

An Incident (Disquiet)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/16423262) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/16423262>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Band of Brothers
Relationships:	Eugene Roe & Ralph Spina , Renee LeMaire & Eugene Roe , Edward "Babe" Heffron & Eugene Roe , Eugene Roe & Easy Company , Lewis Nixon & Richard Winters
Characters:	Eugene Roe , Ralph Spina , Edward "Babe" Heffron , Warren "Skip" Muck , Richard Winters , Lewis Nixon , Carwood Lipton , Renee LeMaire , Donald Malarkey
Additional Tags:	Blood , Blood and Injury , Head Injury , Snow Medics , Episode: s01e06 Bastogne , Medical , medics , Hurt/Comfort , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Angst , Team as Family , Easy Company - Freeform , Easy Company is a Family , Worried Easy Company , World War II , Injury , Ralph Spina is Awesome
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Requiem of...
Stats:	Published: 2018-10-27 Completed: 2019-03-11 Words: 17,192 Chapters: 2/2

An Incident (Disquiet)

by [tincturedwords](#)

Summary

Replacements are a jumpy, twitchy bunch; Doc Eugene Roe ends up on the wrong end of a skittish replacement and Doc Ralph Spina has to deal with the subsequent fallout.

Notes

Warnings: ¡Spoilers! Blood, Gore, Language, Violence, Dark Themes, War Action, Descriptions of Wounds/Illness, etc

Spoilers: Bastogne (s01e06)

Timeline: Bastogne

Pairings: None

A/N: A bit about our snow medics. I really wanted this to focus on Spina & the company's feelings.

Previously posted on AO3 in 2014, but I took it down & revised it.

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Disquiet

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Nobody gets justice. People only get good luck or bad luck.”

– **Orson Welles**

Snow flurries fell in a discombobulating fashion, the breeze disturbing their carefree flight pattern to the ground. The enlarged flakes joining their many others, the frozen dirt beneath the layers of day old snow receiving a softer powder-like new layer.

A change from the usual wet rain-like snow that had fallen several nights previous, causing a sheen of ice to crop up during the frigid night that was now concealed by the powdered fluff. The fog having thickened now that the snow cascaded down in large quantities, making the line barely visible to those at watch. Squinting didn't help any as it became impossible to see more than three feet in front of oneself by noon. This creating an eerie ghost-like aura to everything around.

Quiet was how many of the veterans would describe the evening as it was rapidly darkening to night. Though to a civilian, it had been anything but quiet. With an occasional machine gun popping off down the line, the enemy flares flying high to shed any light on their positions, and the sporadic yet expected HE mortar rounds whistling above to make instant craters upon impact with the ground or mere splinters out of the trees. But with no attempted advances from the enemy's side, only three barrages during the day and not once had any of the medics been called upon. It was a rather quiet day.

And yet, no one commented as such. The atmosphere made more so uneasy with the sudden decrease than if they were being shelled like normal. Sideways glances were flicked from person to person, weary staring contests with the fog concealed line were unintentionally initiated as if they expected tanks to suddenly burst into the open, and the usual humming chitter of conversing soldiers was nearly non-existent. Only quieted mumbles between foxhole partners.

Not even the solace of night could balm the edginess settled over their humble encampment, however it didn't impede a certain medic from making his rounds to each of the foxholes. It had become a instinctual routine for Doc Roe every night and after every battle. Needing to reassure that no one else had been wounded, even minorly, and to ensure the general health of the men was kept as close to par as he could manage.

Footsteps softly crunching the dirt spotted snow as he jogged in a bent over crouch, Roe swiftly made it from foxhole to foxhole. A few he could slid in next to the pairs sharing the small space, enjoying the warmth provide when he sat next to them.

The ones that had tarps over them were an added bonus in regards to warmth, though a majority of the foxholes, including Captain Winters', weren't deep enough to even accommodate sitting. One would have to lay flat on their belly to gain adequate cover. That

didn't stop Roe from crouching lowly at the sides, the front curvature of his left boot would hang slightly over the lip of the small 'hole whilst the other lay folded under him with his knee pressed into the snow, helping him keep his balance and kept him low enough to not be seen easily from the Germans' side.

Babe soundlessly chuckled to himself as he watched Doc Roe do just that at the edge of the foxhole to his left, a smile stretching his lips thin as he shifted to snuggle closer to the back wall of his own foxhole. The knowledge of his inability to gain anymore warmth didn't stop his body's instinctual attempts to leech every last ounce of heat from his army issued coat and blanket. Thankful to just be off the line watching for the night was enough to make sleeping a little bit easier. His eyes slipped closed before he could stop them, falling into a light sleep.

Until a far too close sounding discharge of a M-1 rang out from his direct right.

Roe expertly crouched beside the edge of Malarkey's and *Ducaine's foxhole, though his presence wasn't anticipated by the replacement situated with Malarkey for the night. The wariness of war and the increased tension brought on by the quiet day had done in the exhausted kid's nerves, thus at suddenly seeing a crouching figure stop outside their 'hole, Ducaine, feeling his eyes widen and his heart began to hammer, flipped his rifle up and fired.

Malarkey had seen nearly every type of wound their way to be had during battle; gaping gunshot wounds, blown off limbs, internals falling out to spill on the ground, bone sticking through skin and even a decapitation once. Nothing could phase him now, not even any of the creative injuries like a gaping hole through the chest where one could see the scenery behind the man through said hole or a body blown completely to bits that fell around the field as the snow itself did.

But seeing Doc Roe drop like a sack of potatoes, the medic's body hitting the frozen snow tainted ground did nothing to lessen the impact nor the sound of it, had him shaken. Little flurries puffed up at his impact, creating too mythical a scene for the gut churning horror at having the medic die before his eyes. Let alone die because of a skittish replacement's mistake.

"Doc!" He hollered, the overwhelming panic and sickening terror leaching into his tone, shoving the now stunned replacement backwards into the foxhole as the boy stammered out a continuous stream of apologies.

Malarkey sprung up out of the 'hole now yelling, "Medic! Spina! Spina!"

All the while his mental thoughts consisted of a steady stream of 'shit! shit! shit!' Intermixed with a sloppy prayer of 'please let Spina be able to do something!'. He physically felt his stomach constrict as he turned Roe over from where he collapsed on his side and saw the alarming amount of red staining the snow.

Swallowing thickly, almost afraid to look at the Doc's face, knowing it was his head that got hit from the position of the crimson covering the snow. Dragging his gaze over to the medic's face, Malarkey was glad to see that the other man's face hadn't been mutilated when the bullet hit.

His inspection didn't get past that as the voice belonging to the company's second medic abruptly exclaimed "Shit!" brought Malarkey's gaze up to Spina, seeing the startled wide eyes. Noting a second later the transformation from a panicked friend to a stoic calm wash over the medic's face.

It left the Oregonian feeling relieved Spina was, too, brilliant at his job, only second to Roe; but each of them held the trust of every man within second battalion. Thus he had no reverses over sliding to the side to allow Spina room to work, remaining close enough to help if necessary but giving Spina space.

Immediately Malarkey shifted away from Gene's side to allow Spina, who was quickly moving towards them once more, to crash to his knees beside the downed medic. Hands already flying into position at the pulse point on Doc's wrist and a hand on his chest, an unconscious need for a secondary check to ensure his first findings weren't wrong.

"Is he...?" The tiny wavering voice of the replacement called up from the depth of the foxhole behind them.

It sounded as if the kid was nearly in tears, but at the moment there was little sympathy for him as worry and fear for their trusted medic -and brother in arms- clouded any capacity for other emotions.

Though it was then that Malarkey caught sight of the extent of unrest the incident had created. Every man with a foxhole within proximity of the commotion was peering over the edges of them, occupants stared at the scene before them. Expression beyond that of stunned, not yet comprehending they could have just lost the man who was responsible for saving their hides ten times over.

It was Captain Winters, with Captain Nixon and First Sergeant Lipton hot on his heels, who broke the spell as he came trotting over to their position, his own M-1 in hand though it was long forgotten as he took in the scene for himself. Only pausing for a moment before too crouching near them.

"He's still breathing and his pulse is strong." Spina finally spoke, having taken an extra moment to relish in the feeling of a steady pulse beneath his fingers in utter relief. Feeling as if he needed to check his own pulse now, since this incident had nearly given him a heart attack, and still damn well might, at running up to find Roe deathly still with blood clinging to his all-too-pale features and staining the snow a horrid shade of carmine.

The collectively huffed sighs at hearing that news resounded loudly in the strangely silent area. A huge weight seeming to lift about the tension strung along the atmosphere.

Now Sergeant Lipton worked to get the men's focus back onto the line or onto other things, wanting to give some form of privacy to the medics, and they needed the watch to keep vigilant anyway, not distractedly gawking. Though the helmets of the replacements were slapped and harshly ordered them to 'keep an eye on the goddamn line', the veterans returned to glancing over at the scene. Concern and curiosity spurring the action.

Spina, now able to think without the underlying thoughts of 'my partner is dead. I couldn't do anything to save him. He's dead, he's dead.', quickly dug his hands into his medical bag. Pulling out a sulfa packet, tearing it open with his teeth as his hands were too stiff with cold to properly rip it open, and gingerly poured the powdery contents along the gash lining the side of Roe's left temple after turning his head gently to the opposite side.

A sharp hiss from the downed medic penetrated the air once the sulfa made contact.

"Gene? 'Gene, can you hear me?" Spina immediately questioned, leaning further over his patient to look at Roe's face, whilst his hand waved the two Captains and Malarkey away to give the wounded medic some air, "You with us, partner?"

A low groan was the only answer Spina received as Roe's expression scrunched up in pain; brow furrowing, nose wrinkling and lips pulling down in a frown, and his hand moving up to find the source of it. Though Spina beat him to it, snatching the wandering hand by the wrist.

"Leave it be, 'Gene. I gotta bandage it, okay?" Spina's spoke slowly yet not patronisingly, practice from talking with tons of stubborn troopers had perfected it, as he slowly released Roe's hand.

Making sure the the disoriented medic wouldn't reach for it again; thankfully, Roe's hand fell back down against his chest, "Good. Now can you open your eyes for me ?"

Roe had yet to and the threat of him falling back unconscious loomed heavily, than the threat of coma lay just beyond that.

It was a simple request, Roe knew that, even asked it of several soldiers when trying to keep them awake as well. Though it seemed like an impossible feat at the moment. With his head slapping his senses repeatedly with intensely pulsating pain, it'd be a relief to let himself drop off into the completely unaware blackness of unconsciousness. But a nagging voice of reason, one trained relentlessly from since he's been chosen as a medic through all the battles where his resolve had been tested in keeping the men in his care alive to the best of his ability, tried to remind him of something. Something dangerous about falling asleep right now.

"Eugene?" Spina called again, though his tone now sounded strained, stressed and Roe felt a sudden sting on the lower side of his face punctuated by another calling of his name.

A sluggish realisation that he'd been slapped was supplied a tad too slowly as the sting renewed a moment later.

"Quelle." Roe mumbled, tongue feeling weighted thus bringing out his accent with more heft and causing Spina to wonder if that was a whimsical muttering or an actual word.

Spina knew Roe slipped back and forth between English and French so fluidly that had he not know better he'd have figured Roe to be a French native. Having asked Roe about it before revealed his partner to be half - Cajun, thus Spina found out Roe grew up speaking both French and English, which accounted for his fluidity between the two. Yet that knowledge

did little to help the able bodied medic at the moment, since he didn't understand a lick of French, no matter how many times Roe tried to teach him simple words.

"He said 'what?'" Someone supplied, though Spina nor anyone within the tiny close circle around the downed medic looked up to identify who'd spoken up.

"Need you to open them eyes of yours." Tone set purposefully light and amused, Spina hoped to rouse the groggy medic and ease a bit of the thickly lingering tension settled around them.

After a moment, Roe was able to drag his eyelids up, slits revealing dark irises that stared unfocused-like up at Spina and blearily tried to identify the three other shapes lingering just outside of his swimming vision. Details were futile to depict, edges of his sight still a dull grey and the images taken in wouldn't remain stationary. The effect made him dizzy.

"No, no, 'Gene! Keep them open!"

He hadn't realised he'd even closed them, the haziness clouding his mental capacities and awareness. Opening them once more, Roe was immediately grappled by the dizziness accompanying the action and he hadn't even moved yet, but feeling the unnatural fatigue pulling at his consciousness, keeping them open now meant the difference between him falling into a deep -possibly forever- sleep and living to doctor another day.

"There ya go. Just keep 'em open for me, yeah?" Spina glanced at Malarkey, still unmoved from his kneeling position beside him, the meaning behind the look wasn't lost simply because the second medic didn't verbally voice his 'order'. It greatly enhanced its importance. Keep him talking.

"Hey, Doc." The sergeant called, waiting to gain the currently dull gaze of Roe's and hopefully his attention before he began speaking, through his mind wasn't coming up with much to converse about. Thus he spoke the first thoughts that came, whilst Spina finished sprinkling the wound with sulfa, "How you holding up? You took quite a hit, huh?"

Roe made a motion to nod, but winced at the subtle movement, head feeling like it may very well be the next thing to explode in these woods. Too caught up in the intense wave of nauseating pain and dizziness, he missed the concernedly warned, "Don't move, Doc." though moving anything at the moment was the last thing Roe wanted to consider. If he couldn't sleep then hopefully they at least would leave him still, despite the chilling wetness of melting snow underneath him was soaking through his ODs.

"Quoi- What happened?" Roe began in French before his brain supplied the information that the soldier he was answering didn't speak any French, outside of possibly a few key phrases, and he corrected himself, tone coloured with more confusion than anything else.

His memory of the time before he woke up to a disorienting painful headache and people hovering over him was nearly nonexistent, though he was sure he would have remembered if a barrage had occurred. He wouldn't forget him being called to help another, would he?

"Is anyone hurt?" Now worried, Roe shuffled to get his hands at his side, palms digging into the snow as he attempted to push himself up, but the intensity of the dizziness had him

wavering and unable to resist the hurried hands that sternly pushed him back down, one remaining on his chest to ensure he wouldn't try to sit up again.

Though the spinning effect left him more pale than usual and fighting past the sudden churning of his stomach, still he managed to hear several voices speak up at once; a mash up of "Dammit, 'Gene!", "Stay down, Doc!", "Easy, no one else is hurt.", "We're all good, Doc. It's only you who took the hit."

Groaning was all Roe could do in response, aside from give in to the firm hand keeping him pinned. The sudden vocal volume too loud for him, his headache spiking sharply, and the sudden pressure against the wound from a bandage Spina had now tied around the wound along with the tilting to better access the bandages end ties on the other side of his head, finally did in Roe tolerance. Stomach roiling, Roe swallowed thickly as his pallor turned a vague grey colour and his eye squeezed shut, brow furrowing.

Malarkey opened his mouth to try again at keeping Doc talking, especially since his eyes had slid close again. Though the steady hand he had against the medic's chest was roughly shoved away by Spina, who then quickly gripped the front of Roe's jacket and hauled him over onto his side. Not a moment too soon before the concussed medic's stomach rebelled and he began heaving onto the snow, much to the increased worry of those around. A definite concussion, bad from their perspectives.

A weakly mumbled "Sorry." came from Roe afterwards. Spina merely telling him they'd both seen worse and patting his back softly as Roe coughed several times before helping him lay back down.

Immediately, Spina asked "Did someone call a jeep? He'll need stitches." while he pulled out a lighter from his pocket, flipping the cover open and striking his thumb against the igniter twice before the spark hit creating the little flame that wavered severely in the breeze.

The sound of Captain Nixon ordering a jeep be sent to their location from Luz's communication unit in the background was a welcomed sound as Spina checked Roe's pupil reaction.

"C'mon, you know the drill, Doc. Look at the light." The secondary medic spoke mostly to keep the weaning attention of his partner on him, keeping up with the light tone for reasons of easing the tense concern that lay thicker than the fog around their camp and hoping it get a rise out of Doc's absent dry wit.

Noting the small wince Roe gave at the minimal brightness of the faltering flame and how sluggish the left side pupil was in constricting against the light, had Spina confirming the diagnosis of a concussion.

He said as much aloud, wanting to put to ease any worries over the Doc dying before their eyes. Even if Roe wasn't completely out of danger of coma or other complications later on, now they knew the steps in which to help prevent any of that.

"Jeep's enroute." Captain Nixon slid back down into a crouch next to Captain Winters, leaning in closer, his fore-shoulder brushing against Winters' as he spoke, "Should be here

real quick."

Spina just nodded and had Malarkey help him steady Roe whilst they half carried him to the jeep once it arrived. Captain Winters helping the pair lift his lean frame onto the hood mounted stretcher. Roe mumbling a quiet, "You stole my seat." when Spina explained that there wouldn't be room for him to actually sit in the jeep and not harm the condition of his head anymore. The answer of Roe's had spurred relieved chuckles of laughter from the one's assisting and a thin smile from Roe himself at his success in making them laugh, despite the worry he'd unintentionally caused.

Spina leant forward in his seat, not really sitting more of semi-crouching to keep a hand on Roe's upper arm as the jeep bounced unevenly down the dirt road headed towards the town of Bastogne. Wanting to ensure Roe remained awake as well as to keep the disoriented man grounded to something, uncertain how the effects of the concussion would further scramble the medic's state of mind. His remaining somewhat aware while at camp could change, Spina had seen a man with a concussion before go from being slightly groggy to completely unresponsive within an hour then dead in the next two.

Bleeding into the brain was what the surgeon had said, saying nothing could have been done as the brain became too bruised and compressed by the blood for it to function properly even if they got the man to a brain surgeon. The idea of that happening to 'Gene had Spina gripping the other medic's arm a bit more firmly, now needing to ground himself in knowing 'Gene wasn't like that. His pupils weren't blown nor had one been larger than the other like that man who'd died from a brain bleed.

Roe groaned lowly when the jeep hit a practically rough dip then incline within a pace of each other, thus jarring the passengers and causing Roe's head to smack the hood. Eliciting a pain that had his vision blurring more so and the dull grayness of its edges to darken to black as it crept inward, narrowing his field of sight and having his eyes roll backwards.

"Almost there, 'Gene. Stay with me. Almost there." Came Spina's voice from somewhere he couldn't see, but the worry laced tone had Roe blinking rapidly in hopes of clearing it and the fatigue pulling at him to see what had his partner on that degree of an edge.

The jeep sliding in the puddled street a multitude of feet from the entrance to the Church-turned-Aid Station. Spina jumping out of the passenger seat the moment the jeep's momentum halted, moving expertly around the hood to haul Roe off the stretcher. His attempts at being gentle about it were futile as any movement sent 'Gene's vision swimming and his surroundings were spinning. Roe's knees gave out, unable to orient himself with his concussion playing Hell with his balance.

Luckily, Spina's hold on the other medic was strong, only having to dip once to pull Roe's arm over his shoulders and tighten the grip his hand around the lean man's waist. Another medic from an entirely different company jogged over to assist him, bringing up the other side and helping to drag a half-conscious Roe into the Church.

"Eugene!" A decidedly feminine and French accented voice called out as Spina and the unknown medic dragged an unsteady Roe down the stairway into the main room of the Church.

Roe's head lulled to the side, white bandage now sporting a pale crimson stain from where the wound was bleeding through. Drying blood coated his right ear and had track marks lining down the side of his pale face, some even matting a few clumps in his dark coloured hair. It made for a worse sight than it was.

Spina glancing over to the young woman, who came directly up to them and took over in assisting him in helping move Roe towards the side of the main lobby, where they kept a majority of the supplies and the pots of boiling water to wash, and sterilise, the bandages they reused. It offered a bit of privacy and immediate access to their supplies.

"What has happened to him?" She asked, sounding more worried than a mere nurse inquiring after the extent of a patient's injuries, though Spina didn't linger on the implications too long before answering.

"Took a bullet across the side of his head." Spina explained, plainly. Not needing to soften reality, going by what he saw in the other room, the nurse was well aware of how ugly wounds could get.

And frankly, he just wanted Roe stitched up quickly so he could be that much closer to being on the mend.

The pair sat Roe down on a bench, Spina having to keep a hand on the Doc's upper arm to ensure he stayed upright enough for them to properly treat the gash. The French nurse reaching forward with deft hands to untie and peel the bandage back, revealing a lengthy laceration that sliced through the surprisingly thick, for how short it was, black hair along his temporal bone, only a centimeter or two from missing the top of his ear.

"It needs stitches." She spoke after surveying the wound for a moment, gaze acutely keen from having to visually examine many wounds of many types.

It was a gaze that held a look similar to that of the Doc's, Spina noted offhandedly when he had turned to tell her he already knew it needed stitches that's why he'd brought him here, but at seeing that particular look, it silenced any words he had.

"Renée?" Came the quietly mumbled name from Roe, his tone sounding still disoriented, yet less dull than when Spina was having him answer questions prior to the ride over.

It was a welcomed and promising change, though had Spina mentally questioning who this young woman was further.

"Oui." Renée answered in French, a shadow of a smile upturning a single corner of her lips at hearing Eugene address her, "Quelle peine avez-vous obtenu dans?"

Whilst Spina was lost in the sudden switch to French, Roe smiled faintly at whatever had been said, his gaze still distant but his repeated blinking and squinting spoke of his attempts at wanting to focus. Him adding a quiet, "Pas très sûr." after several moments of trying, settling on the bleary blue haze of Renee's headscarf as a point of reference.

"C'est bien. Il ne est pas mauvais." She replied, brushing her fingers through the hair along the uninjured side of Roe's head.

His posture relaxing in some of it's pain and stress induced rigidity, him instinctively leaning into her touch as his eyelids drooped in relief, "Rester éveillé, Eugene."

Roe compiled, his eyes still half-lidded but he wouldn't let them fall anymore. Her small smile lengthened minorly before she slowly relinquished her hand from his hair to turn towards the bench with the box holding the needle already tied to the cord-like wire thread that they substituted for actual suturing thread.

Spina tilted Roe's head over to gain a better angle for stitching the impressive cut, but the slight movement triggered another bout of world tipping dizziness. Even slamming his eyes shut had no effect in decreasing the whirling feeling, nor the return of Renée's hand to the side of his face stopped it.

"I'm sick." Roe mumbled, pulling away from the hands touching him to lean to the side, pallor paling severely to an almost grey tinge.

Dropping the suturing set off to the side and quickly moving to snatch a basin from the bench behind her, dumping the towels it held onto the benchtop, Renée held it for the ailing medic's as he heaved over it. Bringing up mere bile after the previous episode back at the camp nearly emptied his stomach of any content, still the nausea persisted along with the dizziness accompanying the pulsing pain within his head. Dry heaves replaced the retching quickly.

Renée using her other hand to pick up the bandage she's removed from the wound to take the clean side and wipe it along Roe's forehead, where blood from the cut had trickled down the side of his head to run along his forehead and intermix with the collecting sweat there. Then pressing the thick gauze to the still bleeding cut again, stemming the flow whilst Roe coughed and spit twice.

Spina held onto Roe's shoulders, supporting the other medic's weight, then, once the heaving had ceased, pulled him back slowly from the half bent over position to sit up once more so they could tend to the laceration. It having began to began a bit heavier with the straining of vomiting and removal of the pressure bandage.

"Désolé." 'Gene whispered, voice hoarse and distant, his energy already drained from the concussion but the added exertion was quickly eating away at his reserves and making the nothingness unconsciousness offered more tempting.

"Stay with us, 'Gene." Spina voice was distant, like he was hearing the other medic through a long tunnel. The last he heard was the odd echoing effect of two voices calling out, "Eugene!".

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The revving sound of a jeep approaching the outskirts of their entrenched line had several heads peeking over the lip of their foxholes. Curiosity and concern driving their motives.

News of the doc's injury having spread throughout second battalion; even Dog and Fox had heard about someone shooting one of their own medics in a fit of panic. The "panic" bit the only thing keeping everyone outside of Easy company from thinking it might have been Speirs. For Lieutenant Speirs didn't panic. Didn't stop the rumour mill from conjuring unique twists to the tale. Ones that'd no doubt would circulate around before making their way back to Easy.

It was Captain Winters who left the sanctity of his cover to meet the lone medic half way. Expression grim on his too pale face, the cold sapped the appearance of life out of all of them but it was the anxiety over seeing Private Spina return alone that'd sunk any flutterings of optimism on Roe's condition. Preparing for the worst, the Captain paused before the medic.

"How's Roe?" The question left Winter's mouth the moment they were within conversing range.

Sighing in frustration, it shouldn't have been 'Gene, Spina glanced from the ground up to his Captain, "He's alive, sir, but it's bad. Couldn't keep him conscious. Time'll tell if there's bleeding on the inside."

Winters' lips pressed into a thin line, guilt of the injustice of it eating at him despite there having been nothing he could have done to prevent it, before they parted, "And what are the chances there is?"

Spina bit his lower lips, worrying the flesh between his teeth, "It didn't look good. One pupil was larger than the other and he was pretty out of it by the time we got him to the Aid Station, but Gene's strong and we got him there quick. Honestly, sir, it could go either way."

Nodding, Winters digested the information with a heavy heart, unwilling to let hope blossom but not yet ready to give into mourning in disrespect for their medic's strength. A delicate balance. One that he'd yet to master, one he longed to but hadn't, despite time and time again faced with battle and the loss of men. He prayed Roe wouldn't be the latest casualty to wrong place, wrong time ; bad luck.

"Keep me posted of any developments." The Captain merely stated, trusting Spina's observations and the reality of it that they truly wouldn't know until it went one way or the other.

"Of course, sir."

Winters offered a small sympathetic smile with a single nod then turned to walk back to the CP, Spina spotting Captain Nixon just outside and two other figures within. Thus Spina was left to his own thoughts as he wanted, giving him time to wallow a slight before he'd be the sole medic to answer the call in the next barrage, facing the battlefield was of little problem but facing it without Doc Roe didn't seem right. If anything happened to Gene, he'd be the most senior medic on the field; out of all of second battalion. It wasn't a responsibility he wanted, not like this. Gene had been with Easy since the beginning, when the men called out for medic they wanted Doc Roe; Toccoa approved and company accepted. Not some South Philly replacement.

“Hey, hey, Spina !”

The medic in question turned to see Private Heffron waving him over, though no smile nor warmth was held within his gestures. With his brow furrowed and his frown creasing his features, the other south Philly boy oozed disquiet. Spins paused, then turned to back trace his steps towards Heffron’s foxhole. Crouching along the edge of it once he reached it to hear what the other had to say.

“Hey, I heard what happened to Gene.” Heffron’s greeting fell flat as the rest of his sentence was spoken, his concern outweighing pleasantries at the moment, “He okay?”

“He took quite a hit, Babe.” Spina started off, not wanting to give false hope yet knowing it truly could go either way for Roe given his condition, “If he wakes up in the next twenty - four hours then yeah I’d say his chances are good, but until then we don’t know.”

“Jesus Christ.” Heffron huffed, glancing towards the bottom of his foxhole, gaze clouded at the gravity of Easy’s primary medic’s injuries.

“Hey, scoot over.” Spina chimed in after several moments of silence, forcefully making Heffron move to make room for his form to slide into the foxhole next to him. “Only fair you share your foxhole for awhile.”

Heffron allowed a smile to curve his lips upwards at hearing that. Glad to have the company as his foxhole had felt overly large and empty since Julian’s death. Thus he didn’t mind squishing up against the wall of his foxhole to make room for the medic, easing back once Spina found a comfortable spot to sit shoulder to shoulder with Easy’s lone medic.

Thought drifting back along that line of thinking, drawing up memories from before the war, back home, had Heffron speaking up again after several minutes of quiet , “Hey, Ralph?”

“Yeah?” Spina angled his head to face Heffron, sniffing lightly against his runny nose from the ever present chill that clung to the air and everything it touched.

Heffron paused a moment, uncertain exactly how to express his next question, “When Gene wakes up, will he still be Gene?”

Spins threw the other trooper a curious look, “Whatcha mean?”

“Well, when a neighbor friend of mine back in Philly took a baseball to the side of the head, was out for three days.” Heffron explained, giving context to his query, “When he did wake up, he wasn’t him. Wasn’t the same. Y’know, in the head, was different.”

Spina licked at his chapped lips, understanding now what Heffron’s meaning was and trying to think of a good way to explain it without dashing or elating hope, “The brain’s a tricky organ, Babe, and I’m no doctor. I’ve seen heads take a lot of damage and be fine, same with the opposite. But I know Gene, and he’s a tough s.o.b for all his soft talk and polite manners.”

Heffron chuckled, having both seen and heard stories of Easy’s quiet medic take on negligent superiors without fear, “Yeah, that’s true.”

“You bet it is. You remember in Holland when Doc sliced his leg and kept going.” Spina reminded, shaking his head lightly at the memory.

“Yeah, you're right.” Heffron outright grinned, “Doc doesn't give up on any of us, so why give up on him, right?”

“Exactly.” Spina nodded, feeling his own sense of hope rising, despite his previous intentions.

“Thanks, Spina.” Heffron settled deeper into his coat in a futile attempt to ward off the ever encroaching cold, more so content now with Spina’s pep talk.

The medic merely nodded, lips pressed thin as he turned to watch the line right along with Heffron. Uncertain if his words would be of more harm than good if Roe didn't recover fully, or at all.

No less than five minutes later the at ease silence that spread between the pair was broken. First Sergeant Carwood Lipton trotting up to the foxhole’s edge, crouching with a sincere yet apologetic smile. Meaning the news or orders he would have to give would be less than pleasant, better than his flat smile or pursed one, but still had Heffron and Spina bracing for bad.

“Hey, boys.” Lipton greeted, nodding to each of them but his gaze staying on the medic, “Spina, the replacement, John Ducaine, that caused the ruckus this morning isn't doing so hot. Mind checking on him?”

“That's what I'm here for.” Spina answered, trying seem unaffected by all that occurred and that he was ironically alone in a Company of men, a single medic with none to relate with Roe at the aid station.

“Yeah boy.” Lipton smirked, but offered a hand up to the medic, keeping low but still able to help pull the shorter man up and onto his feet.

“Thanks. Now show me to the kid?” Spina adjusted his medical bag along his shoulder as he followed Lipton back several foxhole, away from the forward line.

“Captain Winters said that Ducaine could come be a runner for him, get him off the line for a bit.” Lipton relaid as they walked, keeping his voice low but audible to the medic that followed closely, “I tried to offer it but I think he needs to hear from you on how Roe is and then ask him again.”

“All right. I'll see what I can do.” Unable to promise that he could fix the kid as mental issues were always touchy at any given time, but he'd definitely try his best to help.

Lipton patted Spina’s shoulder, “That's all I ask.”

Given the situation combined with the frigid elements , everyone's try at their best was all anyone could ask.

...

Few hours after Spina returned to his own foxhole, his pensive thoughts were interrupted by the soft crunch of footfalls on the fallen snow next to his foxhole. Glancing up he realised it was Skip Muck crouching beside the outer edge of his foxhole.

"Hey." Muck called in a soft greeting, much more subdued than his usual boisterous nature.

Spina straightened a slight, turning more so to face the other as he was addressed, "Hey, what can I do for you?"

"Doc's religious right? Heard him saying prayers before." Muck twirled his rosary between his fingers before continuing, "Think you could give his to him? Even if he's not awake, just put it in his pocket or something?"

Spina blinked, before reaching out for the proffered item. Nimble fingers clasping the treasured rosary, he'd seen Muck clutch it quite often when stressed or in thought.

"Yeah, he is." Spina answered, still a bit stunned at the generous offer, "I'll be sure to lend it to him."

"Lend?" Muck asked, thinking he'd be parting with it for good as he was gifting it to their missing medic.

"Well, c'mon, it's not like he'd leave me alone to look after you all." Spina pitched his voice a slight louder at noting a few peering eyes about, unintentionally eavesdropping, "That's just cruel!"

This pulled a laugh from Muck, uplighting a bit of the doubt that'd settle a slight too heavily given the atmosphere today.

"Nice to know you think so highly of us." Came a call that belonged to one George Luz, who's foxhole was situated closest to the pair.

"Ah, he's just being polite in saying us because he didn't want to call you out, Luz." Muck shot back, a grin pulling up the corners of his lips.

This brought snickers up from several listening men within their foxholes, succeeding in what the medic and two sergeants had been shooting for, so to speak. A bit of lifting of morale.

"Now I'm hurt. This true, Spina?" Luz asked, mock hurt colouring his tone as he sent a pout their way.

"Naw, of course not, Luz." Spina hollered back, tone a slight too innocent sounding to be truthful, if anything it would be indulgent at best.

"Ah yeah, I feel real special now, don't I? Real loved." Luz deadpanned, flicking his spent cigarette out of his foxhole in the direction of Muck and Spina.

"We still love ya, George!" Came tandem voices farther along the line, it sounding a lot like Malarkey and Hoobler.

“Thank you! See, someone appreciates me.” Luz called back before addressing the other two again, whilst a choir of chuckles rose and fell around them.

Yet the good humoured peace was short lived when the high pitched whistle of HE mortar rounds split the air and the resounding warning of incoming soon followed by earth quaking impacts of the sounds striking home. Everyone diving back into their foxholes, Spina reaching up to snatch Muck just as the other went to dive into the medic’s foxhole. Each ending up in a tangle of one another, fighting a moment to deprecate themselves.

"MEDIC!"

The cry went up almost instantly after the first few shells impacted the ground, sending up dirt and burning pieces of pin sized metal that showered around the landscape to blacken the snow and crater the earth. Nearly as instantly as the call went out, Spina was out of the foxhole and racing towards the cry's direction before Muck had a chance to say anything about it. Crouching low, mindful of the still falling mortar rounds, the medic sprinted towards a downed tree for cover before springing up to duck up against a still upright one and so on as he made his way towards the wounded man.

"MEDIC!"

Flopping himself to flat the ground, belly first with his hands clasping tightly to his helmet, out of battle born instinct when a shell exploded a mere twenty-five feet from his position, Spina prayed every syrette remained intact. Their glass encased needles broken easily in this kind of chill and once that was cracked there useless unless injected right away. Again the call for medic went up and so did Spina, clambering to his feet with practiced ease and setting out at a run once more.

"I got ya!" The medic's voice was more reassuring than any words Alley had ever heard, especially as the man snatched at his belt and pulled him towards a foxhole whilst the barrage continued. Having been caught just outside his 'hole when shrapnel was blown into his leg. Now he could safely thank the Lord his leg was still in one piece and didn't look to have anything wrong but a chunk of metal sticking out from it.

Though since hindsight is always 20/20, perhaps he should have waited a bit longer before offering his thanks in silent prayer.

Alarmingly close whistling sound of an approaching round had Spina bodily throwing himself over Alley as the round came crashing down and exploding ten feet from the pair of them. Though Alley was near dizzy now from blood loss and the second skull rattling explosion, he felt Easy's lone medic raise up and begin pulling him again until they reached the relative safety of the foxhole.

Immediately, Spina felt at Alley’s leg; tearing at the tattered fabric of his ODs to expose the wound. Scissors, after finally being extracted from his medical bag, being utilised to cut away the rest of the pant leg and reveal a long slice of shrapnel embedded in the Sergeant's lower leg. Thin, sluggish rivulets of blood seeped from the edges where skin met metal.

Paying little heed to the continuing barrage going on around them, Spina remained focused on the task at hand; removing the shrapnel from Alley's leg. Sliding his hands into his medical bag that lay slung at his side, the medic pulled out his scissors and a bandage, having it at the ready to contain the bleeding once he extracted the splinter of foreign material. Ducking instinctively against another close proximity impact and shower of a tree burst, bending forward over the sergeant's leg to protect his work area. Then setting to work at cutting away the rest of the red sodden pant leg, gaining access to the wound site.

"Looks like a clean hit, you're going to be fine." Spina spoke up, needing to reassure the fidgeting trooper, knowing any wound frightened every man no matter the rank, and saying it wasn't as bad as it looked eased any panic.

Snatching a morphine syrette from his bag, Spina pulled the glass casing off to shove the wire downwards to expose the needle and stick it into the meat of Alley's opposite leg. Squeezing the casing to release the pain medication, feeling the Sergeant relax under the effects (or more so the knowledge the pain would soon be dulled) before setting back to grip the shard and pull it from the flesh. A slight sucking sound accompanied the motion, blood leaking from the wound at a slow pace; merely beading up between the severed flesh and muscles. Meaning no major blood vessels had been hit.

"No arteries were hit, buddy. Looking better every second." Spina continued to speak, keeping up a lighter tone as he pressed a bandage to the bleeding wound and tied it tight.

"MEDIC!"

Another call for aid shot through the air, causing Spina's head to snap up towards the direction of the call. Knowing Roe wasn't here to assist in multiple casualties that cropped up during extensive enemy fire. Thus twisting around towards Moe's foxhole, Spina yelled out against the backdrop noise of a continued bombardment.

"Moore! Need you to keep an eye on Alley!" Spina turned to pin the empty syrette to Alley's jacket sleeve, hauling himself out of the foxhole over to Moore's, "Got it?"

"Yep!" Moore hollered back, still keeping low but having an eye on Alley's foxhole to ensure the drugged sergeant stayed put, "I'll bring him back once this ends!"

"Thanks!" Spina called back, already turning to sprint towards a repeated shout for him.

Another ear splitting explosion and a spray of blown dirt following his run through the wood. The ever present cold fog swallowing his form whilst another shout for him sprang into the air.

...

"How is he?" Spina asked, stepping towards the nurse who sat beside Roe's cot, wiping down his face with a clean cloth.

A bowl of red tinged water lay on the ground with a rust tinted white rag in it, and a spotless bandage lay wrapped around Roe's head. She must have changed his bandages and was now

ensuring he was comfortable. Unless infection set in while Spina was away.

“He sleeps still, but no fits and no infection has come.” Renee answered, her ever present accent doing nothing to dispel the tender affection colouring her words.

Relief washed over Spina, some of his anxiety leaving him (but none of his worry) at the news. Counting the small blessings is sometimes all you can do.

“I’ll take whatever good news I can.” Spina huffed, humourless smile pulling at the corners of his mouth, glancing from the Belgian nurse to his inert partner on a cot.

“He is strong. This will not break him.” The nurse encouraged, turning away only when she heard her name being called, glancing at Spina one last time, she spoke softly, “Sit with him one moment? Maybe he can hear you, maybe not, but try?”

Spina watched her go, standing a moment to process her parting words. Never having given much thought to if unconscious patients could derive comfort from another’s spoken words or presence, it wasn’t exactly something gone over in boot camp nor had Spina’s idle thoughts of late drift towards anything other than needed supplies. Perhaps, an occasional thought to home when his own morale took hit after hit the last few days. But it seemed worth a shot if it’d help Roe any, even a possibility of it made it worthy of trying.

Wasn’t as if anyone would think him odd doing so. Every wound man situated in the church turned Aid Station was looking for some form of comfort, of pain relief; of both the physical and mental anguish. Thus Spina held no reservations as he knelt beside the cot Roe laid, hand on his arm to signify he was actually here.

“Hey, buddy. Not sure you can hear me, but wantcha to know Easy’s doing fine. I’m keeping an eye on them.” Spina cleared his throat, it feeling oddly tight, forcing a half smile to curve his lips, “But that’s no excuse to just lay around, sleeping. We, me included, want ya to come back to us. Babe’s worried. Hell, I think even Cobb asked after how you were. Can ya believe that?”

Roe remained unresponsive, face still passive in sleep and frame still.

Spina sighed, rubbing his other hand down his face, it dropping before he remembered something, “Oh! I almost forgot, but don’t tell Skip.”

Reaching into his chest pocket, Spina pulled out the carved rosary of Muck’s to gently intertwine it with Roe’s fingers, the rosary cross coming to rest between gingerly between his thumb and forefinger. The South Philly medic ensuring it was secure yet not tight nor would it be hindered by any movement show the other aid men have to move Roe while Spina was with the company.

“There.” He proclaimed after he was finished, looking to Roe’s sleeping features with a broad grin of his own, it tempered but not diminished at that, “Skip sent it. Cause, y’know, you’re always praying and he thought it’d help. I promised him it was on loan though, so get better and bring it back to him.”

Spina ended with a bright smile that slowly lost its light at realising Roe wouldn't wake up to his rambling or the sincere gift. No groggy awakening for Spina to quip at as he'd fight to keep Roe on the cot until he was cleared, promising to update the medic as the nurse looked him over and would declare him fit. But it seemed that would remain a distant hope since Roe remained unconscious, pale and placid.

Leaning forward to rest his forehead against Roe's shoulder, almost an instinctive action when needing strength; to lean against one of your brothers. And Spina wasn't sure which of them was trying to encourage the other now, he'd came to talk Roe back towards consciousness but yet drawing comfort from the simple gesture. If he closed his eyes, he could almost imagine they were in a foxhole, huddle together for warmth while Doc slept and Spina kept watch.

Strangled cries of a man struggling through the pains of his wound interrupted the private moment, shattering Spina's moment of fallacy. Reality seeping in once more, reminding him of his friend's condition and the weight that now lay on his shoulders. And solely his.

Sitting with Roe a few moments more, silently reciting a prayer he'd heard his father say while at his uncle's bedside while his uncle fought through illness. It'd intrigued him at the time and thus when he asked about it, his father had taken him to his study to explain the different prayers that could be said. Many for many different reasons. His father further told him that prayers for others mattered most, and he'd been reciting a prayer met to ask God's assistance in healing a loved one or friend.

Even though God didn't seem to present out here; in the field, on the battlefield or in here; with the wounded and sick. Spina still believed, there was a reason for everything that happened, and while Roe would make an excellent angel, he was still needed here. He was sure of it, for Roe patched so many up and defied the enemy's' attempts to knock him flat, and still kept going. This wouldn't break him. Couldn't break him. He still had work to do here on Earth.

Sniffing harshly, Spina stood quickly, to pat Roe's shoulder as he hoarsely spoke, "I better get back to Easy. Who knows what sorta hell they got into while I was dropping off Alley. Who's going to be okay by the way. Rest up. You'll need it once your back."

Nodding to the kind nurse, signalling that he was leaving, and offering a parting smile of understanding, Spina trotted up the stone steps towards the exit. Shoving his hands into his pockets to ward off the chill as long as possible, hoping to hitch a ride back to the line from one of the MPs moving about outside. It'd be faster than walking.

Though he remained oddly numb to either option. He didn't care. So long as he got back with the men. He'd find one way or another to get back there. No matter how crazy it sounded. He would wade through the tide of death alone. To carry the responsibility of keeping each man alive and healthy as he could, willing to take the weight in full until his partner returned.

And forever more, if his partner didn't.

TBC

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Next chapter's storyline will proceed directly after this one. I would have continued it here , but it was beginning to get too long word count wise , also then the 'emotion' would have changed & thus messed with the entire set up of the series , but the next part is $\frac{3}{4}$ completed so you won't have to wait very long for it.

Any breaks in this story , where there is ... will be filled in during part two of this.

Thank you for reading. As always reviews / comments are always welcome as I'd love to know what you think.

Also aside from the second part to this & the second part to *Requiem of Nightmares (Apprehension)* this will most likely be one of the last chapters set in the episode Bastogne , the other chapters I have planned are written in other episodes.

***Note :** Ducaine was a name I made up for the replacement, no member of easy company ever held that name. I didn't want to place such an action on anyone, even an actual replacement thus I made up one to do so.

Translations:

Oui - yes

Quelle peine avez-vous obtenu dans? - What trouble have you gotten into ?

Pas très sûr. - Not very sure.

C'est bien. Il n'est pas mauvais. - That's good. It's not bad.

Rester éveillé - Stay awake

Désolé - Sorry

A Return (Relief)

Chapter Summary

It's always a morose time when a comrade is wounded & their return is in question, especially with the ones so well liked, but it's always a grand relief when the odds are beat & to the ranks they do return to fight alongside their brothers once again. Or in this case, swoop in to secure a bandage in place with softly assured words & swift application of morphine.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: ¡Spoilers! Blood, Gore, Language, Violence, Dark Themes, War Action, Descriptions of Wounds/Illness, etc

Spoilers: Bastogne (s01e06) , set two days post - Requiem of An Incident (Disquiet)

Timeline: Bastogne

Pairings: Gen. None.

A/N: I don't have much of an author's note, except to apologise that this took a bit longer to post than I had originally thought it would as after completing it , I realised I had left out a massive bit that needed to be resolved from the first chapter. So I had to find a way to slip it into all that I had already written since it wouldn't be complete without it.

Disclaimer: I do not own any rights to Band of Brothers or the book it's based on. Nor do I wish to mock / slander / jest with or disgrace their names & that part of history. Take none of what happens within as fact, unless stated otherwise in endnotes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Under certain circumstances, profanity provides a relief denied even to prayer.” –

Mark Twain

Unfamiliar noises filtered through the grogginess of sleep, ones not associated with the chatting of soldiers or conversing of officers nor that of the woods 2nd battalion had been camped in for the last few weeks. Curious, Roe attempted to open his eyes to look around and hopefully place where he was. He was prone to forgetting just as any man was, but complete blank spaces of memory as to if they moved out was worrying to him.

A wave of dizziness kept his movements restricted, barely able to move his head to look about the room. Seeing the hazy field of a ceiling above and fuzzy outlines of people,

furniture and other items slowly coming into focus, Roe realised he was at the aid station. The headache he was currently sporting gave him a clue as to why, but he held no memory of anything that could have landed him here as a patient.

Though, as startling as waking up here without immediate recall of why or how, the medic was thankful to hear a familiar voice suddenly gasp out in express relief, "Jesus fucking Christ, Thank God."

Squinting against the light filtering in through the windows, the brightness stinging the back of his eyes and throbbing at his temples, Roe focused on the welcome sight of Ralph Spina. Noting despite his discomfort and the relieved smile on his partner's face that Spina appeared haggard with dark circles under a set of troubled eyes that were further outlined by the pale nature of his face.

His clothes carrying discoloured patches of mottled maroon on his olive green O.Ds, Roe's mind supplying that dried blood was responsible for the miscolour. Those stains hadn't been as present on the other medic's uniform when he'd last seen him.

Those observations spurred Roe's next words, spoken with a concern they shared for another as medics, "You alright?"

Spina stared at him, an odd look in his eyes before shaking his head incredulously and clearing his throat to explain, "You've been out for two days, Doc. A bullet to the side of your head coupled with exhaustion put you out like no tomorrow."

The admission left Roe stunned, reeling at the notion of him being off the line for two days, even a few hours was bad enough, "What? Two days?... Damn."

Hearing that response pulled a laugh from Spina, though it was devoid of any real humour, "I'd say, Doc. You had everyone worried."

Wanting Roe to realise all he put them through with not waking up within an hour or the day, just continuing to be unresponsive to any attempts to wake him. It had scarred Spina more than he let show when he returned to camp after doing all that he could for Roe that night. Fearing for his friend's life, whether he'd be the same after he woke back up or if he ever would, and afraid for 2nd battalion as a whole with so few medics to begin with.

"Was anyone hurt while I was out?" Roe asked, genuine worry over the men back on the line punched his brow and he would have made to sit up had a stab of dizziness not chosen that moment to strike, but by the time it passed Spina was already into his rendition of events.

"The kid who shot you is actin' as a runner for Captain Winters, he's pretty sorry about what he did."

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Parting ways from the First Sergeant, Spina made his way towards the farther back positioned foxholes. Back where he knew Ducaine was now situated with Benton. Footfalls crunching the snow under his boots, his crouched position not lessening the sound any since

the snow had frozen without any new snowfall to cover it again. Though by tonight the medic was certain that wouldn't be the case. Another snowstorm never seemed far away here.

Dropping low to kneel just along the edge of Benton's foxhole, it being far too small for him to slip beside the two that sat within. Giving a small nod to the Corporal, Spina focused his attention on the replacement private. The kid sat huddled underneath an army issued blanket, although it appeared to be doing little good with the tremors racking the private's frame being visible to the naked eye despite it. Gaze staring ahead just over the lip of the foxhole, but it didn't seem as if the kid was seeing much.

"Hey, Ducaine." Spina called, tone aimed light, near conversational - like to ensure the replacement knew Spina held nothing against the kid nor was he patronising him either.

Suddenly seeming to come alive, Ducaine's head shot up to sharply look at Spina, "Doc Roe, is he—? He's okay, right?"

Hearing the unabashed hope in the younger trooper's tone had Spina rolling his bottom lip between his teeth. Conflicted about telling Ducaine a partial truth to the whole of it. While Roe's chances were good, head wounds were tricky given the best of circumstances. And considering they were without any surgeons nor proper aid station with supplies, Spina worried for Roe. Hell, at this rate, it was worrisome for everyone out here, but he doubted that degree of honesty would garner any points towards moral.

"He's alive and at the aid station where he needs to be." Spina answered, figuring a version of the response he gave the Captain would have to do, "Only time can tell with head wounds, but Gene's a tough s.o.b as anyone will tell you."

"Yeah, couldn't put that better myself!" Benton added, glancing from the medic to the replacement.

Although the kid had paled a shade lighter at hearing Spina's words. Swallowing thickly at the thought of having killed, or worse yet, harmed the doc's mind in any degree, the young trooper began trembling all over again. Mind awash with guilt over doing that to another man, on their side and their medic for christ's sake.

"Hey, hey, it was an accident, kid." Benton threw an arm over Ducaine's shoulders, speaking reassuringly with only a creeping edge of desperatity to his tone.

Too many replacements, fucking kids really, were being taken out by kaut fire or by the whole weight of this situation. Constant vigilance, facing enemy artillery with uneasy break in between, plus the cold and little hot food, wore away at everyone. To add losing buddies, or this instant of guilt in being the cause of anyone's harm within their company had to be all the more weight. Or so Benton figured.

"Doc Spina was there quick enough. And Doc's at the aid station now being looked after. Best to be optimistic, Sam."

Spina nodded in agreement with Benton's words, "He's right. Gene's where he needs to be and I have a request from Captain Winters for you to be a runner for him at headquarters for

a while.”

Ducaine attempted a shake of his head, he didn't want to come off the line, he'd already caused enough trouble for everyone. In his mind.

Opening his mouth to protest, but Benton spoke up before Ducaine could voice a word against it, “Smith once skewered Talbert with a bayonet because he thought he was a Kaut.”

This drew Ducaine's attention, and Benton continued to explain, especially at seeing Spina's intrigued expression, “Tab found a Kaut pancho and was wearing it when he went to check the line, then he went to wake Smith. Still wearing that pancho and Smith thought a Kaut was sneaking up on him, and stabbed him. Happened back when we took Carentan.”

“See. Accidents happen.” Spina reiterated softly, then standing he motioned for the kid to stand and follow him, “Now c'mon we shouldn't keep Captain Winters waiting.”

Ducaine nodded, looking a slight numb but less on the verge of panicking, and stood to pull himself up out of the foxhole. Spina offering a hand for him to grasp, to which he accepted a bit absently. Still pale but standing steady, Ducaine didn't flinch when Spina gingerly slapped him on the back as they walked. Knowing the gesture was supposed to be bostling and friendly.

“C'mon, let's get you to Lipton. And he'll take you to the CP.” Spina explained, turning away from the kid to call into the thin fog where he knew the First Sergeant would be waiting, “Sergeant Lipton.”

Carwood Lipton was quick to appear, walking up towards them with a patient smile that he always had for the men, “Doc Spina. Ducaine, you ready to try your hand at being a runner?”

Spoken as if this assignment was an undertaking, one that was of equal importance to this war as any of the men still situated within their foxholes. Lipton always has a way about never belittling nor shaming a man when he wasn't at his best. All the First Sergeant's strength of person and position of rank, never once was it abused. It reminded Spina of Captain Winters in that respect. A good man.

...

Breaking off from his retelling, Spina lunged forward to place a hand on Roe's chest. Attempting to keep the other medic from rising from the cot, but it seemed Roe was insistent to sit up.

Spina reaches around to help Roe do so, placing an arm around his back and keeping it there when the stubborn medic swayed. The sudden change in elevation eliciting another dizzy spell and lightheadedness at the fluctuation in blood pressure sitting up had caused. Roe's eyes had slammed closed, his features compressed in a grimace.

“Breathe through it.” Spina encouraged, “You know the drill. I won't let go until you're ready.”

After a handful of moments, Roe was able to open his eyes and give a ginger nod that he was okay on his own now. Spina waited a moment more, eyeing his partner's all too pale face and the tension at his eyes that spelled a hell of a headache, before gauging that Roe was indeed steady enough for him to move away.

"Hang on a second." Spina stepped over to a crate of supplies to pull out a glass bottle of aspirin, twisting off the cap and shaking out two of the little white pills, he moved back over to Roe's cot.

"Here." Spina held out his hand to pass over the pain relief, removing his canteen and taking its cap off to pass that over next.

Roe reached out to take the proffered items but stopped short when he felt something on his hand. Glancing down at the appendage, he noticed that a rosary dangled from being intricately woven around his fingers. He blinked in shock at seeing it, he didn't have one of his own but this one seemed vaguely familiar.

"Oh, that's Skip's." Spina explained at seeing the confusion come over Roe's face, "He lent it to you. He thought it'd help."

"Ah." A delicate upturn came to Roe's lips at realising why the cross was there.

Gently removed it from his hand and placed it in his pocket, where it'd be protected and kept safe. Setting a mental reminder to give it back to Muck once he returned to the line and thank him for lending it to him. The gesture a kind one that Roe appreciated far more than he could express.

"Here." Spina reminded, giving his hand a little shake for empathises, Roe of the pills he'd been about to take.

"Thank you." Roe accepted each easily then, popping the pills in then swallowing them down with a drink of water that had him groaning anew at the iodine taste of it.

"Figured you'd have one hell of a headache, no matter how many days it took you to wake up." Spina took the canteen back, sliding into its cover before retrieving his lighter, "Mind if I check?"

Roe glanced from Spina to the lighter then back again, nodding faintly, "Yeah, okay. If you tell me all that's happened since I've been 'ere."

"You got it." Spina agreed, striking the lighter until a flame came up, "Already told you about the kid. But during a shelling, Alley took some shrapnel to the leg. He's fine. Then Wiseman took some to his arm. Set them both here for stitches, but they were back this morning fine an' dandy."

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"Fuck! How bad is it?" Wiseman grounded out as Spina slid into the sparse free space within the foxhole.

Hoobler, who held a hand onto the other's uninjured shoulder to keep him off his back, shifted some to give the medic more room to work. His gaze flicking from his wounded foxhole partner to the line and back again, wondering if the kauts were going to try an advance, thus his other hand kept a tight grip on his rifle.

A moment to examine the wound through the thick clothing, visually then with some required prodding that elicited another several epithets from the wounded private, before Spina could confidently say, "It's not bad at all. I'm going to pull it and then bandage it. Get you some stitches at an aid station and you'll be fine."

"Shit." Wiseman muttered, relief coating the epithet thickly.

"Hold still." Spina instructed, bracing a hand on Wiseman's shoulder above the wound while he pinched the sharpnel between his fingers and gave a swift pull.

Blood welled up, but it was slow and Spina had a bandage pressed to it a moment later. Wiseman's groans against the sting radiating from his wound went ignored, until Spina was done securing the bandage around his patient's arm and helped sit him back up. Only then did his hands grabbed for a morphine syrette, preparing to inject it into Wiseman's shoulder, opposite of the wounded on.

"No. I'm good, I'm good." Wiseman waved off the syrette, "It just stings like a bitch."

"Think that's sting like a bee, Don." Hoobler shout back, grinning at his own joke.

Wiseman huffed on a laugh, "Jeez, Hoob."

Hoobler merely laughed aloud at that, glancing back to flash a large smile over his shoulder.

"All right, c'mon you jokers." Spina hadn't to break up the fun, but Wiseman and Alley needed an aid station, "You and Alley have an appointment at the aid station."

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"Whoa, hey! If you push yourself too far too soon and you'll end up right back on that cot." Spina stressed in exasperation, unable to stop Roe from swinging his legs over the edge of the small cot, "You know that."

"m fine." Roe insisted, glaring back up at the other medic, "Headache is all I've got. Others could use this bed."

Spina laid a supporting hand on his shoulder since he knew he couldn't push the stubborn man back down, going by the look Roe was sending his way, it wasn't a wise idea to even try to dissuade him further.

Instead he said the one thing he knew would stop him in his tracks, "Your girl will want to check that head of yours before you leave. She worried over you just the same."

Roe paused, about to correct the his partner about her not being "his girl", when a delighted and relieved voice called out, "Eugene!"

Renée then appeared from around the corner, hurrying over to the side of his cot, "Comment allez-vous?"

Spina stepped back to let her examine him herself, her deft fingers removing the bandage gingerly. Then she checked the integrity of the stitches, while ensuring there wasn't any sign of infection. Renée found none but when she prodded the area lightly, fingers cool against his skin and forever gentle. Roe still flinched at the slightest touch.

"Encore tendres, mais guère de vertiges." Roe replied, noticing his words to be true even if the light stung his eyes and sounds seemed a bit too loud for the still present pounding in his head.

"Vous êtes chanceux." Was her response as she renewed the dressing, her touch gentle but steady.

He replied with a quiet, "I know"

Seeming satisfied then, she answered Roe unvoiced question that'd been brimming on his features during the entire examination, "You are all right enough to return."

Standing up, slowly so as not to upset any lingering dizziness, Roe smiled lightly in thanks towards the nurse, she returned the gesture kindly.

"Merci." He thanked her whilst Spina, standing off in the background, rose his eyebrows twice in quick session when he caught Roe's gaze.

Roe sent a stern glower towards his partner, who merely smirked, when Renée turned to grab his helmet and pass it back to him. Accepting it with an kind expression, he slipped on with only the barest of winces when it brushed against the bruised side of his head. The bandage that still covered it easing the discomfort fractionally. He'd have to be careful not to hit, or have his head hit, anytime soon again.

"I would say my pleasure, but I do not wish to see you back here for nothing more than to have your stitches removed." Renée stepped aside, away from the bed, glancing from Roe to Spina, "Good luck, both of you."

The pair nodded in thanks, Spina coming up to Roe side as they made to walk out of the church. The latter ignoring the side eyed glances sent his way by the former.

"Eugene." Renée called to Roe as he settled in the passenger side seat of the jeep that'd take him and Spina back to the line, his head darting up just as a chocolate bar landed in his lap, she waved, "Pour vous!"

Then she disappeared beyond the Church's archway. Just like the first day they'd met. Leaving Roe with a reminiscent uplift to the corner of his lips.

"So that's where you keep getting all those." Spina commented, pointedly, staring at the back of Eugene's head intently, tone suggestive.

"I've got no idea what yer talkin' 'bout." Roe responded, squinting off to the scenery passing along the side of the jeep.

Roe deliberately not looking back at Spina, who scoffed and mumbled "Like Hell."

That brought a thin smile from Roe, the glare that followed it dampened by the curve to his lips. It only causing Spina to laugh outright. All in good humour were the jokes and jests, if they didn't have the little things to tease or laugh about then this hellhole would be far more devastating than it already was.

If only they could bask in that for awhile longer, but war held little sympathy for anyone; soldier and civilian alike. They had their jobs to do and necessity had Roe turning to look at Spina once again. Features severe.

"Tell me the rest of what happened while I was out?" Roe asked, "So I know what to expect when we get back."

Spina cleared his throat to answer, knowing his partner would find out later anyway as Roe remained the most senior medic to 2nd battalion, "Shell blast hit Hayes. Soaked through his bandages no matter how much pressure we put on it."

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"How bad?" Spina questioned once he dropped to his knees along the ground near Holton and Hayes' foxhole, leaning in close to examine Hayes.

"Took a hit from shell fragments." Holton, who sat near Hayes' head, pointed out the darkening carmine patches along the other private's left side.

Nodding in acknowledgement, expression set in a calm determination, the medic set to work. Pulling at the wounded man's pants leg to tear them open, gaining access to the afflicted area. Visually taking in the injury, as his hands moved to snatch a sulfa packet from his bag. Tearing it open with his teeth he evenly sprinkled it along his leg, slapping a clean bandage on next and swiftly tying it securely.

Retrieving another sulfa packet and pressure bandage, Spina quickly made work of tying it to the majority of the wound on his side, before snatching a syrette from his bag to stick the trooper with.

"Here. Pin that to his jacket." Spina passed up the empty syrette to Sergeant Martin, who had came over to help.

"We got a jeep coming." Martin told the medic whilst he quickly obeyed Spina's orders, "Got Luz to radio in before I came over."

"Thanks." Spina acknowledged with a nod.

"He's gonna be okay, right?" Holton's question was directed at Spina, fearful eyes imploring Spina to say yes.

"He's going to be fine. He'll need some stitches and to get to the aid station. Though it depends on the amount of damage to the muscle on his leg if he'll come back or not." Spina answered, but his attention was on the bandages along Hayes' side, noting the snow beneath the private was still growing red despite the bandage being tight.

Frowning, Spina leaned over to pull up the downed man's eyelids then press a hand to his forehead as the other clasped his wrist to feel for the pulse there.

"Help me turn him! He's bleeding somewhere else!" Spina's actions were ahead of his words as he was already pulling at the trooper's belt to see his back, and with the help of the others revealed another gunshot wound to his lower back. "All the way, I need him on his stomach."

The movements were quick and efficient, though not a sound came from the wounded man. Even with the morphine, hastily being maneuvered onto his back should have at least brought a moan or movement indicating of pain. That wasn't a good sign.

"Oh God." Breathed Holton at seeing the extent of wound, swallowing thickly at the sight of it.

Spina's hands shoved the regulation jacket and undershirt aside to better access the shrapnel wound. The fragment had punctured through the lower back near where the kidneys were, and was steadily bleeding, even with gravity now against it; something major had been hit or the artery severed.

Coming to that conclusion didn't stop the medic from pulling an abdominal bandage from his bag and pressing it against the trooper's back. The body beneath him didn't react either to this, causing a stab of fear to slice through Spina's core. Quiet patients were always a concern. He'd rather them screaming their lungs dry or cursing him out than quiet and listless.

...

His voice having gained vehemence throughout his retelling had dropped off suddenly, leaving Spina a slight breathless and grief stricken, "Shit. I'm sorry, 'Gene."

"Hey, hey Ralph." Roe had turned in his seat the best he could to face Spina, his expression hauntingly understanding, "I get it, it's hell losing 'em. But you did all you could. Tha's all any of us can do out 'ere."

"Yeah, but maybe if you'd be—" Spina began, interrupted swiftly by Roe.

"Nuh-uh. You's just a good medic, betta than most." Roe redirected, "They know that an' trust you. All you did for 'em while I was at the aid station. They saw that an' all the times before."

Spina considered Roe's words, thinking back to the few days he spent as Easy Company's sole medic. Helping Ducaine see it was just an accident, giving reports to Winters and the rest of the men about Roe's health, patching up Alley and Wiseman, and keeping a steady check up on the men's overall health. Going beyond his duties as a medic ranked at Private. It was a

responsibility he hadn't had to yet face alone, nor really considered as Roe had always been there, but he did it.

But he had hated being without Roe. Someone to just shoot the shit or sit in comfortable silent with after the wounded to taken care of. Having someone who knew the specific struggle all medics faced day in and day out helped. It ease the burdens of everyday and drew them closer than with any other company member. Despite army medicals advising against attachments, he and Roe had become friends.

"An' you're still 'ere despite all the bad." Roe continued, taking Spina's silence as continued doubt, "Through this shit, you still run out at the call of medic an' do your job. You give your all for every man."

Spina looked up at Roe, catching the other's intense gaze, "I get what you're saying. It's just...."

"I know." Roe agreed, he too was finding the fight against combat fatigue rough, "Think that's why they try to keep us in pairs. To balance each other out when we need."

"That I can believe for sure." Spina had to smile at that, it more rueful than humourful, before turning serious again, "Missed the hell out of having you only a shout away. Scared the hell out of me too. Being the only one they'd call for."

Roe offered a rarely seen genuine smile, it reaching his tired eyes, "Well, you survived it an' managed to help lots of the guys. Helped patch me up too when I needed it."

Glancing down, Spina nodded. Always he'd doubted that'd he have the metal for being a medic, running out to bandage wounded men against Kraut fire without any weapon. He'd prepared to do weapons training and kill Krauts, not train in first aid and save lives. It was a reversal for him when after basic training, they'd slapped a red cross brassard in his hands and told him to report to the medical tents for his training.

"Thanks. Guess I just needed to hear it." Spina finally relaxed, unaware his posture had been so tense before.

Roe allowed a smirk to upturn his lips, the most Spina had seen his smile in this last ten minutes than since they met, "More like convince you of what was right under your nose."

"Oh okay. I see how it is." Spina laughed, taking the joke for what it was, "Tell me I'm good then bring out the insults. Thanks 'Gene.'"

Roe's smirk deepened. He turned back around to conceal the expression from his partner, shoulders jumping a fraction in a silent laugh at hearing Spina's mock affronted huff from behind him.

...

Their return back to camp was heralded by a barrage of shelling not a second after the jeep pulled up to the outer perimeter of Easy Company's designated encampment. Machine gun

fire and snapped off rifle shots soon followed. The Germans pressing along the line.

Immediately Roe and Spina leapt out of the jeep's interior, the latter running out first into the fray as his instincts had yet to let him relax so soon after Doc's return. Besides he didn't want the other overworking himself that soon after having his bell rung that severely. Him catching the first call for medic , voiced by Wynn.

Sliding to his knees beside a fallen tree trunk, Roe clutched his head between both his hands. Pressing the palms of each hand to his temples, aching to shift them over his ears but knowing he wouldn't be able to hear anyone yell over the explosions combined with him muffling his already ringing ears. Though the ground felt as if he'd stepped foot on an ocean bound rig during rough seas, he was up and sprinting like a bullet at the second call for a medic. Trusting Spina to handle the first, but he wasn't without help any longer. Not so long as Roe was still around and capable.

His leanly muscled legs covering the distance in long strides, weaving purposefully and not so purposefully through the trees and natural debris caused by previous barrages; using fallen trunks or stumps as cover and pausing points to regain some of his bearings before pushing off again. Paying no attention to hearing a startled shout of 'what the fuck' off to his left, his sole focus being on putting one foot in front of the other as quickly as possible towards the man needing his assistance.

It was a foxhole shielding Robbins and Christenson that the shouts came from. Sliding in expertly into the slim open space of their foxhole, Roe took note of Christenson holding each of Robbins' arms in each of his hands, clasping them at the elbow and keeping them apart as Robbins withered and grimaced against the pain. The source coming from blistered burns lining the palm of his right hand.

"How'd ya manage this?" The medic asked, more to gauge his patient's level of alertness and pain than any true confusion.

Robbins gasped, gritting his teeth, "Touched the fucking barrel."

Christenson was quick to explain further , "We had to move quickly. He grabbed the gun's barrel without gloves, but if he hadn't we would have lost the whole gun."

"Takin' your word fer that, Sarge." Roe answered without looking up from examining Robbins' hand, noting with relief that the burns didn't extend past the palms and appeared to be only partial thickness.

"It ain't that bad, Robbins. Ain't bad at all." As he spoke, Roe pulled a syrette from his bag, angling it then forcefully injecting it through the soldier's clothes and into the skin, "There ya go. It'll be all right".

The morphine taking affect almost instantly. Robbins' panting breathing rate slowing as his uncontrollable trembling and involuntary jerking movements in vain attempts to get away from the pain. Sliding the needle through the collar of his patient's uniform, ensuring it was pinned before diving back into his bag.

Seeing Doc shove his hands back into the internals of his bag to retrieve a packet containing sulfa pills, then unbuttoning the straps restraining one of his canteens, he ripped open the packet and calling to the drowsy assistant machine gunner, "Robbins, you gotta take these. C'mon."

Slipping an arm around the man's back, Roe lifted him up and popped the two white pills into the nearly limp soldier's mouth then lifted the uncapped canteen to his lips, patiently holding it steady as Robbins drank enough to wash down the chalky medication. Helping him lean back against the rugged wall of the foxhole while Roe shuffled through his bag to pull the tube of boric acid ointment out along with a bandage.

Unscrewing the cap to the burn cream, the medic set about gently spreading it over Robbins' injured hand. Ensuring to cover all the blisters and reddened areas of his hand before unwinding the cotton bandage around it.

Securing it with a pin on the back of Robbins' hand, Roe glanced up at Christenson, "Help me get 'em up an' to the rear."

With a swift heave, Robbins was out of the foxhole and they were headed to the jeep that thankfully remained here whilst the shelling was occurring. Though the driver was crouching a few feet away behind a large tree, the man running up to them and jumping back into the driver seat, looking all too eager to head back into town.

Just behind the three was Spina with Wynn helping a wounded Mayer supported between them. Roe turned to help lift Mayer up onto the stretcher strapped to the hood of the jeep. Robbins, glassy - eyed due to the morphine , held the passenger seat next to the driver.

"You go. Robbins got burns to both 'is hands." Roe spoke to Spina, but at noting the look of hesitance his fellow medic sent him , Eugene allowed a hint of a smile curved at a single corner of his pale lips as he continued, "I've spent more than enough time there."

Spina let loose a sharp chuckle at hearing that, stepping up to sit behind the Robbins' seat. Bracing between the spare tire and the seat's back to ride in with the two patients. An awkward ride it would make but it was nothing he hadn't done before.

"Make sure Robbins gets a penicillin shot!" Roe called as the jeep began pulling away, his voice near swallowed by another ME impacting the ground, but Spina waved a hand in signal that he heard.

Crouching beside a still standing tree, the medic waited. Ears perked, despite the deafening sound of artillery whistling overhead and the following explosions once it hit the earth, for any shouts for help. But as soon as the barrage had began, it was over. Only lasting a few handful of minutes as if the Germans were merely sending a reminder of their presence across the line.

A heavy breadth of silence fell upon the wood then. Everyone seeming to be held suspended in a moment of soundless tension, waiting to see if another bout of rounds would soon fall or any more movements from the kraut line and not wanting to be the one to set it off. No sound

, nor movement. It seemed they'd halted any notion of advancing, or had simply been toying with their side.

Whatever it may have been, now all was quiet. And was so even after a handful of minutes. By unvoiced agreement several heads began to rise to peak over the lip of foxholes, while others relaxed their huddled forms and some called lowly pitched shouts to neighbouring foxholes asking if their buddies were all right.

Everyone had answered in affirmative as far as Roe could hear, none calling for a medic nor seeming to be in need of one. Thus he stayed put, crouched against the thick trunk of a tree. His frame ready to spring forward should that change.

"Did anyone else see Doc running through here?" Mellett piqued up, his head peeking over his foxhole to look right then left.

"Why? You need a medic?" Hashey asked, giving his foxhole partner a hard stare.

Mellett huffed, feeling a blush of embarrassment creep up on his face at the incline of how his next words may be received, "No, but I swear I saw Doc run by during that last attack."

"Hey, Hash, he hit his head in that last one?" Hoobler asked good naturedly, his voice coming from the left of them, he having overheard their conversation.

"Very funny, but I'm serious!" Mellett's tone had a hint of a plead within it, but was beginning to question what he'd seen.

Shaking his head at the exchange, Roe moved forward, crouched low, before anymore barbs could be exchanged, "e's serious. Now you guys okay?"

A collective sputtering sound came from the foxholes nearest, whilst a vindicated, "See!" sprang up from his direct right.

"What the hell, Doc! When'd you get back?" Hoobler asked in a hushed whisper, elation palpable in his tone and in the fact he was smiling from ear to ear.

Another voice piped up, "Yeah, thought the aid station would have you held hostage for a few days yet!"

"You take a french leave from aid station, Doc?" Came an equally good - humoured voice.

"You know nothin' can keep me away long." Roe answered almost absently, keeping low to the ground he inched forward step by step, he asked again, "Everybody okay?"

Hoobler gave a short breathy laugh, shaking his head in wonderment, "We're good here."

"All good on your right." Came Hashey's voice, a follow up from Mellett with a quick, "A - Okay."

"Nothing to complain about that we don't already." That one brought forth a few snickers from those close enough to hear.

Spreading faster than a wildfire, as news amongst the men was wont to do, word was passed through the ranks of Doc's return. Met with marginal disbelief, until the man himself past by to check in on those within their foxholes. Happy greetings, muted in volume but not in delight, and choirs of welcome back.

"Hey, Doc. Heard you made it back to us just in time for that last attack." Malarkey spoke up at seeing the medic approach his and Muck's foxhole, a smile pulling at his chapped lips.

"Yeah, don't you know that staying out of it is the sane thing to do?" Muck added, but too was smiling.

Roe squatted outside the lip of their foxhole, a hint of his own smile playing at the corner of his lips, "Ain't stop me none. Not you neither."

"Isn't that the true of it." Malarkey huffed, elbowing Muck, "Mister 'I swam across the Niagara Falls River'."

"Eh, never said I was the sanest one around." Muck shrugged, his good - humour not abating any, "But again who of us is? Jumping out of perfectly good airplanes to go to war."

Malarkey had to agree with that, both their smiles upturning towards grins at the joke that most of airborne personnel always brought up one time or the next. Had to be a little nuts to do what they did. All the better for it, by their thoughts.

"Muck." Roe brought the conversation back, features a slight more serious than before as he reached up to pull the wooden rosary from his jacket pocket, "Thought you'd be wanting this back. An' I want to thank you for lendin' it."

Muck reached upwards to take the beloved cross from the medic's hands, remembering when he'd given to Spina to give to the doc. Secret worry that Roe wouldn't be returning to the company and want to comfort a man who'd been through the thick of it with them since the beginning, a friend. It's spurred his actions then, and it must have worked seeing as Doc was before them right now. Whole and hale.

"Thanks for bringing it back to me, Doc." Muck's tone was sincere, gently he wound the rosary around his fingers. He'd missed having it, missed having the Doc around even more.

Roe nodded, "Think all the thanks belongs to you. Was nice, calmin' to see that when I woke up."

"Least any of us could do with how you always take care of all our asses around here." The smile that's pulled at Muck's lips didn't diminish any of the sincerity within his voice, enhancing the appreciation and admiration he held for the medic.

"Hey, Doc!" Lipton called to the medic, trotting up to Roe and Muck's position.

A smile had bloomed on the First Sergeant's face as he stepped up to the pair, "Good to have you back, Doc."

“Thank you, First Sergeant.” Roe nodded, returning a slight smile of his own.

“I hate to break up the party you two have here.” Lipton’s smile turned a slight sheepish, as it always did when he had to rely orders that’d dispel with a good mood, “But Captain Winters wants to see you, Doc.”

Roe nodded, glancing over to Muck to see the other waving him off, “Ah I’ve taken too much of your time anyway. See you around.”

Another small nod with a tiny uptilt of a smile before Roe move past the pair to head over towards the Captain’s foxhole. Steps softly crunching on the snow, it looked not even a few hours old, thus the sound was more muted. Once it froze that classic harsh crunch would return. That was if no new snowfall returned to cover this morning’s fall before then.

“Roe.” Captain Winters greeted, voice a slight shaky with the cold, but the soft upturn to his lips told of the gladness he felt at seeing the medic hale and whole.

He dipped his head in replacement of a salute, uttering a respectful greeting in return , “Cap’n.”

“It’s good to see you on your feet.” Winters began, eyeing the other with a keen glance up and down, “No worse for wear?”

“No, sir. There’s no break in the bone an’ no infection of the wound.” Roe answered, “But I’ll have to go back in a week ta have the stitches removed.”

“Are you sure you should be back with us yet?” Winters asked, features furrowed in consideration of the medic before him.

“Yes, sir.” Roe affirmed, “The headaches may last a while, but there’s nothin’ they can do at the aid station for it. Best I be here.”

Nixon cleared his throat to drag Roe’s attention away from Winters for a moment as he made to pass the tin cup to the medic, “Coffee? Or at least, what CP likes to pass off to us as coffee.”

“No, thank you, sir.” Roe was polite in declining the drink.

“You’re sure?” Nixon asked but at receiving a nod from the medic, he shrugged, “Suit yourself.”

“It’s good to have you back, Eugene.” Winters brought the conversation back on track, smiling lightly as he spoke, accepting Roe’s word.

Nixon pulled his tin cup from his lips hurriedly, “What he said. Wasn’t the same without you here. Spina did a hell of a job though, you’d be impressed.”

“Thank you, sirs.” Roe returned the small smile Winters had given, nodding formally in his thanks before angling his attention towards Captain Nixon, “An’ I know that, sir. He’s a good

medic.”

“You got that right.” Nixon tipped the cup in way of salute to that statement before taking another drink from the tin, his gaze flicking towards his fellow captain.

“All right, return to the men, but try to take it easy. Okay, Doc?” Winters brought the conversation back on track, his own gaze returning to the medic.

“Yeah. Same to Spina. Hate to lose either of you.” Nixon added, although the smile that he wore was his usual curved smirk, there was a quiet sincerity to his eyes that not many saw.

Roe nodded, offering a tiny smile of his own, “Yes, sirs, we’ll try.”

“Good man!” Nixon praised, the casual, near carefree, nature to his person back, as he turned away towards his own foxhole.

Winters nodded to Roe, a quiet dismissal, smiling a bit more openly. A weight of worry lifted with Roe’s return and Nixon always had a knack for lightening his mood no matter the trails they faced. The medic returned his gesture, both of them turning away to head back towards their foxholes.

Snow was beginning to fall once again. Tiny snowflakes that were caught by the frigid breeze to twirling around in its wake before meeting the ground. The biting nature of Bastogne wasn’t something any of them had become accustomed to, it still chilling to the very bone, yet it was tolerated. With grumblings from many of the enlisted and even some of the officers.

Roe had found snow to be beautiful when he first saw it fall, never having experienced the phenomenon before. Although it had lost much of its glamour in the coming days, it was still a source of fascination for the Louisiana born medic. Despite being less acclimated to the cold than those troops that’s grown up in elements such as this, and the added burden it place on their positions here. Snowfall seemed a rare treat that he’d want to share with his family, perhaps in tale enclosed in a letter he’d send home. Focus on this bit of wonder to fill a page, covering over the splattering of horror that tainted this wood.

Stepping through the snow, weaving around the foxholes of the dug in men to get to his foxhole. It only showing traces of the recent snowfall, none from the two days he had been absent from tending to it. This caused him to pause a moment, then leaning down to jump into the shallow hole.

Everything he’d left in it, which wasn’t much, had been dusted from snow and kept nice as could be whilst here. His puzzled expression cleared about when he figures Spina must have been by to his foxhole since his housed the spare bottle of plasma and the few cloth bandages that they didn’t keep in their medic bags. Only what they needed for a few runs before restocking, in case a shell hit them and destroyed the low amount of supplies they carried on them. It would be a loss they couldn’t much afford now. Thus they kept some separate from their person.

Reminding himself to thank his fellow medic later, Roe squatted down. Unfolding his legs out from under him to sit down, drawing them up as they hit the wall of his foxhole. It wasn't quite long enough to stretch out in, nor was it very deep, but it helped when it came to jumping out of it quickly.

"Hey, Gene."

An oddly soft, but familiar voice called from overhead. Roe twisted around to peer up at the visitor to his foxhole from underneath the lip of his helmet. Knowing it was Heffron, even with his figure shrouded in the darkness of the late evening, leaving him a mere silhouette against the brighter backdrop of the snow laden forest.

"Heffron." Roe shifted over in the too small foxhole to allow Heffron to step down and squeeze into the tiny space left, at least they were both out of the line of possible fire and their close proximity kept whatever warmth left in their limbs trapped between them.

Heffron wiggles around a moment before settling, his rifle along his lap, finally looking towards the medic, "See getting knocked to the head ain't changed ya mind any about calling by my nickname, but least it means you're still you."

Gaze narrowing, brow pinching downwards a slight, Roe glanced towards his foxhole partner. His confusion clear on his features. Heffron seeing the look, and understanding his words had been rather cryptic, opened his mouth to explain.

"Uh, when you got hit, just. I'd seen a fella of mine back in Philly take a real bad hit to the head and when he woke up, his memory wasn't the same." Heffron stared at his hands, remembering the fear that'd plagued the last two days for the medic who he was beginning to consider a friend, "Was worried that'd happen to you."

"Hey." Roe called quietly, waiting until Heffron looked back up at him before continuing, "It didn't happen to me."

"I know, you calling me 'Heffron' told me that already." Heffron smiled, relief overcoming any irritation, but at Roe's contrite expression, he was quick to add, "I ain't even mad about it. Just glad you're you."

Roe nodded, the corner of his lips twitching in small display of a smile in thanks, his tongue farting out then to lick his chapped lips before he spoke again, "Don't rememba' much after it, not much of bein' at the aid station eitha', but everythin' else I do."

"Guess that's good, not rememberin' it because seeing you hit isn't soemthin' I want to see again." Heffron

"Can't promise that." Roe was quick to squash any thought to him being invincible, because medics were supposed to be off limits but it was never any guarantee that a shell wouldn't find their mark with him or an arrant round would hit him or like then a mistake would take him out of the action again. Nothing was a guarantee in combat.

Something they all knew, but seemed a slight more foreign for the soldiers in regards to those who wore the white armbands decorated with red crosses. The Geneva Convention saying non-combatants weren't meant to be aimed at nor harmed, also none of them carried a weapon on their person but were still smack in the middle of the shit with everyone else. Coming to the aid of those in the personal hell of being wounded in the middle of the bigger hell of active combat. Who couldn't see them as something a bit more than what they were.

Or so Heffron had thought. Despite the knowledge that the next moment wasn't a promise for any of them. The evidence the last few days having driven the point home, the medic's words reminding him of that point.

"But I'll always get up if I can and come back." Roe continued, unknowingly interrupting Heffron's morose thoughts.

Huffing on his next breath, an odd mix of amusement, exasperation and affection mingling in the single breath. For, of course, Roe would come back. A steady, calming presence in every moment, especially when in the thick of it. Unwaveringly, he was always there. No matter the severity of the combat or personal risk to himself. With a bandage and a quiet word of reassurance. As long as he was able, Gene would be there. Heffron knew it, he believed it wholeheartedly.

Not that it was ever in question for the red head, or anyone in the company. Their medics were some reliable son of bitches.

"I know you will." Heffron could keep the grin from pulling up at his lips, "Too stubborn not to, you."

Roe sighed through his nose, fighting to keep any trace of a smile from his own lips as he spoke, "Well, guess I fit right in with everyone else here."

Heffron laughed outright, the comment and seeing a peek at the sense of humour the medic kept mostly under wraps spurring his reaction, "You got that right. All of us a bunch of crazy S.O.Bs."

Softly snorting, Roe shook his head, silently glad to be seeing some of Heffron's good humour returning after the devastating loss of Julian. It'd been a worry of him and Spina's. Worrying if the loss would be a tipping point for Babe, whether it'd changed him for good or be a near final straw before he cracked. They'd kept a special eye on him since, but it was relief to see more of his natural personality. Another thing he'd have to share with Spina later.

The smile Roe'd managed to keep at bay until then curved subtly at the corners of his lips, a genuine expression of mirth, "Heffron, get outta my foxhole before both a' our legs fall asleep."

Letting loose another laugh at hearing Roe's tone and seeing the expression on his face, Heffron grinned wider. The steps into befriending the medic seemed to be taking root, this banter and conversations proving such. He was more than glad to leave it on this good note.

And his legs were beginning to lose a bit of feeling.

Still shaking with suppressed chuckles, Heffron hauled himself out of the foxhole. A bit of shuffling and grappling before he was finally standing outside the edge of it.

“See ya around, Gene.” His breath a ghost-like waft in front of his face, eyes still bright with laughter.

Roe nodded back, the creases of his smile still present, “See you, Edward.”

Another peel of quiet laughter fell from Heffron’s lips at being called his christian name. One of these days he’d get Gene to call him ‘Babe’. How? He didn’t know yet, but he wouldn’t ever let the medic forget it once he did. And he would. That’s for sure.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Can you tell endings aren’t my strong suit ? I’m sorry, but there it is , Roe is all right & was able to assure Easy that he was. While also getting to see more insight into Spina’s time as company medic. Also closure for some of the missed events in chapter one.

As always comments / reviews are amazing because I’d love to know what you think or if you want to impart some constructive criticism or merely thoughts / reactions on this piece, but if you’re just here to read then that’s a - okay as well !

Note#1 : Medics carried sulfa tablets, along with powdered sulfa packets, which were supposed to be swallowed as an oral antibiotic , which I wanted to feature here. But also to sprinkle sulfa powder on burns isn’t wise , since it’s a powder meaning little granules instead of a cream. Just necessarily painful & would cause more harm than good. (also reason for the mention of a injury outside of a shrapnel or bullet wound was to showcase some of the medics other supplies than bandages & morphine)

Note#2 : Cpl. Francis J. Mellett (we see him for a moment in *Replacements*; Hashey tosses the K ration down to Mellett for the woman on the side of the road) served in Operation Market Garden , Operation Pegasus , & the Battle of the Bulge. He was KIA on January 13, 1945. I mention him in here to show some of the other men of Easy that weren’t showcased as much in the miniseries but were no less brave and human beings as everyone is, it’s not meant in any disrespect of any form.

Note#3 : french leave = AWOL
AWOL = absence without official leave

Translations:

Comment allez-- How are you?

Encore tendres, mais guère de - Still tender, but hardly dizzy.

Vous êtes chanceux. - You are lucky.

Merci. - Thank you.
Pour vous! - For you

*I know Renée & Roe switch back & forth between 'vous' & 'tu / toi' throughout the episode Bastogne, I kept the formal one because they don't know each well, even though they're beginning to be friends & have shared their first names. It just seemed more appropriate to keep it formal. If my assumption is wrong, let me know & I'll fix it.

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