

A Cold Night

A sharp, cold wind bites at my face as I strike a match and bring it to my cigarette, the warm ember glow briefly illuminating my face. Leaning forward onto the railing of the balcony I can see the street below. Houses line the street partially illuminated by the moon, lights off, curtains drawn. It's a quiet night, and too late for anyone to be awake, yet here I am. An abrupt gust of wind blows past, causing the dead leaves to scatter down the street. I look up to the moon and sky, a silhouette crosses over the bright moon, a plane. Squinting for a better look I recognize the plane, it's a bomber.

Scattered gunfire crackles in the distance as I look down to see legions of hostile soldiers march down the street with rifles in hand. As the soldiers make their way towards my house they kick down the doors and barge into the houses along my street. I rush into the house and down the stairs, hurrying out the back door I see a group of exhausted looking troops to my left, taking cover from the staggering numbers of enemy forces. One man in the middle of the group notices me and swiftly walks up to me.

"Charlie, you made it! What took you so long?" He greets me with a smile.

"George? I thought you were- how are you here?" I remember what happened when I last saw him. It was 1943, September, we were in Italy when he was hit by enemy fire while attempting to save another soldier. I look down and I see I'm in full uniform, rifle in hand, I'm young again. Looking around I can see I'm not in Canada anymore, my house is gone and we're hiding behind the rubble of what used to be a house, the sky is no longer clear, a thick blanket of clouds and smoke cover the city.

"The reinforcements should be here at 0300 hours" George says as he looks down to his watch "meaning they should be here any minute now".

"What's the plan again Sir?" a nervous looking private asks. Before George can reply a group of soldiers encircle us, guns up and pointed at us, they must have heard us. We slowly begin to raise our hands in surrender, but as we look up we can see a group of bombers soaring overhead, our reinforcements arrived. Dozens of bombs rain down upon the city, the soldiers scatter as we run to take cover under a nearby building.

We duck into a half-destroyed house across the street as the bombs come crashing down over a nearby area of the city. Enemy troops frantically search for cover as we begin to take aim and pick them off one by one, but as I aim my rifle I can see one of our men stuck under a bit of rubble across the street.

"George, look!" I shout to be heard over the bombs as I point to the trapped soldier.

"I have to go get him, cover me!" George shouts as he gets up and begins to dash across the street into enemy fire. I remember this moment, I can't let it happen again, I dart out and tackle George out of the way of enemy fire. We roll into the ditch alongside the road, I look down and see blood pooling between us.

I feel a sharp pain in my chest, as George gets up I can see a clear entry hole just under my left breast pocket. George leans over me and examines the wound, he looks up at me and says "Wake up Charles".

"What?" as I respond I see I'm in my bedroom, no wound, I look over at George but I see my wife, she has her hand on my shoulder.

"Charles are you alright?" she asks with a worried look on her face.

"Yea, just another dream" I look over to my bedside table to see the picture of me and George that sits there. That was a long time ago now, but I still remember. Lest we forget.