

Chapter 9 Private Ryan

“Jackson,” Miller said. “Take Mellish. Check the sniper’s house. We don’t want any more danger coming from there.”

“Yes, sir,” Jackson said, and Mellish joined him. They walked past Reiben and Wade, who was bandaging a deep wound in Reiben’s forehead.

“Forget Private Ryan,” Reiben said angrily. “Forget him.”

“Stop it,” Jackson said as he passed the two men.

“Caparzo’s just the first of us to die trying to save Private Ryan,” Reiben complained. “You’ll see.”

“Private Ryan didn’t kill Caparzo,” Wade responded. “A German sniper did.”

While his men continued their journey down the street to the town center, Miller looked at Caparzo’s bloody letter. He started to pick it up and realized that Wade was also looking at it. The two men hesitated, staring at each other. Then Wade picked up the letter, put it in his pocket, and joined the rest of the men going down the street.

Miller glanced up at the man and his wife. Their expressions told him that they finally understood. The Americans were not going to take their two children to a safer place. He smiled and waved goodbye to the children in the doorway behind him. Then he followed his men, carefully surveying the street and the surrounding buildings. He did not want to lose another man . . .

Jackson and Mellish entered the small house on the hillside, and Mellish stayed downstairs while Jackson went up. He looked around the small rooms carefully. They were empty. The last room he entered had a huge hole in the floor. Looking down through the hole, he saw the body of the sniper he had shot.

Mellish stood near the dead body, looking up. “Come down, Jackson,” he said. “Let’s get out of here.”

Soon the two men joined Miller and the squad, and Sergeant

Hill and his men, in the town center. The sound of bullets made the men a little nervous, and they kept their guns and rifles ready as they walked.

Miller and Hill stopped in a doorway together. Miller pointed to a machine gun in a third-floor window across the open area, indicating that they needed to move quickly.

Suddenly a voice from that window called out: “Thunder!” A very American voice.

Hill called back, “Flash!”

The captain and sergeant smiled and then stepped out and led their men across the open area. When they reached the building, they separated and went in different doors.

Miller’s group entered a large room full of broken furniture, wood from the ceiling, and broken bricks. As they walked through the room, the captain saw five men sitting in the shadows against the wall. He didn’t look closely at these men; he’d been told that this building was controlled by the Americans. Then the men in the shadows turned around and faced them. Miller realized that their uniforms were gray—not green. They were Germans!

The Germans and Americans, equally shocked, looked at each other and then began to shout in their native languages for the others to surrender. After a few minutes they stopped, and it was quiet—no one spoke or moved.

Suddenly one of the young Germans got scared and raised his gun. Before Miller could react, machine-gun fire rained down and the five Germans were dead.

When it was quiet again, Sergeant Hill and his men entered the room, ready to shoot. The captain above called down to them. Miller and his men stood up and moved so they could see who had saved their lives. Upstairs, they saw a dozen American paratroopers staring down at them. Their leader, Captain DeWayne Hamill—thirty-one, San Diego, California—looked confused.