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Tail-end Charlie

written by

Mick Manning

illustrated by

Brita Granström

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EV
IN

THIRTEENTH OP

We were flying through heavy ‘boxed’ flak, raiding Tiger tank supply depots when it happened. I remember us making the bombing run and hearing Com say, “BOMB DOORS OPEN. LEFT, LEFT. STEADY, STEADY… BOMBS GONE!” Then a shell burst close by…

Chunks of shrapnel punched through the aircraft. Bill’s windscreen shattered. Filthy smoke rushed in and then something hit me in the face. It was like being kicked by an elephant! I blacked out.

I heard later that Bill had wrestled the plane back under control before checking everybody was OK on the intercom. When I didn’t reply he sent Paddy to find me…

RAF HOSPITAL, 1945

Back at the airbase I was rushed away in an RAF ambulance. When I woke up again it was Christmas Day. The doc came and showed me my broken oxygen mask. It had taken the full force of the impact. I’d smashed my jaw – but I could have lost my head.

When my wounds had healed the commanding officer must have thought I’d done enough, because he didn’t send me back. He posted me to a desk job in England instead. And that’s where I met Muriel Jones…

The war ended six months later. I was a lucky boy. My war ended with peace and love – and that’s how all war should end.


EV