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### A Call for Roman Glory

April 28<sup>th</sup> 1945. 4:00 pm<sup>1</sup>. I am standing guard at a large house in Dongo, looking straight into the eyes of the man whom I had once ardently admired. I have put the past behind me and repressed it from my memory fifteen years ago. Now what I feel for him is not only abhorrence but also a desire to slit his throat just to feel the dark heart that nourishes his body gradually enter a state of immobility. I have anticipated this day for so long. Even though Valerio<sup>2</sup> is the one pointing the 7.65-caliber L.MAS, 1938 model-F.20830<sup>3</sup>, straight at my enemy's chest, instead of me, I am not in the least displeased, for my state of mind would have been completely destroyed if the *faccia di merda* ever got off with impunity.

My enemy rests his head on his chest without avoiding my gaze. What do I see in there now? Is it fear, terror, or regret? It's a wonder how easily the world changes. Just to think of the fact that a man whose sole appearance used to epitomize power, a man who seemed to have towered over every Italian citizens despite his five feet six inches height, could have stood right in front of me, trembling in a decrepit coat, stammering with terror, is too much of a shock to me<sup>4</sup>. I am not a cruel man, but just a man who has lost his dearest possession, driving him into a

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<sup>1</sup> April...4:00pm: This was the exact date that Mussolini was killed, but concerning the time, he was probably killed ten minutes after 4:00pm. I therefore assumed that it was reasonable to set the time at 4:00 pm. (Moseley 291).

<sup>2</sup> Valerio: his real name was Walter Audisio. He was the Italian partisan and communist politician who was supposedly ordered to enter Dongo and enforce the capital punishment that was decreed against Mussolini and others in the fascist hierarchy. Audisio claimed to have been the killer of Mussolini, but his death still is a mystery. Some people claim that Mussolini might have been killed by more than one person while others claim that Audisio was not even present at the death scene. (Moseley 289).

<sup>3</sup> 7.65...20830: This was the gun identified as the killer of Mussolini. (Moseley 289).

<sup>4</sup> Just...me: Mussolini was a man who was invariably described as delirious, formidable, unstoppable, prolonged and enthusiastic. His name was always attached with the words sublime, magnificent, divine and tireless. He used the motto "live dangerously. Better one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep." (Duggan 478). He was

permanent state of melancholy that can only be absolved with retribution. Standing here at this moment, at this very second, staring at him, makes me remember the various events in my past that led to my presence at this very place.

I was born on the second of May 1901, right at the beginning of the *nuovo secolo*, the great and destructive 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was the year after king Umberto had been assassinated by a murderer who committed suicide on my birthday, how blessed I was. It was the year in which Italy was a political battlefield between anarchism, catholicism, radicalism, syndicalism, republicanism, and not to mention the burgeoning “religion” that attempted to displace Catholicism in everyday life, socialism<sup>5</sup>. It was the year where Giolitti became Minister of the Interior, set on his goal of unifying a deeply divided country with such a disparity between its northern and southern regions that one could hardly believe that it was the state Garibaldi and Count Camillo Cavour thought they had unified after the *Risorgimento*<sup>6</sup>. Overall, my dear country was in deep turmoil, plagued by a persistent gap between the masses and the institutions,

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praised for surviving four assassination attacks. He was even seen as a Christ figure, for his simple origins were made to have an explicit parallels with the life of Jesus. Italians even took a pilgrimage to the house that he grew up in, for he was the nationalist “messiah”. (Duggan 479). Although it is not known how Mussolini reacted at the point of death, I imagined that my character, as a communist later on in his life would definitely describe him in such a demeaning ways.

<sup>5</sup> Religion...socialism: All the internal problems in Italy, especially the continuous poverty and the huge disparity between the ruling classes and the peasants left many desperately searching for a new faith. During this time, socialism became part of everyday life. There were socialist puppet shows and comedies and dances and family parties. Socialist activists staged public meetings, debates, conferences and lectures wherever they could such as in clubs, halls, cafes and chambers of Labor, or out in the open air. So many socialists helped impart a religious note to many of their educational and propaganda initiatives. Their language and tone even resembled the primitive era of Christianity, not to mention the fact that pictures of Karl Marx regularly appeared alongside those of the Virgin Mary and King Umberto. (Duggan 361).

<sup>6</sup> Unifying...*Risorgimento*: The *Risorgimento* was an ideological and literary movement that helped to arouse the national consciousness of the Italian people, and it led to a series of political events that freed the Italian states from foreign domination and united them politically in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though Italy claimed to have been unified, a major disparity existed between the north and the south. The north was extremely advanced, in a sense that it was industrialized and it experienced a huge economic development in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In regions such as Milan, there was a surge in steel and rubber manufacturing that led to a huge production of cars by FIAT. The south instead was plagued by poverty and illiteracy. Because of that, many peasant from the south and a few from the north moved to the north or in *La Merica* in huge numbers (eight million from 1900-1915). (Duggan 356).

a shortcoming of parliament, a pervasive corruption and materialism of the ruling class, a high level of poverty and crime, and unfortunately, a feeling of shame because of being a minor power on the international stage<sup>7</sup>.

I was born and raised in Milano, the most advanced city of the early 1900s<sup>8</sup>. I was given the name Leonardo Gionmaria di Lombardi<sup>9</sup>, one that established a common ground between my parents' conflicting ideologies. My madre came from a lower middle class family that was extremely devoted to Catholicism, a quality inherent in her character. She worked as a nurse in a hospital run by my uncle, Salvatore Cannavaro. My padre, Marcello, who also came from a lower middle class family, worked as a literature teacher at the University of Pavia<sup>10</sup>. Unlike madre, padre was moved by anarchism at the beginning of the *nuovo secolo*. He possessed an extremely belligerent nature that belied my madre's gentleness and piety. The last member of my family was my elder brother, Ugo, who seemed to have acquired all of my mother's characteristics, unlike me, who right from the first year of age was so stubborn and strong-willed that some people began calling me *Ferro*<sup>11</sup>.

As I grew up, I found myself caught up in the political limbo that many Italian citizens found themselves in. I grew up being influenced by two polar opposite ideologies that I formulated into my own view based on my preference. Since I started speaking when I was just 16 months old, my padre began schooling me at home. Due to my intelligence, I never went to

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<sup>7</sup> Overall...stage: these were the problems inherent in Italy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Duggan 357).

<sup>8</sup> Milano...1900s: Milan was a huge industrial city during these times. (Duggan 357).

<sup>9</sup> Leonardo Gianmaria di Lombardi: Leonardo means like a lion. Gian means "God is gracious" while Maria means rebellious, obstinate and warlike. (20,000 names). Lombardi is the region in which Milan lies. Some Italians have last names that are correspondent to the area they are from. (Reserved Domain Names).

<sup>10</sup> University of Pavia: a university in the city of Pavia, which is also located in the region of Lombard. (Killinger 4).

<sup>11</sup> *Ferro*: is the Italian word for iron. Since Italians give nicknames to their children all the time due to their characteristics later on when they grow up, I therefore assumed that a stubborn person could actually be given the name Ferro.

*scuola dell'Infanzia*<sup>12</sup>, but started *scuola elementare*<sup>13</sup> when I was just three years old. My madre made sure that I attended a Catholic school in Milano. From my five years in that school, I grew up excessively admiring science and history, but science mostly, which led to my decision of becoming a doctor. Nevertheless, I could not stray away from history. I cherished the precious past of my ancestors with all my heart. I loved the glory of ancient Rome. I extremely appreciated Augustus Caesar, but held a big grudge toward Brutus. I took pride in the Italian Renaissance and wanted the glory of my country restored at all cost. It was this school that formulated my future and led me to an ideology that highly valued Catholicism.

Remaining just a catholic could never have happened with my combative nature. Somewhere else I found another ideology that I integrated into my beliefs. I met with it at the age of eight in 1909, on my last day of *scuola elementare*. I walked home that day, chewing on a chocolate bar and when I opened the door to my house, my *soggiorno*<sup>14</sup> was filled with my father's friends. At one corner, his friend, Carlo Carra<sup>15</sup> was holding a quite peculiar painting called *Piazza del Duomo*. In the painting, the entire atmosphere seemed charged with luminous energy, as people milled about a piazza dominated by the network of trams. Glittering lights dissolved the distinct form of the figures and diminished the clarity of spatial relations, emphasizing the displacement of the previous social life of the piazza by the new function of the site as a traffic node. I averted my eyes from the odd painting just to find myself staring at Luigi

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<sup>12</sup> *Scuola dell' Infanzia*: it's a non compulsory school, kind of like pre-school that Italian children attend. Since I could not find any information on the Italian school system in the early 1900s, I decided to use the present school system, for it has not changed that much since then. (Stewart)

<sup>13</sup> *Scuola Elementare*: means primary school in Italian. Italians attend it for about five years in which they are introduced to many different disciplines that include science, math, art, history, geography... (Stewart).

<sup>14</sup> *Soggiorno*: means living room in Italian.

<sup>15</sup> Carlo Carra: was an Italian painter and a leading figure of the artistic feature of the futurist movement that began in Italy in 1909. In addition to many paintings, he wrote many books and even taught in Milan. He was a friend of Marinetti. His paintings always reflected the excitement and the spectacle of modern technology mingled with "the psychic disorientation produced by new technologies of electric illumination and travel". (Poggi 18).

Russolo. He was in an ensemble with other people I did not recognize; everyone played wind and percussion instruments, except for Luigi and his brother who were standing next to what they called their *intonarumori*<sup>16</sup> instruments, which looked like two set of boxes each of which were made from a parallelepipedo of wood with a metallic cardboard loudspeaker placed in the front part. Then all of the sudden, Luigi pulled a lever on the side of the machines and the sound of music filled the room. The music they played was fast tempo, aggressively charged with sharp rhythmic curves. Luigi's *intonarumori* instruments, acoustic noise generators, produced different types of noises such as roars, thunderings, explosions, hissing roars, bangs, booms, and much to my astonishment, the sound of sirens<sup>17</sup>. This was a different type of music, a belligerent one, one that wanted to break away from the past to embrace machinery and technological innovations. I wondered what type of music it was until my father and his friend, Marinetti<sup>18</sup>, appeared behind me, holding a blue pamphlet.

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<sup>16</sup> He...part: Luigi Russolo was another friend of Marinetti who extremely advanced the musical part of the futurist movement. He was also one of the first theorists of electronic music. At the beginning of the futurist movement, the classical and the new futurist orchestra stood side by side, but Russolo dreamed of "using the 'pure' orchestra, composed exclusively from the newly invented noise instruments" in the future. (Stojanovic-Novicic) He therefore in 1913, invented the *intonarumori*, an instrument made up of several noise generating devices, in order for people to watch him perform his noise concert. During this time in history, he held many concerts all over northern Italy, all the way in the 1920s. (Saggini). Even though the *intonarumori* first appeared in public in 1913, I included it in here in its premature form, for it took Luigi and his brother many years to complete the actual one.

<sup>17</sup> Luigi's...sirens: these were the types of sounds that Luigi described in his book, *The Art of Noise*, to help the world know about his type of music. (Saggini).

<sup>18</sup> Marinetti: was an Italian poet and editor "who founded the futurist movement early in 1909 by publishing an inflammatory manifesto in several Italian and foreign news papers, most notoriously on the front page of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro*." (Poggi 1). The futurists embraced unruly explosive force, speed, and danger as a cure for the "mortal boredom" and the disempowerment of the individual in society. They embraced violence and war, which they viewed as the "world's only hygiene." They sought, as Marinetti described, to "increase the quantity of excitement to the point of exceeding the threshold of the human sensory apparatus." (Poggi 33). Many futurist believed in the Nietzschean cult of the superman and like the nationalist, wanted a regeneration of Italy. Unlike most nationalist, however, the futurist rejected traditional values and norms as prototypes for the present, for they believed that a "truly renovated Italy could only be born out of the ashes of a destroyed past." (Poggi 1). During the first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, futurism was extremely popular because it fused art and social transformation to make its voice heard.

“My son, what you see here is the future” said my father proudly while looking around the room. “Our movement has begun<sup>19</sup>. It is time to forget about the past and glorify the future.” He turned to Marinetti and said “see here, this son of mine has the heart to actually make our dreams come true.”

“You don’t say” replied Marinetti.

“There is not a boy of his age smarter or more courageous than him, believe me.” My father added with a little bit of hand gesture. “He will become a politician, my son here and help us build an actual futurist state.” He said with conviction. Even though I knew it in my heart that I would never choose that path, I did not object.

Marinetti moved in front of me and I could not stop staring at his bold head. He extended the book he held in his hand towards me, smiling with all his might. “This is your copy of the *Futurist Manifesto*. I am sure you will love it.” I took the book from him and headed out, not knowing that its contents would lead me to the worst path I ever took in my life.

The first play I saw was called *La nave* by D’Annunzio<sup>20</sup>. It was a day that I had extremely valued in my life. I vividly remember it as if it happened just yesterday. I was sitting in *La Scala*<sup>21</sup>, mesmerized by the beautiful message of the play. The year was 1915, a year after the beginning of the first destructive war. I was angry at the Italian rulers’ passive attitude, eternally sitting on their undeserved parliamentary chair, refusing to declare war. I wanted war.

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<sup>19</sup> Our...begun: I made his father become a futurist because many anarchists became futurist in the 1900s. Even Marinetti is known to have been an anarchist and a nihilist. (Poggi IX).

<sup>20</sup> D’Annunzio: he was an Italian poet, writer and politician. At first he was a socialist, but after he lost an election in 1900, he became increasingly concerned about national regeneration. He wrote patriotic odes celebrating Dante, the medieval city-states and ancient Rome, and hailed the illustrious achievements of past Italians in war and arts “as spurs to action and harbingers of the country’s future greatness”. (Duggan 375). He believed that war could save Italy from decline and was passionately anticipating his country’s entry into WWI.

<sup>21</sup> *La Scala*: a very famous opera house in Milan. (Killinger 4).

I wanted it so badly. I would have given up everything to glorify the supremacy of the fatherland and make it the world power of the future. It is true; Marinetti's manifesto deeply changed me. It made me see the world in a totally different way. I found myself overtly celebrating the masculine qualities of aggression, courage, confidence and egotism all the while denigrating the feminine qualities of sentimentality, morality and dependency. I loved speed and courage. To me, the war was a beautiful idea worth dying for, the world's only hygiene. I could not comprehend how any nation could survive without a fight in a world of Darwinian struggle. Nevertheless, I could have never called myself a futurist. I could not damn the past and all those institutions committed to the preservation of a cultural heritage. I cherished the past of the fatherland too much and I could barely let go of my commitment to Catholicism. Much to my father's disappointment, I even despised his poems with their destructive syntaxes, random placing of nouns, veneration of blank verses, constant use of verbs in the infinitive, lack of punctuations, and employment of elements of noise, weight and smell<sup>22</sup>.

I therefore became a nationalist<sup>23</sup>, I wanted war and war alone and above all, I wanted it to heal the country's internal fractures. It was time that a collective national soul was created in

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<sup>22</sup> Much...smell: these were characteristics of futurist literature. I believe that my character will despise this because it denigrates the past and the literary tradition of Italy that he so loved.

<sup>23</sup> Nationalist: nationalism was a powerful current of thought and feeling in much of Europe from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, throughout the twentieth century. It gained an immense appeal in Italy due to the state's beleaguered position at the international stage. It called for patriotism, the love of the fatherland, the idealism at the heart of Italian liberalism. In Italy, the movement emerged as a reaction against socialism and the observed weakness of Italy's rulers. The nationalists hated parliament, loathed the corruption of the capital, saw socialism as selfish, devoid of higher spiritual values and materialistic. Since they believed that Italy was economically and politically too fragile to benefit from class conflicts, they sought a greater moral energy that "would galvanize the middle classes around a program of national renewal and allay the threat of socialism." (Duggan 379). The nationalist celebrated aggression and scorned humanitarian and pacific values like the Futurist, but most of them were ardent supporters of the church and the monarchy itself. My character's nationalistic characteristics were derived from the influence his mother had on him and the futuristic ideal he picked up from his father and the *Futurist Manifesto*.

place of the collective regional soul that existed then<sup>24</sup>. Since the ruling classes were not yet ready to fight<sup>25</sup>, I found great enjoyment in watching plays that reflected my view. The play set place in Venice in AD 552, when the city was asserting its independence from the rule of the Emperor in Byzantium. It tells the story of two brothers, Marco and Sergio, who seized power by murdering the male members of the leading imperial family by blinding them and having their tongues cut out. “The beautiful Basiliola set out to avenge her brothers by stripping, driving Marco wild with desire, and inciting them to a duel, in which the jealous Marco kills Sergio. To atone for his sin Marco decides to take the great ship that the city is building, head off into the Mediterranean and perform heroic deeds for the greater glory of Venice” (Duggan 376). I appreciated the play not only for its echoing of the growing campaign for the liberation of Istria and South Tyrol from the greedy Austrians but also for its message that war was an antidote to national decadence.

After the play, I walked home and was surprised when I found my father hugging me as soon as I entered the house.

“Padre, why the sudden happiness?” I asked, completely surprised.

“Italy has declared war on Austria. We are finally entering the Great War.” He yelled. He grabbed his coat. “I am going to go volunteer for the army, along with Ugo here.” He tapped

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<sup>24</sup> It...then: Like I mentioned before, the Italian state was extremely divided, not only regionally, but also by political fragmentation. The nationalists wanted the Italians to work as one in order to bring their state to glory. At the time of the war, it became a matter of us against them. Nationalism also served as a distraction from internal conflicts at the expense of a focus on international affairs.

<sup>25</sup> Since...fight: Italy did not enter the Great War right away. She spent a great amount of its time contemplating which side to be on, which extremely angered many Italians, especially the nationalists who led many protests. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Italy entered an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary after having a conflict with the French over their colonies in North Africa. After being promised more land if she was to interfere in the war on the side of the allies- Russia, France and Great Britain, Italy, which had some of its regions occupied by Austria-Hungary, consented and entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1915. (Duiker) Italy first declared war on the Austrians (Duggan 388).



my brother on the shoulder, who ever so obedient, was standing behind him with a face as pale as I have ever seen.

“That is great Father, I will go with you. It is time to finish the work of the Risorgimento.” I said, my face beaming with enthusiasm.

“You are not going anywhere Leonardo.” My mother appeared from the hallway. “You are just fourteen years old. You will continue your studies at the *Formazione Professionale della Scienza*<sup>26</sup>.”

“Madre, you cannot do this. If you want one of your sons to stay with you, then let Ugo stay. It is obvious that he does not want to go, but please let me fight for the fatherland.” I yelled at her. I then turned to my father, “Padre, please talk to her.”

“If it was up to me, I would have taken both of you, but we settled on a compromise. I am sorry Ferro, you are staying.” He said with regret and then he walked out with Ugo, reluctantly trailing behind.

It was so that I stayed in my school room during the first two years of the war. My father and Ugo left for the front<sup>27</sup>, accompanied by my uncle who worked as a surgeon. I stayed in my books, despising every moment of it. I was jealous of Ugo, spiteful of the cowardly peasants who kept deserting the army and easily surrendering. I felt like I was withering away, unable to help bring glory to the fatherland<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> *Formazione Professionale della Scienza*: After middle school, Italians go to a higher level of secondary school. Some of those schools are professional schools that might be focused on art, science, dance, music, etc... It takes about five years to complete those professional schools before moving on to University. (Stewart).

<sup>27</sup> Front: His father and brother went to Caporetto on the Isonzo front. Italy had both a western front and an eastern. The western front was in the Trentino and “it was too inhospitable and too well defended to allow for any serious offensives.” (Duggan 391). The eastern front was at Isonzo and it gravely suffered under the forces of the Germans and the Austrians. (Duggan 391).

<sup>28</sup> I...fatherland: during the war, it became obvious that Italians lacked patriotism. Only about 8,000 of the 5.5 million Italians who were mobilized down to 1918 were volunteers. A high percentage of the Italian soldiers were peasants, many of whom deserted the army. This was mostly due to the harsh treatment of the conscripts (harsh generals, barely any food to eat, cold weather that their uniforms could not ward off, etc...). As a result, “war-

After waiting for too long, the day finally came where I was finally taken to the front. My uncle, Salvatore, had come from the hospital near Isonzo front for two weeks. When he came, he was emaciated and seemed to have aged, not to mention that he barely smiled anymore. This was in 1917, two weeks after I graduated from the *Formazione Professionale della Scienza*. During his stay, I persuaded him into letting me go back to the front with him to help take care of our brave soldiers. On the day of our departure, we waited until my madre went to the market and made our escape. I thought I would never feel as happy as I felt that day.

As we neared the front, I was stricken with the most disappointing sight, one that tore my heart. Everywhere on the crooked and mud filled road were disheveled soldiers who walked away from their duties as if no war existed. Some had abandoned their rifles and had joined the thousands of refugees who were leaving their homes along with their belongings before the arrival of the Germans and Austrians<sup>29</sup>. “Broken vehicles, discarded materiel of every description, and dead horses, their flanks routinely darkened with blood where the flesh had been cut away with a knife or bayonet for food, littered the waysides. Men too exhausted, too sick, or too drunk to move lay on the ground. Rivers and streams, swollen with the autumn rains, were clogged with corpses and debris. And most disturbing, perhaps, was the sight of thousands of wounded and shell shocked troops who had escaped terror-stricken from the military hospitals, wrapped in sheets, blankets and bandages, many half naked, screaming, gesturing in agony”

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wearry soldiers everywhere gave themselves up with little or no fight.” At the advance of German troops, some 1,500 Italian soldiers just threw down their weapons and rushed toward the German officer, yelling “Evviva Germania!” Sometimes the soldiers even shot their own officer if he hesitated to surrender. (Duggan 392).

<sup>29</sup> Some...Austrians: there were rumors that the Germans and Austrians were coming to overtake some part of the front, therefore some soldiers and civilians fled.

(Duggan 393). I was angry at the sight unfolding before my eyes. I could not believe that a man could abandon the fatherland so easily<sup>30</sup>.

When we arrived at the military hospital, I could hear the ceaseless booming of cannons in the distance, the voices of which were almost drowned by the moaning and yelling of the wounded soldiers. Some were lying on filthy beds while others were on dirty sheets on the floor, for there were too many of them. I saw soldiers with their hands cut off, some with no legs, some with bandages dripping with blood. They looked resentful and desperate. In their eyes I saw their desire to escape that horrible place, be it by death, some of them did not mind at all, as long as the suffering ceased. I could not sympathize with them, for I found it the greatest honor to be allowed to die for the fatherland. Before I could fully soak in the details of my surrounding, I was interrupted by my uncle.

“Go tend to that corporal’s wound.” He pointed at a man who lay at a corner of the huge room. He had an enormous wound on his right foot that seemed to have inflamed to twice the actual size, but he remained passive as if he carried not even a scratch on his body. I was fascinated by this man’s nonchalance. All I could think was that this was how a soldier of the fatherland should behave; not flee from the army. “Maria, the nurse, informed me that he accidentally received shrapnel wound during the training session by one idiotic soldier.” Said my uncle. He handed me band-aids, a bottle of hydrogen peroxide, a scalpel, cottons, scissors, and tongs, and other medical needs.

I rushed by the soldier’s side. Before tending to his wounds, I administered some chloroform and ether<sup>31</sup> to relax his muscles and numb his pain. I took the scissors and cut open

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<sup>30</sup> I...easily: again, his great love for his country and war is closing his mind to reality even though he is a very intelligent boy.

the right leg of his pants. With the scalpel, I opened up the wound to a point that I could see the shrapnel embedded in his flesh. With the tong, I reached for the shrapnel and took it out, all the while applying cotton to stop the excessive bleeding. Afterwards, I took all the pus out of his inflamed leg and applied some hydrogen peroxide to it for disinfection before I wrapped it with the band-aid. As soon as I finished, he woke up.

“Thank you for tending to my wounds. Such idiots in our battlefields.” He said with such a powerful voice. I looked up. His face was very pale. He had a massive jaw and his eyes dominated his face. “I am Benito. Benito Mussolini.” He added with such pride.

“I am Leonardo Gionmaria di Lombardi.” I replied. “It is always a pleasure to help the defenders of our fatherland.”

“What a rebellious name. Futurist?” He asked.

“Nationalist actually, but named by a futurist when he was an anarchist.” I responded. He grinned before he acquired a very serious facial expression.

“I know that I will be the Crispi<sup>32</sup> of tomorrow. I will be the one to bring Italy back to its glorious position. If you need anything in the future, come see me. We are both from Lombardy. In the mean while, all I could offer you is this book.” He took out a book from the inside packet of his jacket. “This is *The Prince* by Machiavelli. Enjoy it and watch me become an Italian prince<sup>33</sup>.” He said with great confidence.

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<sup>31</sup> Before...ether: during the war, even non-professionals administered anesthesia due to not only a lack of profound knowledge about them, but also due to the fact that the medical providers were too busy to take their time. (Ether and Chloroform).

<sup>32</sup> I...Crispi: was the Italian politician who served as the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> prime minister of Italy and was very essential in the formation of united Italy. Mussolini’s father always told him this line. (Duggan 372).

<sup>33</sup> This...prince: Machiavelli’s book “The Prince” was one of Mussolini’s favorite books. (Duggan 433).

I took the book, but before I could reply, I was pulled by a man who told me to follow him. “We are in need of people to go collect the wounded soldiers from Caporetto<sup>34</sup>. Hurry.” Said the man. I followed him to a room where we gathered several stretchers and embarked on a truck. I was so happy, for Caporetto was the place where my padre and Ugo were serving.

When we reached the front, we found soldiers wounded everywhere, not to mention that many of them threw their rifles and ran away, fearing the advancing Germans and Austrians. I started turning over the bodies to examine who was alive or dead, all the while ignoring the continuous roars of bombs. I kept loading the soldiers in the stretchers, until I came across one that I recognized. His face was pale, a face that I had always seen. It was the face of a boy I had always fought for, for he was too fragile, too delicate. He did not want to come here. He was afraid, but he was forced to.

“Ferro, tell madre that I never fled, I died with a rifle in hand.” Whispered Ugo before he closed his eyes and entered the world of the dead. Without thinking about what I was doing, I grabbed his gears and headed the opposite way our soldiers were escaping. I was ready to fight those Germans and Austrians, but before I could run for even thirty feet, I was shot on the thigh by one of our own soldiers and carried off on a stretcher. It was at that moment that I knew that it was over for us Italians in this Great War. I thought we had lost the war<sup>35</sup>. Our soldiers had abandoned us. It was all I could think about before I entered a state of unconsciousness.

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<sup>34</sup> Caporetto: was part of the Isonzo front. In 1917, the Italians suffered a major defeat here. “The Austrians and Germans met with little resistance and quickly broke through the lines of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, wheeling right into the valley towards Caporetto, and encircling several divisions.” (Duggan 392). Of the million of men that had comprised the Isonzo army, 10,000 were killed during the Caporetto disaster, 30,000 taken prisoner, while 400,000 just vanished. (Villari).

<sup>35</sup> We...war: my character did not continue his part in the war because he was wounded. After he was shot down, he “thought” the Italians had lost the war because a nationalist was down and he had the mindset that only the nationalist had the heart to stand their ground no matter what. This mentality of his is obvious when he described the peasants as disappointing because they fled the war. Even though the Italians lost many of the major battles, some of them still believed that they were the ones who helped the allies win the war. The fact that my character says the word “thought” implies that his thinking changes afterwards. The first two years of the war was extremely

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difficult for the Italians, but as the state provided a more cautious commander and took more care of the welfare of the soldiers and their families, the moral of the soldiers were increased and the death rate of Italian soldiers decreased. With the crumbling of the Austro-Hungarian empire and with German troops weakened on the western front, Italian forces were able to enter the town of Vittorio Veneto, which allowed them to split the Austrian army in two and to proclaim victory. The Austrians signed an armistice on 4 november, which brought the war in Italy to an end. Therefore the Italians did not actually lose the war, but that was how my character felt at that time.(Duggan 404).

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