doesn't protest any further as she steps out and closes the door behind her.

Hicks shakes his head while he waits for an answer on the line. He can't believe he's doing this.

INT. RECEPTION - U.S. BASE - DAY

Eleanor sits on a bench with all her LUGGAGE beside her. She stares out the window and jots notes in her JOURNAL. Hicks steps out of his office and marches up to her.

HICKS

Thirty bucks a month gets you room
and board on a farm in Yonago.

ELEANOR

How close is that to Hiroshima?

HICKS

As close as I can get you. Listen to me, Eleanor. You need clearance to go there and I have to pull some serious strings for that. In the meantime, you go to the farm and wait. I'll send word when I've got it all figured out. Now that's it, final offer, best you're gonna get.

He braces himself for another battle, but Eleanor knows when to accept a victory. Her excitement can't be contained and she leaps into Hicks' arms and plants a BIG KISS on him.

ELEANOR

Thank you, Major.

HICKS

You're welcome. You'll be on the first train out in the morning.

ELEANOR

In the morning?

He smiles suggestively and tries to help collect her things but she pushes his hand away and does it herself.

ELEANOR

I knew you'd be happy to see me.

She leads him off down the hall.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Eleanor is the only Westerner on the packed train.

She watches with amusement as the MEN TAKE OFF THEIR PANTS, wearing white long-johns underneath, and hang them, perfectly creased, on a post next to the seat.

When the train starts to move, the PANTS ALL SWING TOGETHER. It fully sets in exactly how far from America she is.

Outside the window, Eleanor watches as the train passes from the bleakness of WAR-TORN TOKYO into the COUNTRYSIDE--

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train passes rice fields, misty valleys, red temples decorated with dragons, and clusters of thatch-roofed houses. MOUNT FUJI towers in the distance. It's beautiful.

EXT. YONAGO TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train rolls to a stop at a very RURAL TRAIN PLATFORM and Eleanor emerges amongst a crowd of LOCALS. For the first time she feels uncertain and out of her depth.

YOSHI MATSUDA, (40), a Japanese man, well-dressed in a suit and hat, approaches her. He speaks very proper English.

MATSUDA
Mrs. Hicks?

ELEANOR
Yes!

MATSUDA
I am Matsuda. The Major sent me to escort you. Right this way.

Matsuda leads her to TWO BICYCLES, one fitted with a TRAILER behind it. Eleanor drops her bags on the trailer.

ELEANOR
Bicycles! How wonderful.

Eleanor kicks off her high heels and picks them up.

MATSUDA
Oh good. I was afraid you wouldn't know how to ride.

EXT. JAPANESE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

She doesn't. Eleanor wobbles and weaves across the road on her bicycle, dress hiked up in a bunch, trying to keep up.

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM - DUSK

The sun sets as Matsuda leads Eleanor down a long, bumpy road, RICE FIELDS on both sides. They pass through a GATE breaking up a HIGH WALL and arrive at the FARMHOUSE.

Out of breath, Eleanor dismounts the bicycle as the IWAMOTO family emerge from the house to greet her.

KATASHI (30), a serious man, stands in front. MIEKO, (mid-twenties), his wife, trails behind him, dressed in a simple black shift. Their small boy, NORI, hides behind her legs.

Matsuda greets the family in a RAPID STRING OF JAPANESE. Eleanor tries to pick out the few words she knows, but it's pointless. She hears her name and figures she should smile.

MATSUDA

Eleanor, this is the Iwamoto family. Katashi is head of the household and runs the farm.

Eleanor bows. She attempts her best Japanese.

ELEANOR

*Thank you, Sensei. With honor I
feel to meet your house.*

Katashi raises an eyebrow. Matsuda gives him a look that says, "just go with it." Katashi bows.

MATSUDA

His wife, Mieko, and their son, Nori. No need to say anything.

Eleanor exchanges bows with Mieko then with the little boy, who gives her a little bow which delights her.

MATSUDA (CONT'D)

Very good.

Matsuda takes the bicycle Eleanor rode and fastens it to the trailer behind his own bike.

ELEANOR

Wait, can't I keep the bike?

MATSUDA
I apologize, but I must take it
back with me.

Eleanor looks around, realizing how isolated she now is.

ELEANOR
So I'm trapped here?

She helplessly watches Matsuda ride away, then turns back to the family, who stand awkwardly in silence.

EXT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mieko opens the door for father and son to enter. They take off their shoes and put on SLIPPERS that wait by the door. Eleanor is about to enter but Mieko stops her. She points to another pair of SLIPPERS set out just for Eleanor.

Eleanor points to the slippers then to herself. Mieko nods. Eleanor excitedly replaces her heels with the slippers.

INT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mieko leads Eleanor through the house. There's very little furniture inside so rooms all look similar.

At the back of the house, they arrive at a small room with a futon mattress on the floor, a BLANKET on top and a mosquito net hung from the ceiling. Other than that the room is bare.

Mieko stops at the entrance and bows before leaving her alone. Eleanor sets down her bag and looks around at the sparse room. Her unflappable smile loses some of its muster.

ELEANOR
You did it, Eleanor. You're in
Japan. What the hell do you do now?

INT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - ELEANOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

ELEANOR'S LUGGAGE crowds the little room. The only light comes from a candle on the floor.

She writes from her bed pad, back against the wall. She struggles to get comfortable when something makes her pause--

THE MOSQUITO NET ABOVE HER IS MOVING. Eleanor's confused for a moment then she begins to feel it all around her:

THE ROOM IS SHAKING.

She panics. THE SHAKING GROWS AND BECOMES MORE VIOLENT.

The candle by the bed TIPS OVER AND IS PUT OUT.

Eleanor SCREAMS and runs into the main room. THE WHOLE HOUSE SHAKES for several seconds then suddenly stops.

Mieko runs out of her room to calm Eleanor.

MIEKO

Jishin.

Mieko nods and MIMES SHAKING A BALL IN HER HANDS.

MIEKO

Jishin.

ELEANOR

(understanding)

Of course. It was an earthquake.

Jishin is an earthquake.

Mieko listens curiously then very carefully repeats--

MIEKO

Earthquake?

Eleanor smiles. She does the same ball shake motion.

ELEANOR

Yes. Earthquake.

Mieko, happy to have learned a new word, bows and leaves.

Eleanor, adrenaline still surging, goes back to her room and grabs her JOURNAL. She writes by the light of the moon...

ELEANOR (V.O.)

"Think Japanese", chapter one.

"Jishin" means earthquake. This writer can now definitively say she does not care for "jishin."

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM - DAY

The MORNING MIST dissipates off the RICE FIELDS as the sun climbs in the sky. Eleanor walks amongst the FARMERS, lost in the serene moment.

INT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - DAY

Eleanor sits on the floor as a traditional breakfast is served. She shifts uncomfortably and rubs her numb legs.

EXT. YONAGO TOWN - DAY

Eleanor is led by Mieko through the main street in the small town. TOWNSPEOPLE gawk at Eleanor constantly. She remains polite and smiles often, but they continue to stare behind her back and look away when she tries to make eye contact.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

People in town are not sure what to make of my arrival. They think I am some sort of spy or criminal.

Eleanor stops outside a store window, admiring the paintings and calligraphy on display. In the reflection she notices a GROUP OF WOMEN behind her, all dressed in beautiful kimonos.

INT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - ELEANOR'S ROOM - DAY

Huddled in Eleanor's room, Mieko and Eleanor sit on the bed. Mieko looks over her shoulder to make sure they're alone.

Eleanor reaches under her folded blanket and pulls out a SEARS-ROEBUCK CATALOG. Mieko scans the pages in awe.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

While the language barrier is a hurdle, it only took a few weeks for Mieko and I to become fast friends. It's funny, for all the ways we're opposites to each other, we're the same in just as many.

KATASHI (O.S.)

Mieko-san!

Mieko closes the catalog and buries it in the blanket again.

EXT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - DAY

Eleanor is in the BATH, located behind the house. She dunks her head under water then stands. A TOWEL has been set out for her, but it is THE SIZE OF A HANDKERCHIEF. She frowns.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

After a while, even the local women came around to me.

Eleanor looks out to see A GROUP OF WOMEN, led by Mieko, staring at her with absolutely no shame. They watch as she tries to dry off and cover herself with the small towel.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
Their fear of me is gone and they
realize we are in fact the same.

Mieko speaks to the other women in rapid Japanese while she points at Eleanor, who uncomfortably smiles back.

INT. HICKS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Hicks laughs out loud as he reads Eleanor's writing. His Secretary glances over at him and he quickly stifles his laughter. He reads on, enraptured.

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM - DAY

Eleanor has gathered the Iwamoto family on the porch. She films them with her 16mm camera.

The family think it's a 'stills camera' and remain still.

ELEANOR
No, no... It's a moving picture
camera. You can move!

Eleanor moves about, flailing her arms up and down. Katashi and Mieko don't understand and remain still.

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM / YONGO TOWN - DAY

A 16mm MONTAGE OF LIFE ON THE FARM AS ELEANOR:

- STUDIES AND PRACTICES JAPANESE
- LEARNS CALLIGRAPHY
- HELPS ON THE RICE FIELDS
- INTERVIEWS WORKERS IN THE TOWN
- HAS HER PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN A KIMONO

EXT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - DAY

Eleanor sweeps the patio along with Mieko. They look up to see Mr. Matsuda riding his bicycle down the driveway. He has Eleanor's bike on the trailer.

She looks back to Mieko, who knows what this means.

MIEKO

Do not go, Eleanor-san. It is a shameful place. There is nothing in Hiroshima but death. Hiroshima is not Japan. This is Japan. All you need to see is here.

Mieko walks inside just as Matsuda arrives at the patio and pulls out an envelope.

MR. MATSUDA

Your request has been granted.

After waiting all this time, Eleanor suddenly seems anxious, afraid even...

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Eleanor sits in the back of a truck filled with LABORERS and SUPPLIES. People and objects are jostled around with the large bumps in the road. A sense of uneasiness grows in her.

EXT. HIROSHIMA - DAY

The truck enters into HIROSHIMA. Eleanor looks all around her, shocked at what she sees:

The RADIUS OF DAMAGE is still very clear as the landscape changes from destroyed, CONCRETE DESERT to barely standing, FRACTURED BUILDINGS on the outskirts of town.

Eleanor steps off the truck onto a RAVAGED STREET. Everywhere she looks there's TWISTED STEEL and SHATTERED CONCRETE.

Eleanor stops by some steps that once led up to a building:

A CHARRED IMPRINT OF A MAN'S FIGURE IS STAINED ON THE STEPS.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

They refer to it as "Pika-don," which simply means "Flash. Boom."

There is no escaping the horror. Eleanor begins to walk towards the only building left standing in the whole city...

THE GENBAKU DOME. Just as Sadako saw it that horrible day, reduced to nothing more than metal frame and crumbled stone.

EXT. GENBAKU DOME - DAY

RELICS of the bomb are littered around the dome.

A PAIR OF WARPED GLASSES. A TWISTED, DEFORMED TRICYCLE.

CROWDS OF PEOPLE, many marked with HORRIBLE SCARS and BURNS.

A MAN has an 8MM PROJECTOR set up, projecting onto a SHEET. It shows SILENT NEWS FOOTAGE OF THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

"Hibakusha" is what they call them.
Explosion-effected people. Tens of
thousands sick with what is called
"A-Bomb disease."

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - DAY

Eleanor interviews a WOMAN WITH BURNS ON HER FACE.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

We know it as leukemia.

SEVERAL OTHER PATIENTS pass by Eleanor in the hallway.
There's so many. It overwhelms her.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

I asked one man where he was when
the bomb fell. He pointed to the
misery all around him and said "the
bomb is still falling."

EXT. OTA RIVER - DOME - NIGHT

Eleanor watches a FAMILY carrying a PAPER LANTERN to the OTA RIVER. They set the lantern in the river and hold each other.

ELEANOR (V.O.)

They light lanterns with the names
of loved ones who died here. The
candle light is supposed to help
the spirits find their way home.

Eleanor breaks down into tears as she watches the WARM GLOW float off into the horizon...

EXT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - MORNING

The SUN has just begun to peek over the horizon.

Eleanor hurries out of the house and runs over to the bushes on the outskirts of the garden. She THROWS UP and falls to her knees. Her breath falls short.

EXT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - LATER

A LOCAL DOCTOR performs a number of tests on Eleanor while she lays on her back; he listens to her chest as she breaths, takes her temperature and feels around her neck and the back of her ears...

The man's expression is completely stoic while Eleanor's anxiety increases with each test.

When he's done, he turns to Mieko and speaks in JAPANESE. Mieko turns to Eleanor in shock.

Eleanor picks up all she needs to hear. She can't believe it. A wave of uncertain, complicated emotion crashes down on her.

INT. HALLWAY - U.S. BASE - DAY

Coffee mug in hand, Hicks makes his way to his office. The same Private salutes him and he gives him the same nod. He reaches the corner and...

Eleanor is there. Again. The coffee cup falls from his hand and SHATTERS again.

HICKS
Godammit, Eleanor! Stop doing that!

He looks at her and immediately can tell something's wrong. She takes a moment to get the words out but finally does...

ELEANOR
I'm pregnant.

Hicks takes a second to process then rushes to her and wraps her in his arms, a big smile on his face. She holds on to him tightly, retreating into the comfort of his embrace...

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM - DAY

A U.S. ARMY JEEP rolls down the dusty road to the Farmhouse.

Mieko steps out of the house just in time to see Hicks hop out and walks around to the passenger door. He opens it...

Eleanor gets out, FIVE MONTHS PREGNANT. She smiles to Mieko.

ELEANOR

*I couldn't leave without saying
goodbye.*

Mieko hurries up to them, beyond excited. She bows to Hicks and then reaches her hands out to touch Eleanor's bump.

MIEKO

May I?

ELEANOR

Of course. Please.

Mieko lovingly places her hands on Eleanor's stomach.

MIEKO

Have you picked a name?

ELEANOR

Robert Hicks, Jr. Robbie.

Hicks puts his arm around Eleanor and beams with pride. Mieko smiles and whispers to the unborn baby...

MIEKO

Hello Robbie-san...

She then begins to SING A JAPANESE LULLABY.

When it's over, Eleanor wraps Mieko in a hug. It's a sad embrace between close friends who don't know when, or if, they'll ever see each other again.

MIEKO

I have a gift for you...

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a FOLDED PIECE OF ORIGAMI. She lifts the paper to her lips and BLOWS into it, bringing a PAPER CRANE to life. She holds it out to Eleanor.

MIEKO

May it bring you luck.

INT. JEEP - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor looks back and watches Mieko and the farm grow small and disappear into the dust kicked up behind her. Hicks, behind the wheel, gives her a sympathetic smile. She forces one back.

On her lap is her journal, open to a BLANK PAGE. She stares down, intimidated and unsure of what to write.

HICKS

When are you going to let me read
the rest of your story?

ELEANOR

Nothing to read really...

She does her best to disguise her disappointment.

ELEANOR

I don't think I was the right
person for the job.

With that, she closes her journal and tucks it away. Hicks reaches over and places his hand on the baby bump.

HICKS

Me and the Captain here, we believe
in you, Eleanor. Remember that.

Eleanor smiles, takes hold of his hand and grips it tight.

FADE TO:

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Fujiko takes hold of Sadako's hand and offers a brave smile. Sadako smiles back then looks away as...

Nurse Satomi pokes an IV NEEDLE in her arm.

This begins a MONTAGE of tests and treatments; PILLS, INJECTIONS, BLOOD DRAWN, MORE PILLS, BIGGER INJECTIONS.

The whole time the number of PAPER CRANES scattered around Sadako's bed grows and grows.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Sadako reads a YOUNG GIRLS' MANGA MAGAZINE with an IV hooked up to her arm. Her eyes wander next to her and she covertly watches Nurse Satomi read a book. She's a beautiful woman.

Nurse Satomi places her hand over her chest, intrigued by something she just read. Sadako mimics the affectation.

Nurse Satomi puts down the book and checks on Sadako's IV.

SADAKO

May I ask what you were reading?

NURSE SATOMI
Gan by Mori Ogai.

SADAKO
What is it about?

NURSE SATOMI
A young woman who is forced to become a moneylender's mistress.

Sadako is shocked.

NURSE SATOMI
Forgive me. I should not be speaking about such things to you.

SADAKO
No, I would like to read Gan. Will you let me?

NURSE SATOMI
I don't know. It's for grown ups.

SADAKO
Please. I graduate elementary school in just a few days and I will be a junior high student. I am ready to read a novel like Gan.

Nurse Satomi considers and smiles. She checks on the IV and then exits the room, leaving the book on the table.

NURSE SATOMI
If anyone asks, I'm saying you stole it from me.

Sadako drops her magazine and picks up Gan.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - DAY

Sadako walks with Tomiko down the halls of the hospital. Tomiko is timid and scared to be there, but Sadako is cheerful and does her best to make her friend comfortable.

TOMIKO
Graduation is next week, Sadako. You have to come.

SADAKO
I want to more than anything in the world, but father says I need the doctor's permission.

TOMIKO

*Chizuko said that Kiyo said that
Nasu said that our Bamboo class is
so boring without you.*

SADAKO

Did he really?

Tomiko nods. Sadako is now even more determined.

SADAKO

I will be there.

As they pass other patients in the hallway, everyone says hello to Sadako and bows. She bows in return.

TOMIKO

How do you do it?

SADAKO

What?

TOMIKO

*Get so popular. It's just like at
school in this hospital. You've
only been here a month and you're
practically the mayor!*

Sadako can't help but smile.

SADAKO

*I think most people are too scared
to speak to each other. But if you
say the first word, everyone loves
a good conversation.*

Just then, the girls pass an OPEN ROOM: Inside is a boy, KENJI (14). Both girls are awe-struck by the sight of him.

TOMIKO

Have you talked to him?

SADAKO

Not yet.

Kenji looks up. The girls scurry away, giggling as they do.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Sadako sits with Fujiko in the cafeteria. She doesn't have an appetite and just watches her mother SEW A GARMENT.

SADAKO

I must attend graduation.

FUJIKO

I don't know, Sadako.

SADAKO

Please. I want to go so badly.

FUJIKO

Keep folding your cranes. If it is meant to happen, it will.

Determined to make it happen, Sadako tips her pills out of their wrapping and begins to fold another crane...

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Outside the emergency room, Dr. Numata speaks with Sadako's parents. Sadako listens to them intently from inside. It's unbearable. She looks to her PAPER CRANES...

DOCTOR NUMATA

Sadako should not be too far away from the hospital at this time.

FUJIKO

Please, doctor, Sadako worked hard to graduate. She should celebrate with her friends.

DOCTOR NUMATA

It is an unnecessary risk.

SHIGEO

We respect your decision, but feel strongly it is a risk worth taking.

Doctor Numata doesn't like it. Sadako can't contain herself.

SADAKO

Please, please, please Doctor. I feel much better today. Everyone at the hospital has done such a good job helping me! I am well enough!

Numata cannot say no to this vibrant girl.

DOCTOR NUMATA

Very well. But do not exert yourself. And come straight back.

She nods joyously. He can't help but smile.

DOCTOR NUMATA
*Congratulations on your graduation,
 Sadako.*

The doctor leaves and both parents look to Sadako, huge smiles on their faces. Sadako literally leaps from her bed.

SADAKO
YES!

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

Sadako enters the house to a GREAT WELCOME from Masahiro, Mitsue and Eiji. She screams in delight and embraces them.

SADAKO
Masahiro! Up for a race later?

Masahiro breaks off and fakes a painful leg.

MASAHIRO
*I wish I could but I got another
 leg cramp. Just my luck!*

They laugh. Fujiko emerges, holding something.

FUJIKO
*Sadako, we have something very
 special for you.*

Fujiko reveals a BEAUTIFUL KIMONO, hand-sewn, white and filled with red cherry blossom patterns. Sadako gasps. She touches the kimono. Her eyes well up with emotion.

SADAKO
This must have cost so much money.

SHIGEO
*You are a young woman now, Sadako.
 Every young woman should have a
 kimono as beautiful as she is.*

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Fujiko dresses Sadako. Sadako carefully slides her arms inside the WHITE JUBAN. Fujiko holds out the kimono and Sadako nervously slips herself inside.

Fujiko knots the belts around Sadako's waist and shifts it over to the back.

Fujiko stands back to allow Sadako to look at her new image. She can't believe it. A young woman is looking back at her.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

Sadako lets her family get their first look at her. It's a moment that brings them together in their happiness.

MITSUE

Wow! You look like Misora Hibari!

A greater compliment could not be said to her. Sadako runs to her father and wraps him in a hug.

SADAKO

Thank you, father. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

INT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Sadako stands in the center of the room. The GIRLS gather and touch her kimono. Sadako is loving every moment of it.

MR. NOMURA

Alright, it is time to give Sadako her gift.

Sadako is caught off-guard as Mr. Nomura approaches her with a WRAPPED PRESENT.

SADAKO

Thank you, sensei.

MR. NOMURA

It's not just from me.

She opens the box and finds inside a RED JOURNAL. She lifts up the journal and opens to the first page: IT IS SIGNED BY ALL OF HER CLASS MATES. She loves it.

SADAKO

Thank you, everyone. I will keep it with me every moment of every day.

EXT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

A stage has been erected on the field. Students and parents line up for the ceremony.

Fujiko, Shigeo, Masahiro, Mitsue and Eiji sit with a CROWD OF FAMILIES and watch proudly.

Sadako sits with Tomiko, thrilled as GRADUATION CERTIFICATES are handed out on stage by Mr. Nomura. With each student awarded, the crowd of parents applaud. Mr. Nomura lifts a certificate and speaks in the microphone.

MR. NOMURA
Sadako Sasaki, Bamboo class.

Sadako rises to get up on stage. The crowd rises with her.

It's a HUGE STANDING OVATION, a tidal wave of energy. Fujiko and Shigeo, overcome, applaud the loudest. Masahiro cheers. Mitsue and Eiji scream in delight.

Sadako takes the certificate and bows with a huge smile.

As she makes her way back to her seat, her eyes fall on a ROW OF FOURTEEN EMPTY CHAIRS ON STAGE with FLOWERS draped over them. Sadako stares at the harsh reminder of her situation.

EXT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

THE BAMBOO CLASS WAVES goodbye from inside the school gates. Sadako waves back and walks outside with MR. NOMURA. He takes the camera from around his neck.

MR. NOMURA
Stand there. I will take your picture in your beautiful kimono.

With her school behind her, Mr. Nomura takes Sadako's photo. It feels like a moment everyone will hold on to forever.

As Sadako looks back, she is on the verge of tears. Fujiko steps in and takes her by the hand.

FUJIKO
Thank you, Sensei. We must get back to the hospital.

Sadako struggles to hold it together as she waves goodbye to her beloved school.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Sadako folds cranes at a table by herself, the pain from leaving her school behind still very fresh.

Kenji watches from across the room and finally walks over. He slides beside her.

KENJI
You're a celebrity.

Sadako is startled.

SADAKO
Pardon me?

KENJI
"The girl with the cranes."
Everyone is talking about you.

SADAKO
Are you poking fun at me?

KENJI
I'm not poking fun. You've got people excited.

SADAKO
Why?

KENJI
Look around you.

He indicates around the hospital cafeteria.

KENJI (CONT'D)
Not a lot of positivity around here. You're all we have.

Sadako is flattered.

KENJI (CONT'D)
I am Kenji.

SADAKO
Sadako.

Kenji bows. Sadako notices PURPLE BRUISING ON HIS ARM. He leaves with a smile. Sadako nervously smiles back.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Late that night, Sadako sits in bed and writes the FIRST ENTRY in her new journal.

SADAKO (V.O.)
My name is Sadako Sasaki. I am twelve years old. I am from Hiroshima. My favorite flower is a rose. My favorite celebrity is Misora Hibari. I am Hibakusha...

Sadako pauses and considers what else to write. She looks to A STRING OF CRANES beside her, getting bigger every day.

SADAKO (V.O.)
I am sick. But I will get better.

A NOTE IS SLIPPED UNDER HER DOOR. Sadako sees the note, puzzled. She crosses the room to pick it up and reads:

SADAKO
What is something that wears many clothes when it is small, but grows up to be naked?

It's a riddle. Sadako is intrigued. She opens the door and leans into the hallway:

Kenji leans his head out of his room and smiles before disappearing back inside.

Sadako leans back into her room. She can hardly stand it. Now she must focus on the riddle...

SADAKO
Wears many clothes when it is small, but grows up to be naked?

After a moment's thought she gets it...

SADAKO
Bamboo!

She writes down her answer.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sadako slips into the hallway. It's dark and quiet. She tiptoes down the hall to Kenji's door and slides the note underneath, then runs back to her room.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadako lies in bed, an exhausted, but excited smile on her face. She closes her eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET / COERR HOME - DAY

It's a beautiful, sunny day. So sunny it's almost washed out.

Eleanor walks down the street outside their house, Robbie next to her on his bicycle. He circles around her, laughing and having fun.

As they round the corner to their house, Eleanor sees a MILITARY CAR parked out front. Robbie hasn't seen it yet.

She hurries up ahead to get a closer look and that's when she sees them...

TWO OFFICERS IN FULL, DRESS UNIFORM. A LETTER in one's hand.

She knows exactly why they are here... Her husband is dead.

The officers see Eleanor and SALUTE.

She covers her mouth in horror. The tears immediately build in her eyes. She then remembers Robbie and turns--

He's frozen in his tracks, tears rolling down his cheeks.

ELEANOR
Robbie...

She approaches him but he turns away on his bike and PEDDLES HARD down the street.

ELEANOR
Robbie!

Eleanor runs after him, desperate, as fast as she can but she'll never catch up.

The distance between them grows and grows--

SUDDENLY THERE IS A HUGE BURST OF BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT.

Eleanor is knocked off her feet and has to shield her eyes...

Robbie becomes SILHOUETTED as the LIGHTS GROWS.

Pure, helpless terror consumes Eleanor as a BRUTAL WIND TEARS down the street, getting closer and closer--

ELEANOR
ROBBIE!

INT. COERR HOME - ELEANOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor WAKES FROM A NIGHTMARE in a COLD SWEAT.

She struggles to catch her breath as she looks around...

Wym sleeps peacefully next to her. Everything is fine.

INT. COERR HOME - ROBBIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Still rattled, Eleanor checks on Robbie. He's sound asleep.

Once she's regained her composure, she pulls the blankets tighter around him and kisses his forehead. As she does, she gives a somber glance to the PHOTOS OF HICKS and his FLAG.

EXT. COERR HOME - NIGHT

Eleanor sits on the front porch, a glass of whiskey alongside her, and a blanket on her lap. She looks up at the stars, bright and peaceful overhead.

Wym, in his pajamas, comes out of the house behind her

WYM
Everything all right?

ELEANOR
Yeah... Just thinking.

He sits down next to her and takes a sniff of her glass.

ELEANOR
You want one?

WYM
It's a bit early, or late, for me.

Eleanor shrugs and takes another sip.

ELEANOR
I received a letter from my old friend in Japan.

WYM
Oh, yeah?

ELEANOR
Yeah. And it had something in it.

She holds out the PAPER CRANE. Wym doesn't quite get it.

WYM
Origami. Neat.

ELEANOR
And this.

She hands him Sadako's story and watches it affect him as he now looks at the origami differently.

ELEANOR

When I was in Japan, Bob told me not to go to Hiroshima. He begged me not to. He made up reasons, but I always knew why he didn't want me to see it... He didn't think I could handle it. And he knew if he said that, it would only make me want to go more.

Wym smiles as that's a trait he knows as well.

ELEANOR

I never told him, but for all these years I wished I'd listened to him. It was truly the most horrific thing I had ever seen. And then when I found out I was pregnant with Robbie, more than anything else, I just felt this overwhelming fear, this awful feeling... That I don't know how to keep him safe.

It's difficult to finally admit that to someone else. Eleanor sucks it up and carries on...

ELEANOR

But there was no stopping me when I was younger, I knew what I wanted and I went after it.

WYM

What did you want?

ELEANOR

No, it will sound so silly now...

WYM

Just tell me, Ellie.

Eleanor thinks about it. She's uncomfortable, embarrassed

ELEANOR

I thought I could make a difference. I wanted to write something that inspired peace, whatever that means, but you know, "make the world a better place."

WYM

I don't think there's anything silly about trying to make the world a better place.

He takes her hand. It helps.

ELEANOR

I don't know... Maybe I was just trying to make myself feel better. Either way, I've spent all this time since telling myself I failed, but the truth is I didn't fail, I gave up. But this girl Sadako... It's still happening, Wym. Over ten years later, it's still happening and people around here have no idea. That's not right.

WYM

If that's how you feel, don't give up anymore.

Whatever she's about to do, he's got her back, which is exactly what she needs. Wym kisses her and heads back inside.

INT. AMERICAN RED CROSS - DAY

Eleanor enters the office and approaches the front desk, where a RECEPTIONIST finishes up a phone call.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to the American Red Cross.
Are you here to volunteer?

ELEANOR

Not today. I'm a reporter with The Post and I was hoping you might provide me with some information.

The receptionist is excited and treats the request with the utmost seriousness. She lowers her voice.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm in. What's the scoop?

Eleanor plays along with her and leans in.

ELEANOR

I need a name. Anyone that might have worked in Japan over the last ten years. Preferably Hiroshima.

The receptionist nods as she writes the bullet points down.

RECEPTIONIST
Piece of cake.

She places a "BACK IN FIVE MINUTES" SIGN on the desk and disappears into a back room. Eleanor hears the sounds of filing cabinets frantically opening and closing before the receptionist steps back out, very casually.

RECEPTIONIST
(barely a whisper)
Marge Grey. In the donation center.

She proudly points down the hall.

ELEANOR
Exceptional work. Thank you.

As Eleanor walks away the receptionist excitedly picks up the phone to tell someone about her investigation.

INT. AMERICAN RED CROSS - BLOOD DONATION CENTER - DAY

A NEEDLE pokes through skin and BLOOD fills up the tube leading to a BLOOD PACK.

Eleanor watches closely from the doorway, behind her is a LINE OF PEOPLE waiting to donate blood.

MARGE (30s), in a RED CROSS NURSE'S UNIFORM, tapes the needle down on the MAN in the chair. She turns back to Eleanor.

MARGE
Sorry lady, but the other nurse called in sick today and I don't even have time for a bathroom break. You'll have to find someone else for your story. Next.

A man steps forward and Marge is about to lead him inside. Eleanor makes the only move she can think of.

ELEANOR
Actually I was next.

Marge and the donor turn back. Eleanor rolls up her sleeve. Marge shrugs with a smile.

MARGE
Right this way.

INT. BLOOD DONATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The IV is in Eleanor's left arm so she can still take notes with her right. Marge is on a stool next to her.

MARGE

"A very pleasant way to die."
That's what they said. That's what I expected when I went over. Let me tell you, there's nothing pleasant about radiation sickness. I went there because I wanted to help people, but after two years in Nagasaki, if I can help people right here in this room that's what I'm choosing.

Marge falters emotionally, just the slightest bit.

MARGE

There was one patient, a little boy, he wasn't even born yet when the bomb went off. His mom was four months pregnant. Ten years later he gets it.

ELEANOR

A-Bomb Disease?

Marge is surprised she knows the term.

ELEANOR

I was in Hiroshima.

They share a moment of mutual understanding.

ELEANOR

When did you get back?

MARGE

Few months ago.

ELEANOR

So just to confirm, it is still like this over there?

MARGE

When I left, they didn't have enough beds in the hospital.

As Eleanor writes that down, she gets a little woozy from the blood loss and has to shake it off.

MARGE

When you were there it was scars
and burns, but it's way beyond that
now. It's become a crippling fear
that at any moment you or your
children are next. And that fear is
still spreading.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor drinks JUICE in her car, a BANDAGE on her left arm. She looks over her notes then finally starts the car and drives off, more determined than ever.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF GEORGETOWN HOSPITAL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A CLASS breaks and STUDENTS IN LAB-COATS pour out.

Eleanor waits for them to leave and enters to find DOCTOR CROSS (50s) packing up his things.

DOCTOR CROSS

Office hours are in the morning.

ELEANOR

I'm not a student. I'm a writer for
the District Post.

DOCTOR CROSS

No comment.

He grabs his briefcase and walks past her. As he does, Eleanor sizes him up: the shine of his shoe, the press of his pants, the part/crop of his hair. She throws out a Hail Mary:

ELEANOR

My late husband was Air Force.
Sixth Night Squadron.

Doctor Cross stops. She's found his weak spot. He checks his watch, and sighs, knowing his obligation. He turns back.

DOCTOR CROSS

I'm sorry for your loss...
(checks his watch)
You have five minutes.

She wastes no time, reaching for her notes.

ELEANOR

I'm writing about Hiroshima and the lingering effects of the bomb, particularly "A-Bomb Disease." What can you tell me about it?

DOCTOR CROSS

It's complicated. "A-Bomb Disease" is shorthand for what are actually a variety of diseases caused by exposure to high levels of radiation, usually Strontium-90.

ELEANOR

I'm not familiar.

DOCTOR CROSS

It's a cancer-causing isotope chemically very similar to Calcium, so the body confuses the two and absorbs the radiation from the environment. Most commonly, this leads to Malignant Acute Marrow Leukemia. It's cancer in the bone marrow that infects the blood then rapidly spreads to the organs.

ELEANOR

Can it be treated?

DOCTOR CROSS

We can manage pain and delay the disease for a while, but no, it is almost always fatal.

ELEANOR

I read that patients were healthy for years then suddenly got sick, despite there being no traces of radiation left. Is that possible?

DOCTOR CROSS

No. They've been sick all along. It's just taken this long for the symptoms to surface.

He turns to the chalk board behind him and draws a DOT with a CIRCLE around it. Then ANOTHER CIRCLE and ANOTHER.

DOCTOR CROSS

They call it the concentric circles of death.

(MORE)

DOCTOR CROSS (CONT'D)
The distance the patient was from
the epicenter of the bomb directly
correlates to the time before their
sickness manifests.

He points to the innermost circle and moves outward.

DOCTOR CROSS
One week... One month... One
year... Ten years...

ELEANOR
How far out do the circles go?

DOCTOR CROSS
We're still waiting to see.

Eleanor is shocked. Her eyes turn back to the "concentric circles of death" on the blackboard.

FADE TO:

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - DAY

STRINGS OF PAPER CRANES are now suspended from the ceiling.

Sadako has been moved to a private room. It is a much better environment than the emergency room. She sits on the bed while Fujiko brushes her hair and hums a peaceful tune.

Nurse Satomi comes in with her morning pills.

Sadako excitedly takes the paper and folds another crane. Once it is done, she closes her eyes and restates her wish.

Fujiko watches her daughter, pained by what she inspired...

EXT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - DAY

The cherry blossoms are in bloom. SEVERAL PAIRS OF SHINY BLACK SHOES walk down the pavement towards the hospital.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - DAY

Sadako sits on her bed and folds cranes with Tomiko, Chizuko and the GIRLS FROM SCHOOL.

SADAKO
Tell me about junior high-school.

TOMIKO

*Oh, Sadako, you'll love it. I mean,
I hate it, but you'll love it.*

CHIZUKO

Can you really fold a thousand?

TOMIKO

Sadako can do anything.

CHIZUKO

*You know, Nasu talks about you all
the time.*

SADAKO

Nasu is a silly boy.

The girls can't understand her indifference. Then there's a KNOCK at the door. They look over as Kenji enters.

KENJI

I didn't know you had visitors.

SADAKO

*It's fine. Come in. These are all
my friends.*

KENJI

Hello. I am Kenji.

The girls can't speak or move. Kenji sets a note by the door.

KENJI

I think I'll get you with this one.

He smiles and leaves the room. The girls are in awe.

CHIZUKO

The mayor does it again...

The girls all giggle. Sadako smiles to herself.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - LATER

Sadako watches from her window as her friends all get to leave the hospital and go back to their homes. It's so hard.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Fujiko tries to brush Sadako's teeth, but she's uncooperative and turns away. Her skin is pale, her lymph nodes swollen.

FUJIKO

Sadako, please.

Reluctantly, Sadako allows Fujiko to part her lips and brush. Sadako spits into the sink. There's BLOOD from her gums.

FUJIKO

It's me. I'm brushing too hard.

Sadako stares at the BLOOD IN THE SINK. She knows...

SADAKO

I will never go to junior-high school.

Sadako cries. It breaks Fujiko's heart.

FUJIKO

That is not true, Sadako. You will get better and you will go back to school. You just have to keep folding your cranes. You have got better already, have you not? The doctor said so himself.

SADAKO

I won't make it to a thousand! I'm too slow! My medicine makes me tired! My hands are swollen! I'm running out of time...

Fujiko wraps her in a hug and comforts her.

FUJIKO

It's okay, Sadako. It will be okay. How many have you folded?

SADAKO

Almost five hundred.

FUJIKO

You're half way there! Now is not the time to feel sorry for yourself, now is when you fight harder than ever.

Fujiko wipes Sadako's tears away. Her smile makes Sadako feel better, the way only a mother's smile can.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadako holds up a CANDY WRAPPER. It's very small. Using a NEEDLE, Sadako folds her smallest crane yet. It's incredibly difficult but she does it, then stops to admire her work.

SADAKO
Five hundred.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sadako and Kenji walk together down the hallway. Kenji is weak. The PURPLE MARKS have spread more.

KENJI
*If you could do anything right now,
what would you do?*

Sadako doesn't have to think long.

SADAKO
Run.

KENJI
Where to?

SADAKO
Nowhere. I would just run. Like I used to. I would close my eyes, feel the air burn in my lungs and let my legs take me wherever they wanted to go.

They pass a NURSES' STATION where Nurse Satomi and the other nurses are working. Suddenly, there are SHOUTS from down the hall. DR. NUMATA RUNS PAST THEM.

DR. NUMATA
All nurses! Emergency!

The nurses dash away, leaving their station empty. Kenji sees an opportunity and darts behind the station.

SADAKO
Kenji, what are you doing?

KENJI
Finding my chart.

SADAKO
But that is for the doctors. We're not supposed to look.

KENJI

*Why? It is my life. Why can't I
know how much time I have left?*

This makes an impact on Sadako. He finds his file and copies the information to a piece of paper.

SADAKO

But how will you even know?

KENJI

*No time to explain, you just have
to answer right now, do you want me
to get yours as well?*

It's a split second decision. Does she want to know exactly how sick she is? She nods.

Kenji flips through the files, finds Sadako's and copies the numbers down. Then he hurries out and takes Sadako's hand.

EXT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Kenji leads Sadako onto the roof. It's a beautiful night over Hiroshima with the MOON and STARS casting a glow on the city. Kenji has the information he copied down in front of them.

KENJI

*Our blood is made up of two types
of cells. Red carries oxygen. White
fights disease. To be healthy they
must be in balance.*

SADAKO

Where did you learn this?

KENJI

*An old patient. He was a doctor
before he got sick. If your white
blood cell count is over a hundred
thousand, you are very sick.*

This is a huge amount of information for Sadako to process. It scares her. Kenji takes her hand.

KENJI

*Yours is only thirty thousand,
Sadako. You've got lots of time.*

Sadako breathes for what feels like the first time in ages.

SADAKO

What about you?

Kenji changes the subject as he looks out at the night sky.

KENJI

*Do you believe that when people die
they become stars in the sky?*

SADAKO

Yes, I do.

KENJI

*Me too. I like to look up and think
about which ones are my parents.*

SADAKO

Did they die in Pikadon?

Kenji struggles to hold back his emotions. He nods.

KENJI

Ten years, I have been on my own.

SADAKO

*You are not on your own, Kenji. I'm
with you.*

Kenji looks over to her. He leans in, as if to kiss her, but simply RESTS HIS FOREHEAD AGAINST HERS and closes his eyes.

KENJI

*You will fold your one thousand
cranes, Sadako. You will get
better. You will run again.*

She nods and they turn back to the stars on top of the lights of the city. Sadako rests her head against Kenji's shoulder.

FADE TO:

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - DAY

Eleanor is at her desk, notes piled up in front of her. Jerry steps out of his office and calls out to the room:

JERRY

Pitch Meeting! Let's go!

Eleanor watches the REPORTERS and SECRETARIES get up from their desks and make their way to the conference room.

Using all her courage, she rises from her desk, gathers her notes and joins the crowd headed to the meeting.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

All the reporters sit around a table with Jerry at the head. The secretaries sit in chairs along the walls and take notes.

Eleanor is along the wall, waiting for her moment to strike...

REPORTER #1
It's called the GE Telechron-7H241
or "Snooz-Alarm."

JERRY
What does it do?

REPORTER #1
Say it's early in the morning, your
alarm goes off but you don't want
to get up yet, you just tap the
"Snooz button" and the alarm shuts
up! A few minutes later, it goes
off again and you start your day.

REPORTER #2
What if you still don't want to get
up?

REPORTER #1
You just tap the button again!

An impressed MURMUR fills the room.

JERRY
I love it. "The world's first
humane alarm clock." Get a quote
from General Electric and let's run
with it. Anyone else got anything?

Nobody wants to follow the "Snooz-Alarm" and Jerry is about to call it... Eleanor knows it's now or never.

ELEANOR
I do.

Heads turn to the back of the room. The WOMEN around her are the most surprised of anyone.

They all then look to Jerry, who begrudgingly allows it.

JERRY
Alright Eleanor, what is it?

She stands up.

ELEANOR

It's been several years since anyone ran a story about Hiroshima. I think it's time we revisited it--

REPORTER #2

Hiroshima? What has that got to do with anything?

REPORTER #1

It's yesterday's news.

REPORTER #2

Yesterday plus a decade.

ELEANOR

Tell that to the people building bunkers in their backyards. Or the kids hiding under their desks, like that will do anything if--

JERRY

Enough. Okay, Hiroshima... What's the angle?

ELEANOR

Well, the War Department censored media reports out of Japan until 1952, but by then most people had moved on and we never really got the end of the story. We know that people were still getting sick months after the blast, but I've been doing some research and found that they still are getting sick to this day. Over ten years later. Children who were in utero at the time of the blast are now dying. Frankly, the fallout is worse than anyone ever imagined. I think people deserve to know that.

Eleanor, and the whole room, waits anxiously while Jerry considers...

JERRY

I think there's something here.
Good work, Eleanor.

She can't believe it...

JERRY

Pete, go over Eleanor's notes and get started on this right away.

And her short-lived celebration is over.

ELEANOR
Excuse me? Jerry, this is my story.

JERRY
And this is my newspaper. How many times do I have to tell you? I give the assignments and that's it.

She's furious. He can tell and tries to calm her. Badly.

JERRY
Listen, you did a good job and I'm very impressed. Maybe sometime soon we can find a nice story around town for you to get your feet wet. But right now, it's time to let the professionals go to work. Okay?

He thinks that's it, everyone does. Except Eleanor.

ELEANOR
No.

JERRY
What was that?

ELEANOR
It's my story.

The whole room is stunned and careful not to get caught in the cross-fire as Jerry is clearly pissed at his authority being questioned.

JERRY
Let's be real here. It's not like I can send Dear Lily to Japan...

He laughs but that's exactly what she wants.

JERRY
You're nuts, Eleanor. Anyone ever tell you that?

ELEANOR
Not for a while.

Their stare-down continues in front of everyone.

JERRY
It's not going to happen, Sweetie. I'd think long and hard about what you say next.

But Eleanor has gone too far to back down.

ELEANOR

You know, I must have written a thousand "Lily" columns by now, and the funny thing is that the answer always ends up being some version of the same advice... When something isn't working, it's time to make a change. I think it's time I finally listened to Lily for myself... I'm writing my story, Jerry. The only question is will it be here or somewhere else?

All the eyes in the room shoot back to Jerry...

INT. THE DISTRICT POST - DAY

Eleanor packs up her things in a banker's box.

Jerry watches her from his office, a NOTECARD in his hand. As Eleanor heads towards the door, he intercepts her.

JERRY

Here. Don't say I never gave you anything.

He holds out the card, she eyes it suspiciously.

ELEANOR

What's that?

JERRY

An old friend... Kind of. If you're really going through with this, you'll want to talk to him. Best of luck, Eleanor.

Eleanor takes the note from Jerry. Her eyes go wide.

INT. COERR HOME - ROBBIE'S ROOM - DAY

Robbie lies on his back in bed, throws a baseball in the air and catches it in his glove. Eleanor stands next to him.

ROBBIE

Who even is this guy?

ELEANOR

His name is John Hersey. He wrote the definitive piece of journalism on Hiroshima. He's someone I have admired for a very long time and this is a really exciting opportunity for me.

She's pleading with him. He considers...

ROBBIE

I'm not going.

ELEANOR

Yes you are.

ROBBIE

Well, does the dork have to come?

OUTSIDE THE ROOM, Wym tries not to be offended. He looks at himself in the mirror. Is he a dork?

ELEANOR

Yes, he does. It will be nice for us all to spend the time together.

ROBBIE

No thanks. I'll just stay here.

He tosses the ball in the air again, but this time Eleanor snatches it. This is no longer a discussion. Robbie throws off his glove in defeat.

INT. COERR HOME - CONTINUOUS

Robbie stomps out of his room past Wym. Eleanor comes out behind him and smiles encouragingly.

ELEANOR

All set.

INT. WYM'S CAR - DAY

Wym drives with Eleanor in the passenger seat.

Robbie is in the back, bored out of his mind and still bitter he's here.

Eleanor flips through her notes, secretly anxious. Wym motors through some questions, only adding to her nerves.

WYM
What do you think he'll be like?

ELEANOR
I have no idea.

WYM
What are you going to ask him?

ELEANOR
Still figuring that out actually.

WYM
What has he been doing--

ELEANOR
Wym.

She places her hand on his shoulder to calm down.

WYM
Sorry. Just excited for you.

Robbie watches them smile at each other from the back seat and he doesn't like it one bit.

ROBBIE
You ask a lot of questions.

WYM
Maybe that's why your mother and I get along so well. The solution to every problem begins with someone simply asking the right question.

Robbie is unimpressed.

WYM
Give it a shot. Ask me anything.

ROBBIE
Anything?

Wym nods. Robbie looks to Eleanor. She encourages him, albeit with a slight nervousness. Robbie leans in aggressively.

ROBBIE
Is "Wym" your real name?

WYM
Wymberly deRenne Coerr.

ROBBIE
What do you do, Wymberly?

WYM

I'm between jobs at the moment.

ROBBIE

What was your last job?

WYM

For several years I was the United States Ambassador to Bolivia.

Robbie looks to Eleanor, confused. She confirms it's legit.

ELEANOR

It's in South America.

ROBBIE

Do you speak Spanish?

Wym rattles off a few sentences in PERFECT SPANISH.

WYM (SUBTITLED)

Whenever people ask me if I speak Spanish, this is what I say because it sounds impressive and I've rehearsed it many times.

Robbie has no clue what he said but is clearly impressed.

ROBBIE

Why did you leave Bolivia?

WYM

Revolutionaries attacked the embassy and I was evacuated after days of eating only peanut butter and burning classified information.

Robbie's eyes go wide.

WYM

Not bad for a dork, huh?

He smiles at Robbie, who takes it as a challenge. One he accepts...

ROBBIE

Why did you and your last wife get divorced?

Wym looks back, knowing he can't back down now.

WYM

Sometimes, it's very easy to think
you love someone you actually just
really like at that moment.

ROBBIE

Is that what it's like with your
kids?

ELEANOR

Robbie!

Eleanor is ready to reprimand him, but Wym stops her.

WYM

No. When you have kids you find out
what true, undying love feels like.
And it makes you pay attention when
you miraculously find it again.

Wym affectionately takes hold of Eleanor's hand. Robbie
returns his attention to the window.

ROBBIE

I'm done with this now.

They all settle into riding in silence.

EXT. YALE CAMPUS - DAY

It's a grey winter day in New England.

Eleanor stands outside an OLD TOWNHOUSE, reticent. She
finally walks up the steps and hears something... CLASSICAL
MUSIC. She reaches the door and KNOCKS.

BARBARA HERSEY (40) comes to the door and opens it, the
sounds of the music flood out as she does.

BARBARA

Can I help you?

ELEANOR

I'm sorry to interrupt, but I was
looking for John Hersey...

Barbara looks over her shoulder to the other room.

BARBARA

He's almost done. Would you like to
wait inside?

INT. JOHN HERSEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Eleanor steps in and Barbara closes the door behind her. She then leads her to the back room where the music originates.

Eleanor walks through the house and certain things jump out at her: A poster for the film "A BELL FOR ADONO," a large piece of JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY, and most impressively, a PULITZER PRIZE displayed on the mantle.

Then she sees him, JOHN HERSEY (50s) plays VIOLIN in a STRING QUARTET. With him are an OLDER MAN on VIOLA, an OLDER WOMAN on VIOLIN and a FEMALE STUDENT playing the CELLO.

Eleanor stands with Barbara and watches the beautiful performance reach its grand finale.

Hersey lights up as soon as the last note is played. He compliments the other musicians then looks back to his wife. He sees Eleanor with her and immediately grows suspicious...

INT. JOHN HERSEY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The musicians have gone and it's just Hersey and Eleanor left as he picks up after the performance. He pours himself a glass of scotch.

HERSEY

Drink?

ELEANOR

Not when I'm working.

She pulls out her notepad and pen.

HERSEY

Put that away. It's an awful habit.
Journalists are full of them.

With a bit of difficulty, Eleanor detaches from her tools. She seems unsure of what to do with her hands now.

ELEANOR

I'm sure you appreciate the irony
of you not liking journalists.

HERSEY

Don't confuse irony with hypocrisy.

ELEANOR

I wish I could write that down.

Hersey cracks a smile.

HERSEY

Why are you here?

ELEANOR

I'm writing an article about Hiroshima, what it's like today and the lingering effects--

HERSEY

No, that part I get. I want to know why you're at my house. What do you want from me?

She's caught off-guard. It's a question she asks herself.

ELEANOR

Your reporting from '45, your account of the bomb, it inspired me. I want to expose the reality of the long-term fallout the way you exposed the reality of the bomb itself.

HERSEY

Long-term fallout?

ELEANOR

People being diagnosed with a variety of cancers from radiation exposure that occurred sixteen years ago. Children who weren't even born in '45 now getting sick and dying--

HERSEY

Are you a doctor, Eleanor?

His tone is suddenly hostile. Eleanor doesn't understand.

ELEANOR

No.

HERSEY

A scientist?

ELEANOR

No.

HERSEY

What about a politician? Are you at least a politician?

ELEANOR

Enough. You know what I am.

HERSEY

Yes I do. You're a wannabe
journalist who's also a wannabe
activist. Neither of which qualify
you to get the job done.

ELEANOR

Excuse me?

HERSEY

Make a difference, right? That's
why you're here. You saw one too
many Cold War broadcasts and
decided you were the one who could
get through the noise. One good
piece of reporting to change the
world! Am I close?

Eleanor is speechless. She never expected to find herself under attack.

HERSEY

You're not the first one to show up
at my door.

Reeling, Eleanor stands up to leave.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry I bothered you.

HERSEY

No bother at all.

She walks towards the door. Hersey watches her go. She's almost there when she stops... Her skin thickens and any personal feelings she had wash away. Now it's just business.

ELEANOR

No, actually, I'm not sorry. I just drove seven hours to get here and I'm not leaving until I ask you a couple questions. Now, you're completely indifferent to what I said, which means you're either a heartless bastard or you already knew. Or both.

Hersey looks almost glad she turned around.

HERSEY

Back then they called it the Atomic Plague. It's a living, breathing nightmare.

ELEANOR

Why has no one reported on it? Why have you not reported on it?

HERSEY

There have been reports.

Eleanor doesn't understand.

HERSEY

I'm sorry to ruin your expose, but there is nothing to uncover here. There are no men in black suits hiding the truth. This information is out there. It's everywhere. The problem is no one wants to hear it.

ELEANOR

No, the media bans and censorship--

HERSEY

Have all been lifted for years. The government laid the sand, but it's the public who choose to bury their heads in it. Your enemy is not conspiracy, it's indifference.

She's floored by what she's hearing.

HERSEY

You want to write something down, here it is: there are no stories that haven't been told, only ones that nobody cares about. It's not enough to tell them the facts, you have to make them care.

Her desperation grows as she begins to think he's right...

ELEANOR

How?

HERSEY

I can't answer that.

ELEANOR

But you did it!

HERSEY

(snaps)

What did I do? Huh?

(MORE)

HERSEY (CONT'D)

I took note of people's misery and suffering, and a lot of people read it and patted me on the back, but we're still just standing around waiting for the next one to drop! So, please, tell me what exactly you think I did because I'm guessing it sounds a lot better coming from you.

His anguish devastates Eleanor. She searches for an answer...

ELEANOR

You told the truth.

HERSEY

Yeah, and here we are... A couple pennies at the bottom of a well.

Hersey composes himself and finishes his drink.

HERSEY

I'm sorry you drove all this way.

He can't look her in the eye as he waits for her to leave. This time Eleanor is more than happy to do so.

INT. WYM'S CAR - NIGHT

Wym drives and Robbie sleeps in the back. Eleanor stares out at the miles of deserted highway stretching all around them.

INT. COERR HOME - DAY

Eleanor stands by the phone, the cord stretched as far as it will go as she paces back and forth.

ELEANOR

That's absolutely unacceptable! It was half the price in 1946! I don't care if it is an airplane! Put your manager on please, I'll wait...

She doesn't notice Robbie PEEK HIS HEAD around the corner, then when he's sure she's distracted, sneak past.

INT. COERR HOME - OFFICE - DAY

The wall of Eleanor's office is a maze of DATES, NAMES and other pieces of information Eleanor has collected. Her desk is just as big of a mess.

Robbie quietly enters on a mission of curious investigation. The excitement of doing something he knows he shouldn't pulses in his veins.

He TAPS a few keys on the typewriter. He flips through her notes. He then sees the PAPER CRANE. He grabs it, intrigued, then sees the flyer about SADAKO SASAKI. He looks at the picture and the ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS that are now attached...

"SADAKO SASAKI: BORN JANUARY 7, 1943. DIED OCTOBER 25, 1955."

The young girl he's looking at is dead. This rattles him.

He notices PHOTOS FROM THE BOMB on the desk and looks through them. He gets to an IMAGE OF A CHARRED BODY...

He looks back to the photo of Sadako and begins to connect the horrible dots in his mind. Upset, he recoils backwards and BUMPS into the desk. Eleanor's PAPERS SCATTER EVERYWHERE.

Terrified by what he saw, and now terrified by what he's just done, Robbie drops the stack of photos on the floor.

ELEANOR (O.S.)
Robbie?

She enters the room and sees him over the mess he's made.

ROBBIE
I'm sorry, Mommy. I'm really sorry.

ELEANOR
Dammit, Robbie! You know you're not allowed in here! What were you thinking?

Robbie's scared and doesn't answer.

ELEANOR
Robert Hicks Jr. I asked you a question!

ROBBIE
I said I was sorry!

Tears running down his face, he runs away. She hears his DOOR SLAM from across the house.

Eleanor immediately regrets that. She bends over to clean up the papers and sees what they are:

PICTURES FROM HIROSHIMA: BURNS. SCARS. DEVASTATION. TRAGEDY. She sees this all from her son's eyes. He must be terrified.

Then she sees Sadako's story and the origami crane. She gets an idea...

INT. COERR HOME - ROBBIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Robbie sits with his back against the door and his knees pulled to his chest. He angrily wipes tears from his cheeks.

A SQUARE PIECE OF PAPER slides underneath the door next...

ELEANOR (O.S.)
Make a wish.

He's intrigued, but fights his urge to pick it up.

INT. COERR HOME - NIGHT

Eleanor leans her back against the door and slides down to the floor, just like Robbie.

ELEANOR
The first time I went to Japan,
when your dad was there, it was one
of the happiest times of my life.
When I found out I was pregnant
with you, my friend Mieko gave me
an origami crane. She said it would
bring us luck...

Eleanor trails off for a moment. She picks up a piece of paper she brought for herself.

ELEANOR
I think you and I could use some
good luck right about now. What do
you say? Should we give it a shot?

She hears him PICK UP THE PAPER and smiles.

ELEANOR
Listen carefully, okay? Thirteen
steps, twenty-four folds... Step
one: fold the edges together to a
triangle. Then do the same the
other way...

Eleanor goes through EACH STEP, speaking through the door the whole time and folding her own page to match.

As she folds, she gets lost in it. There is power in this.

The folds become more complicated. She messes up and laughs. If she's having problems, Robbie surely is as well. But they're in it together. Eleanor's crane takes shape...

ELEANOR

Now, the last step is to very gently pull on the wings as you blow into the body...

She blows into the paper and holds the tiny, delicate piece of origami in her hands.

ELEANOR

And watch it come alive...

The door opens. Robbie steps out, hands behind his back...

ELEANOR

Well? How did we do?

He reveals a CRUMPLED BALL OF PAPER that in no way resembles a crane.

ELEANOR

Oh my word. You're a prodigy.

Robbie suddenly throws his arms around her.

ROBBIE

You'll come back right?

ELEANOR

Of course, baby. I promise. I'm coming right back.

INT. COERR HOME - LATER

Wym walks in the door after a long day and sees Eleanor's office light on. He curiously walks over and sees...

Robbie asleep, origami cranes scattered around him.

And Eleanor, at her wall of research, energetically moving around various notes and photos.

WYM

Ellie?

She turns around, mind racing still. His expression begs her for an explanation.

ELEANOR

The girl, Wym. Sadako. She isn't a part of the story. She is the story.

He looks past her to the wall where SADAKO'S PICTURE has been pinned at the epicenter of it all.

FADE TO:

EXT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - DAY

STORM CLOUDS gather over the hospital. It begins to rain. The rain drips steadily from the leaves of the maple trees.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - KENJI'S ROOM - DAY

The rain splatters against the window of Kenji's room where HIS BED HAS BEEN STRIPPED and his belongings removed.

A PICTURE OF KENJI is on the floor outside the room, CANDLES AND FLOWERS beside it.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - DAY

Sadako is inconsolable. She screams, she cries so hard. She grabs a string of cranes from the ceiling and RIPS IT DOWN. The cranes fall from the string and scatter on the floor. She rips down another and another.

Fujiko bursts in the door. She finds Sadako on the floor, and falls down with her. Sadako rocks in her mother's arms.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fujiko is asleep on a chair in the room. Sadako watches her from the bed. She appears numb after a long day of crying. Convinced her mother is asleep, she creeps out of the room.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sadako stands at the far end of the hallway. She looks down the LONG, DARK TUNNEL, determined. She gets into her RUNNER'S STANCE and takes a few breaths...

THEN SHE RUNS.

As hard as she can, she runs down the hallway. Her breath quickens and her chest heaves. She watches the end of the hall come up fast...

But then her vision begins to blur. She clutches her chest. Her legs fail her, no matter how hard she wills them not to.

The end of the hallway seems suddenly very far.

Sadako falls to her knees, painfully out of breath. She looks to the end of the hall and her eyes go wide with terror...

THE WOLF IS THERE. It stands frozen, staring, its big eyes pierce right through her.

Sadako FAINTS.

A voice comes in muffled...

NURSE SATOMI (O.S.)
Sadako! Sadako!

Nurse Satomi runs over and pulls her into her arms. SADAKO OPENS HER EYES. She sees Nurse Satomi, then looks to the end of the hallway. The wolf has gone.

Sadako takes in her surroundings as something dawns on her. She looks to the nurse, eyes heavy...

SADAKO
Please do not tell the doctor.

NURSE SATOMI
I'm sorry, Sadako, but he needs to know so he can help you.

SADAKO
If he finds out, he won't let me go home for the weekend and that is what I need more than anything.
Please, Nurse... I want to go home.

Nurse Satomi considers...

EXT. SASAKI HOUSE / BARBER SHOP - DAY

Sadako, very weak, is helped by Fujiko up to their entrance.

Shigeo is inside with a row of CUSTOMERS. He sees her through the window and immediately stops what he's doing. He runs outside and wraps her into a hug.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

Shigeo carries Sadako into the house and sets her down on a cushion in the main room. Mitsue and Eiji run in to welcome her. She's so glad to see them.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Sadako's RECORD plays in the background as the family sits together with PAPER LANTERNS on the ground. A communal bowl of INK is between them and they each have PAINT BRUSHES, which they use to write on the lanterns.

SADAKO

*Is it alright if I don't write
Grandma Matsu on mine?*

SHIGEO

What will you write?

SADAKO

Kenji.

Shigeo is sad for his daughter's loss. He nods.

FUJIKO

*My lantern will be for Kenji as
well.*

Her mother's gesture means a lot to her. Sadako dips her brush in ink and writes KENJI on her lantern.

EXT. MEMORIAL PEACE PARK - EVENING

The peace park is full of PEOPLE. From all over Japan, they come to pay their respects and remember those lost on this tenth anniversary of the atomic bomb.

The Sasaki family walk up to the park with their lanterns. They pass a MAN with BURNS over much of his body. He reads a poem to a SMALL AUDIENCE:

BURNED MAN

*Give back my father,
Give back my mother...
Give grandpa back, grandma back;
Give our sons and daughters back.*

Sadako hears the poem and stops. Her family stops with her. She remembers this from school, but it sounds completely different. Maybe it's the man reading, or maybe it's her, but now she understands so much more.

BURNED MAN
*Give me back myself.
 Give back the human race,
 As long as this life lasts,
 Give peace back to us,
 Peace that will never end.*

The man steps down from the soapbox but Sadako doesn't move. She's left almost in a trance by the poem.

FUJIKO
Sadako?

She turns to her mother who waits, her arm outstretched. Sadako takes her hand and the family carries on.

EXT. OTA RIVER - NIGHT

The family wait their turn to get to the bank of the river. All around them and in front, PEOPLE PLACE LANTERNS IN THE WATER and watch as they FLOAT AWAY.

It is finally their turn. Shigeo lights his candle which he then uses to light everyone else's. Sadako's lantern is lit and she sees "KENJI" illuminated through the paper.

As the rest of her family place their lanterns in the river, she waits until the last moment, then pulls from her pocket a SMALL STRIP OF PAPER. On it, she has written A RIDDLE.

SADAKO (V.O.)
*What can you always see in the dark
 of night, but never in the light?*

Sadako drops the riddle inside the lantern and lets go of it. She watches as "Kenji" floats away...

His lantern joins the THOUSANDS drifting down the river.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - CHILDREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadako is upstairs with her siblings, all sleeping together under the same roof, just the way it used to be. Mitsue and Eiji have already fallen asleep, but Sadako remains awake.

MASAHIRO
Sadako, are you asleep?

SADAKO
*No, I don't want tonight to ever
 end.*

Masahiro nods. They lay awake together.

MASAHIRO
I'm sorry about Kenji.

Sadako nods in gratitude.

MASAHIRO
Mother says you stopped folding cranes. Is that why?

SADAKO
It was a childish game, Masahiro.
It was pointless.

MASAHIRO
I didn't think so.

SADAKO
Well, you're not me, are you?

He can see her spirit's crushed.

MASAHIRO
Do you remember Pikadon?

SADAKO
No. I try to sometimes, but can't.
Do you?

MASAHIRO
I remember I was inside our house then I blinked and I was outside in the garden and I was terrified. It was so hot and my ears were ringing and I was lost. It was as if I was in a different world. Then I heard you cry. And I remember thinking, "Sadako is here, I must be home. Sadako is here, it will be okay."

Masahiro begins to cry. Sadako takes her brother's hands.

SADAKO
Don't worry... I'm still here.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - DAY

Sadako stands alone in her room and stares at HER CRANES, scattered across the floor where she ripped them down...

And begins to HANG THEM BACK ON THE CEILING.

Soon, the room is filled with them again. She sits down and admires them with new eyes. She reaches for her morning pills, laid beside her bed in their paper wrapping.

After she takes her pills, she begins to fold a new crane...

FADE TO:

EXT. IWAMOTO FARM - EVENING

A CAR pulls down the long road to the farm.

It stops outside and Eleanor steps out. The car drives away.

The PORCH LIGHT turns on and out walks Mieko.

Eleanor drops her bag and hurries up to the door. Mieko meets her at the base of the steps and they hug.

INT. IWAMOTO HOUSE - NIGHT

Eleanor and Mieko are deep in a bottle of SAKE. PHOTOS OF ROBBIE are on the table, as well as PHOTOS OF MIEKO'S CHILDREN. Mieko now speaks decent English.

MIEKO

We did not know why you came. We assumed you were a criminal.

ELEANOR

If you thought I was a criminal why did you let me into your house?

Mieko shrugs.

MIEKO

Thirty dollars is thirty dollars.

They laugh. Katashi emerges from the back, looking angry. With a look he tells his wife all he needs to, but once he's gone, Mieko pours more sake for them.

ELEANOR

Your English is so good. To think, there was a time when we couldn't speak in any language and now we have two to choose from.

MIEKO

Better late than never.

The mood softens as they reflect on the past.

MIEKO

I am very sorry to hear about Major
Hicks. He was a good man.

ELEANOR

Yes, he was. A great one.

Mieko picks up a PICTURE OF ROBBIE.

MIEKO

That must have been very difficult.

ELEANOR

It was... Still is, to be honest.

Eleanor takes the picture.

ELEANOR

It's hard to stay a child once
you've experienced loss like that.
He's different from the other boys
his age. He always will be. I know
that and I love that about him. I
really do... But also, I would give
anything to see him believe in
something wonderful again.

Mieko understands the desire.

MIEKO

What about you?

ELEANOR

What do you mean?

MIEKO

Can you believe in something
wonderful?

Eleanor thinks about it and eventually smiles, unsure.

ELEANOR

We'll see, I guess.

Mieko smiles. It's a good start.

ELEANOR

I can't believe I'm going back. I
said I never would.

MIEKO

I will go with you.

ELEANOR

I couldn't ask you to do that. I
know how you feel about Hiroshima.

MIEKO

Feelings change.

Mieko begins to tidy up.

ELEANOR

All because of Sadako?

The question gives Mieko pause, then...

MIEKO

Japanese value honor above all and
there is no honor in defeat. For
years, Hiroshima and its people
were a reminder of our greatest
shame, when our honor was taken
from us... When I heard about this
young girl who fought until her
last breath and folded her cranes
until her fingers bled, I saw the
spirit of Japan that I grew up
believing in. Sadako died with
honor. And she makes me very proud.

This is as emotional as Mieko gets. Then she continues to
tidy up. Eleanor marvels at her friend from the table.

EXT. HIROSHIMA MEMORIAL PEACE PARK - DAY

Eleanor stands at the center of the park, next to a cleared
section where something is UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

The debris is gone. New trees and flowers have been planted.
It's built-up so much from the destruction she remembers.

A MONTAGE OF ELEANOR LEARNING ABOUT SADAKO BEGINS --

Mieko helps translate while Eleanor interviews:

- Sadako's teacher, MR. NOMURA, in Sadako's old classroom.
- TOMIKO, while they walk around the track at the school.
- At the hospital with DOCTOR NUMATA.
- In Sadako's old room with NURSE SATOMI. PIN MARKS remain on
the ceiling from where her paper cranes used to hang. There
are TWO NEW PATIENTS in the room. They both light up when
asked about Sadako.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - LOBBY - DAY

A MEMORIAL OF SADAKO hangs on the wall. Below it are FLOWERS, CANDLES, LETTERS, and PAPER CRANES.

ELEANOR'S REFLECTION appears in the glass of the frame.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out her paper crane and sets it under the picture with the others.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - NIGHT

The barber shop is CLOSED UP. The entrance is SHUTTERED.

Eleanor stands outside with Mieko who speaks to a NEIGHBOR. The women exchange bows and Mieko solemnly turns to Eleanor.

MIEKO

I'm sorry, Eleanor. She thinks they went to Shigeo's family in Hokkaido, but no one is sure.

Undeterred, Eleanor stares up at the lifeless house--

A GROUP OF BOYS run past her, a BASEBALL being thrown between them. As she watches the boys play in the street, she gets an intense longing for her home...

INT. WYM'S CAR - DAY

Wym drives Robbie to school. The mood is somber, quiet, as it has been since Eleanor left them alone.

A SCHOOL BUS in front of them makes a turn, but their car keeps going straight. Robbie is confused.

ROBBIE

Wym, the school is that way.

WYM

You're not going to school. My morning meeting was cancelled and it seems like a rare opportunity to have some fun, don't you think?

This is nuts.

EXT. CINEMA - DAY

Robbie walks alongside Wym up to the cinema. The marquee displays the film: GODZILLA.

INT. CINEMA - DAY

Robbie stares wide-eyed up at the original black and white classic on the big screen. He's never seen anything like it.

EXT. COERR HOME - DAY

Wym and Robbie get out of the car, still excited from their day of playing hookie. Robbie is in a particularly good mood as they walk up to the house.

He notices an ENVELOPE poking out of the MAILBOX and grabs it. It's ADDRESSED TO HIM and covered in JAPANESE STAMPS.

WYM
Open it already!

Robbie tears it open and pulls out a LETTER. He looks down at it and reads below "MY DEAREST ROBBIE (AND WYM)..."

ELEANOR (V.O.)
Sadako's story is even more
remarkable than I imagined. I have
learned so much about her, but
there is one piece missing...

EXT. YONAGO TOWN - DAY

A BUS kicks up a huge cloud of dust as it rolls into town.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
Her family. I've been told that
they went to Hokkaido but nobody
knows for sure.

Eleanor waits alongside Mieko. In her hand is a MAP OF HOKKAIDO with several LOCATIONS CIRCLED.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
I found every elementary school in
Hokkaido and will visit each one.
If the family is there, the
children must be at one of them.

As the bus approaches, Eleanor and Mieko hug. PEOPLE ON THE BUS stare out the window, but neither of them cares.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
While I hate the idea of staying
away from you any longer, I have
come too far to give up now.

INT. BUS - DAY

Eleanor takes her seat on the bus and waves to Mieko through the window as the bus rolls away.

ELEANOR (V.O.)
Your continued support has meant
everything to me. I promise to come
home as soon as I possibly can.

She looks down at the map again. Her search begins...

ELEANOR (V.O.)
All my love, Mom (Ellie).

EXT. JAPANESE CITY/COUNTRYSIDE - DAY/NIGHT

And takes her from BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE...

To CROWDED CITY...

And back into the COUNTRY.

EXT. CARGO PIER - DAY

Eleanor talks to a FISHERMAN about getting on a boat. He refuses to take her money and turns his back to her.

She walks to the next dock where LIVESTOCK is being loaded. She finds the CAPTAIN on the dock and offers him cash...

INT. BELOW-DECK - EVENING

Below deck, alongside CRATES OF CHICKENS, Eleanor rolls out a sleeping mat. Home for the night.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Robbie sits on the school bus, surrounded by kids excited to be done with school. He looks out the window as they roll up to the bus stop...

A CROWD OF MOTHERS wait for their children...

But Eleanor isn't one of them.

EXT. BOAT DECK - MORNING

Eleanor stares out as they approach HOKKAIDO ISLAND.

EXT. SMALL CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Eleanor enters the first elementary school, map in hand.

INT. SMALL CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

She sits with the PRINCIPAL and shows him the Sasaki names. He shakes his head no.

EXT. INCREASINGLY MORE REMOTE SCHOOLS - DAY

Eleanor continues on her journey, but in each school she only receives more rejection with the SHAKING HEADS of PRINCIPAL after PRINCIPAL.

Eleanor CROSSES OFF one school after another. It's starting to wear her down and is taking much longer than she had hoped.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

Eleanor enters a guest-house for the night. Her breath is a puff of cold air. She falls to the tatami mat.

EXT. ROBBIE'S BUS STOP - DAY

Robbie steps off the school bus in a crowd of kids that immediately run to their parents.

Soon enough he's the only kid left. He puts on a brave face and starts his walk home.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Eleanor steps out of a remote mountain school, SNOW blankets the ground around her.

In a sudden fit of frustration, Eleanor CRUMPLES HER MAP and tosses it. She throws her bag to the ground, exhausted. She can't do this anymore...

A RUSTLING gets her attention and she looks up to see...

A WOLF.

It stands regally at the edge of the forest ahead of her. A beautiful and powerful animal. It locks eyes with her for several seconds, then runs off, disappearing into the forest.

Eleanor catches her breath... Then collects her things and grabs her map before it blows off in the wind.

INT. HOSTEL - NIGHT

Eleanor sits at a desk and stares at her map. There's only one school left: her last chance.

INT. OCEANSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Eleanor TAPS HER FINGERS on the counter at reception. Her nerves are all over the place.

An OLD TEACHER comes out carrying a register.

OLD TEACHER

Follow me.

Eleanor can't even process what this means. She fights to keep her expectations in check as she is led out of his office into a LONG WOODEN HALLWAY, past CLASSROOMS filled with YOUNG CHILDREN. They stop outside a classroom...

OLD TEACHER

Wait here, please.

Eleanor watches him first speak to the teacher inside then approach a GIRL, who looks almost identical to Sadako. The likeness makes Eleanor gasp. This is actually happening...

MITSUE SASAKI follows the teacher out to Eleanor in the hallway. Eleanor bows.

OLD TEACHER

Mrs. Coerr, this is Mitsue Sasaki.

ELEANOR

It is an honor to meet you.

Mitsue looks from Eleanor to her teacher, completely confused. Eleanor needs the teacher to translate now.

ELEANOR

My name is Eleanor Coerr. I've travelled all the way from America because I'm writing a story about your sister, Sadako, and I wish to speak to your parents.

As the teacher translates, Mitsue's expression changes drastically. Eleanor can't tell if it's amazement or despair or something in between. She grabs a LETTER from her bag.

ELEANOR
Please, Mitsue, will you deliver
this note to them?

The teacher translates. Mitsue thinks. Finally, she takes the LETTER and returns to her class. Eleanor is almost there...

EXT. NEW SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

Mitsue runs home from school and up to a small house with little surrounding it.

INT. NEW SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

Fujiko is inside sorting the laundry. Masahiro is nearby helping with chores in the house. Mitsue excitedly comes in.

MITSUE
Mom! Mom! Look...

She runs up to her mother, holding out the note to her.

FUJIKO
What is it?

Mitsue hands her the letter from Eleanor. Fujiko is taken aback while she reads.

Masahiro watches the emotion consume his mother.

FUJIKO
Get to your chores, Mitsue.

MITSUE
But mother--

FUJIKO
Mitsue! Now!

Mitsue sadly walks away, her excitement extinguished. Fujiko drops the letter from Eleanor and retreats to a back room.

Masahiro walks over to the letter and reads for himself...

EXT. OCEANSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - TRACK - DUSK

Eleanor walks around the track and checks her watch. The sun is setting. The growing disappointment is unbearable...

But then she sees Masahiro enter the side of the track. He cautiously walks up to Eleanor and bows.

MASAHIRO

My name is Masahiro Sasaki. I am
Sadako's oldest brother.

ELEANOR

Thank you so much for coming. Did
your parents get my note?

MASAHIRO

I'm sorry to say they do not wish
to speak to you. It is best for our
family if this is not revisited.

Eleanor is clearly gutted.

ELEANOR

Of course. I understand.

MASAHIRO

Did you really come all this way
just to tell Sadako's story?

She nods. It's obvious how personal it is to her.

Masahiro smiles, intrigued, and his mind is made up. He reaches into his jacket pocket and retrieves SADAKO'S JOURNAL. He offers it to her.

ELEANOR

What is this?

MASAHIRO

Sadako's journal. She always had it
with her. Until the very end.

Eleanor can't believe it. She takes the book and flips through the pages and pages of Sadako's writing...

MASAHIRO

I believe my sister would have
wanted you to have it.

She gets to a page at the back where there are TALLY MARKS and runs her fingers over them. They keep going and going.

ELEANOR

She folded more than a thousand...

MASAHIRO

Yes. One thousand, six hundred and
forty-four.

Eleanor does her best to mask her disappointment.

ELEANOR

Why did she keep going?

Masahiro considers, still raw from the heartache.

MASAHIRO

Because we needed her to.

Eleanor looks back to the tally marks...

FADE TO:

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - DAY

As the SUN RISES through the window, Sadako sits on her bed folding her cranes. Even with her swollen hands, the origami takes shape in an extraordinary way.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Sadako sits at a table with Fujiko and carefully folds TINY CRANES out of CANDY WRAPPERS, utilizing her needle technique.

The PURPLE MARKS on her hands and neck have spread. Sadako's fingers shake. It is becoming increasingly difficult.

FUJIKO

Perhaps you should take a break.

SADAKO

I don't need a break. I need more paper.

An OLD WOMAN, a fellow patient, PURPLE MARKS all over her, sits behind them. She overhears the conversation and looks down to the tray in front of her:

Next to her food and water are her PILLS. Wrapped in PAPER.

OLD WOMAN

Sadako?

Sadako and Fujiko look up. The woman holds out THE PAPER HER PILLS WERE WRAPPED IN.

OLD WOMAN

It would be an honor for me if you would accept this as a gift.

Sadako stands and bows to the woman then accepts the paper.

Another PATIENT witnessed what just happened and gets up to give Sadako their paper. Then ANOTHER. And ANOTHER.

Soon, the ENTIRE CAFETERIA has lined up to donate their paper to Sadako, who bows to each and every one of them.

Fujiko is overwhelmed with gratitude.

EXT. HOSPITAL GARDEN - DAY

Sadako sits in a circle with THREE YOUNG PATIENTS and teaches them to fold paper cranes. Although she is clearly very sick, she laughs and engages with the young children.

Sadako sees a YOUNG GIRL off to the side, sad and alone. She walks over to her and hands her the crane she just folded.

SADAKO

*Now you only have nine-hundred and
ninety-nine to go.*

Fujiko sits nearby and watches Sadako lead the girl to the circle with the other children. Her daughter is amazing.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadako gets into bed and stares at all her cranes, hanging from the ceiling, littered around the room. Beside her bed is a stack of ORIGAMI PAPER. She grabs several sheets.

SADAKO

*Nine-hundred and ninety-seven,
ninety-eight, ninety-nine...*

She lifts the page that will become her one thousandth crane. It's GOLD colored. She stares at the gold paper then looks to the cranes all around her.

Sadako grabs a pencil and writes something on the gold paper.

After she's finished writing, she stares at it and smiles, at peace with her decision.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Nurse Satomi is at work behind the desk. Dr. Numata runs by.

DR. NUMATA

Quick, nurse! Now!

Nurse Satomi runs off to the emergency. She follows Numata as he runs INTO SADAKO'S ROOM...

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A CROWD has gathered under the HUNDREDS OF CRANES dangling from the ceiling. All shapes, sizes and colors fill the room.

PATIENTS, DOCTORS, NURSES watch from the back. Mr. Nomura and the students from Bamboo class, led by Tomiko, are all there.

Sadako's family are there up against the bed where Sadako sits, dressed in her kimono, holding the golden origami paper in front of her.

She looks to her family and friends. They are so excited. But as Sadako lifts the paper to fold, her hand trembles. She's done this so many times before, but for some reason, she just can't make the folds.

The excitement in the room dips as people start to wonder what's going on.

Sadako looks to her mother, helpless. But it is too much for Fujiko. She forces a smile, but when Sadako looks away she excuses herself from the room.

Sadako finally begins to fold.

The whole room watches in silence as she makes twenty-four perfect seams and creases.

OUTSIDE HER DOOR -- Fujiko leans against the wall. She takes deep breaths to try and calm down but is losing the fight.

INSIDE, Sadako lifts the bird to her lips, takes a DEEP BREATH and blows the golden crane to life. She holds it in her hand and turns to the crowd.

SADAKO
One thousand.

Fujiko breaks down. The people inside the room APPLAUD for Sadako, but Fujiko just cries harder.

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is just Fujiko and Sadako left. The day has taken a lot out of Sadako and she is worn out. So is Fujiko as she helps her get from the bathroom to her bed. She glances around at the thousand paper cranes hanging off the ceiling.

FUJIKO

*You did it, Sadako. Your father and
I are so very proud.*

Fujiko seems weak. Older, tired, never far away from the next attack of emotions. Sadako watches her with concern.

SADAKO

Are you alright, mother?

FUJIKO

Just a headache. I'll be fine.

SADAKO

You should lay down.

Sadako slides over in bed and clears a space for her. Fujiko considers, then joins Sadako in bed. Their heads lay beside each other, looking up at the thousand cranes... But it's far from the joy of earlier. It's now profoundly sad.

Fujiko can no longer hold it in...

FUJIKO

*I'm sorry, Sadako. I'm so sorry. I
never should have started this.
You've worked so hard and deserve
to have your wish come true. It was
not fair of me to lie to you. I
just didn't know what else to do--*

SADAKO

*It's alright, Mother, it's
alright... My wish will come true.
I know it will.*

Fujiko looks to her daughter, who smiles warmly. For the first time she sees it... There is no delusion here. Sadako knows exactly what is happening and she accepts it bravely.

SADAKO

*Thank you. You have given me a
wonderful gift.*

The weight of her guilt is slowly lifted off Fujiko's shoulders and she becomes exhausted, like she hasn't slept in months. She can't keep her eyes open.

SADAKO

*It's okay to rest, Mother. You must
get some sleep if tomorrow is ever
going to come.*

Sadako strokes her mother's hair and hums to her until she falls asleep.

SHIGEO (V.O.)
Sadako continued folding her cranes until she passed. They were her passion and her wish. Now, they must carry her to the heavens so she may watch over us.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - DAY

THE PHOTOGRAPH OF SADAKO DRESSED IN THE KIMONO is on display.

Shigeo and Fujiko stand at the front of a crowd of MOURNERS with a BOX FULL OF SADAKO'S CRANES.

Fujiko sees Tomiko in the crowd, crying. She approaches and gives her a crane from the box. It's hard for her to let go.

SHIGEO
Please come forward. Sadako would want you all to have one.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

SNOW falls over Hiroshima. Outside the barbershop, Fujiko brushes away snow with a broom before she heads inside.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Shigeo snips away at a CUSTOMER'S hair while Fujiko sweeps. The door opens and Tomiko excitedly runs in.

SHIGEO
Tomiko--

TOMIKO
Sorry, Sensei, but I have news. Wonderful news. Look at this!

Out of breath, she holds up a FLYER with SADAKO'S PICTURE on it (*Note: this is the same flyer Eleanor received*).

TOMIKO
The National Principals' Convention was today. Principals from all over Japan were here in Hiroshima. All the children at school donated their allowances and we printed two thousand of these.

SHIGEO
What does it say?

Tomiko reads out loud.

TOMIKO
*Our dear friend Sadako Sasaki died
 on October twenty-fifth...*

As she continues to read...

INT. NOBORICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The ex-students of BAMBOO CLASS wheel a MIMEOGRAPH MACHINE into their old classroom. They print FLYERS which all have SADAKO's PICTURE on them.

TOMIKO (V.O.)
*She was sick with A-Bomb disease.
 And Sadako fought bravely in the
 hospital for nine long months.*

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER COURTYARD - DAY

Tomiko and the CHILDREN stand outside the CONVENTION CENTER, armed with the flyers. They wait patiently, determined.

TOMIKO (V.O.)
*It was not her war, but she was
 forced to pay the price.*

The doors of the center open and the PRINCIPALS come out. Men dressed sharply in suits, HUNDREDS of them pour out.

TOMIKO (V.O.)
*We do not want her death to be in
 vain, so we, her classmates wish to
 build a statue for Sadako and a
 monument for all the children who
 died because of Pikadon.*

The children are surrounded by the throng of principals. They PASS OUT THE FLYERS and BEG FOR THEIR ATTENTION.

TOMIKO (V.O.)
*We ask you to convey our message to
 all our fellow junior high school
 students throughout the country.
 And encourage them to support us.*

The Principals all read the flyer, all clearly affected. All engage with the children. Some give money immediately.

TOMIKO (V.O.)
*We came today to make this plea.
Will you join us? Will you help?*

Soon, the men have left and the children are once again alone in the courtyard. All of the flyers are GONE.

INT. NOBORICHO SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Campaign headquarters. STUDENTS fly around the classroom, busily producing flyers to raise money for the statue. The walls are filled with posters and leaflets.

A ROUGH DRAWING OF SADAKO'S STATUE hangs on the center wall.

Tomiko leads Shigeo and Fujiko inside. Fujiko is in a world of her own. Everywhere she turns, there is Sadako. Suddenly, her emotions crash in on her and she has to leave the room.

INT. SASAKI HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fujiko sits on the floor next to an open WOODEN BOX. It's filled with SADAKO'S THINGS...

A KOKESHI DOLL.

HER CHERRY BLOSSOM KIMONO.

She picks up Sadako's DIARY, filled with pages of Sadako's beautiful handwriting. Fujiko is awash in painful memory. She closes the diary, and as she does, something catches her eye:

Inside the box are the LAST OF SADAKO'S CRANES. Among them the GOLDEN CRANE, number one thousand.

There's WRITING on it. Fujiko pulls out the crane and reads the writing that Sadako left inscribed on its wings...

Her face hardens. The crane becomes the focus of all her anguish and she CRUSHES IT in her hand.

FADE TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Robbie has his head pressed against the window as they pull up to the bus stop. The crowd of mothers are there as usual, but this time...

ELEANOR IS THERE.

EXT. BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

Robbie steps off the bus, almost in disbelief that she's there. He seems hesitant to accept it...

Eleanor tears up at the sight of him. She opens her arms...

And he runs to her. They embrace and she lifts him off the ground, a feeling of wholeness returning to them both.

INT. COERR HOME - ROBBIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The bed is covered with ORIGAMI CRANES. Eleanor and Robbie sit together amongst them, a new closeness between them.

ROBBIE

I wish I could have helped her.

ELEANOR

What do you mean?

ROBBIE

Get to a thousand. Then her wish would have come true.

Eleanor opens her mouth to correct him but the words don't come out...

Robbie looks up at her, hope in his eyes...

ROBBIE

How many did she fold?

As she looks at her son's concerned face, the weight of her reply fully dawns on her. She has only a split-second to make the right choice for her son and speaks from the heart.

ELEANOR

Six hundred and forty-four.

He's disappointed, but the magic of the story is still alive. He begins to do the math in his head, using his fingers to keep count. Eleanor smiles, intrigued.

ROBBIE

Three hundred and fifty-six. That's how many I need to fold.

Eleanor is taken aback by the sentiment. She's in awe of her son's compassion for a girl he never met.

ELEANOR

Are you sure? That could take us a while...

ROBBIE

I'm sure.

ELEANOR

Alright then, Captain. Let's get started.

Robbie's enthusiasm falters slightly...

ROBBIE

Dad used to call me Captain.

ELEANOR

I remember. Do you want me to stop?

ROBBIE

No. I like it.

They get started on their mission together.

And that's when it hits her. Suddenly she knows exactly what needs to be done...

INT. COERR HOME - OFFICE - DAY

The typewriter keys attack the page like a hailstorm; the words flow through Eleanor and onto the page.

The joy and sadness, tragedy and hope, all coming back to life in the story.

SADAKO'S JOURNAL is open on the desk beside her...

DAYS PASS while ELEANOR TYPES and we see FLASHBACKS OF SADAKO woven with moments of ELEANOR, WYM AND ROBBIE FOLDING CRANES.

INT. COERR HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Eleanor flips through the PAGES OF HER MANUSCRIPT, crossing things out and making notes.

Sadako's journal is near-by, open to the final page with the TALLY MARKS. Eleanor looks to it, contemplative...

WYM (O.S.)

Ellie.

She turns around to see Wym and Robbie with a long STRAND OF CRANES held between them.

ELEANOR

Oh my word! They're beautiful!

She gets out of her chair and walks over to it, running her hand down the line. She looks to Robbie.

ELEANOR

What should we do with them all?

He clearly has something very important in mind...

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

The sun sets behind a TOMBSTONE decorated with MILITARY MEDALS. The inscription reads:

"LT. ROBERT J. HICKS. 1915-1953."

Robbie lays his paper cranes on his father's grave.

Eleanor leans down and kisses the top of his head.

They stay there for a while, hand-in-hand, mourning their loss but also finding the strength to move forward.

When they're ready, they turn away and walk back to the car where Wym waits for them.

INT. ELEANOR'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Eleanor picks up her manuscript. Her mind races as she flips to THE LAST PAGE...

"IN THE END, SADAKO FOLDED WELL OVER A THOUSAND CRANES..."

With an inspired smile, she CRUMPLES IT UP.

A BLANK PAGE goes in the typewriter and Eleanor types out a new ending:

"BEFORE SHE WENT TO SLEEP, SADAKO MANAGED TO FOLD ONLY ONE PAPER CRANE. SIX HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR... IT WAS THE LAST ONE SHE EVER MADE."

She sits back and looks at what she just wrote, taking her last chance to reconsider... But her mind is made up.

EXT. COERR HOME - DAWN

THE PAPERBOY delivers newspapers along the street.

INT. COERR HOME - MORNING

Robbie comes out of his room and is surprised to see Wym outside Eleanor's office looking in. Wym holds his finger to his lips. Robbie walks over and looks inside for himself...

Eleanor is fast asleep with her head down on the desk. Next to her is a THIN MANUSCRIPT. Robbie reads the title:

"SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES: A CHILDREN'S STORY"

ROBBIE
It's a kid's book?

FADE OUT.

EXT. BENTON PUBLISHERS - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Eleanor, dressed as sharp as ever, walks into a large high-rise. A SIGN on the entrance reads: "Benton Publishers".

INT. BENTON PUBLISHERS - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor sits with her PORTFOLIO on her lap. All around her are images of FRIENDLY ANIMALS and SMILING, HAPPY CHILDREN.

Beside her is a man, TODD, nervously shuffling in his seat. He holds a BIG DRAWING OF A CARTOON MOOSE. Eleanor stares.

TODD
His name is Monty Moose. He was kidnapped from his home in Alaska and now has to trek across America to get home. What's yours about?

ELEANOR
A girl who died from leukemia.

The smile fades from Todd's face and he looks around him.

TODD
Wait, am I in the right place?

Eleanor is thinking the same thing.

INT. BENTON PUBLISHERS - BOARD ROOM - DAY

Eleanor sits at a long table, opposite MEL BENTON (30s), who has a smile so wide it looks like it hurts.

MEL

I don't beat around the bush, Mrs. Coerr, so let me just come out and say I love this book.

ELEANOR

You do?

MEL

Absolutely. Great story. Kids will love Sadako. Plus all the stuff with the paper? That's great stuff.

Eleanor thinks she might cry. It's overwhelming her.

ELEANOR

I knew it. This story wants to be told, it always has--

MEL

Hold up one second now...

The brakes are hit. Eleanor comes back down to Earth.

MEL

I love the story. I love the writing. But I am a little worried the book isn't quite...

He searches for the right way to say it. It hits him.

MEL

Fitting our brand.

ELEANOR

So you don't want the story?

MEL

No, no, I do. Just with a few changes...

ELEANOR

Changes? Like what?

INT. PUBLISHER #2'S OFFICE - DAY

Eleanor sits in front of a different man (PUBLISHER #2), but the ART ON THE WALLS and entire office is eerily similar.

PUBLISHER #2

For starters, why does Sadako have to be Japanese? Why can't she be an American?

Eleanor can't tell if he's joking. It becomes clear he isn't.

ELEANOR

There was never a bomb dropped in America.

INT. PUBLISHER #3'S OFFICE - DAY

Another day, another suit.

PUBLISHER #3

That's another thing. Maybe we just leave out the whole bomb stuff.

Eleanor is more confused than anything else.

ELEANOR

Then how does she get leukemia?

INT. PUBLISHER #4'S OFFICE - DAY

PUBLISHER #4 is the least likeable yet.

PUBLISHER #4

This is the best part, ready? She doesn't. Her pet crane does. Her pet crane, who can absolutely be Japanese, was there for the bomb then flew to America, is the one that gets sick and dies. Sadako lives!

ELEANOR

But she's dead...

INT. PUTNAM PUBLISHERS - DAY

MR. WINTON is different from the other publishers, older with more authority, but his message remains the same.

MR. WINTON

Look. Mrs. Coerr. My job is to get our books in front of as many kids as possible. As it is, this story is just too dark, too difficult, and frankly, too real for children.

Eleanor gathers herself to make her plea. She's not going to let this go again without a fight.

ELEANOR

Mr. Winton, Sadako's story is difficult, yes, but that is what makes it special. Despite her immense suffering, Sadako somehow still lived her life filled with hope. That's what children pick up on when they hear this story... Hope. It's us, the parents, that choose to focus on everything else.

She's got his attention now and doesn't let it go.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

But we can't let our fear stop us from giving our children the information they need. If you tell a kid two hundred thousand people died, they just don't get it. The numbers are simply too large to comprehend. But one little girl? They identify with that girl. They feel they know her because she's just like them. And they want to help her. Can you imagine the power of a generation growing up with this girl in their hearts?

She's said everything she can. The choice is now his...

TEACHER (V.O.)

Children, I want you to give a very warm and special welcome to Eleanor Coerr, who has come today to talk to you about her new book...

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Eleanor stands in front of a CLASSROOM FULL OF CHILDREN.

The TEACHER holds up a first edition copy of her book, with a beautifully DRAWN ILLUSTRATION of Sadako on the cover...

TEACHER

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.

ELEANOR

Thank you and hello, everyone.
Today, I would like to tell you a
true story and while I do, I want
to show you how to turn this--

She lifts up a SQUARE OF PAPER.

ELEANOR

Into this.

She lifts up an ORIGAMI CRANE. The children's eyes light up.

ELEANOR

So what do you say? Do you want to
hear a story?

The response is an emphatic "yes." Eleanor beams and begins
to tell the class about Sadako and the thousand paper cranes--

CUT TO:

ABC NEWS REPORT FOOTAGE:

THOUSANDS of copies of ELEANOR'S BOOK roll off a printing
press. The ILLUSTRATED COVER then fills the screen.

REPORTER (V.O.)

You may not have heard of the book
Sadako and the Thousand Paper
Cranes, but the odds are that your
children have.

The report cuts to ELEANOR in front of a class of children,
teaching them how to fold a paper crane. Eleanor walks around
the room while the REPORT CONTINUES:

REPORTER (V.O.)

The author, Eleanor Coerr, has
spent years travelling to
elementary schools around the
country and telling the story of
Sadako Sasaki, a young Japanese
girl who died of leukemia caused by
the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.
Sadako took comfort in an old
legend that said if she could fold
a thousand origami cranes then the
gods would grant her wish and make
her well.

(MORE)

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She only managed to fold six hundred and forty-four before she died, so now Mrs. Coerr invites children to complete Sadako's cranes and make their own wishes. But what are they wishing for?

The FOOTAGE cuts to INTERVIEWS with children (REAL FOOTAGE).

CHILD 1
My wish is for no more bombs.

CHILD 2
We want peace. We don't want what happened to Sadako to happen again.

CHILD 3
I think that they should think before they drop bombs. Think of all the children that should have the chance to live.

ELEANOR
Children want to do something. But they think I'm only a child, what can I do? Folding the paper cranes allows them a way to express their feelings and do something to let the world know they want peace.

The report cuts to an overhead shot of Hiroshima.

REPORTER (V.O.)
The next stop for Mrs. Coerr is back to Hiroshima, where the Mayor has invited her to bring all the cranes she's been given over the years to the statue of Sadako Sasaki. Just maybe the wishes of the world's children can come true after all...

INT. AIRPLANE

In a row of FIRST CLASS SEATS, sit BAGS filled with THOUSANDS and THOUSANDS OF PAPER CRANES.

BACK IN COACH, Eleanor sits next to Wym, who is asleep against the window, and ROBBIE (now 18). She nervously checks on her precious cargo ahead.

ROBBIE
Nervous?

ELEANOR

No, they seem secure up there.
Better be with the cost of the
tickets.

ROBBIE

Not about the cranes, Mom.

ELEANOR

What else would I be nervous about?
I've been there before.

ROBBIE

Yeah, but never with the weight of
thousands of wishes on your back.

ELEANOR

I don't get nervous, dear. You
should know that by now.

With a smile, he closes his eyes to rest. As soon as he does, Eleanor's cool exterior disappears. She is so damn nervous. She hears a commotion down the aisle and turns to look...

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT speaks panicked Japanese with an OLD MAN TRYING TO TAKE OFF HIS PANTS.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

*Sensei, please! We don't do that
anymore! Leave your pants on!*

Eleanor can't contain her smile. A lot has changed...

EXT. HIROSHIMA MEMORIAL PEACE PARK - DAY

The TREES in the peace park have grown tall and lush, thriving in the rebuilt park.

The whole place is abuzz with activity as WORKERS and TOURISTS get ready for the big anniversary ceremony.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - HIROSHIMA - EARLY MORNING

A traditional Japanese hotel room is filled with BAGS AND BAGS OF PAPER CRANES. They are everywhere. Eleanor writes away at a desk, as she's done so many times before.

Wym exits the bathroom in a SUIT and TIE and joins Robbie who's been waiting for him.

WYM

Tie or no tie?

He models the suit with tie look. Robbie considers.

ROBBIE
No tie. You look like an
undertaker.

WYM
Well, this has been quite the
undertaking.

Tumbleweeds. Eleanor and Robbie look to each other.

ROBBIE
They just get worse.

ELEANOR
I know.

ROBBIE
We're going to head down to catch
some of the preparations.

ELEANOR
I'll be right behind you.

Wym kisses her on the cheek as they leave.

WYM
Don't be long now.

The door closes behind them. Eleanor goes back to her work...

A few moments later, A KNOCK at the door interrupts her.
Frustrated, she gets up and crosses to the door.

ELEANOR
What have you two forgotten--

She is stunned to see FUJIKO (50s) in her doorway, stoic and poised. Eleanor knows immediately who it is, and after the initial shock, bows deeply.

ELEANOR
Mrs. Sasaki. It is an honor.

Fujiko speaks in broken, but serviceable English.

FUJIKO
Fujiko, please. May I come in?

ELEANOR
Of course.

Eleanor notices that in Fujiko's hands is a copy of her book: "SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES."

Fujiko sees the PAPER CRANES all around the room and notices all the individual wishes written on the cranes.

FUJIKO

Where do they all come from?

ELEANOR

Everywhere. Children mostly, but not always. I get more every day from all over the world.

Fujiko lifts up a STRAND OF CRANES and admires it. She has to take a seat to collect herself.

ELEANOR

I hoped you would be here. I have something that belongs to you...

She walks to her suitcase and retrieves SADAKO'S JOURNAL. Fujiko can't hide the bittersweet emotion of having it back. She walks to the window and looks out over the city.

FUJIKO

After Sadako died, I could not stand the sight of this place. The house she slept in. The streets she ran down. The school she loved with all her heart.

Fujiko takes a moment to steady herself. Eleanor offers her a handkerchief, which she uses to dry her eyes.

FUJIKO

But a question brought me back. One answer I need from you, Eleanor. In your book, you said Sadako only folded six hundred and forty four cranes. But that's not true. She folded many more and you knew that.

Fujiko holds up the journal as proof. Eleanor has known that some day she would have to answer for this.

FUJIKO

Why did you do it? Why did you lie?

ELEANOR

I'm so sorry, Fujiko. I truly am... But the truth wasn't good enough for Sadako. It wasn't fair. She earned her wish.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Your daughter showed the power of a hope so strong that no force in the world can break it and I saw that same hope in my son's face when I told him her story all those years ago. You know better than me, a child's hope is such a delicate thing... I was afraid that if he knew Sadako's wish didn't come true, it would be lost forever. I had to protect it, Fujiko. I had to. I had to keep her wish alive... I hope you can forgive me.

Eleanor braces herself for whatever criticism may be coming her way, but to her surprise, Fujiko just smiles. A tearful, wonderful smile. She sees the confusion on Eleanor's face...

FUJIKO

You really had no idea...

Fujiko reaches into her bag and pulls out THE GOLDEN CRANE, number one thousand, which looks a little worse for the wear over the years. She offers it to Eleanor.

FUJIKO

This is number one thousand. The crane that was supposed to bring Sadako's wish to life.

ELEANOR

I can't take that.

FUJIKO

You must. I was never meant to keep it. It was just too hard to let go.

Eleanor finally accepts. With the crane in her hands she feels closer to Sadako than she ever has. It's then that she notices WRITING ON THE SIDE OF THE CRANE.

FUJIKO

I was upset for years that she changed her wish, but when I saw my Sadako's story actually spread around the world, I finally understood. Thank you.

She bows to Eleanor who returns the gesture.

On her way out of the room, Fujiko reaches out and touches the cranes Eleanor brought with her. She runs her fingers from one strand to the next, filled with love and pride for her daughter.

Once Fujiko has left, Eleanor sits down at her desk. She gently sets Sadako's Golden Crane in front of her and reads the message on the wing. It just about stops her heart...

INT. SADAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadako sits on her bed and writes her wish on the GOLD PAPER. She finishes and reflects on her decision...

A CRASHING SOUND from outside her room startles her. Nervous, she gets out of bed and steps into the corridor...

INT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - NIGHT

All the lights are off, everything is dark.

Sadako walks down the corridor to the nurse's station and sees it has been RIPPED APART. BUSTED CABINETS and FILES EVERYWHERE. She looks in all directions but sees no nurses.

She sees HER FILE open on the floor. She closes her eyes, afraid to look at it...

A SHADOW DARTS behind her. She turns around--

But sees nothing. She then hears the GROWL...

She turns back and it's there...

THE WOLF.

Sadako looks around for help, but she's alone.

The WOLF SNARLS and moves towards her...

Sadako runs away. To her surprise, she can run like she used to! Fast and powerful. As she realizes she can do it, she gains even more speed.

But no matter how fast she is, it is not as fast as a wolf.

She rounds a corner and sees the STAIRWELL to the roof at the end of the hall. She runs as fast as she can...

THE WOLF'S SHADOW lines the walls and looms over her...

HE IS RIGHT ON HER HEELS...

She gets to the stairwell door and SLAMS IT CLOSED behind her. THE WOLF CLAWS AND SCRATCHES. Sadako runs upstairs.

EXT. RED CROSS HOSPITAL - ROOFTOP - DAWN

Sadako bursts onto the roof. She frantically looks around. There is nowhere for her to go. Dawn breaks in the sky.

Then she hears it... A LOW GROWL.

She turns to see the wolf on the roof with her. It's bigger than before. More terrifying than ever.

The wolf steps towards her. She backs up until her feet hit the edge. Behind her is just a straight drop to the street.

There's nowhere left for her to go.

As the wolf continues to inch closer to her, it dawns on her--

Suddenly, Sadako is filled with courage. She stands tall and locks eyes with the wolf.

SADAKO

I am not afraid of you.

And STEPS TOWARDS THE WOLF.

The WOLF STOPS. It stares back at her, confused.

Sadako hardens her gaze.

SADAKO

I am not afraid of you!

Sadako does not relent. She walks right up to the wolf, until they are inches away from each other. She stares it down...

SADAKO

I am not afraid of you anymore!

And the WOLF SUBMITS TO HER. That's when she sees it... Something in the wolf's eyes. Something not scary, but SAD.

Sadako suddenly feels immense compassion for the frightened animal. She kneels beside it and reaches out her hand to pet the wolf's head, but just as her hand is about to touch it--

THERE IS A FLASH OF LIGHT! THE WOLF SPRINGS IN THE AIR!

Sadako falls backwards and shields her eyes. Then she sees the wolf has turned into...

A LARGE, BEAUTIFUL WHITE CRANE, WINGS OUTSPREAD.

Sadako is startled with delight.

SADAKO
Have you come to grant my wish?

The CRANE calls out.

The morning sun rises higher in the sky. Sadako's gaze is drawn out over Hiroshima. The home she loves, the city that has suffered so much. She knows what she wishes for more than anything and turns back to the crane.

SADAKO
*My wish is peace. Carry it with you
 and fly all over the world.*

The crane BOWS then FLIES AWAY, joining a FLOCK overhead.

Sadako smiles and watches the cranes circle over Hiroshima.

SADAKO (V.O.)
Thirteen steps...

EXT. HIROSHIMA CHILDREN'S PEACE PARK - DAY

ELEANOR enters the park and walks past the MEMORIAL CENOTAPH, an open, saddle-shaped concrete structure facing the Genbaku Dome. She takes in the scene around her:

SADAKO (V.O.)
...Twenty-four folds.

FAMILIES together, life everywhere. It's come so far from the last time she had been here.

SADAKO (V.O.)
*The orizuru is the most popular of
 all origami.*

A group of CHILDREN run past. Curious, Eleanor follows them deeper into the park until she sees it...

SADAKO (V.O.)
*In Japan, the crane is believed to
 be a magical creature that can live
 for a thousand years...*

THE STATUE OF SADAKO SASAKI stands proudly, a beacon at the heart of the Peace Park.

SADAKO (V.O.)
*A legend promises if a person folds
 one thousand orizuru, they will be
 granted a wish. This is called
 Senbazuru...*

THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PAPER CRANES fill the area around the base and hang from the statue itself.

She walks up to the statue and touches it... She brushes PAPER CRANES aside to read the INSCRIPTION at the base:

"THIS IS OUR CRY. THIS IS OUR PRAYER. PEACE IN THE WORLD."

Eleanor looks up at the girl who forever changed her life.

A LIGHT BREEZE blows past and makes the cranes rustle and sway, as though they are flying.

SADAKO (V.O.)
One Thousand Paper Cranes.

END CARDS:

Eleanor Coerr's *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* became a best selling children's book all around the world.

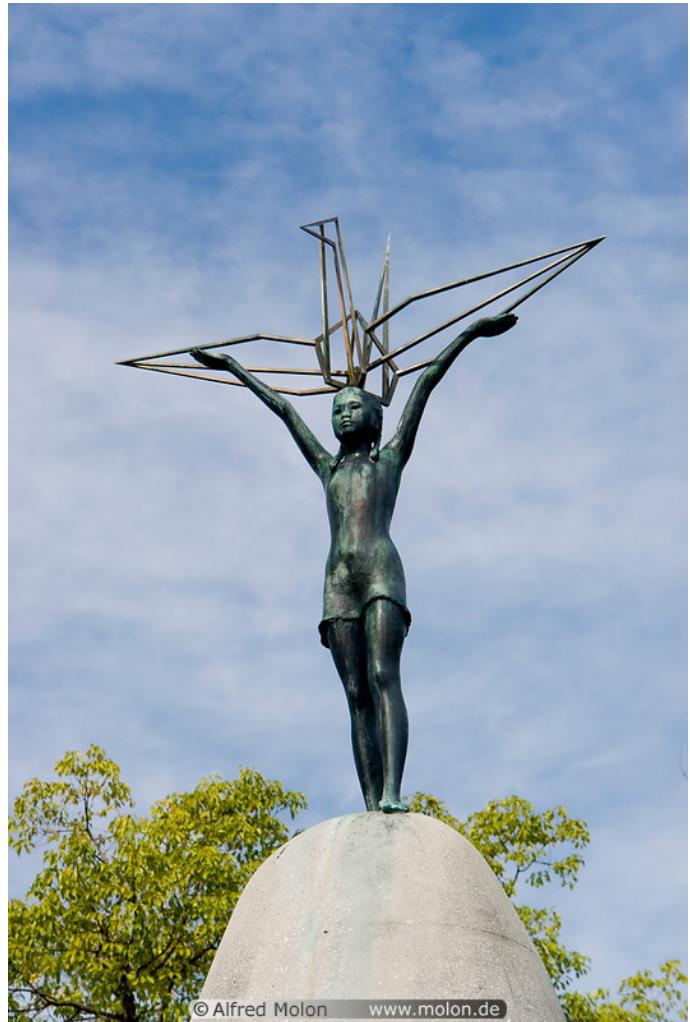
To this day, the book is taught in elementary schools.

Through reading the book children learn how to fold cranes and inspire peace.

The Children's Peace Monument in Hiroshima receives tens of millions of paper cranes each year folded by children all over the world.

They all share in Sadako's final wish...

The Children's Peace Statue is a monument for peace to commemorate Sadako Sasaki and the thousands of child victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.



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Eleanor Coerr (1958 & 1961)

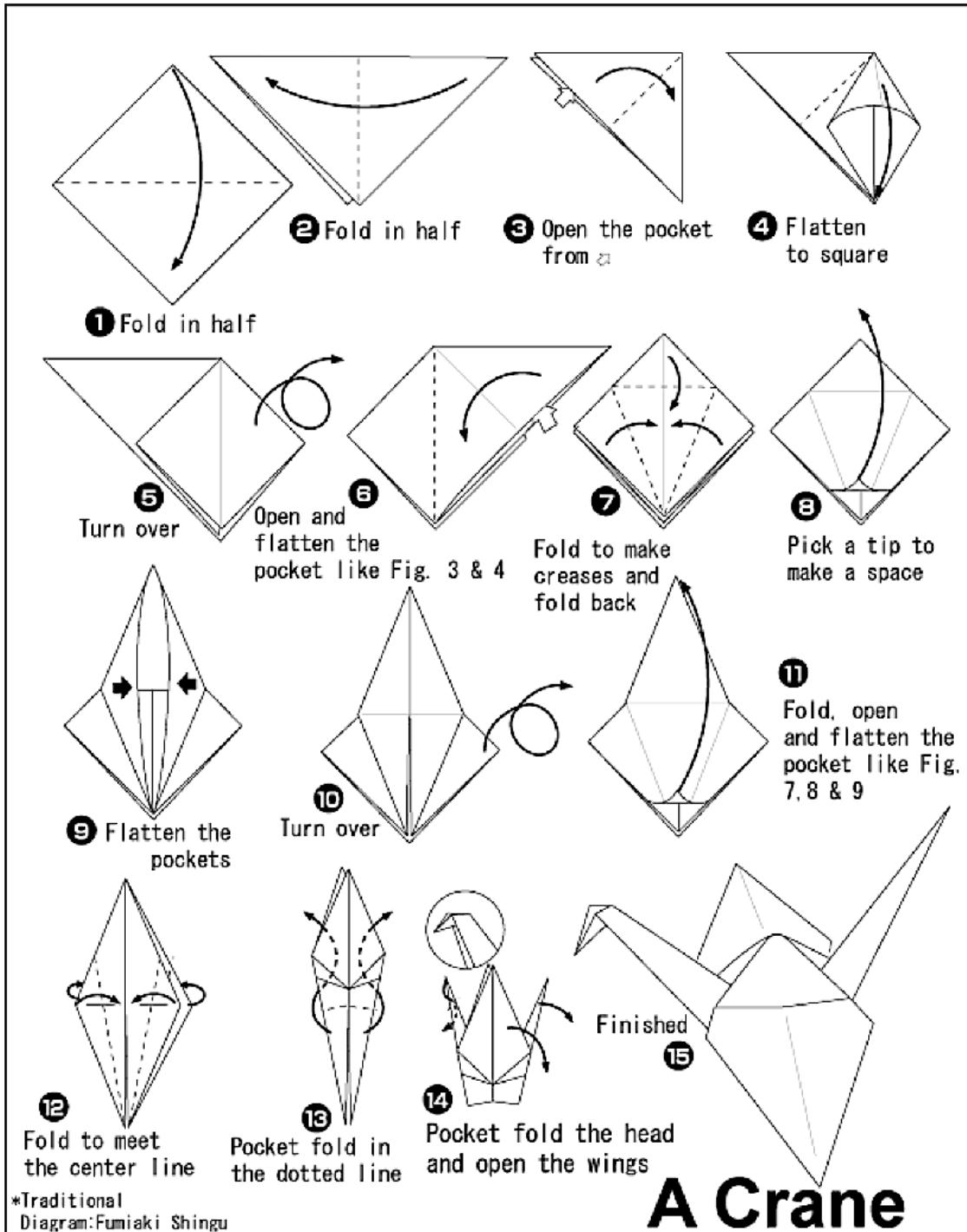


Sadako Sasaki (1955)



Eleanor and Fujiko at Sadako's statue - (1973)





A Crane