

H\*O\*I\*S\*T\*

T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

*Amber Florenza*

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CHILD FICTION/MILITARY/PACIFIC THEATER

History/WWII fiction/ages 6-10/Iwo Jima, 1945.

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Hoist the Flag

Dedicated to the guys who never came back



## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

It had been a tough day. Bullets whistled fiercely and torpedoes screamed overhead. Shells exploded. Men were bleeding. Men were dying. Iwo Jima was swarming with American soldiers and Japanese soldiers.

## **Amber Florenza**

Tom held his machine gun. He looked around him. Never in his life had he seen so much bloodshed! The smell of it would have made him sick...if he hadn't thought about his duty to his country. Tom clutched his machine gun tighter. He'd have to move on. Men were falling all around him.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Tom saw his buddy walking towards him with a bloody face. In the camouflage of smoke and humidity, Tom rushed to him.

“What happened to you, Jake?” Tom almost had to shout above the roar and chaos of the bullets, torpedoes and grenades going off nearby.

## *Amber Florenza*

Jake turned his bloody face towards a distant hill and pointed, "We need you, Tom. The Japs have captured the hill."

Tom stared at Jake and realized what had happened. The Japs had made a bloody mess of the hill and Jake wouldn't give it up without a fight, like any true man of Uncle Sam's.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

“Let’s go.” Tom wrapped his handkerchief over Jake’s bleeding forehead.

Then, they both set out cautiously towards the occupied hill. Tom’s heart beat fast. Would there be any men left of his unit to help them take the hill again? *Please, God, please,* Tom begged silently.

## **Amber Florenza**

Tom and Jake neared the occupied hill, stepping over groaning wounded men as well as bloody corpses. The heavy smoke stung Tom's eyes as he stepped carefully over his comrades...and he felt a silent tear slide down his sooty face stained with smoke.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Tom looked down at one of the bloody corpses below him. Looking at that blood-soaked, disfigured form of his comrade, he realized the sacrifice they had all given. All of them, Uncle Sam's men, had paid that cost of duty to help the poor and suffering of the races of the world as well as defend their country and their liberty.

## **Amber Florenza**

Jake looked back at Tom.  
“We need to hurry. We must take it back, our ground.”

Tom nodded and followed Jake, cringing. Tom saw Jake’s bloody face and decided the taking must be done quickly. Jake needed a doctor, but Tom knew Jake. Jake wouldn’t stop until his job was done.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

As Tom hurried behind Jake's cautious steps, he thought about all what he saw in Jake's bloody face. Jake's face was not only filled with determination, duty and intense desire to gain the ground again...it was also filled with pain as a real soldier. Jake was pained at the pain he saw around him, and so was Tom.

## *Amber Florenza*

Step by step Tom and Jake edged their way towards the hill. On the way they spoke quietly yet urging, "We're taking the hill. Come with us."

One soldier followed them. Then, two soldiers. Then, three. Then, four.

Tom glanced back. Would only six of them be enough?

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The six Marines edged their way towards the hill, making a guesswork to where to step through the heavy smoke of gunpowder. Jake led the way, his face bloody but his heart beating loyally with each step he took. Soon they would be there.

## *Amber Florenza*

New shells broke through the air from the occupied hill. Tom jumped to one side just in time to dodge the bullets. The others hunched more closely over their machine guns.

Tom hugged his machine gun and dove through the cloud of thick smoke. Its denseness camouflaged them. They crept to the hill unseen by the Japs.

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The six Marines jogged on through the smoke. Tom winced as a bullet hit his leg, but he still moved on. Jake cringed as yet another bullet hit him in the thigh, but he still led the way. Bloody or not, he would take the hill...or perish.

Bullets hit the others but their determination moved them on, one step at a time.

## *Amber Florenza*

“Tom!” one of the Marines from behind him yelled.

Tom looked back and leaped forward just in time to miss a grenade.

“Thanks!” Tom called back as the others behind him filled in the gap again.

Tom held his breath. They were almost there. He slammed in another load of bullets and aimed at the nearest Japs.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Japs fled in all directions, losing their selves entirely, yelling out and running into each other in confusion. The six Marines fired away and shoved away the left bloody corpses from the hill.

Tom felt more powder fill his nostrils and squinted in the yet thicker smoke of gunpowder.

## *Amber Florenza*

The hill was clear now. Only the trace of blood, that taste of War, was left behind. Tom stopped firing and held his gun to his side. The others did the same.

“We did it, Tom!” Jake’s eyes showed a right sort of pride that the enemy had been driven away.

Yes, they had done it...they had taken the hill.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Tom nodded and glanced down at the ground, *their* ground, and spotted a dirty pole with a dirty piece of material lying on the ground.

Tears filled Tom's eyes as he stooped to pick up the discarded flag of his country, that symbol of liberty.

## *Amber Florenza*

Tom picked up the dirty folds of his flag and shook the dirt from it. Then, he picked up the dirty pole and began to raise it.

The other five Marines began to shout in excitement as they all took a hold onto the pole of their flag. Slowly, steadily, the six Marines raised the pole higher, high into the air.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Tom gripped the dirty pole and began pushing it into the rocky ground beneath him as the others held on to the upper part of the pole. Tears streamed down their faces as they pushed the pole deeper into the rocky ground.

They had taken their ground again. It was theirs.

## *Amber Florenza*

Once the pole was rooted into the ground Tom stepped back to get a look at Old Glory. Then he glanced down at the ground. Empty shells of bullets lay scattered on the hill, reminding him of the struggle it had taken to reclaim their ground.

Tom felt pain in his leg where the bullet had hit him. What price it took to gain their ground!

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Tom looked at the others. Their faces were lined with gunpowder and tears. Their bodies were torn with bullets.

But they had won their ground.

“We did it!” Tom echoed Jake’s words. “And no man can say we didn’t do it without a struggle.”

The Marines nodded, and Jake lifted his bloody face to the flag and saluted.

## *Amber Florenza*

From a distance another wounded Marine lay on the ground, groaning with pain. He opened his eyes and a movement caught his eye.

On a hill far away there stood his flag, Old Glory, fluttering in the breeze. Tears filled his eyes just seeing that symbol of liberty stuck into the ground of the enemy.

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

Below the hill where the flag fluttered a Marine officer sat hunched behind some stumps, his arm shattered and his machine gun missing. He was about to give up, to let himself die in all that bloody chaos.

*We haven't won a thing,*  
he winced at the pain in his shattered arm. *The Japs will be sure to get me if I live...*

## *Amber Florenza*

But right when his hopes were almost completely gone, his will to live at its brink, a cloud of smoke suddenly cleared from off the hill above him.

The Marine blinked, and blinked again. What was that fluttering in the breeze? A startled, happy cry escaped his cracked-dry lips as he recognized his flag.

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“We won,” he told himself, blinking unsteadily, forgetting the pain of his shattered arm. “We won something! Our flag is flying, our flag of liberty!”

The Marine officer stared up at the flying flag above him. Though he could still hear the screams of both man and torpedo and bullet...

## **Amber Florenza**

...he could still hear the screams of a thousand voices of his comrades, both living and dead.

“We sacrificed! We gave the world a flag of liberty! We were victors through the pain, through the fight, and through the memory of the stand we took at Iwo Jima!”

## H\*O\*I\*S\*T\* T\*H\*E\* F\*L\*A\*G\*

February 23, 1945...the date  
will live on forever as will  
the words, "Hoist the flag,  
hoist the flag of liberty!"

THE END

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