

CHERRY BLOSSOM

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEADOW IN THE MOUNTAIN - DAWN (DREAM SEQUENCE)

A thick fog hovers over a meadow of green grass. Dots of yellow-green light dart over the grass and are gone. Then a SUDDEN MOVEMENT, a flash of color draws us in and there, rising out of the grass is a majestic Cherry Blossom tree in full bloom.

More yellow-green light flit through the branches of the tree. Again, the same flash of color appears and is gone. And now the yellow-green light from the fireflies dart and dance and oddly begin to mass...

...their green fluorescent glow illuminating the cherry blossoms creating the sense that we are in a tranquil dream-like vision.

As cherry blossom petals begin to fall from the tree, it is then we catch a glimpse of A YOUNG JAPANESE WOMAN (early 20s), in an elegant white and light pink kimono.

Cherry blossom petals flutter ACROSS SCREEN. As we MOVE CLOSER, the flurry of cherry blossoms fades away to reveal the Japanese Woman, her stunning, ethereal beauty taking your breath away.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Who are you?

Then an OLDER JAPANESE WOMAN appears in a column of shimmering orange sunlight, her face in shadow, but it is her presence backlit by the brilliant celestial light which is undeniable, god-like, even divine.

OLDER JAPANESE WOMAN

No mortals can be with immortals.

And with that pronouncement, the Young Japanese Woman vanishes in a thick deluge of cherry blossoms.

CUT TO:

INT. SEMI-DARKENED CABIN - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

THOMAS MARTIN (24), blonde, young, handsome, lying asleep in a hammock in a semi-darkened space. The whole space rocks violently, throwing him from his hammock.

He sits up, gasping, his blue eyes blinking, finding himself soaking wet from an overturned pail of water.

EXT. DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

SUPER: June 7th, 1613 - EAST CHINA SEA

The Clove is caught in a raging tempest. Sailors work frantically to keep the ship from sinking.

INT. CABIN - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

Thomas, a rope around his waist, lashes it around the main mast that pierces through each deck to the hull.

The Clove heels. A notebook falls off from the hammock. Thomas releases the rope to collect his notebook and dried plant samples stuffed in the pages.

EDMUND SAYERS (22), dark brown hair, a crucifix around his neck, making his way up the narrow space, the ship pitches sharply slamming him into a wall. Edmund grabs his shoulder in pain.

THOMAS

Edmund!

Thomas rushes to his injured friend. As he approaches Edmund, Thomas studies the damage done. He places a hand on the back of Edmund's shoulder and with a violent jab, shoves the bone back into the socket. Edmund screams, nearly faints.

EDMUND

(weakly, wiggles his
shoulder)

Thank you Thomas.

Thomas nods. He retrieves his notebook lying on the floor. The pages of his notebook are wet, the ink smudged. He throws the notebook to the floor, anger, frustrated. Just as quickly picks it up, blotting it dry the best he can with the sleeve of his shirt.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

The ocean calm. Late afternoon. *The Clove* making steady headway.

SUPER: William Adams was an English navigator on a Dutch ship who became the first English man to reach Japan in 1600.

SUPER: He served Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa as one of the lords in Japan and suggested Shogun to trade with England.

SUPER: England received his letter from Adams and sent *The Clove* to Japan thirteen years after Adams' arrival in Japan.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

A SAILOR lies on a cot, dead from scurvy. A MIDDLE-AGED DOCTOR crosses himself. Thomas saddened, frustrated, and angry.

EXT. UPPER DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

SAILOR #1 and SAILOR #2 carry the swaddled corpse to the deck rail where the crew is gathered.

JOHN SARIS (33), a confident aristocratic man of medium build, steps forward. Looks up into a clear sky as though looking for divine intervention. He looks at the corpse, tired.

SARIS

(saddened, sighs)

Thomas. You attended a seminary.
Would you give a prayer for him?

THOMAS

Captain Saris. That was a lifetime ago. I'm no longer that person.

Saris gives Thomas a stern look, gestures to proceed. Thomas reluctantly steps forward. He stands before the crew, pondering.

SAILOR #1 pokes Thomas's back.

SAILOR #1

(whispering)

Are you going to take all day? Get on with it!

THOMAS

(nods, sighs deeply, looks at Edmund sternly, then)

Almighty Father, eternal God, hear our prayers for your son... Pastor Lloyd... whom you have called from this life to yourself. This man who so bravely served King and country... grant him light, happiness, and peace.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Let him pass in safety through the gates of heaven, and live forever with all your saints in the light you promised to Abraham and to all his descendants in faith. Guard him from all harm, and on that great day of resurrection and reward, raise him up. Pardon his sins and give him eternal life in your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALL SAILORS

Amen.

SARIS

(pats Thomas on the shoulder)

That was beautiful.

Thomas coughs uncomfortable, uneasy. And that's when he SEES:

INSERT - A JAPANESE MAN IN A GREEN KIMONO

floating over the ocean. Looking at Thomas with stern cold eyes.

Thomas blinks and the Japanese Man suddenly vanishes. He rubs his eyes, thinking it's just fatigue. But when he looks again, he sees only calm seas.

SAILOR #1 and SAILOR #2 heave the corpse overboard. They watch it bob in the waves before slipping into the deep.

SAILOR #1

Poor fellow.

SAILOR #2

So close to Japan and he didn't make it.

SARIS

Okay boys. Put away your cross. The Japanese will have none of it. That'd be the last prayer for a while.

Sailors removing their cross from their necks and put them into their pockets.

EXT. UPPER DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - NIGHT

A stark blue moonlight shines down on *The Clove*, silhouetting the vessel.

INT. CABIN - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - NIGHT

Sailors asleep in their hammocks slung from the bulwarks. Thomas wakes and makes his way on deck.

EXT. UPPER DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - NIGHT

Thomas on the deck under the light of a full moon.

The ocean is still, when suddenly it begins to boil and heave.

Rising out of the water, in a swirling vortex, is a magnificent tall figure wearing an ancient green kimono. One hand clutches a long sword and we SEE his hand is missing its fingernails. The moonlight catches his clean-shaven handsome face with what can only be described as a mischievous grin.

No words can explain what Thomas sees because it can't be possible, but there before him is, SUSANOO, the Japanese God of the Ocean.

SUSANOO

Brother!

Then a blinding bolt of light flashes across the night, and landing on the swirling water, appears a striking muscular Japanese man of deep black hair, wearing an ornate purple kimono with white obi (belt) and clutching a golden sword.

He is an equally foreboding presence. TSUKUYOMI-NO-MIKOTO, the Japanese God of The Moon turns to face Thomas.

THE TWO GODS

Appear to float over the swirling vortex.

UPPER DECK - THOMAS

Thomas cowers, trying to hide behind a cannon, but to no avail. He slowly rises, standing before both gods. Susanoo points at Thomas.

SUSANOO

(to Tsukuyomi-No-Mikoto)

This human is the one I was talking about.

TSUKUYOMI-NO-MIKOTO

(to Thomas)

Susanoo told me that you delivered a beautiful prayer, but you didn't believe the very words you spoke. Why?

Thomas shudders in disbelief, still cowering near the cannon.

SUSANOO

Answer us!

The ocean rumbles and *The Clove* jostles in the waves. Thomas slips and is thrown onto the weather deck capstan. Thomas is trying to make sense of it all when...

...Edmund emerges topside.

EDMUND

What was that yelling about?

THOMAS

Did you see that?

EDMUND

See what?

Thomas stands steady, surveys a now calm ocean.

THOMAS

It was there. I saw it. I...I must have been dreaming.

(ill at ease)

I've been having strange dreams of late.

EDMUND

Are you all right?

Thomas doubles over and vomits.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - DAY

SARIS

What are your plans once you set ashore?

Edmund looks longingly at a wall decorated with an erotic painting of several bosomy English wrenches all naked as the day they were born.

SARIS (CONT'D)

Exotic women from the East, is it?

EDMUND

Fortune, Sir.

Edmund reaches up to the painting, tenderly caresses the buxom naked breasts of one of the women.

THOMAS

Botany.

SARIS

There's nothing wrong with a little amusement.

THOMAS

I'm here for-

SARIS

King and country. I know. You have told me that more times than I care to count.

Edmund chuckles.

EDMUND

Captain. He loves his plants more than his women. He and this lass were going at it and she told him about this flower, the color of his eyes. And just like that, he's off to find his rare and pretty flower, leaving her naked and longing to do more than stare into those blue eyes of his.

SARIS

You are kidding!

Thomas smiles, awkward, unsure.

THOMAS

(beat)

What is the point of loving a woman? Just my luck, she'd die from the disease. Here is my chance to do something. If I could find a cure, maybe others would be spared the torment I've gone through.

They hear CLAMORING from the deck. A bell RINGS.

SAILOR #1 (O.S.)
Captain! General quarters!

Saris, Thomas, and Edmund walk out to the deck.

EXT. FORECASTLE DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

SAILORS lining the deck rails, screaming, pointing at land - JAPAN. Thomas runs to the pinrail.

Hirado Island, beautiful green emerald, floating over a brilliant blue ocean.

SARIS
Twenty degrees to starboard.

HELMSMAN
Aye, aye.

A PILOT spins the wheel. *The Clove* shifts, sails billow full. The ocean reflecting the sun in a blinding array like so many diamonds.

THOMAS
Vessels approaching!

JAPANESE FISHING SKIFFS

approach *The Clove*. The Japanese fishermen wave to the crew to guide *the Clove* into port.

Edmond slaps him on the back.

EDMUND
My god man! We've arrived! We're in Japan!

In the distance, we SEE the port of Hirado. Wood buildings and shops of a medium-sized village bustling with trade.

Japanese villagers come out of their houses to gather at the port.

A BEAUTIFUL SPARROWHAWK

Is seen flying high in the sky over *The Clove*.

EXT. DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

Thomas sketches in a notebook. The Japanese village, its people. The wind catches a page and turns to a new page, a new drawing...

INSERT - A SKETCH OF TSUKUYOMI-NO-MIKOTO AND SUSANOO

EXT. HIRADO PORT - DAY

With five anchors dropped, *The Clove* docks in Hirado port.

SUPER: June 1613 - Hirado - Southern part of Japan

Carts, horses, and Japanese people gather at the port. Some to watch the English crewmen curiously.

Japanese people gathering around to see *The Clove's* flag of Saint Andrew's Cross.

ON TOP OF THE HILL

The burned down, Hirado castle, its stone walls facing the sea.

EXT. SHIP DOCKED AT HIRADO PORT

Wood buildings and shops clustered along the port. Merchants selling their wares. A thousand new colors and textures greet the sailors.

A man approaches the ship with the local delicacy, fish and fruits.

DRIED OCTOPI

Stretched on bamboo sticks held up by the man hang on a line with several more of his grotesque misshapen brethren at the port.

CUT TO:

EXT. DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

EDMUND
(re: octopi)
Look.

THOMAS
 (impressed)
 Monster's kids.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP DOCKED AT HIRADO PORT

A regal-looking samurai, SONOSUKE MOTOKI (40) and a Dutch trader, JAN HOFF(35), observe *The Clove* from the dock.

EXT. DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - DAY

Thomas and Edmund observe the Samurai, dressed in a kimono of exquisite design, his hair, braided and tied back, standing near a group of men. Edmund checks out what Samurai is wearing, silk. His eyes widen and then shifts to Samurai's head.

EDMUND
 Looks like they are carrying guns
 on their heads.

Thomas laughs.

Thomas looks at the lush green mountains.

A STRONG WIND blows down off the mountain across the port and out to sea. Thomas HEARS something, a siren call perhaps, voices calling out to him.

He looks around but there is no one there. He scans the horizon, following the landscape up into the mountains. He feels another gust of wind.

A JAPANESE FOOT SOLDIER

carrying a spear comes aboard with more FOOT SOLDIERS.

He is greeted by several crew members and the ENGLISH INTERPRETER.

Note: The Japanese speak Japanese unless otherwise noted. They are in Italic. The Malay Interpreter speaks Malay unless otherwise noted. When the characters speak non English, there will be English subtitles.

JAPANESE FOOT SOLDIER
Do you have an interpreter?

A MALAY INTERPRETER approaches the Samurai.

JAPANESE FOOT SOLDIER (CONT'D)
What is the nationality of this ship? It's not a Dutch ship.

MALAY INTERPRETER
 (in Japanese)
This ship is from England. England is a friend of the Netherlands.

JAPANESE FOOT SOLDIER
Who is your captain?

MALAY INTERPRETER
 (to the English Interpreter in Malay)
 He is asking for the captain.

The English Interpreter sees Saris.

ENGLISH INTERPRETER
 Captain Saris. This gentleman wishes to speak to you.

Saris sees the Japanese Foot Soldier and bows.

SARIS
 My name is John Saris. I'm the captain of *The Clove*. We came from England for friendship and trade.

Saris nods to the English Interpreter who translates into Malay. The Malay Interpreter then translates what Saris had said into Japanese.

ON THOMAS AND EDMUND

THOMAS
 (to Edmund)
 This will take forever if we have to communicate this way.

BACK TO SARIS AND THE FOOT SOLDIER

The Japanese foot soldier nods and leaves. The remaining foot soldiers remain on board.

SARIS
 Have the mess prepare our finest for these gentlemen. We have wine, fresh fruit, stores of meat. We'll entertain them like royalty.

A COOK nods and goes below to the galley.

Thomas and Edmund stow lines and prepare the deck to receive the local contingent.

THE SPARROWHAWK

circles high over the main yard-arm. Thomas looks up into the rigging, admires the Sparrowhawk, its black and white striped plumage.

EDMUND

Look.

THOMAS

Magnificent.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

Empty dishes and goblets of wine scattered on the table. SHIGENOBU MATSURA (64) and TAKANOBU MATSURA (21), Lords of Hirado sit happy, satisfied. Their faces flushed from wine.

The Lords turn to admire Saris' erotic painting on the cabin wall. Saris, the Malay Interpreter, and the English Interpreter look on. One of the Lords makes a joke that requires no translation. They laugh.

A KNOCK at the door.

SARIS

Enter.

Thomas, Edmund, doctor, and three TRADERS come in. Both men dressed in their finest.

Thomas wears clothing favoring lighter tones topped off with a tricorne hat of laced sides. His waistcoat (vest) of brocaded design.

Edmund in a shirt, waistcoat, and knee breeches befitting a man of more modest class.

SARIS (CONT'D)

These men are traders.

Saris waves over the English Interpreter who hands him a satchel which he opens and produces a letter.

SARIS (CONT'D)

(stands, offers it to
Shigenobu)

(MORE)

SARIS (CONT'D)

This is the letter from his majesty
King James.

The English Interpreter translates to Malay. Malay translates to Japanese. Shigenobu accepts the letter from Saris who hesitates before bowing.

SARIS (CONT'D)

So when can we expect to see Mr.
Adams?

The Interpreters translates for Shigenobu.

SHIGENOBU

*If it is your wish, a messenger
will be dispatched within a day.
Mr. Adams can be here in 40 days.
He is aware of your situation, so I
can assure you, you can expect to
receive the cooperation you require
by summer.*

The Interpreters translates for the English.

THOMAS

It will take that long?

Saris gives Thomas a stern look.

EDMUND

(to Thomas, whispering)
Hold your tongue!

THOMAS

(whispering)
If we set sail on the next good
wind, we'd reach Mr. Adams in less
time.

EDMUND

(whispering)
It will happen soon enough. And who
is to say that the very plants you
seek aren't right here under your
nose?

Thomas mulling this over. Petulant, resigned.

THOMAS

Captain. Permission to speak to our
guests.

Saris nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (to the English
 Interpreter)

It has been suggested that I begin my study of the local plant life here. Of course, this is dependent on you granting me permission to explore the local area.

As the English Interpreter translates to Malay, Thomas hands his notebook to the Malay Interpreter who says something in Japanese and hands Shigenobu the notebook.

Shigenobu looks quickly at the smudged drawings, notations, and plant cutting between some of the pages.

SHIGENOBU
 (to Malay Interpreter)
*For this man of science, we will
 indulge him.*

Shigenobu stands up and bows to Saris.

SHIGENOBU (CONT'D)
*Thank you for your hospitality. You
 must allow me to repay you in some
 way.*

The Malay Interpreter nods to a departing Shigenobu and Takanobu.

SARIS
 What did he say?

The Malay Interpreter points at Saris' pornography paintings.

MALAY INTERPRETER
 He wants to show you the most
 precious jewels in the east!

English Interpreter translates it.

SARIS
 (not getting it)
 Oh very good!

The Samurai laugh.

Saris opens the door again, and the Sparrowhawk suddenly swoops in. Everyone panics as it darts around the room. The Sparrowhawk grasps the notebook and flies out the door as quickly as it arrived.

EXT. HIRADO MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The Sparrowhawk, still clutching the notebook, lands gently on the raised left arm of the bearded ONMYOJI YASUMASA ASHIDA (50).

His clothing torn and disheveled, a straw hat obscuring half of his face. Onmyoji yanks the notebook from the talons of the Sparrowhawk and gives his arm a shake.

The hawk transforms in into a bird-shaped doll made of straw. The doll and a talisman with Japanese text fall to the ground.

Onmyoji flips through the notebook and finds the drawing of Tsukuyomi-no-mikoto and Susanoo. He tears out the page, tossing the pieces into the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. DECK - THE CLOVE, AN ENGLISH GALLEON - NIGHT

Japanese PROSTITUTES parade aboard followed by a middle-aged JAPANESE PIMP, a JAPANESE INTERPRETER and Japanese musicians.

The women, 20s - 30s, are dressed in brightly colored kimonos, their hair tied up and bonded at the top of their head, their faces in white makeup, lips painted red. They look over the crew members with curiosity and a bit of anxiety.

EDMUND
(gracious)
Thank you, my Lord.

JAPANESE PIMP
*Lord Matsura sends you this gift
for your hospitality the other
evening.*

The Japanese Pimp claps his hands and the women form a line. Musicians begin playing the Shamisen, a three-stringed, Japanese musical instrument. The women begin to dance.

The crew members look on intently. They have been drinking heavily. The men move closer in a circle around the women. Thomas stands off to the side.

EDMUND
(to Thomas)
Look. I'm sorry for the notebook.
But for now cheer up. I mean it.