

Memories of Remembrance

I stared down at the cold, leaf strewn ground, a tear dripping down my cheek. As I gazed at the aged red tombstone bearing the name of my father who died in the war, I felt as bad as I did the night I found out I had lost him. My father had died in the war all because of his love for my mother, Canada, and I. As I stared at his name on the cold stone tablet, my mind wandered back to 1942, the year when my life was changed forever...

"Mother, come play with me!" I laughed as I ran towards the sofa where she sat knitting.

"Just a moment, James. Let me put my yarn away." She replied with love. I watched her impatiently as she finished her stitch and placed the sweater down on the table.

"Let's play hide and seek," I exclaimed, "You count."

"Okay, pumpkin. One, two, three..." she counted as I ran through the house. I stepped inside of my parent's bedroom, running past the pictures of my dad that she kept in there. There were pictures of us before the war, playing catch together and having a picnic as a family. A picture of Father in his new Royal Canadian Air Force uniform with me sitting on his shoulders also graced the wall, and I often found Mother staring at these pictures, crying, wishing things were different.

I jumped into the closet and hid behind the big wooden chest where Mother kept keepsakes of Father and the letters he sent, but even as a five-year-old, I was careful not to disturb anything. "Ready or not, here I come!" I heard my mother yell.

I sat very still as Mother moved throughout the house, rummaging through objects trying to find my hiding spot. I finally heard her enter the room, and I could not help but giggle. She burst into the closet and exclaimed, "Found you!"

"Let's play again!" I shouted with delight as I ran back to the living room. My mother followed, straightening the pictures on the wall with sadness in her eyes as she went. "You count again," I requested as I ran to find a hiding place. I stepped into a different closet just as I heard a loud knock on the door.

I listened as my mother answered the door, but the voices were not loud enough for me to hear. I waited another couple seconds, then crept out of the closet and towards the voices. As I approached the door, all I could see was my mother with her back towards me and a uniform that looked similar to the one Father had worn just before he left for the war.

"Daddy!" I shouted with joy and started to run towards the man. Just before I reached the uniformed soldier, I shrank back. It was not my Dad. I stepped back towards my mother and took her hand.

The soldier got down on his knee and looked at me with kindness in his eyes. He said, "No son, I am not your Daddy, but he was one of my best friends. I heard much about you from him, and your Daddy, my dear friend Fredrick, was one of the bravest men I knew."

My mother squeezed my hand and told me to go read a book as she finished talking to the soldier. I complied, sat down, and started to read. All of a sudden, I heard a shriek and saw my mother collapse onto her knees. I ran to her, as the soldier kissed her on the cheek, handed my mother a letter, and left. "Mommy, Mommy, what's wrong?" I shouted with fear.

She looked at me, tears sparkling in her round, blue eyes, and I knew that my life was never going to be the same again. "Jamie, honey, come," she sniffled. "We need to talk."

I shook my head to clear the painful memories. I, living during the time of the war, would always remember those who died for my freedom, but my greatest fear is that the young people will forget the sacrifices made for them. As I stood there, remembering, a boy ran towards me through the rows of tombstones and stopped as he reached me. Eyes the exact shade of blue as my mother's stared up into mine, and he asked with curiosity, "Grandfather, what are you doing?"

I reached into my pocket, pulled out a poppy and while pinning it on his shirt, I said, "Fredrick, let me tell you a story of bravery, sacrifice, courage, and most importantly, love. Let me tell you about your great-grandfather and why we need to remember."