

The Revolutionary

It was on this cool, summer morning that a certain middle-aged man pondered to himself. After all, to be perched in the skies for so long provided him with ample time to do so. The rooftop of what used to be his old apartment complex left the man with an almost a bird's eye view of the city. The place he spent his life growing up in. Regardless, he wasn't keen on letting himself be distracted by the sights for too long. He returned to this place for a reason.

It was strange to even think about how quickly things spiralled to this point. Having worked at a steel mill for most of his life, the man was content with his lot. He earned just enough to keep his family fed and more. While not the most exciting of professions, he felt a sense of pride in doing what he considered to be an honest trade. However, there came a point where the usual orders at the factory started to change. From tools and structural beams, to weapons and armored vehicles.

He didn't complain about his work though. It only took some bit of time to get used to the new routine. Besides, turbulent times had befallen his country, and every able-bodied citizen was expected to serve in some way. The grizzled worker considered himself fortunate enough already that his black lungs disqualified him from fighting on the frontline.

Though, it was only a matter of time before the frontline came to him anyhow.

Then came the rain. Day after day of shells, pounded from the heavy guns brought forth by the enemy. With them came the bombs, dropped by planes who's dots were nigh indistinguishable amidst the dazzling lights of the sky. A sky all but set ablaze with gunfire. Used to be that on a lucky day, if the faulty power lines sizzled out or the furnace coal wasn't delivered on time, it meant that the workers got to have a day off. Much to the chagrin of their peers.

For all the times the factory floor got swept over by fire and shrapnel, they never got such a break.

He couldn't complain about his work though. It was a matter of life and death, not to mention he could get people hurt. The factory had to keep running, the tanks had to keep rolling out the door to reach the warzone. Except, this was the warzone now. None of them were used to the shelling. None of them were used to seeing coworkers they knew for years end up strewn about the factory floor, blown to pieces.

It's for the war. It's for the country. It's for victory.

At least, that's the rhetoric he had drilled into his head from the broadcasting towers that still worked in this city. Sometimes it felt like a higher priority was placed on keeping those running than certain other services, such as running water. Ah, well. Better that a man die while loyal to the party, than live another day and have time to think. Maybe even doubt.

Well, everyone had plenty of time to think after war had ended. In this worker's case, it was just after he learned that the family he worked so tirelessly to protect happened to have died a little over a year ago; from a prolonged siege that left his wife and son trapped within their homes. Eventually, they starved. This apparent footnote in the military's correspondence never reached him until just recently ago.

So, he thought to himself. What was it all really for? This war of eradication that taxed the common man of his livelihood, his loved ones, everything that they held dear? The ruling party would argue that it was a necessity. How everyone had a part to play in the defense of the homeland. The leaders of the committee are praised for the 'guidance' they offered throughout what was now the bloodiest chapter of their nation's history. The people are *expected* to lavish them, to credit their victory to the party's name. These were the memories that filled the steel worker's mind, as he loaded a final round into his rifle and cranked back the bolt to chamber it.

Respectfully, he disagreed.

Hence why he planned to return home today. The day he knew that an official parade was to be scheduled for one of the members of the committee. A grand event to congratulate the role this figurehead had played, by 'maintaining the spirits' of the people during the war. Today, this city will host the head of the propaganda department himself.

It wouldn't be long now, but in the meantime he took pleasure in the little things. Like how he got burn through a good pack of smokes while lounging about on that empty rooftop. He had to scrape together quite a bit to afford it, but it felt nice for a change. To spend what he worked for not on something he needed to survive, but something to enjoy. Part of him just wishes he could enjoy it a little longer, maybe just one more day. But no, this had to take precedence. He won't get another chance like this again.

When the needle of the clock tower reaches the twelfth hour, that'll be the moment that the commissar takes to the stage. It'll be hard to mistake him given he'll be the only fat man in the plaza, though the uniform and bodyguards help too. They aren't the only ones who'll be part of his security detail though, no. The tired worker reckons that a number of sharpshooters will no doubt be positioned along various vantage points of the city. In fact, the building he perched up on would be one of the most watched targets during a grand event like this. At most, he'll have about a couple seconds to pull off a shot before being spotted.

Provided one were to have no intention of getting afterwards, the odds were decent enough.

Ever since that war, things have felt very dark for him. But on this day, the labourer steeled himself by remembering he is not alone in the way he feels. He has no way of truly knowing this, but he knows. Now that the needle struck the twelfth hour, and the bells rang out across the city, he would prove as much. He would trade his empty life as a sacrifice to serve as the spark of something so much greater.

A government that only ever speaks on behalf of its people is one that is afraid of what their people have to say. Now, the steel worker speaks. Not with words, but with the round of his rifle.

One gunshot echoes across the city centre.