

Chapter XLI

The Day of Infamy

November 28, 1941 – December 7, 1941

Geannie had just finished getting dressed when she heard Little Bertha start up. She went to the window to wave goodbye. Curly saw her and waved back. She had lost count of how many times she had seen him off over the last twenty years. Some of their goodbyes were for long periods of time, others like this one were for only two or three days. She knew that the next time they said goodbye would be when he left her and the kids in Roanoke, it would probably be for a very long time as it was very likely that he would be going off to war.

Geannie had breakfast while the kids finished getting ready for school. They headed out the door and got in the car for the six mile trip to school. Since Sandy's high school was less than a half a mile from where she and Austin went, it all worked out very well.

On Saturday, Geannie started getting together some boxes to begin packing. Sandy, Austin had Geannie had to be at the church at eight thirty on Sunday morning to practice for a number the youth group were putting on during church services the next Sunday. Geannie was their accompanist. They needed to leave early enough to pick up one of Austin's friends along the way.

Geannie half way expected to find Curly at home when they all returned from school on Monday. After all, he was only supposed to be gone for the weekend. She wasn't too surprised however when he never made it home at all that day. Oh well, he'll surly be home tomorrow. That evening after dinner she began boxing a few things up.

The story was the same each day during the rest of the week. She came home each afternoon expecting to find Curly there. On Tuesday, half of Task Force 2 sailed into port but the Enterprise was not part of it. She got more things packed up that night and each night for the rest of the week.

She usually knew when he would be returning. She began to wonder if the Enterprise had been secretly sent to the Atlantic like the Yorktown had been several months earlier. Or perhaps they had been sent to the Philippines. She remembered how the families of the Yorktown men had been caught off guard by the move. Certainly neither was the case, she reasoned.

During the week, Geannie received a letter from her mother.

11/18/41

Dear Geannie

I was happy to receive your letter with the news that you are coming home. Two years has been a long time and I can't

wait to see all of you again. When you left the last time you were here, I wondered if I would ever see you again. I am getting to be an old women. I'll be turning 74 next month, you know.

At that age, this big house is too much for me to take care of. So, rather than you and the kids moving into an apartment, why don't you just stay here with me. There is plenty of room and you can save a lot of money on rent. I would really like that very much. That way we can make up for all the time you have been so far away.

If there is going to be a war, which seems very likely, I would feel much better having you safe at home. I worry for Curly and where events might take him. Many of my grandsons are of the age were they will most likely be called upon to serve. I would be proud to have them do so, although I would worry about them as well.

It's too bad that you can't make it for Thanksgiving. Everyone but your lovely family will be here. We will be sure to go all out for Christmas, It might be the last one we'll have before the unthinkable happens.

I have been listening to the news and reading the newspaper. Things in the world are very dark indeed. Even if Japan leaves us alone, we will most certainly have to join the

fight against Hitler, especially now that he is sinking our ships. He is such an evil man!

So much for all of that. I try not to dwell on it. We have had such a nice Indian summer this fall. It has cooled off now and the leaves are all off the trees. It was such a colorful autumn. I don't suppose you get anything like that in Hawaii. I wished I could have come for a visit. You make it sound so wonderful. I'm sure you hate to leave it.

Everyone is doing well. I don't know if you have heard from Sarah lately but Emmeline is engaged to be married to a nice young man from Richmond sometime in the spring.

I am doing quite well for my age. I have slowed down a little but I feel well. I can't believe how the time has flown. My baby girl will be 43 in 3 weeks! And you and Curly will be celebrating your 20th anniversary. It's hard to believe that your father has been gone for ten years now. I still miss him so much.

Here I go living in the past. Those were some good years. I'm sure there are good years ahead as well. I was talking to someone at church a couple of weeks ago and we were talking about this very thing. She made the funniest comment. She said that life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer you get to the end, the faster it goes.

*Well, this "old woman" has rattled on long enough. I had better close now so I can get it posted in today's mail. If I don't write again before your ship leaves, I'll see you on the 20th.
Love, your Mother*

Curly still had not returned as of Friday. That evening she received a telephone call from Fan Halsey. Mrs. Halsey was of the understanding that they would certainly be back sometime on Saturday. All day Saturday she and the kids worked on packing up the rest of their household belongings, except for a few essentials that they would need. She had arranged for a moving van to come and pick it up on Tuesday so it could be loaded aboard the ship the day before it sailed.

Even though she was sad to leave their island paradise and be separated from Curly, she was excited to share this cruise with him. They could do all of the things that she wished they could have done together on the way over nearly two years earlier. She was also excited to be going home.

Toward Saturday afternoon, it was obvious that Curly wouldn't be home that day either. Geannie helped Sandy get ready for a date to a school dance. By the time they were done she looked absolutely beautiful. For seventeen, she looked sophisticated and elegant. Sandy was putting on the finishing touches when the telephone rang. Hoping it was news of when Curly would return, Geannie answered it. "Hello. Brason residence."

"Hi Geannie. Its Ramona."

"Oh hi, Ramona. What do you know?"

"Well I was wondering what your plans for this evening are."

"Sitting home alone in a house full of packed boxes. It doesn't look like Curly will make it back today after all, Sandy has a date, and Austin is at a friend's house."

"How would you like a girl date? It's my treat for your birthday tomorrow. How would you like to go to a picture show and maybe get something to eat?"

"I'd love to." Geannie gladly accepted.

"Great. I'll be over about seven. See you then. Bye."

"Sounds good. I'll be ready. Bye Ramona."

Sandy came down stairs and Geannie had her pose for a photograph. She was a bit nervous and giddy at the same time. She had gone out with Chip three or four times before and really liked him. He was a senior at Sandy's high school.

As she waited anxiously, there was a knock at the door. "He's early." Sandy exclaimed as she rushed to the door. Her countenance fell to find Ramona at the door wearing her dress white navy uniform.

Geannie invited, "Come on in Ramona."

As she entered the front room she raved, "My, my, Sandy you're just gorgeous. I love the gardenia in your hair." she said and then gestured to the one she was wearing.

"Thank you, Ramona." Sandy blushed then added. "Your gardenia matches your uniform."

"Its not exactly regulation is it, but who cares."

After a moment of chit chat, there was another knock on the door. "Thats him!" Sandy gasped as she rushed to the door.

She opened it and invited the handsome young man wearing a double breasted suit to come in. "Wow! Sandy, you look terrific." he complimented. "This is for you." he said as he brought his hand from behind his back, revealing an orchid corsage. He fumbled nervously as he pinned it to her dress. Sandy then pinned a boutonniere to his lapel.

"What a handsome couple you make." Geannie beamed. "Let me take your picture." Her camera at the ready for that very purpose. She had them pose and snapped a couple of photos.

"I'll have Sandy home by midnight, Missus Brason." Chip said as he offered Sandy his arm. Sandy took a hold of it and they turned to go out the door.

"Have fun." Geannie called from the doorstep as Chip walked her to his car.

Geannie stepped back inside and closed the door. "Hes such a nice young man." She remarked to Ramona. "Thanks for inviting me out. Otherwise I'd just be sitting home alone. Let me go and change into something and freshen up."

Ramona followed Geannie into the bedroom and sat on the bed while Geannie changed into something more dressy. "It looks like you have everything packed up."

"Everything except for what we will take in our luggage." Geannie replied. "Things are kind of sparse around here now. If we need something already packed, its just too bad. We'll have to do without. Here, do me favor and zip me up, won't you?"

"Sure." Ramona said as she stood up and zipped up Geannie's dress. "Its not going to be the same around here without you."

"Thanks for the zip. Oh come on, there are a lot of eligible men around. It wouldn't hurt if you made yourself available, you know."

"I supposes your right." Ramona said as Geannie touched up her lipstick. "Its just that I have been afraid to let any of them get too close. I feel like a jinx."

"That's silly, and you know it, don't you?"

"I suppose you're right." Ramona confessed. "It's not that I haven't been asked out, you know. Its just that I usually find a reason to turn them down. The poor fellows. They must be crushed."

"I know what you mean. In high school I dashed the hopes of several boys who gathered up the courage to ask me out, knowing that as far as I was concerned, Curly was the only boy in the world."

"You got one of the very best. If there was another one like him around, now I could go for him."

"Sorry, but I have the only of one him that was ever made, and he's all mine. But if I were to die tomorrow, you could have him." Geannie teased.

"Some girls have all the luck." Ramona sighed.

"I know, I can't believe that tomorrow is our twentieth anniversary. I hope he makes it home tomorrow. What if he doesn't get back before we have to leave?" The thought just occurred to her.

"I'm sure he'll be back by then." Ramona assured her as Geannie ran a brush through her hair. "If not, then I guess you'll have to go without him. You're smart for deciding to go home, you know."

"There, how do I look? Geannie asked.

"Like your ready to break some more hearts. Come on, lets go."

Geannie and Ramona left the house and got into her little Dodge coupe and drove downtown. As they got into the heart of Honolulu, sailors, soldiers, and marines were everywhere. Some of them in groups, some in twos and threes. Some had girls on their arms, those who didn't were looking for girls. It was as if everyone wanted to get in all of the living they could before the dieing started.

Geannie and Ramona found themselves at the Hawaii Theater. Ramona paid for their tickets and they went in and found a good seat for the seven forty five showing. The theater was full of uniformed men with their dates. The lucky sailor in front of them had two girls. From the looks of them, they were identical twin sisters. The motion picture was "Ball of Fire", a comedy starring Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck about a group of professors who had been laboring for years to write an encyclopedia and their encounter with a burlesque queen know as Sugarpuss, the girlfriend of a mob boss, who provides her own unique knowledge. It was almost as much fun watching all of the smooching going on around them in the theater, especially the trio right in front of them, as it was watching the show.

After a good laugh, Ramona treated Geannie to dinner at one of the popular downtown restaurants. They had placed their order and the waitress had brought their drinks, a draft beer for Ramona and a Coca-cola for Geannie. Like every other place in Honolulu that night the place was crawling with uniforms.

It wasn't very long before two navy officers approached their table. The one in the lead stood at attention at and saluted Ramona and asked, "Permission to be seated, ma'am."

Before Ramona could think of reason to blow him off, Geannie answered for her, "The Lieutenant Commander would be delighted. The officer quickly sat down beside Ramona. His friend took that as his cue to sit beside Geannie.

"Lieutenant Hurly Snellgrass at your service ma'am." the officer introduced himself, "And this is Lieutenant jg Harry McFee."

Still a little uncomfortable, Ramona was trying to formulate a response. Geannie helped her out. "Hi. I'm Geannie and this is my friend Romona Katmuth."

"Pleased to meet you, ladies." The two officers said in unison.

"I notice that you are naval aviators." Geannie remarked referring to the wings on their uniforms. "What unit are you assigned to?"

"Yes ma'am" Hurly answered. "We're with the observation detachment aboard the Arizona."

That was Geannie's way out. "Oh so then you are part of Admiral Halsey's task force. Perhaps you know my husband, Commander Brason? He is Admiral Halsey's air officer."

"Yes ma'am." Harry answered as he slid away from Geannie as far as he could without falling out of the booth. "We know him. He coordinates all of the observation detachments in the task force. From what I understand, they should be back in port sometime tomorrow afternoon."

Knowing that he was out of luck, Harry didn't have anymore to say. Hurly turned to Ramona and asked, "Would you mind if I called on you sometime?"

Geannie gave Ramona a silent nod and a wink of encouragement.

"Yes, that would be alright." Ramona stammered "Yes," she repeated more confidently, "I'd like that." She took the piece of paper and pencil that Geannie had slid across the table to her. "Here's where you can contact me." as she wrote down her name, telephone number, and address. As she handed it to him she added. "You can find me at the hospital, too."

"Great!" Hurly said. "Why don't I save the telephone call. Are you off duty next Saturday?"

"As a matter of fact I am." Ramona answered.

"Would you like to take in a dance and dinner?"

Again Geannie offered an encouraging nod and wink.

"Sure. That would be great. I get off duty at fourteen hundred hours."

"So," Hurly asked, "shall I come by and pick you up at, say seven?"

"Seven would be fine." Ramona agreed.

"Great then. Its a date." Hurly said as the waitress was standing at the table with their order. "Then, if you will excuse us, we will leave you to your dinner. Good night ladies." as he got up to leave.

Harry got up as well. "Good evening ladies." he said as he politely nodded to each of them.

As they left, the waitress set their plates before them. "See." Geannie said. "That wasn't so bad now was it? He seems like a nice young man."

"Young is right. He can't be much over thirty."

"Don't worry about that. Its a start, isn't it? You can break the ice with him and it will be easier to say yes to others more to your liking."

"I suppose you're right. Besides, I have all week to come up with a reason to break his heart."

"Don't you dare! Go out with him. Do I have to miss my ship to stay around and make sure you follow through?"

"You do realize that I have just jinxed that poor unsuspecting man, don't you?" Ramona reflected. "All I ever wanted was a long term relationship with a good man who loved me. Growing up as an only child without a father, I never had a real example of that, only what I observed in other families. I must admit, I really envy you. I thought I had finally realized that for myself twice, only be widowed twice."

Geannie sat quietly and listened as her friend poured out her heart. "After coming here to Hawaii, I

fooled myself into thinking that if I couldn't have a meaningful longterm relationship, I'd settle for short term and meaningless. Consequently I had a couple of those kinds of encounters. I knew it was a sin, but at the time I didn't care. It left me even feeling even more empty. I realized that I was using those men just like they were using me for what I was becoming. So, I just gave up on having any kind of a relationship with men. I have been as celibate as a nun for more than ten years now."

Finally Geannie spoke up. "You've told me this once before. I'll never forget when I was about fifteen my mother talked to me about that. She told me a story and made me promise that I'd wait until I was married. Curly and I did and we have never regretted it. For us it made the whole intimate part of our marriage so much more special."

"As you know, Tom and I didn't wait. I have always felt so guilty about it. Geannie, do think God will forgive me."

"Of course he will, but you have to do your part."

"Whats that?"

"First you have to make a confession to God."

"But I just told you. Doesn't that count?"

"As a Methodist, I believe that by confessing to God directly we demonstrate that we are truly sorry for our sins. Even though He already knows, there is a great power in actually vocalizing our sins to Him so that we can hear them with our own ears. That's what seeking God in prayer in the privacy of one's closet is for. Thorough God's grace, true forgiveness is possible. Only He can truly forgive our sins and we all have them to one degree or another."

"Even you?"

"Even me."

"I find that hard to believe. Thanks. You've given me a lot to think about." Ramona acknowledged. "I might just take you up on that sometime."

"I guarantee that it will make you feel better. Oh, and Ramona, I don't think any the less of you because of it."

Geannie and Ramona had an enjoyable meal and conversation. The combination of Geannie's wedding ring and the rank insignia on the shoulders of Ramona's uniform kept any other men from interrupting them.

When Ramona dropped her off, Geannie said, "Thanks for the evening out. I really enjoyed myself."

"Me too. Happy birthday tomorrow. We'll have to get together once more before you leave. I'm also going to see if I can get off to see you off at the dock."

"That would be great. I'd like that." Geannie said.

"It sounds like Curly will be home tomorrow. Oh and thanks for the encouragement. I think I will keep the date."

"You'd better. Good night Ramona." Geannie said as she got out of the car. "Thanks again for a fun

evening.”

“I’ll be in touch.” Ramona said as she put the car into gear. “Good night.”

As Ramona drove off, Geannie went in the house and found Austin at home. He told her all about his evening before going off to bed. Gennie went into her bedroom and got undressed and put on her nightgown and got ready for bed. It was eleven thirty and she decided to wait up for Sandy.

About twenty minutes later, she heard a car pull up in front of the house. A moment later she could hear them at the door step. After a moment, Sandy opened the door and floated through on air.

“He kissed you, didn’t he?”

“How did you know? Where you watching us?”

“No. The way you’re beaming and fact that feet are hardly touching the floor gave it away.”

“Uh huh.” Sandy nodded.

“My baby girl’s first kiss. How was it?”

“It was like electricity.” Sandy answered. “It tingles all the way to my toes.”

“I know the feeling. I’ll never forget my first kiss. It was after the junior prom. Your father was kind of slow and I had to kiss him.”

Sandy floated onto the couch next to her mother and told her all about her evening.

“You really like Chip, don’t you?”

Sandy began to cry. “Just when someone likes me, I have to leave. It’s not fair. I may never see him again.”

“You can always write to each other.” Geannie encouraged.

“Thats just not the same.” Sandy protested through her sobs.

“No it isn’t. Your father and I had to carry on a long distance relationship through the mail while he was at the academy and even during the first nine months that we were married. Were not leaving until Wednesday. Will you see him again before we leave?”

“Yeah. He’s going to take me out Tuesday night to go roller skating. How was your evening with Ramona?” Sandy asked, feeling better.

Geannie told her all about it and how she helped Ramona get a date. Then she concluded, “Its getting late and we have an early rehearsal at the church in the morning. I’m going off to bed.” She reached over and gave Sandy her second kiss of the evening.

“Good night, Mom.” She said as she got up.

“Sweet dreams sweetheart.” she called as Sandy floated up the stairs.

Geannie turned off the lights and retired to her bedroom where she wrote all about the evening in her journal. As usual, she knelt beside the bed and offered a prayer to heaven. As she did every night while Curly was gone, she prayed for his safe return. She pulled the covers back and laid down on the bed without pulling them back over her.

It was later than usual when she woke up and realized that they were running late. It was her birthday. She had three years to get used to being forty something and it didn't bother her anymore. It was also their twentieth anniversary and Curly was certain to be home before the day was over.

They had to be at the church early again for their last practice for their program. They were running just a few minutes late, it was about a quarter to eight when they left the house. As they got onto the highway, Geannie said, "Listen! I hear the roar of aircraft engines. Surely they were from the Enterprise! That means the ship will be a few hours behind them."

"They don't sound right." Austin observed. "They must be something else."

As they neared the turn off to the entrance to the base, a flight of planes were approaching low from the east. As they passed very low right in front of them, Geannie exclaimed, "Somethins wrong! For one thing, they didn't look like any planes I've seen before. Secondly, why are they carrying torpedoes?"

"Mom!" Austin called out in disbelief. "I recognize them from the aircraft recognition book that Dad gave me. Those are Nakajima B5Ns, Japanese carrier based torpedo bombers."

Geannie could see the face of the man in the rear seat of the long, green airplane with a red ball on its side train his machine gun on their car. Just then, before there was time to react, she heard the sound of something hitting the car. Sandy who was riding in the passenger side slumped over next to her. She heard Austin scream from the backseat. Before she could turn to look, she felt three sharp, hot stabs into her own body. She swerved off the road and the car came to a stop against the embankment along the side of the road. Then everything went black.

The next thing she remembered was two men taking a hold of her and lifting her out of the car and placing her in the backseat of their car. As she leaned against Sandy, she saw all of the blood. She barely had enough strength to turn her head toward her daughter. The ghastly sight of the side of Sandy's head was the last thing she remembered until she came to on a gurney being wheeled into the hospital. She heard noise and confusion all about her but didn't know the reason for it.

She heard someone shout, "The girl is dead. These two are still alive but the boy is in pretty bad shape. Give them both some morphine!"

The images of people about her were a blur, until she saw the face of her dear friend, Ramona. "What's going on?" Geannie struggled to ask.

"The Japaneses are bombing the harbor!" Ramona answered as she rushed alongside Geannie's gurney as she was taken into the hospital.

Geannie blacked out again for a moment. When she opened her eyes again, Ramona was wrapping a bandage around her head. "Where are the kids?"

"They are being taken care of."

"Sandy is dead, isn't she?"

Ramona paused momentarily, "I'm so sorry, Geannie, but yes she is. Austin is right here next to you. The doctor is working to save him. You have three bullets in you and some shrapnel cuts on your

head. After they take care of Austin, we're going to have to operate on you to remove them."

Geannie closed her eyes again. Through the muffled confusion, she heard someone say, "We lost the boy."

Moments later she heard someone else say, "The woman will have to wait." Something about there being more casualties being brought in than they could handle. "Give her another shot of morphine."

A medic injected her with a dose of morphine. Soon everything went black again. For how long is uncertain. The next thing Gerannie was aware of she was standing beside the bed looking down on her own body. The mass of confusion going on about her was muted and blurred as if the scene was playing out in slow motion in another time and place.

She was approached by a three men and a woman who seemed vaguely familiar. She turned to look at them. "Daddy? Is that you?"

"Yes Geannie. It's me."

"Sandy? Austin?"

"It's alright, Mom." Sandy said.

Looking at the fourth person, she wasn't sure who he was.

He simply said, "Mother."

"It can't be. Charles Emmett?"

"Yes. Mother."

Then her father explained, "You see Geannie. Our spirits are timeless and eternal. We look as our bodies did or would have looked in the prime of life."

"Daddy, I have so many so many questions."

"Now isn't the time or place. But I assure you there are answers to all of your questions. Hold on just a little longer. Curley is on his way. Charles Emmett and I are here to take the three of you back with us, as soon as you say goodbye to Curly. We'll be here waiting right here for you."

Geannie slipped from that world, back into darkness, only to come to amongst the horror that prevailed around her. Her body racked with pain, she called out for Ramona, but she wasn't there to respond.

Again she slipped into unconsciousness and again found herself standing next to her body. She felt a familiar presence about her. The same presence she felt when alone with Charles Emmett's body at the funeral home, and then again at the lake. She turned around to see him standing behind and above her. He as so handsome and looked a lot like his father.

He floated down to her level and stood beside her. "I'm sorry that I had to leave you like I did." he said. "I was never meant to stay in this world. I could only stay long enough to get what I needed, something only you could give me and that was my tiny body as imperfect as it was."

"All of these years, I have wondered how you would have tuned out. You would be eleven years old now, you know."

"Come. There is something I want to show you." He reached out and took her hand. In a blur of light and motion he took her to a point in the air high above the harbor where she could see the devastation below off in the distance. At that moment, a blue gray airplane flashed by. She could see Curly in the back seat desperately shooting at a white plane with red circles on its wings. The plane Curly was in caught on fire and she watched as he bailed out. Seconds later she watched as his parachute opened. "He will be alright." Charles Emmett told her. "He's coming to you. Hold on until then. There is something else I want you to see."

After another blur of light and motion, she and Charles Emmett were standing in the dining room of the Austin Mansion. She was behind and slightly above her mother. Seated around the table were Emmett and Ellen, Walt, Sarah, and Sylvia and Curtis. They were in the middle of Sunday dinner with the radio on in the other room.

"I afraid I don't have much of an appetite." she heard her mother say.

"I'm sure they're alright, Aunt Marie." Sarah said. The radio said that it was Pearl Harbor that was being bombed, not Honolulu. If you say that Curly has been at sea, maybe he isn't there at all."

"That sounds reasonable." Emmett said.

"I can tell you from experience," Walt added "that what is going on is a frightening experience. I rarely talk about it but it brings to mind once in France when our position was being shelled by the Germans. I didn't think I would get out of it alive, but I did. If its not your time, God will deliver you. I say this not to conger up a scene of horror but rather to show that in the midst of horror God's angles are there, taking some with them and sparing others. What I mean to say is that, if it isn't a person's time, they're protected. I can't say for sure, but I doubt it is time for any of them."

"Thats what worries me." Marie said. "Sarah do remember when they left two years ago and I turned to you and said that I was afraid I would never see them again? I thought it was that because I wouldn't live to see see them. Now I worry that it is just the opposite."

Geannie settled directly behind her mother and put her hands on her shoulders and and said, "Good bye, Mother. I'm afraid that you are right."

In an instant Charles Emmett brought her back to rejoin her own crumpled body, numbed by unconsciousness and morphine.

A while later, she was aroused by Ramona saying, "Hold on a little longer. We're trying to get you as fast a we can."

"Where's Curly?" Geannie mumbled almost incoherently. "Tell Curly where I am."

"Yes, Geannie I will." Ramona assured her. "I have to leave now, I'll be back as soon as I can."

Romona raced among the other casualties doing what she could. She stopped cold in her tracks at the feet of a man laying among the dead. It was Hurly Snellgrass from last night. "I knew I should have never agreed to go out with him. Now he's dead and its my fault." she reasoned. "I am a jinx."

As Curly neared the turn off into the base, he saw something that made his blood run chill. There, off to the side of the road was Geannie's car. He pulled over and jumped out of the jeep to have a closer look. The car was riddled with bullet holes and blood was all over the seats and floorboards. He could tell from the foot prints on the ground that someone had pulled them from the car.

His only concern now was finding them. The logical place to look was at the Navy Hospital. He was stopped by guards at the gate and was allowed in after identifying himself. As he pulled up to the hospital, he could see the devastation out in the harbor. Inside the hospital was sheer pandemonium. "How am I ever going to find them in all of the chaos?"

Curly inquired at the front desk, "Has a woman in her forties and two teenagers been brought in?" he asked.

The steward behind the desk pointed down the hall, "If so, they'd be in B wing."

Curly began making his way in that direction. Dead and wounded were laid out in the corridors. Blood soaked doctors, nurses, and orderlies did their best to attend to the casualties. Ramona, her white uniform splattered with blood, appeared out of nowhere. "Thank God your here! She has been calling for you." She grabbed his arm and lead the way.

Ramona took Curly into a large open room lined with beds. "They were among the first ones to be brought in." she said. "A couple of officers on their way to play golf came upon them and brought them in."

Her expression became emotional as she continued. "Before I take you to her, I have to tell you something. Sandy was already dead when they got here. Austin died soon after. Geannie is failing fast. She has three bullets in her. One in her right lung which has collapsed; one in the abdomen, that one is causing some serious internal bleeding; and one in her left thigh, which completely shattered her femur just below her hip." With tears running down her face she said, "I'm so sorry Curly."

Ramona lead Curly to where Geannie was lying. Her head was bandaged for the lacerations she received from flying pieces of glass and metal. Her chest, abdomen, and left leg were wrapped in bandages oozing with blood.

Curly knelt next to Geannie and took her hand and called her name.

Geannie opened her eyes and with an attempted smile said, "Flyboy. I knew you would come." She coughed up some more blood and said, "Happy birthaversary, Sheffield."

With hot tears streaming down his face, he squeezed her hand with his trembling hand and bent down to kiss her lips. "Happy birthaversaray sweetheart. Hang in there. Don't leave me now. I don't know what I'll do without you."

"Did Ramona tell you about the kids?" she whispered.

"Yes, she did." he sobbed.

"I'm so sorry, Curly. If only we had left the house a couple of minutes sooner."

"It's not your fault, sweetheart."

"Will you still take us home?" she plead. "I want to be buried next to Charles Emmett and near

Daddy. They're here to take the kids me back with them. I have to go now. I'll be waiting for you someday. Always remember this, you were the one and only love of my life." With the last of the strength she had, she struggled to whisper, "I love you." and she was gone.

* * * * *

Civilian casualties during the attack included 68 dead and 35 wounded.