

LE SACRIFICE

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

MARK	An American soldier, very scared and nervous
ANTON	A French soldier

## SETTING

The shelled remains of a house in France during some fictitious war.

Note: The names/nationalities of the soldiers are American and French, but with some minor tweaking of the script they really could be from anywhere (and of different genders, different times in history, etc.). The main point should be that they are from different countries (even fictitious countries), and that the word “sacrifice” is the same in both.

SCENE

*(A young soldier, Mark, is hiding out, curled up against the wall in an abandoned house. He's scared, jumping at little sounds. There is a loud explosion or burst of gunfire, and he curls up tighter. There is a breaking in the sounds, and he uncurls just a little. He shakes less, listens, hears nothing. He allows himself a moment to relax, and suddenly the door opens, and another soldier, wearing a different style of uniform, comes into the room. He enters gently, like someone just looking around. They suddenly notice each other, and their eyes lock. Suddenly, realizing the danger, Mark looks around for his gun, which is several feet away. He is about to lunge for it, but Anton points his weapon and warns...)*

ANTON

Neh neh neh!

*(Mark stops, staring at Anton in fear and unsure what to say or do. Anton studies Mark, then moves over to where the weapon is lying, and picks it up.)*

Not so smart, letting your gun wander so far away.

MARK

You speak English.

ANTON

Enough.

MARK

So... what now?

ANTON

Now?

MARK

What... what are you gonna do?

*(Anton looks down at his gun, then at Mark's, then back to Mark.)*

ANTON

I suppose... there is only one thing to do.

*(The blood drains from Mark's face. Then he closes his eyes.)*

What do you do?

MARK

*(Opening his eyes again...)*

What do I do?

ANTON

*(Motioning to indicate Mark's closing his eyes.)*

This. What do you do?

MARK

I don't understand.

ANTON

You close your eyes. Why? Are you so scared to meet death?

MARK

Yeah, I'm scared...

ANTON

A man should not be afraid to die.

MARK

*(Trying to be humorous, but too scared to really pull it off as comedic...)*

Give me the gun. Let's see if you still feel the same way.

*(They stare at each other for a moment.)*

That's not why I closed my eyes.

ANTON  
No? Then why?

MARK  
What does it matter? Why are you asking me this?

ANTON  
I... I wish to know.

MARK  
Why?

ANTON  
Maybe because I think I would do the same.

MARK  
I thought you said you weren't afraid of death.

ANTON  
*(With vehemence born of falsehood...)*  
I am not afraid! *(Then more calmly...)* So that *is* why you closed your eyes.

MARK  
No. I... uh... I closed my eyes... because I didn't want to... you know... see it coming.

ANTON  
See it coming?

MARK  
I didn't want that to be the last thing I saw. The last thing I knew.

ANTON  
So you close your eyes...

*(Mark nods.)*

...and you remember...

MARK  
*(Surprised...)*  
Yeah. How did you...

ANTON

I would do this too, I think.

*(There is a long silence as each considers the other.)*

What do you remember?

MARK

What? Oh, I... I don't know. I guess I didn't have a specific thing. Just... feelings.

ANTON

Feelings. What feelings?

MARK

That I miss...

ANTON

What? What do you miss?

MARK

Why are you asking me? You can't really care about this. I'm just someone... someone you're goi...

ANTON

What? Someone I what?

MARK

Someone you're gonna kill. Why are you asking me these things?

ANTON

Do you have a woman?

*(Mark just stares at him.)*

At home. You have a woman? A girl?

MARK

*(Slow and unsure...)*

I... do....

ANTON

I see. And is she who you remember now? Who you miss?

MARK

Yeah. But not just her. My family. I have a little brother. He's ten.

ANTON

I do not have brothers or sisters.

MARK

Then you're missing out. Jacob's... he looks up to me, you know? Wants to be like me.

ANTON

I have heard this about little brothers.

MARK

I'm glad he can't see me now.

*(Anton stares at Mark, looks down at his gun, looks back at Mark.)*

ANTON

Yes.

MARK

What are you waiting for?

ANTON

You want to die?

MARK

No. I just...

ANTON

You what?

MARK

I don't understand.

ANTON

You think I want to kill you?

MARK

*(Taken by surprise...)*

I... I never thought... Don't you?

ANTON

I...

*(There is a long pause. Anton thought that he would want to, and finds that he surprised that he doesn't. But he won't admit this, won't share it. So he evades.)*

Why would I want this?

MARK

We're enemies.

ANTON

I hold your gun. You are on the floor. You are no threat.

MARK

That doesn't matter.

ANTON

So if you were standing in my place, you would kill me with no second thought?

MARK

I...

ANTON

Yes?

MARK

I might.

*(Anton stares at him for a time.)*

ANTON

I think you lie. You are dressed like a soldier, but...

*(Again, they stare at each other.)*

Why are you here?

MARK

It's war.



ANTON

No. Not here in France. Here. Here in this building. In this shattered shell of a house.

*(Mark just stares at him.)*

Why?!

*(Mark shakes his head. Anton points his gun at him more aggressively.)*

Tell me! Tell me or I'll kill you right now!

MARK

I don't know!

ANTON

You don't know!? You don't *know* why you are—

MARK

*(Into himself...)*

I don't know!! I ran! There was gunfire, and I ran! I turned down the street, and they were there, and I turned the corner and they were there too! And... And I...

*(Mark stops, looks up at Anton, sees him staring at him.)*

I don't know. The door was open. A little. A crack. I saw it and I... I went inside.

ANTON

*(Quietly)*

When was this?

MARK

*(He swallows hard.)*

Two days ago.

ANTON

And you stay here?

MARK

*(Ashamed...)*

Yes.

ANTON  
Why?

MARK  
I don't know what else to do.

*(Anton looks around, clearly not seeing something he expects.)*

ANTON  
You have no supplies.

MARK  
I dropped my pack. *(He motions outside.)* Out there.

ANTON  
I didn't see...

MARK  
When I first started to run. It was blocks away from here.

ANTON  
And you have no food or drink?

MARK  
No.

*(Anton studies him again.)*

ANTON  
You lie to me again.

*(Mark stares at him.)*

I have been watching this house for two days. No one has entered in that time.

MARK  
It... it might have been three. *(Anton continues to stare at him.)* Or four. I... It's hard to keep count.

*(Anton makes a decision. He puts down Mark's gun, shrugs off his backpack, and roots through it with his free hand. He finds a thermos, and tosses it to Mark. Mark just stares at him.)*

ANTON

Drink. Go on. Drink.

*(Uncertain, Mark opens the thermos, takes a sniff.)*

It is bouillon. Soupe. In English is...

MARK

Same.

ANTON

Is that so? Drink. It is cold, but... *(he shrugs)*

*(Mark takes a sip, then offers it back.)*

No. Drink. Finish. But slow.

MARK

Why?

ANTON

I can find more.

MARK

No. Not... *(Shakes his head, not meaning the soup. Then with intensity...)* Why?

ANTON

This is what we do. When we have a guest in our home.

MARK

You mean France?

*(Anton gives a "sure, if that makes you feel better" shrug.)*

MARK

*(Realizing...)*

This. This is your... This is your house.

ANTON

Not much anymore. The bombs...

MARK

I... I'm so sorry.

*(Anton sits down against the wall, a respectful distance away from Mark.)*

ANTON

I know. I can see. It was not you.

MARK

It was us.

ANTON

What is 'us'? 'Us' is not a person.

MARK

But you owe me nothing. Worse, it was my country that did this.

ANTON

Yes. Your *country*... did... this. And I will not lie. When I first saw you, I *wanted* to kill you for it. For my anger. For my loss.

MARK

For your house...

ANTON

For my house, yes. And more for those inside. For my country... my pride... for many losses.

MARK

Why? Why didn't you just shoot me?

*(Anton smiles, laughs just a touch. He lifts his weapon, pulls the trigger, and we hear the click of a gun with no ammunition. There is a pause, then Mark laughs a little, just a hint of nervousness.)*

But my gun...

ANTON

Yes. I had this thought. But that was at first. Then... after... it was different.

MARK

Because I closed my eyes?

ANTON

Yes, maybe... Yes.

MARK

But anyone would have done that. Wouldn't they?

ANTON

Maybe. But that is the point. A person... a person *would* close his eyes. You closed them. Like I would. Like I have.

MARK

You were trapped? Did someone spare you like...

ANTON

No. I was not trapped like this. I was on a roof, and the gunfire came. I laid down, and closed my eyes. I prayed, and I remembered. And that was all. But I closed my eyes just like you did here. Like any person would. And that's when I realized.

MARK

What?

ANTON

There is a difference between a person and a country.

MARK

Countries make people do terrible things.

ANTON

Yes. They do. But sometimes a person changes a country too.

MARK

I... I don't think... if I had been in your place, I don't think I could have put my anger aside like you did.

ANTON

Who knows what anyone will do until the choice comes? Maybe you would. Maybe you wouldn't. And maybe none of this will matter. Maybe you will never make it home. Maybe you will get home and forget this moment.

MARK

No!

ANTON

I too think you will not. But whatever comes... I was given the moment... the moment to realize.

*(Mark gives him a "please go on" look or gesture.)*

That I was at a choice of roads. This. *(Anton motions around.)* I could stay the same, and all this... this would be... loss. Or I could choose to make it a... I do not know the word in English.

MARK

What is it in French?

ANTON

Le sacrifice.

MARK

Same in English.

ANTON

Is that so?

*(Lights out)*