

Day 15

Rebel Soldier

It was raining heavily on that fateful night. A man wearing fatigues ran through the torrent. He clenched a heavy firearm to his chest. He furtively ran through the downpour towards a dimly-lit house.

The inexorable knocking on the door awakened Jennifer. She groped in the darkness for her coat that she had inadvertently hung on one of the bedposts. Upon finding her coat she felt her way to the front door. She did not want to turn on any lights as she was concerned she might awake her mother who was in another room.

The old wooden door creaked as Jennifer opened it. At her doorstep was the man wearing fatigues—the soldier. Upon recognizing him, Jennifer opened her arms wide and hugged him.

“I’m so glad you’re safe,” she said. She held him firmly and refused to let him go. “I was worried when I heard the news on the radio that they are detaining any soldier affiliated with the rebellion.”

“I was afraid they might arrest me if I stayed at the base so I decided to come here,” said the soldier after Jennifer released him from her bear hug. “How is your mother doing?”

“I am well, Gerard. Were you the one making the incessant noise?” said an elderly lady as she stepped out of another room.

“Yes, mother, it was me. I’m sorry for waking you up,” said Gerard apologetically.

After a few minutes, Gerard was in the kitchen enjoying a warm cup of cocoa. Across the table from him sat the elderly lady.

“I heard you are among the young officers who are involved in the rebellion. Is it true?” ask the perturbed but strong-willed elderly woman who was well known for her unyielding sense of nationalism.

“Yes, mother, it is true,” he replied calmly.

“You are aware that I am against the rebellion, are you not?” she asked.

“Yes, mother, I am aware of that,” he answered.

“I’ll have you know, Gerard, that I have great respect for our current government. I cannot force you to give up your idealistic beliefs; that is a decision that you have made. However, I will not let my daughter come to harm because of your pursuit of change,” she said firmly.

“I understand, mother. I know that I am putting you all in danger by returning here, but I also know that if changes are not made, then the future of my son—your grandson—will be a bleak one,” he said resolutely.

There was silence for a moment until it was broken by a loud pounding on the door. Gerard instinctively seized the firearm he had leaned against a nearby chair. He knew that it was either the police or loyalists looking for him.

“Settle down, Gerard,” said his mother-in-law. “I’ll answer the door.”

“But, mother, I...”

“Settle down,” she said in a more authoritative tone.

Gerard had no choice. He was joined by Jennifer who also feared the worst. In her arms was their son.

“Stay here,” said Jennifer’s mother.

The elderly lady proceeded to answer the door. At the door were three armed men.

“Good evening, Grandmother,” greeted one of the men. “We’re looking for any rebels. Might you know where we can find some?”

“I beg your pardon, young man,” she replied in an irritated tone. “Are you implying that I associate myself with rebels?” Do you have any idea who you are addressing? I’m a good friend of the police chief. I can have you detained for accusing me falsely!”

The men were surprised to find themselves in such an unexpected situation. They apologized promptly and briskly walked away.

Gerard was listening from an adjacent room and sighed with relief at the turn of events. He escaped a threatening situation by the skin of his teeth.

When it was safe to come out, Gerard had a burning question that he just had to quell.

“Mother, why did you not reveal my presence?” he asked. “I thought you valued the authority of the government.”

“That I do, Gerard, but I value the well-being of my family even more,” she said, smiling gently.

STUDY GUIDE

Rebel Soldier

1. Describe the relationship between the soldier and his mother-in-law.
2. What kind of conviction does the soldier have in relation to the fate of his country? Reflect or discuss on this for a while. Do you agree with his personal beliefs? Explain.
3. What can you say about the young wife in the story, in relation to the situation regarding her husband? What kind of wife is she? Elaborate.
4. Describe the personality of the mother-in-law.
5. What emotions did the soldier and the wife had when mother went to answer the door and started talking to the police or loyalists?
6. What is the moral of the story? Reflect or discuss.

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

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