



Shockwave: Countdown to Hiroshima

Stephen Walker

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At 31,000 feet above Japan, Tom Ferebee sits hunched over his bombsight. Below him lies the primary target of an operation called "Special Mission Number 13" by the few military personnel aware of its existence -- Hiroshima, a city of over 300,000. He waits until the aiming point is directly below the crosshairs and releases his cargo -- a five-ton bomb known as Little Boy by the scientists who built it. If all goes as theorized, the resulting destruction will lead to Japan's surrender and the end of World War II. But right now, a very real question occupies the minds of everyone involved:

Will it work?

The historical record is clear: It did work. On a quiet Monday morning in August 1945, the bomb detonated as expected, resulting in the deaths of nearly 100,000 people. The Japanese Supreme Council surrendered nine days later, after a second bomb, to similarly devastating effect, had leveled Nagasaki. But if, in retrospect, the bombing of Hiroshima represents the climax of one of the signal events of the twentieth century -- indeed, in the history of mankind -- at the time it was but another episode in an unprecedented drama whose final act had begun three weeks earlier, at Los Alamos, a secret laboratory in the high plains of New Mexico.

Shockwave is the story of those terrible three weeks, as seen through the eyes of the pilots, victims, scientists, and world leaders at the center of the drama. Extraordinary interviews with American and Japanese witnesses tell the story of the bombing of Hiroshima with unparalleled immediacy and veracity -- including the story of the copilot, who writes a minute-by-minute diary on board the Enola Gay; the atomic scientist who arms the bomb in midair, equipped with a screwdriver; and the Japanese student desperately searching for his lover in the ruins of the city.

Combining a brilliant gift for storytelling and a keen eye for detail, **Walker** constructs a shocking and unforgettably moving portrait of an event that changed the world forever.

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