**The Ghost – Harriet Lee**

BLACK SCREEN/SOUND OF MORTAR SHELLS

EXT./MUDDY HILL WITH SPARSE TEAK TREES(FOGGY)/DAY

SUDDEN EXPLOSION IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

CAPTION (TYPEWRITER TEXT AND SOUND)  
April 12th, 1944

A RUNNER wearing a dirty WW2 British soldier’s uniform can be seen running up the hill, dodging the ongoing EXPLOSIONS around him and occasional GUNFIRE.

CAPTION (TYPEWRITER TEXT AND SOUND)  
Kohima Ridge, Nagaland, British India

Runner approaches a FOX HOLE where SGT. JOE is taking cover.

RUNNER

Sun!

SGT. JOE (OS)

Set!

Runner crests the hill and slides into the fox hole with CHUCK and SGT. JOE. Joe is haggard, his own uniform has additional blood stains. There is a dirty bandage wrapped around his lower left arm. His RIFLE is held tight in his left hand where a plain WEDDING BAND sits on his ring finger.

RUNNER

Message from command. Where’s your Lieutenant?

SGT. JOE

Shot. Yesterday. And the Second’s been out since he got his leg blown off. Harry’s in charge.

Runner ducks as a mortar shell explodes a few feet away, spraying them all with mud. The others barely react.

RUNNER

How did I end up in your shit?

SGT. JOE

You joined the army.

(pats RUNNER on the shoulder)

Come on, I’ll lead the way. ‘Ere Chuck.

CHUCK looks up from picking mud out of his roll-up cigarette.

CHUCK

Sarge?

SGT. JOE

You’re up.

Chuck grunts but nods.

Another mortar explodes near the FOX HOLE. Joe and Runner jump out, keeping low, and run further up the hill. They soon approach a BROKEN WALL.

EXT./WALL/DAY

Joe and Runner jump the WALL and hunker down on the other side next to PRIVATE 1.

PRIVATE 1

Alrigh’ there Sarge?

SGT. JOE

Message from command. Where’s Harry?

Private 1 points towards a TRENCH that has been covered by some BOARDS and a WATERPROOF PONCHO. Joe nods at Private 1 and he and Runner shuffle towards it.

INT./MAP TRENCH/DAY

SSG. HARRY and CORPORAL are crouched around a CRATE. SSG. HARRY is pointing at a MAP on the crate. They both have mud and blood stains on their uniforms and are sporting bandaged wounds.

Joe and Runner stumble into shot.

SSG. HARRY

News?

Runner moves forward at Joe’s urging.

RUNNER

New orders from command. Everyone is to make a tactical retreat to the Tennis Court.

Harry stares at him for a moment in shock, then his face hardens.

SSG. HARRY

Blast.

He turns back to MAP and rubs face with hand.

Do they know our situation?

RUNNER

No sir. I didn’t know until I arrived.

SSG. HARRY

(mutters)

And the radio’s out of action.

(sighs)

You might as well grab a gun and man the wall. We’re not going anywhere any time soon.

Runner nods and leaves.

CORPORAL

So much for reinforcements.

Harry remains silent for a few moments, glaring at the map. The map shows a circled area which is surrounded by FILLED IN SQUARES. There are less squares south of the circle.

SSG. HARRY

Does anyone know the situation with our wounded?

SGT. JOE

Apart from the Lefty, I think everyone’s either able to stand or dead.

CORPORAL

What about Stone? I heard he got hit this morning.

SGT. JOE

I’ll see what Doc has to say. He’d have my ass if I don’t see him about this anyway. (motions the dirty bandage)

SSG. HARRY

(laughs)

Medics are some scary buggers when you don’t let them do their job.

SGT. JOE

(smirks)

Is this from personal experience, Harry?

Harry chokes on his laughter, and the others pick it up as he punches Joe in the arm.

SSG. HARRY

Sod off. I hope he kills you.

EXT./WALL/DAY

Joe makes his way out of the trench and makes his way back to the wall, where Runner has joined Private 1, now wielding a RIFLE.

SGT. JOE

Lads.

PRIVATE 1

Sarge.

RUNNER

Sir.

SGT. JOE

Don’t suppose you’d know where the Doc is, would you?

PRIVATE 1

Last I ‘eard ‘e was over by them trees.

Private 1 points to an outcropping of TEAK TREES. Joe nods his thanks and traverses the distance between the wall and the trees, keeping himself as low as possible to avoid the constant gunfire and explosions.

EXT./HILLTOP/DAY

He’s almost made it when the ground several feet to his left explodes, forcing him to look that way momentarily. He pauses. CARA, a young woman dressed in brown leather boots, jeans, a red hoodie and a black Led Zeppelin shirt, is stood there, watching him. The ends of her long brown hair are dyed blue.

Another explosion, closer this time, forces Joe to duck, and when he looks up, Cara has vanished. He shakes his head and continues his journey.

EXT./TEMPORARY MEDIC BAY/DAY

The OUTCROPPING has four men around it. PRIVATE 2 has a make-shift SPLINT attached to his right arm, 2D LIEUT is out cold, the lower half of his left leg missing and the STUMP beginning to soak its bandages with blood, and DOC, who is leaning over CORP STONE with a pair of SCISSOR TWEEZERS buried in Stone’s shoulder as he searches for a bullet. Doc has a white arm band on with a red cross on it. His sleeves are rolled up, but his forearms are bloody.

SGT. JOE

Hey, Doc.

DOC

A little busy at the moment.

SGT. JOE

Alright then. You okay there Stone?

CORP STONE

(grunts)

Oh yeah. Just dandy. Not like I’m getting my shoulder pulled out.

Doc finally manages to pull the BULLET out and Stone muffles a cry. Doc immediately presses a DRESSING PAD to the WOUND – dropping the bullet in a TIN – and wraps it tightly around Stone’s shoulder. He then wraps Stone’s arm to his chest with a BANDAGE.

DOC

You can’t use that arm until the wound heals. The bullet damaged a tendon.

CORP STONE

Oh, so your digging did no damage?

Doc just glares at him and turns to Joe, glancing down at the bandaged arm.

DOC

I’m assuming you’re not just here for that mess of a bandage.

Joe holds out his arm. Doc retrieves some scissors from his pack and begins his work on the arm.

SGT. JOE

Is this all the wounded?

Doc binds the arm with a fresh bandage. Joe pulls his arm back and rests his hand on his rifle.

DOC

Unless we have any more casualties I don’t know about, yes.

SGT. JOE

Good. We might be moving out soon. New orders.

CORP STONE

What, we’re leaving, sir?

SGT. JOE

If God is with us.

DOC

Then we’d best start praying.

SGT. JOE

(hums)

Better head back. You’ll know what’s going on when I do.

CORP STONE

The sooner the better.

Joe makes his way back to the trench again, glancing over at the spot he saw Cara but sees nothing.

INT./MAP TRENCH/DAY

When he slides back into the trench, Harry, Sergeant 1 and Corporal are all solemn faced, all looking at the map.

SGT. JOE

I feel like I missed something.

Harry looks at him briefly then turns back to the map.

SSG. HARRY

There’s only one way we’re getting out of this, Joe. And I wish to God this wasn’t it.

Joe looks down at the map where some ARROWS have been drawn – a small one leading off from the circle headed towards the South-West, and a larger arrow headed from the circle headed South towards an area marked Tennis Courts.

SGT. JOE

A distraction.

SSG. HARRY

It’s the only way we can get out of this mess without losing everyone.

SGT. JOE

Who are you going to send?

SSG. HARRY

(takes a deep breath)

I couldn’t ask anyone to do this.

SGT. JOE

(nods)

Volunteers then.

CORPORAL

It would be best.

Silence for a few moments. Joe plays with his ring then clasps his hands.

SGT. JOE

I’ll do it.

SSG HARRY

Joe…!

SGT. JOE

You know no one else will volunteer if I don’t!

Harry grits his teeth but nods. Joe pulls a LETTER out of his jacket pocket.

SGT. JOE

Give this to my Katheryn when you see her.

Harry takes the letter and stares at it before trying to hand it back.

SSG. HARRY

I should be the one to do this. It’s my…

SGT. JOE

(folding his arms)

If you start talking about duty then you’d best stop now. You’re the ranking officer. You have a duty to lead.

Harry sighs and puts the letter in his pocket.

SSG. HARRY

You’ll have to wait until dark.

SGT. JOE

I know.

SSG. HARRY

And find those other volunteers.

SGT. JOE

(smiling sadly)

I know what to do, Harry.

Harry pauses then returns the smile.

SSG. HARRY

It’s been an honour serving with you Joe.

He holds out his hand and Joe takes it.

SGT. JOE

Likewise.

Harry, Sergeant 1 and Corporal all salute Joe. Joe salutes back then we watch as he makes his way out of the trench.

EXT./MUDDY HILL WITH SPARSE TEAK TREES(FOGGY)/TWILIGHT

Joe is leaning against the wall with his rifle in his lap. He is studying a PHOTO of KATHERYN – she has the same hair, nose and jaw as Cara, but is wearing a dress - and a BOY of 5 sitting in her lap. Joe caresses Katheryn’s cheek with his fore-finger and a fond smile.

CARA

She forgave you, you know.

Joe looks up and finds Cara standing just over two meters away, undisturbed by the gunfire and explosions.

SGT. JOE

What?

(OS) CHUCK

Sarge?

Joe turns towards Chuck’s voice to his left. Chuck is in a similar position as him several meters away. He is shifting nervously as he checks his RIFLE. There are several others situated along the wall.

CHUCK

You alright there?

Joe looks back and Cara has vanished once again.

SGT. JOE

Just a little nervous.

Chuck nods.

CHUCK

I reckon you’d have to be some kind of crazy if you weren’t.

Joe snorts out a joyless laugh and looks at his watch. He checks his rifle is loaded then nods to Chuck. Chuck stops fidgeting and follows suit, soon followed by the other men.

CHUCK

See you on the other side then, Sarge.

A WHISTLE blows and Joe, Chuck and the men all jump over the wall, yelling as they charge down the hill. Mortar shells continue to rain around them, 2 are gunned down before they reach the tree line.

EXT./JAPANESE TRENCH (front)/DAY

6 men reach the JAPANESE LINE across the ROAD at the bottom of the ridge, including Joe and Chuck. It’s a TRENCH with a MUD WALL facing them. They manage to kill 4 of the JAPANESE SOLDIERS before Chuck is gunned down.

EXT./JAPANESE TRENCH (rear)/DAY

The Japanese call in reinforcements who come in from neighbouring trenches.

EXT./JAPANESE TRENCH (front)/DAY

Joe is just passing the last TEAK TREE when he gets SHOT in the leg, hip and upper chest. He collapses against the tree, his rifle lost.

Joe’s breathing is laboured, blood leaking out from his WOUNDS onto the ground.

CARA

It took me longer than I thought it would to find you.

Joe looks up and Cara is standing over him.

SGT. JOE

Who… Who are… you?

CARA

(shrugging)

It was only a few months ago that I found out who you were though, so I guess that’s kind of an excuse. But here I am, on the same day it happened!

Joe frowns at her.

CARA (cont.)

My Grandma died back in January. She was an amazing woman – you would have liked her I think. Wouldn’t go down without a fight. But she had her secrets, like everyone does. She hadn’t realised she’d been keeping this one though.

Cara kneels down and looks Joe in the eyes.

CARA (cont.)

I never met my Granddad, but Grandma says… *said* – that he loved his family above anything else, especially his father. I don’t think any of us realised that the man we’d been calling ‘Great-Granddad’ all these years wasn’t actually our Great-Granddad. It was you.

Joe’s breath hitches, then he coughs a little, BLOOD staining his lower lip.

CARA (cont.)

Apparently, after you died, your friend, Harry, and your wife, well… Harry stuck around a few years, and, well, one thing lead to another and… they got married and had a few kids of their own.

Joe’s eyes begin to tear and the corner of his lips turn up.

CARA (cont.)

So, Granddad George grew up in a big happy family, then married Grandma and had a big family of his own. My dad, he was Granddad’s first boy and… he named him after you.

Joe smiles wide and a tear falls down his cheek.

CARA (cont.)

(beaming smile)

Oh! I’m Cara by the way. Mum named me ‘cuz of her Irish heritage or something.

SGT. JOE

Cara…

Joe’s breath hitches again, and he begins to cough up more blood.

CARA

(straight faced)

What you did was a brave thing. You saved a lot of men, doing what you did. Great-gran-… Harry told stories about you. Delivered the letter to your wife just like you asked.

(deep sigh)

She forgave you, you know? In fact, I don’t think she could have been more proud.

Joe stops breathing, but he’s smiling.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT./GRAVEYARD/DAY

PRESENT DAY

Cara is kneeling beside a FRESHLY CLEANED CROSS GRAVESTONE that reads;

JOSEPH WILLIAMS  
1911-1944

Cara kisses her fingertips and places them against the name.

CARA

Sleep well, Great-Granddad. You are not forgotten.

FADE OUT