

Saving private ryan



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There was a flag, above it, rippling with the breeze. The red white and blue dancing and overseeing the park, like a comfort watching the old man, who was wandering, as if aimlessly, down a neat, stone path.

Alan was followed, now, by his family, awkwardly pursuing him, yet remaining at a respectful distance. He was focused and his eyes fixated as he limped relentlessly past the tidy grass and rows of trees, regardless of his annoyingly cautious company.

Concentrated, yet seemingly lost, like a man wandering through a deserted wasteland, he plodded towards a nearby tree, and paused momentarily, eyes gleaming. He rested a heavy hand on the rough bark and gazed towards a flag, shivering above. Red white and blue with famous stripes and stars above the cemetery gates; the wonderer found his oasis-a flurry of wartime memories, forgotten tragedies and lost souls.

On the other side, above the park and rows of trees, another flag of the same colour - a French flag. Still followed and nearly staggering, Alan makes his way across a field through the gates.

Martin Knowles, June 6th 1944, John Way, August 20th 1943, Dominic Scully, September 16th, 1944. The names of a thousand dead men filled the plain with graves of a pristine pearl colour- an army of crosses. Dragging one foot slightly over the grass between them, the veteran searched among the lost for one familiar name. Without warning, we abruptly collapsed to his knees. His family flock around him, holding him in comfort, as he drags the memories kicking and screaming into focus, and he remembers. . . Davey Havok, February 3rd, 1942.

The sea lapped at the sands. The air was tinged with electricity, this energy fuelled by overwhelming fear. The sky was deep and dark, with sodden, muddy clouds. This is the Dog Green sector, Omaha Beach, D-Day. Home is a dream from here, where soldiers live their nightmares.

Grinding their teeth and struggling furiously against the howling wind and waves, a troop of ten are cramped inside a small boat, among many more, heading for land.

Alan Stone, a 20-yr old army officer reached for his water canister with a trembling hand and took a glance at his valiant troops. Some of them, retching with dread, vomiting into the boat . . . which, in turn, made others heave.

" Thirty seconds" Bellowed a man, cramming cake into his face. Half the men in the boat crossed themselves, others tried to remember what they were taught, or were too occupied with their nausea. The ramp at the front of the boat is lowered. Immediately, shot fly into them rapidly, instantly killing most. Bodies were falling about like doll parts.

" Over the sides!!" Alan shifts the remaining living men over the sides and into the freezing water. The screaming bullet sounds are drowned out, but they are relentlessly shot through the murky sea, dispersing blood from floating corpses. There was a strange silence as one man struggled with his heavy belt, until he stops.

Alan, with sopping clothes, wades through, clambering in-between the tank traps. Ears could bleed for the bullets still ear-splittingly twanging against

metal. Falling and dragging and crawling his way, among them, for one moment, everything slows, and Alan's environment begins to sink in . . .

He looks about him, and sees grown men, huddled behind the tank traps, which offer little real protection, sobbing in confusion. Explosions to his left, he sees soldiers, flying off the ground and returning to the sand in halves. Men he once knew engulfed in flames and in a manic state of shock. In contrast, he watched another man lose his arm, calmly reach down to pick it up, and continue marching on, Straight-faced. Another man's blood trickled down his face. Alan picked up his helmet, tipped out the muddy crimson liquid inside that, and placed it back on his head. He'd seen enough.

He screams his orders to the surrounding troops, getting them back into action. What little morale they had amongst them now was gold. He comes across a dying man, wailing like a frenzied banshee with his organs inside out beside him. No, high morale was delusional.

" Medic!" Alan shouted, spotting a man with some potential to live. Though he realised the nearest medic was far too busy already, so he dragged him along the ground. There was a sudden explosion somewhere behind him, after realising he was in one piece, Alan kept moving . . . he paused momentarily, looked back, and saw half a man behind him. Letting go to run, he trudged through the flying mud, bullets and blood to join some twenty men that actually made it to the sand dunes, closer to the front.

He tapped the man beside him with the radio, realising it was his close friend, Davey. It was relieving to see him, but he needed to concentrate. He took it, and screamed " Hardly any soldier survivors." Giving it back, he

rolled over to another group, to find out he's in command. Taking the radio once more from Davey beside him with thanks, he send " 1st wave ineffective, we do not hold the beach! Repeat-We do not hold the beach." Rolling across to give it back, he finds the soldier faceless and gory. Startled, Alan panics into shock, his eyes filled-distorting his vision. He shook and breathed heavily now, he was losing focus . . .

The dunes began to be pelted with fire from a new direction. A foreign man had him in his sights. Unprepared and whimpering, he helplessly struggled with his rifle, mercilessly; the other man pulls the trigger. Alan feels the penetrating blow to his upper thigh and falls to the ground, and lay there gazing at the blackened sky. His throat, dry, and his body, numb. He never thought he'd make it. . .

With a still and sombre face, the old man, lifted himself off of his knees. His family wrapped their arms around him. The sky had grown dark, it was time to leave. Once again, Alan left them all behind, with a single tear to run down his tired, wrinkled face.