

## Hospital Ship, Elsie, 1943

"What color is it?" Tommy asked again, pulling on his pants.

"Red! Danny," told him as they hurried out the door.

"Blasts! A Red Devil, they are extremely dangerous. Leonard's wife, Katherine, passed information to the underground about the safety issue and what to watch out for when around the Devils. It's scary! Can we turn the ship back?"

"Oh no, the captain was told there is submarine activity now in Tunis. Our next port is Algiers before we arrive in Gibraltar, Danny Said running across the deck alongside Tommy. Captain's orders, we are evacuating the ward. He doesn't think one grenade will cause that much damage, but it's slow. The boy is in the back behind a curtain," Danny whispered as they entered Ward 7. They slowed to a walk not wanting to frighten the remaining wounded soldiers stacked two high in the hospital beds.

"What's the boy's attitude, anger, despair?" Tommy whispered back as they walked by nurses, calmly trying to help patient's move out of the ward.

"Och, without understanding him it's hard for me to know, but I would say despair, and if so, that's the worst kind, here we are Tommy, now be careful." The Ships Chaplain stood by the curtain waiting for them. "Father, Tommy is here to help us. He speaks Italian."

The chaplain had recently joined on before they left Gibraltar. Tommy could sense his fear. He too was afraid he saw the carnage caused by a Red Devil exploding back in the Plaza in Genoa. A drunken Italian soldier was showing off to his friends. Tommy peeked through the curtain. He could see the boy on the floor next to his stretcher holding his wounded stomach with his

right hand with the other clutching the grenade. He quietly shut the curtain and turned to Danny for an explanation.

"When our orderlies were carrying him, saw the grenade, they set him down and got out!"

"How the hell did triage miss the grenade before bringing him aboard?" Tommy said with nervous anger.

He needed to calm himself. He stood in front of the curtain and made the sign of the cross and said a prayer. The Chaplain was standing nearby, repeated the prayer in Latin. Before he could open the curtain, Danny added a syringe in his smock pocket.

"If you get this into him Lad, holler, we need to wrap his hand shut around that Red Devil!" Tommy nodded and stepped through the curtain.

"Good morning, I'm Dr. Donati from Genoa, where do you live in Italy, son? He asked in Italian as he squatted down next to the boy. Let me take a look at your wound, and you can tell me about your home," he said much braver than he felt.

The boy was startled and looked at Tommy with tears running down his face. Tommy checked his eyes. They were dilated. He was in shock, there was not enough blood circulating it could cause heart failure.

His fear left him, and his training took over. He gently moved the boy's right arm so that he could have a better look at the wound.

"Tell me about your home," he repeated as he tenderly probed the wound with his fingers. The boy said nothing, he was shaking, but it appeared to lessen as Tommy touched him, he was slipping into unconsciousness.

Tommy held him around the shoulders and whispered, "Danny," Danny quickly came in with a roll of gauze to start wrapping the kid's left hand holding the grenade. The grenade fell from the boy's hand. Both Doctors froze!

