

CLIFFS OF SAIPAN

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Inspired by historical events.

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FADE IN:

EXT. SAIPAN - NORTHERN CLIFFS - DAY

Wind tears across jagged limestone cliffs.

Far below, the PACIFIC OCEAN crashes—beautiful, indifferent.

A JAPANESE MOTHER stands at the edge.

Early thirties. Civilian clothes. Dust-streaked. She holds a BABY, wrapped tightly in cloth, pressed against her chest.

The baby whimpers.

Behind her, OTHER CIVILIANS emerge from the brush—women, children, elders. Some pray. Some sob. Some are terrifyingly calm.

A JAPANESE SOLDIER (O.S.) shouts from somewhere behind them. Urgent. Commanding. We don't see him.

The mother looks down.

The ocean seems impossibly far away.

She tightens her grip on the baby.

A woman nearby steps forward.

Jumps.

No scream. Just the wind swallowing her.

Another follows.

The baby begins to cry louder now.

The mother closes her eyes.

Holds her child's head against her chest.

A beat.

We do not see her jump.

CUT TO BLACK.

The wind continues.

Then—

TITLE CARD

CLIFFS OF SAIPAN

Wind of the ocean followed by silence.

EXT. SAIPAN - COASTAL VILLAGE - DAY (WEEKS EARLIER)

Sunlight. Calm water. A different world.

Fishing boats drift lazily offshore.

The MOTHER, clean and uninjured, walks barefoot along the sand, the BABY tied to her back. The baby sleeps peacefully.

Nearby, children laugh, chasing one another.

Normalcy.

She kneels, rinses cloth in the sea.

Watches the horizon.

Far out, barely visible—dark shapes on the water.

Ships.

She squints, unsure.

A neighbor, AN OLDER WOMAN, notices her gaze.

The older woman stiffens.

Quietly pulls her inside arm.

INT. VILLAGE HOME - DAY

The room is modest. Tatami mats. A radio sits on a shelf.

The radio crackles to life.

A JAPANESE BROADCASTER (V.O.) speaks—measured, authoritative.

Subtitled.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The enemy advances.  
There will be no mercy for those  
who surrender.

The mother listens, uneasy.

The baby stirs.

The broadcaster continues.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)  
Women will be violated.  
Children will be taken.

The older woman bows her head.

The mother turns the radio off.

Silence again.

Too quiet now.

EXT. SAIPAN - VILLAGE PATH - DAY

Japanese soldiers march past civilians.

Not aggressive. Not cruel.

Just certain.

One soldier pauses near the mother.

Looks at the baby.

Then at her.

He speaks gently, almost kindly.

Subtitled.

SOLDIER  
Stay close to the others when the  
time comes.

The mother nods, confused.

The soldier moves on.

The baby begins to cry.

The mother rocks gently, trying to soothe it.

In the distance—

A LOW RUMBLE.

Distant artillery.

The first sign of the storm.

EXT. SAIPAN - HILLS ABOVE THE VILLAGE - DUSK

Smoke curls upward on the horizon now.

Families move inland, carrying what they can.

The mother walks with them, breathing hard, the baby pressed against her back.

She looks once more toward the sea.

The dark shapes are closer now.

Larger.

Unmistakable.

She turns away.

Follows the others into the hills.

INT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Darkness.

Bodies packed close together.

The air is hot. Damp.

The mother sits against the cave wall, the baby in her arms.

The baby cries.

A hand—another woman's—reaches out, gently covers the baby's mouth.

Not cruel.

Terrified.

The crying muffles.

The mother's eyes fill with tears.

Outside, distant explosions echo.

The cave trembles slightly.

Dust falls from the ceiling.

The mother clutches her child tighter.

As if she can will the world back to what it was.

FADE OUT.

INT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

The woman's hand slowly pulls away from the baby's mouth.

The baby hiccups. Quiet now.

The mother whispers, barely audible.

MOTHER

Shh...

She presses her forehead against the baby's.

Around them, other civilians crouch in the dark—faces half-lit by a flickering lantern.

A Japanese soldier steps into the mouth of the cave.

Backlit. Authority without volume.

He speaks calmly.

Subtitled.

SOLDIER

Stay inside.

Stay silent.

No one argues.

The soldier scans the faces. Sees fear everywhere.

His eyes linger on the children.

On the babies.

For just a moment—something flickers in him.

Then it's gone.

He turns and disappears into the night.

INT. CAVE - LATER

Time passes without markers.



Her hand trembles.

Tears stream down her face as she rocks back and forth.

The baby's cries soften.

Then stops.

The mother pulls her hand away quickly.

The baby breathes.

Alive.

She exhales shakily.

Looks around.

No one is judging her.

They are all thinking the same thing now.

INT. CAVE - PRE-DAWN

A pale gray light creeps into the cave entrance.

Morning.

The bombing has stopped.

For now.

The mother opens her eyes.

She hasn't slept.

The baby stirs.

Outside, footsteps.

Multiple.

The civilians tense.

A different Japanese officer appears at the cave entrance.

Older. More formal.

He carries a satchel.

His tone is measured.

Subtitled.

OFFICER  
Listen carefully.

The mother tightens her grip on the baby.

The officer looks directly at the women.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
If the enemy captures you...  
what awaits will be worse than  
death.

Silence.

The lie takes its first full breath.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - MORNING (CONTINUED)

The Officer opens the satchel.

Inside: LEAFLETS, folded neatly.

He hands them out.

No rush.

Each sheet shows crude illustrations—smiling AMERICAN  
SOLDIERS standing over Japanese prisoners.

The captions are vicious.

Subtitled.

LEAFLET (TEXT)

THIS IS MERCY.

The mother studies the drawings.

They don't look real.

They don't have to.

The officer speaks again.

OFFICER  
They will not respect you.  
They will not spare your children.

A murmur spreads through the cave.

Someone sobs quietly.

The officer removes a small object from the satchel.

A GRENADE.

He places it carefully on the ground between them.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
For those who choose honor.

No one touches it.

The officer bows once.

Leaves.

INT. CAVE - LATER

The grenade sits where it was left.

Untouched.

Everyone keeps glancing at it.

Like it might move on its own.

The mother rocks the baby.

Watches another woman—OLDER, hollow-eyed—reach out and pick up the grenade.

The older woman weighs it in her hand.

As if judging fruit.

She looks at her teenage son.

He avoids her eyes.

She sets the grenade back down.

Her hands shake.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE ABOVE THE CAVES - DAY

Japanese soldiers retreat uphill.

Wounded men limp past.

One collapses.

Another soldier tries to help him up—fails.

They leave him behind.

The sound of American artillery grows closer.

Measured.

Relentless.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Dust falls from the ceiling with each distant impact.

The baby cries again.

Louder now.

The mother panics.

She whispers urgently.

MOTHER  
Please... please...

She presses the baby to her chest, rocking harder.

A woman across from her snaps.

WOMAN  
Make it stop!

The mother freezes.

The baby cries harder.

Everyone is watching now.

The mother covers the baby's mouth again.

Longer this time.

Her hand trembles violently.

Tears drip onto the baby's face.

The crying stops.

Too abruptly.

The mother pulls her hand away.

A terrible beat.

Then—

The baby inhales sharply.

Cries again.

Relief floods the mother's face.

But something has shifted.

She has crossed a line she never imagined.

And she knows it.

EXT. SAIPAN - HILLSIDE - DAY

American loudspeakers crackle to life.

A calm male voice, speaking careful Japanese.

AMERICAN VOICE (V.O.)

You will not be harmed.

Lay down your weapons. Bring your children.

The words drift across the hills.

Into the cave.

INT. CAVE -DAY

Everyone listens.

No one believes it.

The older woman spits on the ground.

OLDER WOMAN

Lies.

The mother listens anyway.

Holds the baby tighter.

For the first time.

She wants the voice to be telling the truth.

INT. CAVE - DAY (CONTINUED)

The loudspeaker crackles again.

AMERICAN VOICE (V.O.)  
Food and water are waiting.  
Medical care is available.

The cave remains still.

Suspicious.

The mother looks around.

No one moves.

The older woman shakes her head slowly.

OLDER WOMAN  
If that were true...  
they wouldn't need to say it.

A bitter logic.

The mother looks down at the baby.

The baby stares back at her-wide-eyed, trusting.

EXT. SAIPAN - FOREST PATH - DAY

Japanese soliders move among the civilians now.

Not herding.

Guiding.

Gesturing inland.

Away from the coast.

Away from the loudspeakers.

The mother follows with the others, stepping carefully over roots and rocks.

She notices something troubling-

The soldiers are moving faster now.

Urgent.

As if time is running out.

INT. MAKESHIFT CAMP - DAY

A cluster of civilians gathers in a shaded clearing.

Japanese officers address them.

One officer points toward the Northern Ridge.

The cliffs loom faintly in the distance.

OFFICER

There is a place ahead.  
Safe from capture.

The word safe lands hard.

The mother clutches the baby tighter.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE TRAIL - DAY

The trail narrows.

Below, the ocean flashes through gaps in the trees.

Too close now.

A woman ahead of the mother begins to pray under her breath.

Another murmurs a lullaby to a toddler.

The sounds overlap.

A fragile human noise against the wind.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE OVERLOOK - DAY

The trees fall away.

The cliffs reveal themselves fully.

Sheer.

Unforgiving.

The ocean roars far below.

The mother stops short.

Her breath catches.

This is the place.

Japanese soldiers stand nearby.

Watching.

Waiting.

Not pushing.

They don't need to.

One soldier addresses the civilians calmly.

SOLDIER  
Beyond this point  
your suffering ends.

A woman steps forward.

Then another.

The mother doesn't move.

Her legs won't obey.

She looks at the baby.

Then at the cliffs.

The lie is no longer abstract.

It has a shape now.

And it is standing right in front of her.

HOLD

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - DAY (CONTINUED)

Wind whips through hair and clothing.

The mother stands frozen, feet inches from the edge.

Below, the ocean pounds the rocks in a steady, merciless rhythm.

A woman with two children steps past her.

The woman kneels.

Whispers something to the children we cannot hear.

She hugs them tightly.

Then—

She rises.

Steps forward.

Disappears.

No scream reaches the top.

Only the surf.

The mother recoils instinctively.

Her baby begins to cry again, startled by her movement.

A Japanese soldier steps closer now.

Not aggressive.

Almost apologetic.

SOLDIER

Do not be afraid.

The mother looks at him.

For the first time, she sees fear in his eyes too.

He gestures gently toward the cliff.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

It will be quick.

The mother shakes her head.

Just once.

Barely noticeable.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

More civilians gather at the edge.

Some pray loudly now.

Others stare blankly, emptied out.

A teenage boy breaks from his mother's grip.

Runs.

Jumps.

His mother collapses, screaming.  
Two soldiers restrain her—not violently, but firmly.  
They hold her as she watches the ocean swallow her child.  
The mother presses her baby's face into her chest.  
Tries to block everything out.  
She can't.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFFS - LATER

Time loses meaning.  
The sun shifts.  
The line grows shorter.  
Bodies continue to vanish into the sea.  
The mother is now near the front.  
Only a few remain ahead of her.  
She sways slightly, dizzy.  
A voice cuts through the wind.  
Faint.  
Distant.  
Familiar.

AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.)  
Mothers... please...

The Japanese soldiers stiffen.  
One shouts something sharp in Japanese.  
The loudspeaker continues anyway.

AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Your children will not be harmed.

The mother looks up.  
Toward the sound.  
Hope flickers—dangerous, unwelcome.

The soldier nearest her speaks quickly, urgently now.

SOLDIER  
They are lying!

He grips her arm.

Not cruel.

Desperate.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)  
You must not listen!

She looks down at his hand on her arm.

Then back at the cliffs.

Then—at her baby.

The baby stares back at her.

Trusting.

Unafraid.

She gently pulls her arm free.

The soldier doesn't stop her.

He looks away.

Ashamed.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - MOMENTS LATER

The mother steps forward.

Wind roars.

The ocean waits.

She looks down.

Her knees buckle.

She drops to the ground, clutching the baby.

Sobs break free—loud, uncontrolled.

The loudspeaker is closer now.

Clearer.

AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.)

We can see you.

The mother looks up.

Beyond the ridge—

She sees movement.

Figures.

Not monsters.

Men.

She clutches the baby tighter.

And for the first time—

She doesn't look back at the cliffs.

HOLD.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - DAY (CONTINUED)

The mother stays where she is.

On the ground.

Clutching her baby.

Around her, the wind screams.

A Japanese soldier steps toward her again.

His voice is harder now.

Afraid.

SOLDIER

Get up.

She doesn't.

He looks past her—to the others still waiting their turn.

The line must keep moving.

The loudspeaker carries again, closer than before.

AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.)

We can see you.  
Please... don't be afraid.

The soldier snaps back, shouting in Japanese.

SOLDIER

Don't listen!

His hand reaches for her arm again.

This time she pulls away sharply.

Protective.

Fierce.

She backs up—still on her knees—until she bumps into another woman behind her.

That woman grips her shoulders.

Terrified.

WOMAN

Don't stop.  
Please don't stop.

The mother looks up at her.

Sees what fear has done.

She shakes her head.

A tiny motion.

But deliberate.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

A gunshot cracks somewhere behind them.

Not aimed at anyone.

A warning.

The crowd jolts.

The baby screams.

The mother presses her face into the baby's head.

Whispers.

MOTHER

I'm here.  
I'm here.

Her words are almost drowned by the wind.  
The soldier nearest her lowers his rifle.  
He can't make himself raise it again.  
He steps back.  
Another soldier moves forward instead.  
Younger.  
Angrier.

YOUNGER SOLDIER

If you do not move...  
you shame us all.

The mother looks at him.  
Then at the ocean.  
Then back toward the hills.  
Toward the sound of the voice.  
She rises slowly to her feet.  
For a terrible second, it looks like she will step forward.  
Instead—  
She turns.  
Faces inland.  
Gasps ripple through the civilians.  
The soldiers freeze.  
No one expected this.  
She takes one step.  
Then another.  
Away from the cliff.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE TRAIL - DAY

Chaos erupts.

Some civilians scream at her.

Others follow.

A few break away from the line—running inland, clutching children.

Japanese soldiers shout orders.

Some chase.

Some hesitate.

The mother runs as best she can, stumbling over rocks, breath ragged.

The baby cries wildly now.

Behind her—

The ocean keeps pounding the cliffs.

Unchanged.

Indifferent.

EXT. SAIPAN - FOREST EDGE - DAY

The mother collapses behind a stand of trees.

Crawls.

Presses herself and the baby into the dirt.

She holds her breath.

Footsteps thunder past.

Shouting.

Then fade.

Silence returns—thin and fragile.

She doesn't move.

Doesn't breathe.

Finally—

She exhales.

The baby whimpers softly.

Alive.

She pulls the baby closer.

Kisses the top of its head again and again.

As if counting the seconds they've been given.

EXT. SAIPAN - DISTANT RIDGE - DAY

From where she lies, she can still see the cliffs.

Tiny figures at the edge.

More bodies falling.

She closes her eyes.

She cannot watch.

She doesn't need to.

EXT. SAIPAN - FOREST SLOPE - DAY (CONTINUED)

The mother crawls deeper into the trees.

Branches claw at her skin.

She doesn't slow.

Behind her, SHOUTS echo—Japanese voices, overlapping, urgent.

She trips.

Falls hard.

The baby slips from her arms.

For a frozen instant, the baby lies on the ground—crying, exposed.

The mother scrambles, frantic.

Scoops the baby up.

Presses the child to her chest.

Looks around wildly.

Nowhere left to go.

EXT. SAIPAN - ROCKY OUTCROP - DAY

She ducks behind a jagged limestone formation.

Crouches.

Holds the baby tight.

Footsteps approach.

Boots on stone.

A Japanese soldier appears through the trees.

Young. Mud-streaked. Breathing hard.

He sees her.

They lock eyes.

A long beat.

He raises his rifle.

Not fully.

Not yet.

The baby whimpers.

The soldier's jaw tightens.

He looks past her—toward the cliffs.

Toward the screams carried faintly on the wind.

Then—

He lowers the rifle.

Turns.

Moves on.

The mother doesn't react.

Doesn't breathe.

Only after the footsteps fade does she collapse fully against the rock.

Her body shakes.

Silent sobs rack her frame.

EXT. SAIPAN - HILLSIDE - DAY

Smoke rises from the island now.

Thicker.

Closer.

American artillery pounds with steady rhythm.

The mother peers out from her hiding place.

Sees other civilians scattered through the forest—some running, some frozen, some already gone.

She is not alone.

But she is alone.

EXT. SAIPAN - MAKESHIFT PATH - DAY

The mother moves cautiously now.

Slow.

Each step deliberate.

The baby is quiet—exhausted.

She listens.

Every sound could be the last.

Then—

A voice.

Close.

Clear.

Not shouted.

Spoken.

AMERICAN VOICE (O.S.)

It's okay.  
You're safe.

The mother freezes.  
Heart pounding.  
She doesn't believe it.  
She can't.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLEARING - DAY

She peers through the trees.  
Sees them.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

Not charging.  
Not shouting.  
One kneels.  
Holds out a canteen.  
Another lowers his weapon completely.  
They look... confused.  
Overwhelmed.  
Human.  
The mother backs away instinctively.  
Clutches the baby.  
The soldiers don't pursue.  
Don't advance.  
They wait.  
One soldier speaks again, softer this time.

AMERICAN SOLDIER

Water.  
For the baby.

The word baby lands.  
The mother hesitates.

The baby stirs weakly.  
She looks down.  
Then back at the soldiers.  
Her hands shake.  
She takes one step forward.  
Then stops.  
Torn between everything she's been told-  
And what she is seeing.

HOLD.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLEARING - DAY (CONTINUED)

The mother stands trembling.  
The American soldier keeps the canteen extended.  
Doesn't move closer.  
Doesn't rush her.  
Respects the distance.  
The baby whimpers again - weak now.  
The sound cuts through everything.  
The mother's resolve cracks.  
She takes a step.  
Then another.  
Every muscle tight, ready to flee.  
She reaches the soldier.  
He gently sets the canteen on the ground between them.  
Steps back.  
Waits.  
The mother drops to her knees.

Grabs the canteen.

Hesitates – one last time.

Then tips it carefully to the baby's mouth.

A few drops spill.

The baby drinks.

Greedily.

Desperately.

The mother lets out a broken sound – half sob, half laugh.

The soldier looks away.

Gives her the moment.

EXT. SAIPAN – CLEARING – LATER

The mother sits wrapped in a blanket now.

The baby asleep against her chest.

An American medic kneels nearby, tending to another civilian.

Bandages. Morphine. Quiet efficiency.

No speeches.

No triumph.

Just work.

The mother watches.

Tries to reconcile what she's seeing with what she was told.

It doesn't fit.

EXT. SAIPAN – CLEARING – CONTINUOUS

A Japanese woman, older, is escorted in by two soldiers.

She resists violently.

Screaming.

Spitting.

She points toward the cliffs.

OLDER WOMAN

You should be dead!  
All of you!

The soldiers don't respond.

They keep her from harming herself.

The mother looks away.

She can't watch this part.

EXT. SAIPAN - HILLSIDE - DAY

From the clearing, the CLIFFS are visible in the distance.

Tiny figures at the edge.

The mother's face tightens.

She understands now what she escaped.

And what others didn't.

The baby shifts in her arms.

Alive.

Heavy.

Real.

She presses her lips to the baby's forehead.

Whispers.

MOTHER

I'm sorry.

Not sure who she's apologizing to.

EXT. SAIPAN - TEMPORARY HOLDING AREA - DAY

Civilians gather.

Some crying.

Some silent.

Some staring at nothing.

American soldiers distribute water and food.

Methodical.

Respectful.

One soldier removes his helmet.

Wipes sweat from his face.

Looks around at the devastation.

He doesn't look victorious.

He looks stunned.

EXT. SAIPAN - EDGE OF THE CAMP - DAY

The mother sits apart.

Watching.

Listening.

Processing.

A loud boom echoes from the direction of the cliffs.

Not artillery.

Something else.

She flinches.

Clutches the baby tighter.

The baby doesn't wake.

She looks up at the sky.

Cloudless.

Indifferent.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLEARING - SUNSET

The light softens.

The day's violence gives way to exhaustion.

The mother rocks the baby gently.

The cliffs glow faintly in the distance.

Beautiful.

Terrible.

She turns her back on them.

Faces the camp.

Faces the living.

HOLD.

EXT. SAIPAN - TEMPORARY HOLDING AREA - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

Darkness settles over the camp.

Not peace - just exhaustion.

Lanterns glow softly. Shadows move quietly.

The mother sits on the ground, back against a supply crate.

The baby sleeps in her arms now - deeper than before.

Alive.

She watches the other civilians.

Some stare into nothing. Some rock themselves. Some whisper prayers that no longer sound sure.

No one talks about the cliffs.

They don't have to.

EXT. SAIPAN - EDGE OF THE CAMP - NIGHT

American soldiers stand watch.

Low voices. Muted movements.

One soldier lights a cigarette, then thinks better of it.

Crushes it out.

Another stares out toward the dark ridge.

Toward the ocean beyond it.

Neither speaks.

Neither sleeps.

EXT. SAIPAN - HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

The mother adjusts the blanket around the baby.

Careful not to wake them.

She studies the child's face - memorizing it.

As if afraid it might disappear if she doesn't.

A quiet sob escapes her before she can stop it.

She presses her lips together.

Swallows it back.

She looks around.

No one notices.

Everyone is breaking privately now.

EXT. SAIPAN - DISTANT RIDGE - NIGHT

Moonlight touches the cliffs.

Cold. Pale.

The ocean crashes below, unseen.

The sound carries faintly on the wind.

Unrelenting.

EXT. SAIPAN - HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

The mother hears the ocean.

Freezes.

For a moment, she can't breathe.

Then -

The baby stirs.

Makes a small sound.

She looks down.

The sound anchors her.

She presses her cheek gently to the baby's head.

Closes her eyes.

EXT. SAIPAN - HOLDING AREA - DAWN

First light creeps across the camp.

Gray. Unforgiving.

Another day.

The mother opens her eyes.

She didn't realize she'd fallen asleep.

The baby stretches slightly.

Yawns.

Alive.

Around them, civilians begin to stir.

No relief.

No celebration.

Just continuation.

EXT. SAIPAN - HOLDING AREA - CONTINUOUS

An American officer walks slowly through the camp.

Stops.

Looks at the civilians - really looks.

At the women. At the children. At the ones who survived.

He doesn't smile.

He doesn't look proud.

He looks like a man who has just understood something too late.

He moves on.

EXT. SAIPAN - HOLDING AREA - MORNING

The mother stands now.

Holds the baby close.

She looks once more toward the distant cliffs.

Then deliberately turns away.

Faces forward.

Faces what comes next.

EXT. SAIPAN - TEMPORARY HOLDING AREA - DAY (CONTINUED)

The camp has taken shape.

Canvas tents. Supply crates. Lines forming quietly.

American soldiers move with practiced efficiency.

The civilians move as if underwater.

The mother sits with the baby in her lap.

Watches.

Listens.

Learns the rhythm.

Nearby, an American medic tends to a wounded elderly man.

Gentle hands. No urgency - just care.

The mother studies this.

It contradicts everything she was told.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - WATER LINE - DAY

Civilians line up for water.

The mother waits her turn.

The baby stirs.

Cries softly.

She shifts her weight, anxious.

When she reaches the front, an AMERICAN SOLDIER kneels.

Offers the canteen again.

She hesitates - still.

Then accepts it.

This time without flinching.

She gives the baby a drink.

Then, after a moment -

She drinks herself.

The first time since the caves.

Her eyes close involuntarily.

Relief floods her face.

She opens them again quickly.

Ashamed of the feeling.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - LATER

A Japanese woman, younger, frantic, pushes through the crowd.

Her clothes are torn.

Her arms empty.

She grabs the mother by the sleeve.

                                YOUNG WOMAN  
                                Have you seen my baby?

The mother freezes.

Doesn't answer.

Can't.

The young woman searches her face.

Desperate.

                                YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)  
                                Please...

The mother gently pulls her sleeve free.

Looks away.

The young woman moves on, calling out.

The mother watches her disappear into the crowd.

The baby in her arms breathes steadily.

Alive.

The weight of it settles.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - EDGE OF CAMP - DAY

The mother sits alone now.

Staring at nothing.

The baby sleeps.

A sudden scream echoes from somewhere in the camp.

Raw.

Uncontrolled.

Then another.

And another.

The mother flinches at each sound.

She cannot escape what happened - even here.

EXT. SAIPAN - DISTANT RIDGE - DAY

Smoke still rises.

The battle continues elsewhere.

Unseen.

Unimportant now.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - DAY

An American officer approaches the mother.

Keeps his distance.

Speaks slowly.

Carefully.

OFFICER

We're going to move you soon.  
Somewhere safer.

She nods.

Doesn't ask where.

Doesn't ask when.

She no longer trusts answers.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - DAY (LATER)

The mother watches a group of JAPANESE SOLDIERS, captured,  
being led past.

Disarmed.

Silent.

One of them looks up.

Meets her eyes.

It's the same soldier who lowered his rifle.

Recognition flickers.

Guilt.

Shame.

He looks away.

She doesn't.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - SUNSET

The light fades again.

Another day ending.

The mother rocks the baby gently.

Her movements automatic now.

She looks around the camp.

This is not freedom.

But it is not death.

She doesn't know how to feel about that yet.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

Rain begins without warning.

Soft at first.

Then steady.

Civilians scramble to pull blankets tighter, to shield children.

The mother covers the baby with her body.

Holds still.

Lets the rain soak her clothes.

She doesn't mind.

It feels like penance.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

Under a lantern, an American medic cleans blood from his hands.

Methodical.

Nearby, a young American soldier stares into the darkness beyond the camp.

He hears something.

So does the mother.

A sound drifting on the wind from the direction of the cliffs.

Not explosions.

Not gunfire.

Human voices.

Faint.

Broken.

The mother closes her eyes.

The sound reaches her anyway.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - LATER THAT NIGHT

The rain has eased.

Mud everywhere.

A Japanese elderly man collapses while walking.

The mother stands instinctively.

Moves toward him.

Then stops.

Unsure.

An American medic is already there.

Kneels.

Checks the man's pulse.

Shakes his head gently.

The medic covers the man's face with a blanket.

No announcement.

No drama.

Just another body.

The mother watches.

Learns that death does not end with the cliffs.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - DAWN

Morning again.

Gray light.

Steam rises from wet ground.

The mother wakes to the baby stirring.

She looks around.

Counts.

Some faces are missing.

She doesn't ask where they went.

EXT. HOLDING AREA - DAY

American soldiers begin organizing groups.

Clipboards. Quiet voices.

Order emerging from chaos.

An officer gestures toward trucks waiting beyond the trees.

The mother is guided forward.

She hesitates.

Looks back once more toward the camp.

Toward the direction of the cliffs.

The ocean's sound is distant now.

Muted.

But it hasn't stopped.

EXT. SAIPAN - DIRT ROAD - DAY

The mother sits in the back of a truck with other civilians.

Packed tightly.

No one speaks.

The truck lurches forward.

The island rolls past.

Burned villages.

Abandoned weapons.

Bodies covered hastily with tarps.

The mother turns the baby's face away.

She has learned how to do that now.

EXT. SAIPAN - ROAD - CONTINUOUS

As the truck crests a rise, the cliffs come into view one last time.

Far away.

Almost beautiful.

Almost peaceful.

The mother watches them recede.

She doesn't look away this time.

She lets herself see.

Everything.

Then the road curves.

The cliffs vanish from sight.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

The baby yawns.

Stretches.

Unaware.

The mother presses her lips to the baby's forehead.

Holds on.

She is alive.

So is the child.

The world will not forgive her for that.

She doesn't know if she will either.

INT. TRUCK - DAY (CONTINUED)

The truck rattles over uneven ground.

Dust filters in through the open sides.

The baby fusses.

The mother adjusts the blanket, shielding the child's face.

A woman across from her watches.  
Her eyes linger on the baby too long.  
Hollow.  
The mother turns slightly, protective.  
The woman looks away.  
Ashamed.

EXT. SAIPAN - TEMPORARY CIVILIAN ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The truck slows.  
Stops.  
Another camp.  
Larger.  
More organized.  
Barbed wire at the perimeter—not threatening, just there.  
American soldiers help civilians down.  
Careful.  
Professional.  
The mother steps onto the ground.  
Her legs wobble.  
She steadies herself.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Rows of tents.  
Water barrels.  
Medical stations.  
This place is safer.  
And somehow worse.  
Because there is time to think now.

The mother is guided toward a tent.

An AMERICAN NURSE gestures gently, indicating where to sit.

The nurse smiles.

Not brightly.

Reassuringly.

The mother doesn't return it.

Not yet.

INT. MEDICAL TENT - DAY

The baby is examined.

Careful hands.

Clean cloth.

The nurse listens to the baby's breathing.

Nods.

NURSE

Strong.

The word lands harder than expected.

The mother's breath catches.

She looks away quickly.

Doesn't want to be seen like this.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY (LATER)

The mother sits alone near the edge of the camp.

The baby sleeps beside her now.

She watches smoke drift upward in the distance.

Still burning somewhere.

Still dying.

A GROUP OF JAPANESE CIVILIANS passes.

One woman stares openly at the baby.

Not accusatory.

Envious.

The mother feels it like a weight.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

An American officer walks past, speaking to another soldier.

The mother hears fragments.

OFFICER

...hundreds...

...children...

The words trail off.

She doesn't need the rest.

She already knows.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - SUNSET

The sun sinks low.

The light turns soft again.

Beautiful.

Inappropriate.

The mother rocks the baby gently.

The baby smiles in its sleep.

A small reflex.

The mother freezes.

Stares.

As if the smile might be a mistake.

She touches the baby's cheek.

The smile fades.

The baby sleeps on.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Darkness settles.

Lanterns glow.

The camp quiets.

The mother lies awake.

Eyes open.

The sounds of the camp fade one by one.

But beneath them—

The ocean.

Still audible.

Still there.

She closes her eyes.

Doesn't sleep.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

The mother sits upright now.

Unable to lie down any longer.

She rocks slightly.

The baby sleeps, unaware.

Nearby, a Japanese man murmurs in his sleep.

A nightmare.

He thrashes once.

Then stills.

The mother watches him.

Knows she will dream too — just not yet.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN

A pale light begins to seep into the sky.

Birds call.  
Ordinary sounds returning too soon.  
The mother stands.  
Wraps the baby against her chest.  
Moves slowly through the camp.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - WATER BARRELS - DAWN

She fills a cup.  
Careful not to spill.  
Watches the surface tremble.  
Her reflection stares back at her.  
She barely recognizes the woman looking back.  
She drinks.  
Then pours a little water over her hands.  
Washes them.  
Slowly.  
Deliberately.  
As if something might come off.  
It doesn't.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

An American soldier watches her from a distance.  
Not suspicious.  
Just observant.  
He turns away to give her privacy.  
The mother notices this.  
Files it away.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

The camp stirs awake.

New arrivals are escorted in.

Some injured.

Some in shock.

The mother watches them pass.

Searches their faces.

Looking for someone.

She doesn't know who.

She never sees them.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - LATER

A Japanese woman collapses near the medical tent.

Screaming.

Inconsolable.

The mother stands frozen.

Unable to help.

Unable to look away.

Medics move in.

Block the view gently.

The screaming continues.

Then stops.

The silence afterward is worse.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The mother sits with a group of women.

No one speaks.

They don't need to.

One woman reaches out.  
Touches the baby's foot.  
Just for a second.  
Withdraws her hand quickly.  
The mother doesn't pull away.  
She lets it happen.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - AFTERNOON

The mother watches American soldiers writing names on lists.  
Clipboards moving steadily.  
Order imposed on chaos.  
A name is called.  
A woman steps forward.  
Another name.  
Another woman.  
The mother waits.  
Her name is never called.  
She doesn't know if that's good or bad.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

A sudden wail rises from the far end of the camp.  
It carries.  
Stops conversations.  
Freezes movement.  
The mother's body reacts instantly.  
She pulls the baby closer.  
Her heart races.  
Then the wail fades.

Life resumes.

No one acknowledges it.

They have learned how not to.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - SUNSET

The sun lowers again.

Another day gone.

The mother stands at the edge of the camp.

Looks out toward the horizon.

Toward the ocean she cannot see from here.

She knows it's still there.

Waiting.

She turns away.

Returns to the tents.

Returns to the living.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The camp is quiet.

Too quiet.

The mother sits with the baby in her lap.

Suddenly-

A deep, distant boom rolls through the ground.

Not close.

But heavy.

The earth trembles slightly.

Cups rattle.

Several civilians flinch instinctively.

The baby wakes, startled.

Another boom.

Closer this time.

American soldiers glance toward the hills.

One checks his watch.

Another speaks into a radio, low and urgent.

The mother looks past the camp.

Sees a column of smoke rising beyond the ridge.

Black.

Thick.

The battle is still there.

Still moving.

Still killing.

A series of muffle explosions follows – artillery, measured and relentless.

The mother holds the baby tighter.

She understands now:

The cliffs were not the end of the war.

They were only one part of it.

The baby begins to cry.

She rocks gently.

The explosions continue in the distance.

Unconcerned.

Unstoppable.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT – DAY

The mother sits with several Japanese women.

No one speaks.

A young woman nearby rocks back and forth.

Empty arms.

Eyes fixed on the ground.

She suddenly looks up.

Her voice cracks.

YOUNG WOMAN

They said the Americans would kill  
the babies.

No one answers.

The words hang there.

The mother feels every eye drift toward her.

Toward the child in her arms.

She tightens her grip instinctively.

Swallows.

Then – quietly –

MOTHER

They lied.

The young woman looks at her.

Disbelief. Hope. Anger – all at once.

YOUNG WOMAN

How do you know?

The mother looks down at the baby.

At the steady rise and fall of its chest.

She answers without lifting her eyes.

MOTHER

Because we're still here.

Silence.

The young woman's face crumples.

She turns away.

The mother closes her eyes.

She has said it aloud now.

There is no taking it back.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - OFF THE COAST OF SAIPAN - DAY

A U.S. NAVY DESTROYER moves slowly through calm water.

Too calm.

Sailors line the rail.

Quiet. Alert. Exhausted.

Something bumps the hull.

THUD.

A young seaman looks down.

Freezes.

Leans closer.

Another shape drifts past.

Then another.

His face drains of color.

A small wrapped form nudges the steel hull.

THUD.

The sound carries down the deck.

The seaman staggers back.

Barely makes it to the rail before he vomits violently over the side.

The sound is sudden. Uncontrolled.

Another sailor steps forward.

Looks down.

Turns away sharply.

VOMITS.

Then another.

The reaction spreads – raw, involuntary.

No one speaks.

Floating below them–

BODIES.

Women. Children. Babies wrapped in cloth.

They drift with the current, brushing the ship's hull as it passes.

THUD.

THUD.

Each impact louder than the last.

A Captain steps onto the deck.

Takes in the scene.

Says nothing.

Grips the rail.

Knuckles white.

CAPTAIN  
Slow to one-third.

The engines ease.

The ship still moves.

Still cannot stop.

A sailor removes his cap.

Holds it against his chest.

Another stares down, hollow-eyed.

The bodies slide past.

Disappear into the ship's wake.

EXT. DESTROYER – LATER

The ocean behind the ship is empty again.

Blue.

Beautiful.

The sailors remain at the rail.

Silent.

Changed.

No one looks at the water anymore.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY (CONTINUED)

The mother sits alone near the edge of the camp.

The baby sleeps against her chest.

The world feels farther away now.

Muted.

An American soldier passes, carrying a crate of supplies.

The crate scrapes briefly against the ground.

The sound makes the mother flinch.

She exhales slowly.

Regains herself.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - MEDICAL AREA - DAY

A medic finishes tending to a wounded civilian.

Bloodied bandages are placed carefully into a bin.

The mother watches.

Everything here is done gently.

Methodically.

Too late.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The mother walks slowly now, the baby held close.

She stops near a group of women sitting together.

They make space for her.

No words exchanged.

A YOUNG WOMAN beside her stares at the baby.

Not accusing.

Not angry.

Just hollow.

The mother meets her gaze.

Holds it.

Then looks away.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY (LATER)

A military truck idles nearby.

Supplies being unloaded.

The engine noise rises and falls.

The mother hears it.

For a brief, terrible second—

She hears something else.

Water.

The ocean against steel.

She stiffens.

Closes her eyes.

Shakes the sound from her head.

The truck engine cuts off.

Silence returns.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - AFTERNOON

A line of civilians forms.

Names called.

Groups assigned.

The mother listens.

Her name is finally spoken.

She steps forward.

Clutches the baby tighter.

This time she does not hesitate.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

An American officer gestures toward another group of tents farther inland.

OFFICER

This way.

She follows.

Doesn't look back.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - EDGE OF CAMP - DAY

As she walks, she passes a STACK OF PERSONAL EFFECTS recovered from the battlefield.

Shoes.

Cloth bundles.

Children's sandals.

She slows.

Stares.

Recognizes nothing.

And yet -

She cannot move for a moment.

An American soldier notices.

Steps closer.

Doesn't rush her.

Gently covers the pile with a canvas tarp.

The mother nods once.

Almost imperceptible.

Moves on.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

The baby stirs.

Opens its eyes.

Looks up at her.

She forces a smile.

It comes out wrong.

The baby doesn't care.

It reaches up.

Grabs her finger.

Holds tight.

She closes her eyes.

Lets the moment happen.

HOLD.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - SUNSET (CONTINUED)

The sun lowers behind the hills.

The light turns amber.

Almost kind.

The mother stands at the edge of the camp, the baby held securely now.

She watches shadows lengthen across the ground.

The day is ending.

So many did not.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

An AMERICAN NURSE approaches.

Offers a folded blanket.

Clean.

Dry.

The mother accepts it with a small nod.

Wraps it carefully around the baby.

The nurse hesitates - then gently places a hand over the baby's back.

Not intrusive.

Reassuring.

The mother doesn't pull away.

She doesn't lean in either.

She simply allows it.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - LATER

Civilians gather for food.

Simple rations.

No ceremony.

The mother eats slowly.

Forces herself to swallow.

The baby sleeps through it all.

She watches the baby breathe.

Counts the breaths.

Stops when she realizes she's doing it.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DUSK

A group of American soldiers walks past carrying stretchers.

Covered.

The mother looks away.  
She doesn't need to see.  
She knows what's there.  
She focuses instead on the baby's face.  
On life continuing in the smallest way possible.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The camp quiets again.  
Lanterns glow.  
Crickets begin to chirp.  
Ordinary sounds returning.  
The mother lies down inside a tent.  
Places the baby beside her.  
Curled protectively.  
She stares at the canvas ceiling.  
Listens.  
No bombs.  
No shouting.  
Just the night.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

The baby stirs.  
Opens its eyes.  
Looks at her.  
She meets the gaze.  
For the first time, she doesn't feel fear.  
She feels weight.  
Responsibility.

Memory.

She whispers – barely sound.

MOTHER

You live.

The baby blinks.

Falls asleep again.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT – PRE-DAWN

The sky lightens.

Another morning.

The mother steps outside the tent.

The island is quiet now.

Too quiet.

She looks toward the distant hills.

Toward where the cliffs are, unseen.

She bows her head.

Just once.

No prayer spoken.

She straightens.

Turns away.

Faces the camp.

Faces the living.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT – “ MORNING

American soldiers move among the tents.

Order returning.

Life resuming in fragments.

The mother walks forward with the baby in her arms.

Not toward the past.

Toward whatever comes next.

EXT. SAIPAN - LIMESTONE CAVES - NIGHT

Darkness presses in from every direction.

A jagged opening in the rock.

Inside - civilians huddle together.

Women. Children. Elderly.

The mother sits against the cave wall, the baby pressed tightly to her chest.

Every sound is amplified.

Breathing. Whispers. The baby's faint whimper.

She covers the baby's mouth instinctively.

Not hard.

Just enough.

INT. SAIPAN - CAVE - CONTINUOUS

A Japanese soldier crouches near the entrance.

Mid-30s. Hard eyes. Sweat streaked with grime.

This is the brutal soldier.

He listens.

Raises a hand.

Silence falls instantly inside the cave.

Too practiced.

Too familiar.

He turns to another soldier.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

If they are captured...  
they will shame us.

The second soldier nods.

Avoids looking at the civilians.

INT. CAVE - DEEPER - NIGHT

The baby stirs again.

The mother freezes.

Her breath stops.

The baby's cry grows louder.

She presses the baby closer.

Whispers urgently.

MOTHER

Please... please...

The brutal soldier's head snaps toward the sound.

He rises.

Moves into the cave.

Boots crunch softly on stone.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

He stands over a young woman holding a toddler.

The toddler is crying openly now.

Panicked.

The soldier kneels.

Looks at the child.

Then at the mother.

His voice is calm.

Too calm.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

The Americans will torture them.  
They will poison the children.

The young woman shakes her head.

Tears streaming.

YOUNG WOMAN

No...

The soldier removes a grenade from his belt.

Holds it up.

Lets it be seen.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

This is mercy.

The young woman recoils.

Clutches the toddler tighter.

The soldier waits.

Unblinking.

The silence is unbearable.

INT. CAVE - BACK WITH THE MOTHER

The mother watches everything.

Every muscle locked.

The baby in her arms is quiet now.

As if sensing danger.

The brutal soldier's voice carries.

BRUTAL SOLDIER (O.S.)

Better to die Japanese...  
than live as animals.

The mother closes her eyes.

Holds the baby tighter.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The young woman sobs.

Cannot decide.

The brutal soldier's patience snaps.

He grabs the toddler's arm.

Not violently.

Firm.

The young woman screams.

The sound echoes horribly in the cave.

Other women turn away.

Cover ears.

The mother opens her eyes.

Witnesses it.

The soldier releases the child suddenly.

Steps back.

Disgusted.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

You have chosen shame.

He tosses the grenade at the young woman's feet.

Not activated.

A message.

He turns away.

Moves back toward the entrance.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The young woman collapses.

Sobbing.

The toddler wails.

Uncontrollable.

The sound fills the cave.

Too loud.

Too dangerous.

The brutal soldier pauses at the entrance.

Looks back.

Calculating.

Another soldier approaches him quietly.

Whispers.

SECOND SOLDIER

Orders are to move them to the  
cliffs.

The brutal soldier nods once.

Satisfied.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Good.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT (LATER)

The civilians are forced to stand.

Moved out in groups.

The mother clutches the baby.

The young woman with the toddler is behind her.

Broken.

Silent now.

As they approach the cave entrance, the brutal soldier stops  
the line.

Points to the baby.

BRUTAL SOLDIER (CONT'D)

If it cries...  
you will silence it.

The mother nods.

Terrified.

She steps into the moonlight.

Toward the cliffs.

EXT. SAIPAN - CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Moonlight spills across the rocks.

Harsh. Unforgiving.

The civilians emerge one by one.

Blinking.

Disoriented.

The brutal soldier stands to the side, watching them pass.

Counting.

Judging.

The mother steps out, the baby pressed tightly to her chest.

The baby is still.

Too still.

The soldier's eyes linger on the bundle in her arms.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Keep it quiet.

She nods quickly.

Doesn't trust her voice.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE PATH - NIGHT

The line moves along a narrow trail.

Steep drop to one side.

Dark jungle to the other.

Japanese soldiers flank them.

Rifles low but ready.

No one speaks.

Footsteps crunch on gravel.

Breathing is loud in the silence.

The mother stumbles.

Catches herself.

The baby shifts.

A tiny sound escapes.

She freezes.

Holds her breath.

The sound fades.

She exhales silently.

EXT. RIDGE PATH - CONTINUOUS

Ahead, the young woman with the toddler falters.

Her legs buckle.

She sinks to her knees.

The toddler whimpers.

The brutal soldier moves forward instantly.

Grabs the woman by the arm.

Hauls her up.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Walk.

She tries.

Fails.

He raises his rifle.

Not to shoot.

To threaten.

Another soldier steps in quietly.

SECOND SOLDIER

We are close.

The brutal soldier hesitates.

Then shoves the woman forward.

She stumbles on.

The toddler cries openly now.

No one tries to stop it.

The end is near.

EXT. SAIPAN - APPROACH TO THE CLIFFS - NIGHT

The sound reaches them first.

The ocean.

Distant.

Relentless.

Some civilians recognize it.

Begin to weep.

Others stiffen.

The mother feels the sound in her chest.

A low vibration.

Like a warning.

She tightens her grip on the baby.

Whispers again.

MOTHER

I'm here.

I'm here.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

They arrive.

The drop is invisible in the darkness.

Only the sound below.

Wind whips violently.

The line stops.

Soldiers move along it.

Pointing.

Directing.

The brutal soldier steps to the front.

Faces the civilians.

BRUTAL SOLDIER  
This is where you prove your  
loyalty.

A woman screams.

Another collapses.

The brutal soldier doesn't react.

He gestures toward the edge.

BRUTAL SOLDIER (CONT'D)  
Do not hesitate.

The mother looks toward the darkness.

Feels the pull.

The finality.

She looks down at the baby.

The baby's eyes are open now.

Looking at her.

Trusting.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - CONTINUOUS

The line inches forward.

One by one.

Figures disappear into the night.

No screams reach them.

Just the ocean.

The mother steps closer to the edge.

The wind tears at her hair.

Her clothes.

Her resolve.

She closes her eyes.

Then opens them again.

Looks inland.

Just for a moment.

Toward the sound she heard earlier.

The voice she was told not to believe.

Her breath catches.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

The brutal soldier notices.

Steps toward her.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Do not turn.

She doesn't respond.

Doesn't look at him.

She looks at the baby.

At life.

At what comes after this moment.

The wind roars.

The ocean waits.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

The wind howls.

The line barely moves now.

The mother stands frozen, the baby tight against her chest.

Behind her -

A distant boom echoes again.

Artillery.

Far inland.

The battle is still raging.

History refuses to pause for grief.

JAPANESE COMMAND POST - NIGHT

A battered map table.

Candles flicker.

A Japanese officer speaks quietly to others.

Defeat is obvious.

OFFICER

No surrender.

Civilians must not be taken.

A hand presses down on the map.

Crushes the paper.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE LINE - NIGHT

Japanese soldiers distribute leaflets.

The same ones already scattered everywhere.

"The Americans will torture your children." "Death is honor."

One leaflet blows past the mother's feet.

She doesn't look down.

She knows the words by heart.

EXT. SAIPAN - AMERICAN FORWARD POSITION - NIGHT

A U.S. RADIO OPERATOR listens to static.

A voice breaks through.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

Civilians massing near the cliffs.

Repeating - civilians at the  
cliffs.

The operator looks to his commanding officer.

Helpless.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

The brutal soldier moves along the line.

Checking.

Correcting posture.

Enforcing resolve.

He stops near the mother.

Looks at the baby again.

Still quiet.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Good.

The word lands like a threat.

INTERCUT - MORE HISTORY

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT

American ships offshore.

Darkened.

Silent.

Sailors stare toward land.

The cliffs are invisible from here.

Only the glow of fires inland gives any sense of scale.

Someone mutters -

SAILOR

Jesus Christ...

No one responds.

EXT. SAIPAN - INLAND VILLAGE - NIGHT

An elderly Japanese man kneels alone outside a ruined house.

Holds a family photograph.

He closes his eyes.

The photograph slips from his hands.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

A woman ahead of the mother steps forward.

Disappears.

No sound follows.

The line closes the gap.

The mother is next.

The ocean roars louder now.

The wind pulls at her clothes.

At the baby.

At her resolve.

She looks inland again.

Just once.

As if expecting something.

Anything.

INTERCUT - FINAL HISTORICAL BEAT

EXT. SAIPAN - AMERICAN LOUDSPEAKER POSITION - NIGHT

An American soldier speaks into a microphone.

His voice cracks with exhaustion.

AMERICAN VOICE

You will not be harmed.  
We promise.

Static swallows the rest.

The soldier lowers the microphone.

Knows it isn't enough.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

The brutal soldier steps behind the mother.

Too close.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Now.

The baby shifts.

Makes the smallest sound.

The mother closes her eyes.

Breath shaking.

History presses in from all sides -

Orders. Lies. War. Honor. Fear.

She opens her eyes.

Looks at the baby.

And makes a decision.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

The mother stands at the edge.

The wind is relentless now.

Pulling.

Demanding.

The ocean roars below - closer than before.

The brutal soldier's presence is felt behind her.

Breathing.

Waiting.

The baby stirs again.

Not crying.

Just moving.

Alive.

She looks down at the child.

Touches the baby's cheek.

Feels warmth.

Reality.

Her hands shake.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - CONTINUOUS

Another woman steps past her.

Doesn't hesitate.

Disappears into the darkness.

A gasp ripples through the line.

The brutal soldier steps closer.

BRUTAL SOLDIER

Do it.

The mother doesn't move.

The wind snaps at her clothes.

The baby's tiny fingers curl around her finger.

Hold.

She inhales sharply.

Then -

She turns.

Faces inland.

The movement is small.

But absolute.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - CONTINUOUS

Gasps.

Shouts.

The brutal soldier grabs her arm.

Hard.

BRUTAL SOLDIER  
You shame us!

She wrenches free.

Stumbles backward.

Nearly falls.

The baby cries now.

Loud.

The sound cuts through everything.

Soldiers shout.

Orders overlap.

Chaos fractures the line.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - NIGHT

A gunshot cracks.

Not aimed.

A warning.

The sound echoes violently off the rock face.

Several civilians scream.

A few break.

Run inland.

Soldiers pursue them.

The order is gone.

The line collapses.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE PATH - NIGHT

The mother runs.

Blindly.

The baby screaming in her arms.

Footsteps thunder behind her.  
Shouts in Japanese.  
She trips.  
Falls.  
Rolls hard.  
Protects the baby instinctively.  
She scrambles back up.  
Runs again.

EXT. SAIPAN - FOREST SLOPE - NIGHT

The trees swallow her.  
Branches tear at her clothes.  
At her skin.  
She doesn't stop.  
She can't.  
The baby's cries weaken.  
Exhaustion.  
Terror.  
She presses the child closer.

MOTHER

I'm here.  
I'm here.

EXT. FOREST SLOPE - NIGHT

Footsteps crash closer.  
A figure bursts through the trees.  
It's the young soldier - the one who hesitated before.  
He sees her.  
Raises his rifle.

Holds it.

The baby cries again.

The soldier's jaw tightens.

He looks past her – toward the cliffs.

Toward the screams still echoing faintly.

Then –

He lowers the rifle.

Steps aside.

Lets her pass.

She doesn't look back.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

She runs until her legs give out.

Collapses against a tree.

Slides to the ground.

The baby sobs weakly.

She rocks back and forth.

Shaking.

Alive.

They are alive.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT (LATER)

The sounds fade.

The shouting.

The gunfire.

Only the ocean remains.

Distant.

Unrelenting.

The mother presses her forehead to the baby's.

Closes her eyes.

She doesn't cry.

She can't yet.

EXT. SAIPAN - FOREST CLEARING - DAWN (CONTINUED)

Gray light filters through the trees.

The mother stirs.

Her body stiff, cramped.

She doesn't know how long she slept.

The baby lies against her chest.

Warm.

Breathing.

She exhales shakily.

Alive.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

She sits up slowly.

Every muscle protests.

The forest is quiet now.

Too quiet.

No voices.

No pursuit.

Just the distant OCEAN, still pounding somewhere beyond the hills.

She listens.

Nothing.

EXT. FOREST - DAYBREAK

She rises unsteadily.

Looks around.

Broken branches.

Scuffed earth.

Signs of flight.

She adjusts the baby's blanket.

Checks the child's face.

The baby blinks.

Looks at her.

She nods, as if answering a question only she heard.

EXT. FOREST PATH - MORNING

She moves carefully now.

No longer running.

Each step deliberate.

She doesn't know where she's going.

Only away.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE OVERLOOK - MORNING

She reaches a rise.

Peers through the trees.

Below, the island stretches out.

Smoke columns still rise in the distance.

Fires still burn.

The battle has not ended.

It has simply moved.

She sinks to her knees.

Exhaustion finally wins.

She holds the baby.

Lets herself shake.

Silent.

EXT. SAIPAN - RIDGE OVERLOOK - CONTINUOUS

Movement below.

She freezes.

Peers again.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS move cautiously through the terrain.

Weapons raised.

Scanning.

Methodical.

She pulls back instinctively.

Heart racing.

The baby whimpers.

She presses her lips to the baby's head.

Hushes softly.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - MOMENTS LATER

One of the soldiers hears the sound.

Raises a hand.

Signals the others to stop.

He steps forward slowly.

Careful.

Not threatening.

AMERICAN SOLDIER

It's okay.  
You're safe.

The words sound unreal.

She doesn't respond.

Doesn't move.

The soldier kneels.

Sets his rifle down deliberately.

Keeps his hands visible.

AMERICAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)

We won't hurt you.

She studies his face.

Looks for deception.

Finds only fatigue.

Confusion.

Humanity.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - CONTINUOUS

The baby cries again.

Weak.

Hoarse.

The soldier winces - not annoyed.

Concerned.

He reaches slowly for his canteen.

Holds it out.

Doesn't approach.

AMERICAN SOLDIER

Water.

The mother hesitates.

Everything inside her screams not to trust.

The baby cries louder.

She looks down.

Then back up.

Takes one step forward.

Stops.

Then another.

She reaches the canteen.

Her hands shake as she takes it.

She drinks first.

Then offers it carefully to the baby.

The baby drinks.

Greedily.

She lets out a sound she didn't know she was holding back.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - MORNING

The soldier looks away.

Gives her privacy.

Another soldier approaches quietly.

They exchange a glance.

Something unspoken.

They've seen this before.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - CONTINUOUS

The mother lowers herself to the ground.

Overwhelmed.

The baby settles.

Sleeping again.

She looks up at the soldier.

Her lips move.

No sound comes out.

She tries again.

MOTHER  
...thank you.

The soldier nods.

Doesn't reply.

Doesn't know what to say.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - MORNING

The camera holds on the mother.

On the baby.

On the reality of survival finally acknowledged.

Below them, the island continues to burn.

History moves on.

They remain.

EXT. AMERICAN FORWARD CAMP - DAY (CONTINUED)

The mother sits on a wooden crate.

The baby rests in her arms, wrapped now in a clean blanket.

An AMERICAN MEDIC finishes checking the child.

Nods once.

MEDIC  
Dehydrated.  
But strong.

The word lands again.

Strong.

The mother absorbs it quietly.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - DAY

Around them, other SURVIVORS arrive.

Escorted in small groups.

Some wounded.  
Some hollow-eyed.  
Some children clinging to strangers.  
No reunions.  
No relief.  
Only accumulation.  
The mother watches each new arrival.  
Searching faces.  
Not for anyone specific.  
Just... looking.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - CONTINUOUS

An American officer speaks quietly with an interpreter.  
Points toward the cliffs in the distance.

OFFICER  
Still happening?

The interpreter nods.  
The officer closes his eyes briefly.  
Reopens them.  
Gives another order.  
The machine keeps moving.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - DAY

The mother hears the ocean again.  
Fainter now.  
But present.  
She stiffens.  
The baby sleeps through it.  
She lets the sound pass.

For the first time, it does.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - DAY (LATER)

Civilians line up for food.

Simple bowls.

Rice.

Water.

The mother eats slowly.

Methodically.

She has learned not to rush survival.

The baby wakes.

She feeds the child carefully.

Counts the swallows.

Stops counting.

Lets herself be here.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - AFTERNOON

A GROUP OF JAPANESE PRISONERS, disarmed, is escorted past.

Among them -

The BRUTAL SOLDIER.

His uniform torn.

Face streaked with dirt.

No authority left.

He keeps his eyes down.

The mother freezes.

Recognition hits her hard.

He looks up.

Their eyes meet.

Just for a moment.

No hatred.

No triumph.

Just recognition.

He looks away first.

She doesn't.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - CONTINUOUS

The prisoners are moved on.

The mother exhales slowly.

She hadn't realized she was holding her breath.

The baby stirs.

She looks down.

Grounds herself.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

A MILITARY PHOTOGRAPHER raises a camera.

Documents the survivors.

Not intrusive.

Necessary.

The mother turns slightly away.

Doesn't want the baby photographed like this.

The photographer lowers the camera.

Understands.

Moves on.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - SUNSET

The light softens again.

The island exhales.

The mother stands.  
Looks out over the camp.  
At the tents.  
The wounded.  
The living.  
She shifts the baby in her arms.  
The baby opens its eyes.  
Looks at her.  
Calm.  
Trusting.  
She meets the gaze.  
For the first time, she doesn't feel guilt.  
She feels responsibility.

EXT. FORWARD CAMP - SUNSET

In the distance, the cliffs are barely visible.  
Just a suggestion against the sky.  
She doesn't look away.  
She doesn't bow her head.  
She stands.  
Holds the child.  
Lets history stand where it is.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFFS - DAY (YEARS LATER) (CONTINUED)

The ocean looks the same.  
Blue. Endless.  
Wind moves through tall grass along the cliff edge.  
Quiet now.

A MEMORIAL STONE sits set back from the drop.

Simple.

Unadorned.

Names carved carefully.

Too many to read at once.

EXT. CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

The mother, older now, stands a few steps away.

Time has etched itself into her face.

Not softly.

Beside her stands a YOUNG ADULT – the baby grown.

They stand close, but not touching.

Respectful of the place.

Respectful of the silence.

The wind carries the ocean's sound upward.

Relentless.

Unchanged.

EXT. CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

The young adult steps closer to the edge.

Peers down.

The drop is dizzying.

They step back instinctively.

The mother watches.

Doesn't intervene.

Doesn't need to.

The young adult turns to her.

A question unspoken.

The mother answers anyway.

MOTHER

They said it was mercy.

She pauses.

Chooses the next words carefully.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It wasn't.

The young adult nods.

Accepts this.

They look back toward the ocean together.

EXT. CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

A small group of visitors stands nearby.

Quiet.

Some bow.

Some pray.

Some simply stare.

No one speaks loudly here.

The place demands better.

EXT. CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

The mother reaches into her pocket.

Removes a small object.

A fabric wrap, faded with age.

The same one from long ago.

She holds it for a moment.

Then tucks it back into her pocket.

Not ready to let it go.

Maybe never.

EXT. CLIFFS - LATER

The sun begins to lower.

The light turns gold.

Beautiful.

Inappropriate.

The young adult takes the mother's hand now.

Just briefly.

Grounding.

She allows it.

EXT. SAIPAN - CLIFFS - SUNSET

They walk away from the edge together.

Slowly.

Deliberately.

The ocean continues below.

Unaware.

Unchanged.

EXT. SAIPAN - OCEAN - SUNSET

Waves crash against rock.

Endlessly.

The sound fills the air.

Then -

It fades under silence.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER:

In June and July 1944, thousands of Japanese civilians died at the cliffs of Saipan. Many were misled by fear and false promises. Some survived.

All were changed.

END