



Civil War Historic Fiction for Middle School Students and Adults



BLAKE'S STORY, REVENGE AND FORGIVENESS

2nd Edition






Written by
J. Arthur Moore and Bryson B. Brodzinski
Created by Bryson B. Brodzinski



THE REGIMENTS AND THEIR HISTORIES IN THIS TALE ARE REAL. THE EVENTS DID HAPPEN.

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EXCERPT

from chapter five rewrite

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The fire crackled noisily as the seven sat around and sipped on their hot tins of coffee. It was particularly cold and each had brought out a blanket to wrap around him. The lieutenant had authorized the loan of two blankets for Jimmy. The small boy with his right arm in a sling, sat wrapped in the blankets, sipping from a warm tin of coffee, sitting contentedly beside Blake.

“Matthew,” Blake asked, “what happened ta ya as the lieutenant said when we fust met?”

There was silence as all but Blake and Jimmy knew the answer and knew also that Matthew didn’t want to talk about it.

“Tell you another time. It hurts too much.” A sudden sadness crept into his voice and a quiet tear slipped free.

“Yer not like I ‘spected. It’s like taday an Jimmy here an the other boys in the snowball fight. Yer people jest like back home. Yer friends. I thought I hated Yanks. But wer all in this doin what wer told an some as wished we could be friends. Ya saved ma life when ya coulda let yer army kill me.”

Surprise registered on Jimmy’s face. “Yer a Reb?” he asked softly.

“Yea,” Blake confirmed quietly.

“I shot a Reb,” Matthew barely whispered. “It was my first battle and I thought I could kill Rebs. But I shot my first Reb, and as soon as I pulled the trigger, I got sick and fell to the ground. The lieutenant knows I will never kill again if I can help it. He knows, too, that I will save a life when I can, no matter the army. I think that’s why he let me help you. None of us likes the killing. These guys are musicians and aren’t expected to kill. But John and me are supposed to be soldiers.” His voice faded.

“Why are you in this war?” Christopher asked.

This time Blake was caught off guard and didn’t want to answer. He hesitated a long time. All sipped their coffee in silence, and waited. Jimmy watched his young friend’s face and saw an unexpected hurt.

“My father was kilt at Shiloh,” he began, then stopped. The boy remained silent for several minutes. No one spoke. Then he simply stated, “I thought I wanted ta kill Yanks.” That was all. He said no more.

The conversation was painful for all and they let it end.

Jimmy stared into the fire as he realized he had listened to a conversation revealing a truth about these young soldiers so very different than what he expected. Suddenly he knew what Blake had just observed, they really were so much alike. They really could be friends. It was the war that made them seem different. But they really weren’t.

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The regiments and their histories in this story are real, the events did happen.

