

AIKO

Written By

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MONTAGE - ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR

A TAPING of PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT's declaration of war on Japan is shown on screen. Over it, we see FOOTAGE of the attack on Pearl Harbour.

PRES. ROOSEVELT
Yesterday, December 7, 1941 a date
which will live in infamy.

We see FOOTAGE of Americans in anger and fright.

AMERICAN MAN (V.O.)
Pen up all the Japanese so they
can't do us any dirt! Keep 'em from
giving anyone else any trouble.

PRES. ROOSEVELT
Always will our whole Nation
remember the character of the
onslaught against us.

INT. AIKO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Through the window of a tiny room in which mattresses cover the floor and a table pushed against the window shows a studious user, we see American flags adorning the buildings and racial slurs painted on the walls. AIKO TANAKA (18), a slim and orderly young Japanese woman, brushes her jet black hair as she reads out notes off her notebook.

INT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - DAY

Aiko's mother, ASUKA (40), who shares the same hairstyle and has similar features, stops Aiko from leaving as she zips up her winter coat.

ASUKA
(whisper)
Keep a close eye on your sister. If
anything happens, make sure that
you're-

AIKO
Mother, we'll be alright. It's just
three days of school and we'd be
done, okay? You don't worry.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Insults and punches are thrown at a young Japanese BOY (18) at a distance.

MAN

You're going to end us, we know it!
Get the hell out of here before you
***** blow us all up too, you
good fo' nothing gook!

Aiko and the boy lock gazes. She holds it before her sister tugs on her sleeve, and they continue walking.

INT. EXAM HALL - DAY

The HEADMISTRESS (40), tall and unsmiling, barges into an exam hall where 50 students are taking an exam. All eyes are on her. She wears a grim look.

HEADMISTRESS

Ito, Tanaka, Yamato. Principal's
office with all your belongings,
now.

Whispers build up in the room. The two Japanese girls and Aiko pack their bags in a hurry. They look dazed and one has started crying. As they walk out, a timid teacher gives Aiko a look of confusion and worry. There are 12 other Japanese girls outside, including Aiko's sister. She finds her and squeezes her hand in reassurance.

EXT. OUTSIDE TAMAGAWA RESTAURANT - DAY

A commotion causes Aiko to rush over. She finds three adult MEN, one being Aiko's father, HARUTO (48), trying to resist a smart-looking Caucasian male, RICHARD (22), who politely tries to talk to them. Aiko immediately reacts.

AIKO

Hey! Leave him alone, will you? He
has done you no harm!

HARUTO

(shocked)
I'm sorry, Aiko... I can't seem to
trust any of them anymore.

AIKO

(taken aback)
Them? What do you m- There are no
them, Father!

(CONTINÚA)

Aiko reaches out to Richard.

AIKO
Don't come near him again!

HARUTO
I'm sorry, dear, I'm just trying
to-

Aiko gives him a cold stare. He walks back in following the other men. Aiko checks up on Richard.

AIKO
This will all be over soon. After
all this mess, we can just resume
everything we planned together, I
promise.

They embrace eachother.

INT. TAMAGAWA RESTAURANT - DAY

There are just a couple of older customers, all Japanese. Asuka, Aiko and Richard are cleaning behind the counter.

ELDER 1
Poor Daigo felt compelled to close
down his grocery store, what a
shame. Haruko, you closing down
soon, too?

HARUKO
No, no. You think they'd take me in
anywhere if I were to ask for work?

Nervous laughter.

ELDER 2
We're at war, son. The only work
you will be asked to do will get
blood on your hands.

ELDER 1
Back in the motherland.

HARUKO
(jokingly)
They won't want me, I'm too old!

ELDER 2
(to ELDER 1)
I heard it's intense there. Daigo's
sons will be taken the first
(MÁS)

(CONTINÚA)

ELDER 2 (continúa)
instant they step foot on Japan.
Oh, motherland.

The two elders shake their heads in disbelief. Just then, the news comes on the TV signaling an important message. Everyone draws their attention towards it. The room falls silent in anticipation and fear.

REPORTER (ON TV)
The President of our beloved nation has, as of 9 AM this morning, February 19, signed and issued Executive Order 9066 that calls upon all men and women of Japanese descent in this land to be put into internment camps for the duration of this war. God bless America!

Celebratory noises come from the TV, contrasting the mood in the restaurant. Everyone seems to have lost a connection with reality. Asuka wipes a tear off her cheek.

ELDER 1
(whispers)
Prisoners of war...

INT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A Japanese man in a maroon suit, MR. SAMUEL NAKAMURA (50), sits on the family's couch with his son, THOMAS (28), who's got his head down and hands interlocked. Aiko's parents uncomfortably sit on the opposite end. Aiko walks in with her BROTHER (17) with some grocery bags.

HARUKO
There you are! (to Mr. Nakamura) My oldest one.

Aiko stops in her tracks, dumbfounded. Asuka walks towards her and whispers in her ear that makes her eyebrows scrunch up. Asuka pulls a furious Aiko lightly towards the couch.

HARUKO
Do you remember Mr. Nakamura and his son, Thomas? They used to live just right around the corner, do you recall? They're here to-

(CONTINÚA)

MR. NAKAMURA

Sorry, Mr Tanaka. Allow me. (to Aiko) We're here to come by and give you our well wishes. How are you? You were still so tiny last we met.

Aiko doesn't reply. Thomas steals a glance.

MR. NAKAMURA

(continuing, hesitant)

Uh, I heard the news about your expulsion from school. I can get you to do your exams privately. You will receive your diploma as you had wished... I'm sure they-

AIKO

(politely)

No, thank you, Mr. Nakamura. There really is no possibility of that happening.

HARUKO

(surprised)

Why not, Aiko? Mr. Nakamura will arrange it all for you.

AIKO

(stern)

Father, you said it yourself, we're at war. *They* don't like us. (to Mr. Nakamura) My apologies, Sir, I've had a long day. It's nice to see you.

Aiko gets up to leave.

HARUKO

Aiko. We're not done.

ASUKA

I'll get her. Excuse me.

Asuka rushes to her daughter. She catches up with her and Aiko turns to face her.

AIKO

What are they really here for, Mother? Don't you bluff me.

Pause. Aiko searches her mother's eyes.

ASUKA
(quietly)
Your father wants you to take
Thomas' hand in marriage.

Aiko is taken aback, speechless. Asuka looks at her, convinced.

ASUKA
They can protect the family, Aiko.

Aiko looks at her mother in disbelief.

EXT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD FRONT PORCH - DAY

The flowers have bloomed outside; a stark contrast to their dirt-smearred white walls. Largely spray-painted on the walls, too are words that say "LEAVE OUR LAND BEFORE YOUR SINS ARE REPAID". Aiko and her sister walks out of the door, notice the damage and stand in horror. Her sister sobs into Aiko's shirt. Aiko has her hand tight on her mouth.

INT. HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Richard's hand is on Aiko's belly, his ear pressed against it. Their faces blotchy, but they are elated.

RICHARD
I think it's a girl...

Aiko smiles at him and caress his cheek. Richard is hopeful.

RICHARD
(continues)
What does this mean for us?

Pause. Aiko's expression turns sorrowful. She struggles to hold eye contact.

AIKO
I'm going to accept the proposal.

Pause. Richard's breathing wavers.

RICHARD
But I can take care of you just as well. I promise - your whole family and my own child - you will be safe. We can hide and I-

AIKO

We will *never* be safe, Rich.
They're out to get us.

RICHARD

The documents clearly state that
you're an American.

AIKO

I don't look like you, Richard.

INT. FOOD MARKET - DAY

It's a quiet morning at the market. The small number of people present are in conversation with each other. A SCREAM is heard and a crowd forms a few metres away from Aiko. She marches over to find an older lady passed out. She pushes herself into the crowd.

AIKO

CPR! I'll perform CPR on her! Move,
please!

She kneels down next to the lady. It takes her a few tries pumping the lady's chest and blowing in air. Suspense lingers. Aiko gets more frantic. The lady, then takes in a deep breath. The crowd cheers, give their thanks, and helps the lady. A YOUNG MAN pulls Aiko out and shakes her hands.

AIKO

What happened to her?

YOUNG MAN

She heard news of house raids just
down in San Diego. Her son... He
resisted, and they shot him.

Aiko goes pale.

INT. THOMAS' HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Thomas is nervously showing Aiko around his two-storey house. She trails behind him, silent.

THOMAS

(stutters)

There are a few bedrooms in this
house... A few toilets, too. If
you're in need of anything, just
ask Anita.

(CONTINÚA)

Aiko nods. They stand before the master bedroom. Thomas politely calls her in.

THOMAS

(shy)

This is my- our bedroom. Ample space... A king-sized bed.

AIKO

Thomas, if it's okay, I don't yet feel comfort-

THOMAS

Oh, of course! I understand. Of course. You can pick any other room. I will have the maids prepare it for you.

Aiko looks at him in appreciation before they both swiftly look away. An awkward silence. Aiko is scanning the room when she suddenly throws up. Thomas freezes in his position.

AIKO

I'm so sorry.

Aiko has her hand on her belly. Thomas' eyes darts towards it and back at her face. He looks at her knowingly and leaves the room upset. Aiko closes her eyes, disappointed.

INT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - DAY

The tea is no longer hot and the sweets remain untouched on the table. Asuka is consoling Aiko, who is sobbing. She looks up at her mother with trust in her eyes.

ASUKA

What is it?

AIKO

I'm carrying Richard's child.

A pause. Asuka exhales and looks away.

AIKO

(continuing)

Thomas knows. I barfed all over his floor two weeks ago.

They both gradually start crying.

(CONTINÚA)

AIKO
(in tears)
I can't do it. I can't do this to
Thomas. But, the family's safety is
in my hand. Mother, I'm so ashamed.
I don't know what to do.

INT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Haruko paces back and forth, furious. Asuka sits quietly with her head down. As Aiko walks into the house, Haruko marches towards her in anger.

HARUKO
(shouts)
Why have you got to embarrass me
like that? Have you got no shame in
yourself? What in hell am I to do
now, tell me!

Aiko remains standing where she is, head low.

HARUKO
(continues)
Aren't you aware of what's going on
out there? They're out to *kill* us!

Asuka flinches. She gets up.

ASUKA
Stop! It was a mistake, goddamn it.
What's been done is done.

Pause.

HARUKO
What's been done is done. Of
course. And now we're paying for it
all. The Japanese bomb a port; we
pay the price. The Japanese
integrate fear in these people; we
pay the price. A single mistake has
larger consequences than you can
over imagine.

Haruko fights back tears.

HARUKO
I just want my family safe...

Asuka rubs Haruko's back, holding back tears. Aiko stands before them, stupefied.

INT. THOMAS' HOUSEHOLD AIKO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Aiko wakes up to the RINGING of her alarm clock. She gets up and finds on the bedside table her husband's wedding band over a paper with a note typed out saying "*My sincere apologies, but this is too much for my family.*" signed by Samuel Nakamura. Aiko chokes on her tears.

INT. TANAKA HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Tanaka family is having dinner: bread and soup. The mood is sombre and the room quiet besides the occasional chewing. Suddenly, VIOLENT KNOCKING is heard causing the family to perk up, alarmed.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Mr Tanaka and family, you are to
step out of the building this
instant!

The family in shock, is unable to move.

We see the American soldiers breaking the front door and aggressively handle the family, pushing them out of the house and ordering them to kneel in surrender on their front porch. We see other families in the same position in the neighbourhood.

THE END