

The Indestructable John Sedgwick

By

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EXT. SPOTSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA - DAY -1864

The American Civil War is raging. Canon fire can be heard in the distance, but it has not yet reached the Union camp at the riverside.

Soldiers are busying themselves with preparation for the oncoming battle. Some are preparing defensive earth mounds, whilst others polish their uniforms and check their weaponry.

In the distance, the Confederacy troops are taking position in a long offensive line, spanning the entire horizon.

At a shabby medical tent, three Union soldiers are struggling to hold a man down on a table. He thrashes around and screams in agony as a young nurse attempts to remove a bullet from his leg.

A young boy in an oversized Union uniform is running across the field, holding a sealed envelope. He ducks to avoid some bullets from a misfired musket, and then sprints towards a large canvas tent.

INT. GENERALS TENT - CONTINUOUS

The BOY enters the tent and doubles over, exhausted. Inside is seated a handful of aged army generals. They all wear spotless Union uniforms, covered in medals and regalia, and every man has copious amounts of grey facial hair.

The boy struggles to catch his breath as the Generals stare at him expectantly. He wheezes as he waves the letter around in the air.

BOY

Orders! Orders from General Grant.

The General nearest the boy, Major General HORATIO G WRIGHT, takes the letter and gestures to the boy to leave. As the boy wheezes his way out of the tent, Horatio opens the letter and reads in silence.

Horatio stands and addresses the expectant table.

HORATIO G WRIGHT

Ulysses says we go tomorrow. We outnumber them two to one.

The assorted Generals look slightly worried.

HORATIO G WRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Don't worry boys. General
 Sedgwick is on his way.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Several soldiers of varying age are sat around a large campfire. Some are chatting and readying their weapons, others are drinking ale. Sat on his own, away from the fire, is PRIVATE ANDERSON. He is young and obviously nervous.

Out of the darkness, an older soldier, CORPORAL HAYES, appears next to Private Anderson. His battle experience is written all across his face.

Corporal Hayes holds two mugs of ale, hands one to Private Anderson, and sips the other as he sits down. Private Anderson is almost oblivious to the man sat next to him.

CORPORAL HAYES
 First time in battle, son?

Private Anderson is not listening. Corporal Hayes nudges him on the shoulder.

CORPORAL HAYES (CONT'D)
 I said, you've never fought for
 your county before, have you boy?

Private Anderson looks at Corporal Hayes and slowly shakes his head.

CORPORAL HAYES (CONT'D)
 Are ya scared?

Silence.

CORPORAL HAYES (CONT'D)
 'course ya scared. Heck, I'm
 scared. Just as scared today as I
 was first day I joined. Sixteen I
 was. Couldn't even hold the rifle
 up straight, did'na have the
 strength in me arms, see? Course,
 commandin' Officer sorted that
 out swift. Who's your Officer for
 tomorrow lad? Who's leading the
 charge?

PRIVATE ANDERSON
 Er... Seg... Sed... Sedge...

CORPORAL HAYES
 Major General John Sedgwick.
 You're lucky boy. Real lucky.

Private Anderson is beginning to relax in Corporal Hayes's company.

PRIVATE ANDERSON

Why's that lucky? I... I mean, why is that lucky, erm, Sir?

CORPORAL HAYES

Don't call me Sir boy, call me Hayes like everybody else does. And it's lucky because Sedgwick is the best darn General this army has got. After Grant, of course.

PRIVATE ANDERSON

What's so great about him, Sir? Sorry, Hayes.

CORPORAL HAYES

Couple o' years back, he's been told to set up some fort on the Platte River. Now he been told that by the time he gets there, they'll be wagons full o' supplies and materials for him to build quarters for his men so they can get started on the fort. Only when he gets there, there ain't no wagons. He's in the middle of nowhere, no railroads, no nothin. Quickest way back to somewhere is on riverboat, but he ain't got one a them.

Corporal Hayes waits for a reaction. Private Anderson is not as interested in his story as he hoped.

PRIVATE ANDERSON

So.. erm, what did he do?

CORPORAL HAYES

He did what all could commanders should do. He took care of his men. He ordered them to cut down trees, fetch stone, get leaves, and by that week, they all had warm, dry little huts to sleep in an keep 'em from the cold while they waited for that damn wagon. And he got food too. Food enough so no man went hungry.

Private Anderson seems vaguely impressed.

CORPORAL HAYES (CONT'D)

Man's damn near indestructable too. Survived cholera, came straight back to the army once he had the strength to stand. Got shot in the arm and leg at Glendale, wrist, leg an shoulder at Fredericksburg, and he's still as fearless as when he were born! You're lucky boy, damned lucky, because nobody ain't gonna come to no harm when Segdwick's in charge, that's for sure.

Private Anderson seems encouraged by Corporal Hayes's enthusiasm. They continue talking until the campfire burns itself out.

EXT. BATTLE FRONT LINE - MORNING

The Union soldiers are gathered in a line, sheltering behind mounds of earth. In the near distance, Confederacy troops are stood, guns pointing ahead.

There is an air of unsure excitment amoungst the troops. Nobody knows what to expect, and the sound of nervous chatter can be heard over the cannon and gun fire in the distance.

PRIVATE ANDERSON is waiting, rifle at the ready. He seems more sure of himself than before, spurred on by Hayes's tales of courage and wisdom.

Another young soldier, PRIVATE BRAND, is panicking. His shaking hands means he is struggling to load his rifle, and he starts to sweat and swear.

PRIVATE ANDERSON

Here, let me.

Private Anderson takes the rifle and loads it. Private Brand bashfully takes it back.

PRIVATE BRAND

Sorry, I'm just...

PRIVATE ANDERSON

Nervous? No need to be.

Private Brand is confused. Private Anderson gives a wry smile.

PRIVATE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

No need to be nervous. The indestructable Major General John Sedgwick is on his way.

Private Brand looks confused, but before he can question anything, a bullet shoots over their heads, and the two Privates duck for cover.

At this moment, Major General JOHN SEDGWICK arrives at the battle front. He is every inch the hero that Corporal Hayes described. He is tall, muscular and proud, and stands resplendant in a freshly cleaned Union uniform, covered in various military medals.

He sees the soldiers hiding behind the earth mounds and sighs. He climbs up the mound and looks down at the cowering men, towering over them.

JOHN SEDGWICK

What? Men dodging this way for single bullets? What will you do when they open fire along the whole line? I am ashamed of you!

The men are embarrassed at his display of bravery, and some begin to stand, brushing the dust from their uniforms. Others stay down.

JOHN SEDGWICK (CONT'D)

I am ashamed of you, dodging like this! They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist...

Suddenly, he stops. Bright red blood runs from a fresh bullet hole beneath his left eye. The body loses it's balance, and falls forwards, as if in slow motion, towards Privates Anderson and Brand.

The Privates stare at each other, pure panic on their faces. Private Anderson stares up at the falling body, directly above him.

PRIVATE ANDERSON

...ance?

FADE OUT: