

Underage

I was born in a small town called Buena Vista in 1924. I was 15 when the war started in 1939. My older brother Jack who just turned 20 joined 2 weeks ago, he sends us letters once a week. I really want to help but I'm too young. I've heard stories of young people joining so tomorrow I'm telling Mathew that I'm going to try that.

"Mathew Mathew," I shouted! "I've got an idea."

"What do you want Paul, because if it's about the war, I don't want to hear it."

"No, No it's not, well it is, but let me finish."

"FINE"

"I know how we can join Mathew. My brother said they don't check birth certificates so we can go."

"That's a stupid idea Paul. You can, but I'm not joining you."

So I go tell my mom I'm heading north to find a job and I'll give her my paychecks. I finally got to the recruitment base and Jack was right, they don't check you because they need so many soldiers.

"What branch?" says the recruitment officer.

"Army I want to be a medic."

"Do you have any medical training?"

"Only a little," I say with a stutter.

"Well ok, go that way to medic camp."

"I-I can't believe that worked." I immediately start writing a letter to Mathew saying it worked. A week later I see him training. I go over to him and say, "Mathew, I knew you would come!"

"Yeah, the only reason I didn't is because I was afraid they would check us."

"What did you sign up for?"

"Not sure. I just said whatever you need most and they put me in as a footsoldier."

"Have you seen Jack?"

"Yes actually. He said hi and when I told him you were a medic he got really angry and asked why you lied to join."

"Oh well, I hope I see him in battle."

It's been a few years, now it's 1941. I'm 17 now so still not old enough but today we fight Operation Barbossa. The second we arrive there are bombs and heavy artillery going off. I see Mathew and Jack fighting in the distance. I go out and meet with them. We hold our post for a while, next thing I see is a huge mortar flying at our platoon. BOOM my ears start ringing and I can't see.

"Jack, Mathew," I shouted. No answer. After the smoke clears I see a lifeless foot soldier lying on his stomach. I turn him over and I can't think straight. I was told to not cry but the tears flooded in.

"Jack, Jack no please please don't be dead." I do everything I can, I try CPR and pouring water on him but he won't budge.

"Leave him kid, he's gone," says one of the other medics.

"No no he can't be! He's my brother... please."

"I'm sorry kid, I know how it feels I lost my brother too." We start walking away, still no sign of Mathew. I saw a wounded soldier and helped him out. He was injured

pretty badly so I gave him morphine and sent him back to base camp with a fellow foot soldier to protect him. It was about a half mile south. Then I hear it.

"Who was that?" said another medic.

"I recognize that scaredy cats scream from a mile away," I said. The other medics and I start shouting, "MATHEW MATHEW WHERE ARE YOU?"

"HELP! I DON'T WANNA DIE, I DON'T WANNA GO PLEASE!"

We all start running after the voice but it fades and we don't catch him.

"No, no, not again. First my brother, now my best friend," I say with tears rolling down my face.

"Don't worry kid. He's going to a camp. We'll free the camps soon."

A few years pass and I'm 21 now and we head to a concentration camp.

"Auschwitz, what does that mean?" said one of the footsoldiers.

"I don't know but let's head in," I say.

"Aww this place reeks," we shout, "and why is no one here?" we think.

"HEY! IS ANYONE HERE," we get no response. We look into a bunker and see a 6 foot tall stack of bodies that takes up the whole room.

"Augh, come on this stinks."

"Yeah I wonder who's in there?"

"I don't know but I can't believe Hitler thinking this is ok."

We hear noises and see a group of people. "Oh my god they look like skeletons," we say.

"MATHEW? MATHEW? I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD EVER SEE YOU AGAIN!" I shout, he can barely walk or talk. We have to leave them with the more skilled medics even though I want to talk to him, I know it's best to leave him. A few weeks later I saw Mathew again for the first time since Auschwitz,

"Mathew, how's it going? You don't look like a walking skeleton anymore," I say.

"Yeah, they gave me food but it hurt to eat."

After that I got sent home for Christmas with a medal of honor for helping free the concentration camp victims, and for saving 10 people's lives in the field. However, I couldn't go home with pure honor because alongside the medal was a letter that stated Jack's death to go home to my mother.