



The Souvenir: A Daughter Discovers Her Father's War

Louise Steinman

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Louise Steinman's American childhood in the fifties was bound by one unequivocal condition: "Never mention the war to your father." That silence sustained itself until the fateful day Steinman opened an old ammunition box left behind after her parents' death. In it she discovered nearly 500 letters her father had written to her mother during his service in the Pacific War and a Japanese flag mysteriously inscribed to Yoshio Shimizu. Setting out to determine the identity of Yoshio Shimizu and the origins of the silken flag, Steinman discovered the unexpected: a hidden side of her father, the green soldier who achingly left his pregnant wife to fight for his life in a brutal 165-day campaign that changed him forever. Her journey to return the "souvenir" to its owner not only takes Steinman on a passage to Japan and the Philippines, but also returns her to the age of her father's innocence, where she learned of the tender and expressive man she'd never known. Steinman writes with the same poignant immediacy her father did in his letters. Together their stories in *The Souvenir* create an evocative testament to the ways in which war changes one generation and shapes another.

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