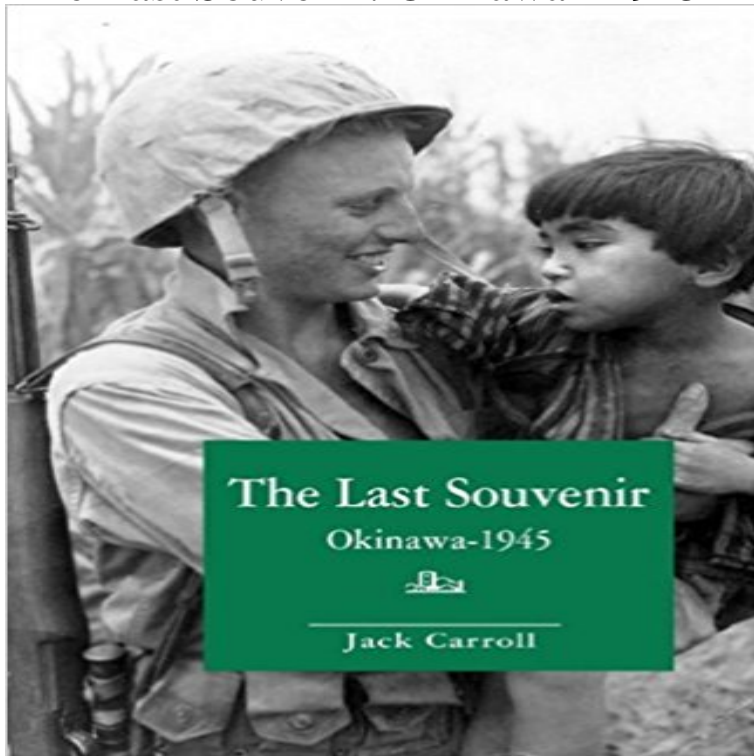


## The Last Souvenir: Okinawa - 1945



The last great battle of the Second World War was fought on the island of Okinawa; situated about three-hundred miles southwest of the Japanese mainland it is bordered by the China Sea on the west and the vast Pacific Ocean to the east. On a map, the island resembles a large pod full of irregular peas, lying at an angle pointing northeast. The Allied forces had been battling the Japanese Empire in the Pacific War since 1941, flattening island after island for three and a half years. Now, it was Okinawa's turn. The Japanese engineers had scarred the paradise by building three major airfields, affording a tempting morsel for the American juggernaut and a strategic entry point to Japan itself. On April 1, 1945, ironically April Fools Day and Easter Sunday, the invasion of Okinawa began. Thousands of warships and aircraft appeared, dumping tons of high explosives on the pristine little island. Tens of thousands of American infantrymen stormed their beaches. Within the flick of an eyelash the quaint little villages were reduced to rubble. The beautiful fields of rice and sugar cane looked as though a giant heavenly shotgun had blasted them into a quagmire of mud and broken debris. Many of the riflemen who survived the flames of combat in the south were sent north and allowed to mingle with these gracious people. This story belongs to them. Jack Carroll enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1944, trained in Camp Pendleton, and later served under Chesty Puller. He served four years in the Marine Corps and was honorably discharged. His experiences were to both enlighten and haunt him for a lifetime. His time in hell was spent fighting the Japanese army during the island hopping campaign, then surviving Guadalcanal as a gunnery sergeant. His most horrific story was when an armed Japanese foot-soldier opted to blow himself up with a hand-granade, rather than risk

capture. Jack returned to a job with Merrill Lynch after the war and lived in Southern California with his wife, Mary, and two children. Leon Uris, a fellow Marine and friend, thought the dialog was Right on the mark. Jack died unexpectedly in 2000.

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