

THE THIRD BOMB

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TEXT OVER BLACK:

"In July 1945, Japan's WWII militarist government rejected demands by the Allies to surrender, vowing to fight to the bitter end.

Even after dropping two atomic bombs on their enemy in August, American military and political leaders still did not have a clear idea of what Japan intended to do.

Preparations by the US for an invasion of the Japanese homeland continued, but the casualty estimates numbered in the millions.

So, orders were given to drop more atomic bombs."

EXT. 20,000 FEET ABOVE THE OCEAN - DAY

An early morning sun on the horizon. A vast empty ocean.

Out of the sun's glare roars --

a B29 Superfortress. West-bound.

It's a giant, metallic-silver bomber with four propeller driven engines and a helluva wingspan.

Painted on the fuselage below the pilot's window - a buxom pin-up girl. Bandoliers strapped across her chest. Cigar in her mouth. Pistol in each hand.

Emblazoned next to her, the name: "*Daisy Do or Die.*"

INT. B29 WEAPONS BAY - DAY

The dull glow of daylight in this metallic cavern reveals --
a single massive BOMB.

20 feet long, 10 feet wide. Black body. Orange tail. A hand-written message in white pen scrawled on its side:

"So a million more will not perish from this earth."

INT. B29 COCKPIT - DAY

In the pilot's chair -- COLONEL MARK STERLING III (32) - Texas native. Fourth generation Army. Fair, but firm. He exudes a quiet sense of calm and control, but --

something on his instrument panel gets his attention --

the LEFT-WING FUEL GAUGE. The needle, dropping.

A metallic BANG. Mark strains to look out his left window.

MARK (PILOT)
(into intercom)
Alamo. Talk to me.

TAIL GUNNER'S POSITION

ALAMO (22) - pencil-thin moustache, cocky gum-chewer. Something outside his window has him worried --

Liquid streams from the left-wing outboard engine.

ALAMO (TAIL-GUNNER)
Number one's getting worse, skip.

COCKPIT

Sitting in the copilot's seat -- CAPTAIN HARRY PULASKI (42) - greying beard, a kind face but with a bad bruise around his left eye. A Texan with an acute sense of fairness.

He jots a calculation on a clipboard. The results, not good.

HARRY (COPILOT)
If we're going to turn around, we
better decide now.

Mark's irritated by the suggestion. He glances sideways at the swollen knuckles on Harry's hand.

MARK
You sure you wanna go home before
we drop this thing?

Harry flexes his sore hand. Casts a resentful look at Mark.

But Mark's searching his instrument panel for a solution.

Around Mark and Harry are some worried faces -- In front - the Bombardier, JESSE (21). Behind them - the Flight Engineer, CLIVE (29) and Navigator/ Radar, TIM (24).

CLIVE (FLIGHT ENGINEER)
 (reading a gauge)
 Oil pressure near critical.

Jesse, the youngest, turns to Mark. Fear in his eyes.

Mark reassures him with a confident wink --

but he's still searching for that elusive solution.

TIM (NAVIGATOR/ RADAR)
 We've drifted another three degrees
 off-course. Adjust to two-one-zero.

MARK
 Adjusting course, two-one-zero.

Harry, eyes on Mark. *Well?*

MARK (CONT'D)
 Clive, shut down number one. We
 don't need it.

That surprises Harry, and the uneasy crew.

MARK (CONT'D)
 Power up on number two. We'll ease
 back on four to even out power.

CLIVE
 Roger that, Colonel.

Mark cranks a handle to turn the dead but vibrating propeller
 on engine #1 edge-on to the wind.

HARRY
 We're going to burn fuel faster.

MARK
 We have enough. Just. Tim, update.

Tim's map shows a plot of the plane's position. From Midway
 Island, far to the south-east, towards Japan, far to the
 north-west. Tim marks their position with an 'X'.

They're half-way to Japan. Surrounded by mainly empty ocean.

TIM
 We've drifted fifty miles south.

MARK
 Any islands nearby?

TIM

One. Ten miles south. Map indicates
'abandoned by enemy.'

Harry shoots Mark a concerned glance. Mark ignores him.

MARK

(into intercom)
Alamo, how's that engine now?

ALAMO (V.O.)

The leak's stopped, skip!

CLIVE

Confirmed. Levels are steady.

JESSE

Hot damn, Colonel. You were right.

Mark grins at Harry -- but Harry turns away, unimpressed.

Mark grabs a thermos. Holds it up.

MARK

Cuppa Joe anyone?

CLIVE

Sweet Jesus, salvation is here!

JESSE

(teasing Clive)
You say the same thing to that
redhead at the skipper's party?

Chuckles from the crew.

Mark pours Harry a cup. A peace offering. Harry ignores it.

Disappointed, Mark drinks.

Hanging from his steering column is a GOLD LOCKET. On the
front are four embossed Chinese characters.

Mark opens it. Inside are two photos of --

A ruby-lipped woman - early 30s, a hint of steel beneath her
softness - and a 5 year old boy. His smile doesn't match the
edge of sadness in his eyes. Both are brunette and Caucasian.

Mark softens, then snaps it shut. Pockets it. Sips his
coffee. He notices the silence around him.

MARK

Y'all hear what the devil said when
Hitler showed up at the fiery gates?

TIM (O.S.)

We got company!

The crew laugh, but not Tim. He stares BUG-EYED at his radar.

A blip on the screen. Approaching fast.

TAIL GUNNER'S POSITION

ALAMO

Bogie six o'clock! Low and fast!

A Japanese fighter plane swoops up from below. FIRING.

Alamo FIRES his twin-barrel machine gun back.

WEAPONS BAY

Bullets rip through the plane and glance off the bomb.

COCKPIT

Mark wrenches the steering column hard to the right --

MARK

Go to oxygen!

The crew scramble to don oxygen masks just as --

bullets punch holes through the plane. Blood splatters the windows. Air in the pressurized cockpit rushes out.

Mark fights for consciousness. He catches a glimpse of --

the ENEMY PILOT as he roars past, cockpit canopy open, a white flyer's scarf around his neck.

This is LIEUTENANT SHIRO (25) - arrogant, intuitive, with the wounded intensity of someone desperate to prove something.

Mark gasps for air. Gets none. Eyes roll. Brain shuts off.

CUT TO BLACK: