



The
Lines
Between
Us

A Novel

AMY LYNN GREEN

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Cover design by Jennifer Parker

Cover image of smokejumpers and airplane courtesy of the Forest History Society, Durham, NC

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To my grandparents,
Bob and Edna Shelenberger and
Ray and Marian Green.
Thank you for the legacy of faith.

Prologue

FROM GORDON HOOPER TO DORIE ARMITAGE

November 25, 1941

Dear Dorie,

When a girl asks a fellow to write to her, is one day after leaving too soon to send the first letter? I bet it is.

But honestly, Dorie, it isn't fair. Whenever I try to study, my mind drifts back to the time we spent together last week. The way you fired back witty replies before I could catch a breath. Your laugh that sounded like sleigh bells. That easy smile of yours I caught aimed at me across the table more than once during the turkey dinner.

Something must be wrong with me. George down the hall's got a record playing "Blue Skies," so Frank Sinatra crooning about being in love must be affecting my mood.

If you're smart, you'll crumple this up and tell Jack to give me a good talking-to. Lucky for me, he's a pacifist now too and won't deck me for sending his sister a love letter. (Probably.)

Doris Armitage, what have you done to me? I used to be a

no-nonsense college man, with dreams of a career and a stock portfolio and making it in the world better than my father did. Now all I can think about is you.

Speaking of fathers, I hope yours doesn't read this. I got the sense from the way he scowled at me that he didn't appreciate my visit. This letter probably wouldn't help.

Listen, even if I'm wrong, even if your request for me to write you was simply one friend to another, I'd love to hear from you anyway. Just have pity on a fellow and put me out of my misery—fast.

*Yours in hope,
Gordon*

FROM DORIE TO GORDON

November 29, 1941

Dear Gordon,

A love letter? Gosh, Gordon, I barely know you. At least other than the stories Jack's told about you this past year.

Still, I've written a few love letters in my day, though none to a college man who's got all kinds of pretty co-eds swarming around him. Meanwhile, I'm just a mechanic's daughter you met hours away in the-middle-of-nowhere Pennsylvania.

Missing you desperately.

Darn this typewriter! I'm awful about writing things before thinking them through, and it's just such trouble to use the correction fluid that I suppose I won't bother.

As for Daddy, don't worry about him. You know how fathers are. Besides that, he didn't like Jack coming home with new ideas after his first semester away. He's always hoped Jack would take

over his auto shop and thinks college classes are a bunch of hooley invented by city folks to steal money from homegrown people like us. You shouldn't let him get to you.

By which I mean . . . you should write again, soon and often. Start now, if you like.

Dorie

P.S. I'm glad Jack brought you home for Thanksgiving. You didn't talk about them much, but I suppose your family will steal you away for Christmas, won't they?

FROM GORDON TO DORIS

December 2, 1941

Dear Dorie,

Do you know, I actually whooped aloud when I got your letter? The fellow at the post office must've thought I was plain nuts, but I didn't care.

You wrote back! To me! I must've read that page five or six times just to make sure I didn't mistake your meaning.

I don't care what you call these letters—I want to know everything about you, Dorie. What you like and dislike, who you admire, what you're afraid of, what you dream about.

I promise I'm normally a rational fellow. President of the campus debate society, member of a Friends congregation, business student, and construction worker during the summers.

But right now, all I am is the happiest man in the United States of America. Maybe the world. Nothing could take away this soaring feeling inside of me, almost like I could jump off a roof and fly.

I'm headed to classes, but I had to get this in the mail. Write back soon.

Yours,
Gordon

P.S. Yes, I'm planning to go to Syracuse for Christmas at my uncle's house. But if I take the train, I can duck out at the Allentown station stop, even if it's just for an hour or two. Will you be there? I checked the schedule—I should be there on December 19 at 4 PM.

FROM DORIE TO GORDON

December 5, 1941

Dear Gordon,

It makes a girl blush to have someone go on so about her.

So please don't stop. I'm awfully pale, and as Daddy insists that "no daughter of mine will wear makeup while under this roof," blushing is the only way to improve my complexion.

I'd love to meet you at the station on the 19th. I'll be wearing my red silk scarf. I can only assume you liked it, the way you stared at me the last time I wore it. Gosh, I love train stations, don't you? The adventure of travel, the thrill of a journey. You never know what might happen.

In the meantime, best of luck with your exams. I'll keep this short so I won't distract you from your studies.

Or maybe I've already done that. The world looks—I don't know—happier and brighter right now, doesn't it? Like nothing bad can really happen, or if it does, it won't reach us. I hope you feel it too.

AMY LYNN GREEN

*It's a delicious sensation, being above the world. I'm not sure
I ever want to come down.*

*Yours,
Dorie*

**RADIO BROADCAST FROM THE NEW YORK NBC NEWSROOM ON
DECEMBER 7, 1941**

President Roosevelt said in a statement today that the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, from the air. Stay tuned for further updates.

IN THE DECEMBER 8, 1941, PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

1500 CONFIRMED DEAD IN HAWAII
US DECLARES WAR
Senate-82-0
House-388-1

FROM DORIE TO GORDON

December 10, 1941

Dear Gordon,

War, Gordon! All this talk about it for years, and now we're finally getting involved. Everyone here is talking about joining up. Some of the farmers will have to stay behind, of course, but I'm sure we women will fill open jobs. Naturally I'm glad to do it—if Daddy will let me. He made me stop wearing overalls

and boots at age eight, and I'm not sure even the war effort will convince him to let me back into them at twenty.

Have you and Jack talked about enlisting yet? Or will you wait until you graduate?

I know both of you went on about peace after dinner one night, but surely you can see this isn't some political stance. When I read about what Hitler's men are doing in France . . . well, it makes my blood boil. Not to mention the awful news from Pearl Harbor.

My friend Carrie and her sweetheart are getting married next week, before he enlists, just to have a few months together first. I've thought about it and want you to know I'm willing to wait for you if you go overseas. After all, it's the girls at home that keep our men fighting for victory.

Please write to me. Better yet, call. You have such a deep, steady voice. I miss hearing it in times like these.

*Yours,
Dorie*

APPLICATION FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR STATUS

GORDON HOOPER

December 14, 1941

The following is my appeal for exemption from military service on the basis of my moral objection to war. As a university student in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love

founded by pacifists, I hope to find sympathy for my convictions.

As evidence that this is a long-held belief, I've been attending a Friends (also known as Quaker) assembly, one of the historic peace churches, since I was eighteen. I'm prepared to appear before the draft board and explain how Jesus' teachings leave me no choice but to reject all kinds of violence.

When I was young, I used to delay bedtime by begging my mother to tell me a story about Clara Hooper, her great-grandmother, a Quaker abolitionist who sheltered enslaved men and women on the Underground Railroad.

I remember huddling under my blanket near the radiator at eight years old, imagining myself as one of those fugitives, heart pounding in fear, back sore from hard labor and whippings, feet cut from nights stumbling through the woods. And there was Clara, standing inside the farmhouse door, with her soft-spoken "thees" and "thous," her kettle of soup simmering over the fire, and her quiet, unshakable commitment to peaceful resistance of a great evil. Almost every refugee who came through her door made their way safely to Canada.

When I was eighteen, I applied to legally change my surname to hers, rather than keep the name of my late father.

I tell you this because I want you to know: I am not only an idealist who can't imagine looking his fellow man in the eye and taking his life by force. I am also the great-great-grandson of Clara Hooper. I have a legacy behind me, and I hope to leave one after me.

Please give me the freedom to choose what that legacy will be.

Gordon P. Hooper

FROM GORDON TO DORIE

December 19, 1941

Dear Dorie,

You weren't at the station.

At first I thought the snow delayed you. Then I wondered if your father tried to keep you from coming, or if you'd bummed a ride from someone with an unreliable car, or even if you'd forgotten.

Eventually, after I wore out a groove in the platform hoping to see you coming over the hill, I had to get back on the train home to New York. That's where I'm starting this letter.

Jack told you, didn't he? That I'm going to apply for conscientious objector status, I mean.

That's why I wanted to see you in person. How else can I explain what I believe? You assumed I'd leap at the chance to fire bullets through men who have the misfortune of living in a country ruled by a madman.

It's not right, Dorie. I can't read the New Testament and find a way to justify killing or any violence, and now . . . well, now's my chance to live it out. Even though it's hard.

One of my professors told me I should start the paperwork, since the process to prove my sincerity can be intensive. If I'm drafted and approved as a conscientious objector, I'll be assigned with the CPS—the Civilian Public Service—till the end of the war.

I don't know how often, if ever, they approve furloughs in the CPS. From the sound of things, they want to make things as tough as possible for the COs to avoid getting an influx of lazy men who don't like the idea of overseas duty. That means my only contact with you might be through letters until this terrible war is over.

I hope I can make you understand. If you have questions, I'm happy to answer them. Below is my uncle's address in Syracuse so you can write or even call if you want. I'll pay the long-distance charges. We can work through this, I know it.

Have a wonderful Christmas, and remember as you sing "Silent Night" that I truly want the world to "sleep in heavenly peace."

Yours,
Gordon

FROM DORIE TO GORDON

December 22, 1941

Dear Gordon,

Your only contact with me will not be through letters. It will be in your memories.

How can you think I'd be interested in a relationship with you after this? Our country is fighting for survival, and you wonder what Jesus would do? Of course he would want you to fight!

If that was all, maybe we could say good-bye as friends. But you dragged Jack into pacifism with you. He's back for Christmas, and it's been days of long arguments, cold silences, and angry outbursts—at the holidays, no less, when all I wanted was for everyone to be happy.

Daddy served with distinction in WWI. We still have the saber from our Civil War ancestor, Robert Armitage, mounted over the fireplace. Now it's Jack's turn, and all he can talk about is flimsy arguments about peace in a world that's gone up in flames.

You can have your Inner Light or Sermon on the Mount or

whatever you call it. I'll have justice. If I were a man, I'd be down at the recruiting station this minute. Then maybe the neighbors would stop talking about how disgraceful it is for Jack to join the conchies.

Mother's always told me I'm too impulsive. Well, maybe she was right. I should have known better than to chase after some city slicker I knew barely anything about.

We live in different worlds, Gordon. Mine is the real one, and yours is some idealistic fantasy where everyone loves their neighbor and no one has to fight for freedom. It took a declaration of war to wake us up to that, but I'd rather know now than keep pretending.

Good-bye, Gordon. I hope the CPS treats you and Jack well—safe, coddled, and far away from those who are sacrificing for the ones they love.

Dorie

CHAPTER 1

Gordon Hooper

December 31, 1944

Three Years Later

Seems to me that if you have to ring in another year of war, you might as well do it parachuting into a wildfire.

That's what I'd thought, anyway, answering Earl Morrissey's crack-of-dawn call to pile into the Ford Trimotor with Jack. An hour later, fingers numb under hand-me-down leather gloves in the December cold, I was having second thoughts.

Thoughts like *I bet the others are eating breakfast right now*. A nice tall stack of Mrs. Edith's pancakes. No butter—rationing hit even the Forest Service—but plenty of maple syrup, pooling over the edge onto the plate.

Not the two of us, though. No sir. We sat crammed in the back of a flimsy plane that lofted us across the forests of Oregon. I could feel the seeping cold of the metal bench beneath me, even through my scratchy long johns and thick canvas pants.

I glanced over at Jack, the padded shoulders of his uniform giving him a hunchbacked look. Puffs of white breath curled out of his mesh-masked helmet, like a dragon had decided to try out for the local football team. "Nervous?" he shouted over the engine's roar.

I shrugged, figuring that even my Friends meeting back home would agree that wasn't a lie, strictly speaking. My hands wandered to the ripcord for the emergency chute strapped across my chest, a tiny thread of a lifeline if the worst happened.

"Get ready, boys!" a voice near my ear hollered, the unmistakable Nicholas Tate, a longtime ranger and our spotter. He gestured to the doorless opening near the back of the plane.

I'd crouched atop the practice tower dozens—no, hundreds—of times at our training center in Missoula, Montana, waiting for the starting gun of a single tap on the shoulder. After that, I'd gone on seven real fire jumps, four the summer of '44, three the year before. But those had ranged from May to September, so I'd never seen snow from the air before, clotting the ground between trees and dusting the coniferous branches far, far below.

At the sight, crooning strains of Bing Crosby wafted through my mind—"*I'm dreaming of a white Christmas.*" I shook my head to get rid of them.

Another Christmas away from home had come and gone for those of us in the Civilian Public Service. We'd roasted a few chickens back at our remote Oregon spike camp, far from glazed ham dinners, neighborhood carolers, department store displays, and pretty girls in red scarves waiting at train stations.

Where did that come from?

It was the nerves of the jump, that was all. Who knew where Dorie Armitage was now? She never wrote, not to me, not even to her own brother. We'd said our good-byes three years ago and never looked back. While some of her words still stung, I knew in my heart that she was right about one thing, at least: We'd both been young and foolish to think we were in love, until the war interrupted our daydreams.

I clipped myself onto the static line that would inflate our para-

chutes and crouched by the door, ready to fall into nothingness. My eyes found the clearing we'd be aiming for.

Take a look at that postage stamp. It would get bigger the closer we got to it, I knew—as long as the wind currents Jack had tested with drift chutes held.

As long as my parachute opened.

As long as I didn't get swept off course and into the trees.

As long as the hundreds of things that could go wrong didn't.

Earl Morrissey's words echoed in my head, delivered with the authority of a district forest ranger and his usual piercing look up and down the line. *"As smokejumpers, you run toward the fire, even when every instinct screams at you to run away from it. That's true courage, men."*

I'd signed up for that, applying to this program, and for two dry seasons, I'd plummeted through the air toward blaze after blaze.

But that didn't mean I had to like it.

I flinched when a hand touched my shoulder, but it wasn't the tap of our spotter, the signal to leave the plane behind. The hand rested there instead. I swiveled to see Jack, his dark eyes reassuring through the opening in the helmet.

"Hey," he said. "We're in this together, Gordon. It'll be all right."

I took in a deep breath. "Thanks."

He clapped me on the back, then moved himself in line in front of me. That was Jack for you. Always willing to go first.

"Ten seconds till drop!" Nick boomed.

I crouched, every muscle tense, my mouth dry as underbrush in July, staring down through cold, thin air.

Just a two-person crew for a small lightning fire. So far, it hadn't even crowned, the smoke rising from burning underbrush rather than the treetops themselves. After we jumped, Tate would have

the pilot circle around and drop equipment, food, and sleeping bags, in case we needed to spend the night. An easy job.

I tried to tell that to my stomach, but it wasn't listening.

Back when the Wright brothers first took off at Kitty Hawk—they were pacifists too—there were plenty of churchgoing Americans who declared that if God had wanted men to fly, he would have given them wings.

Mr. Tate's hand came down on Jack's shoulder. *Tap.* Jack disappeared out the mouth of the plane into the sky. I shifted forward to the door.

I've never been sure about that, but I am pretty certain that even if it was God's idea for men to fly, it was the devil's idea for them to fall.

Tap.

My body reacted on instinct, sprung like a wound tin toy, launching me out of the plane, feet first, arms crossed. For a few terrible seconds, I plummeted toward the earth.

It came a moment before I'd braced myself for it: the sharp jerk of the harness as the parachute bloomed above me like a silk mushroom. *Breathe. Come on, Gordon. It opened. You're all right.*

As usual, the training they'd drilled into us at Missoula played in my head over and over, like the tunes at the cheap bar in town with only a few records to spin on the jukebox. How to maneuver the chute, where to keep my eyes, how to brace myself for an easy landing. Some of the men talked about the float to the ground like it was a pleasant, drifting dream. I always nodded along. It was easier to pretend I wasn't terrified every time I saw the tips of pines and cedars pointing toward me like spears, the whirl of cold air against me almost as terrifying as the whiffs of uncontrolled smoke in the distance.

Those same feelings rushed over me as the ground came nearer,

winter bald and dusted with snow. This time, though, I landed without incident, standing on shaky legs.

I waved the red signal streamer from the pocket on my lower left leg to let Mr. Tate and the pilot know I was all right, then rolled my silk chute with practiced hands. Unlike the military, who'd had to start using nylon after Japan cut off our supply of silk, the Forest Service took good care of their expensive materials. For a man who made \$2.50 a month for CPS labor, the \$125 silk chute was like giving an urchin a royal robe, and I meant to take good care of it.

"Come on, Gordon!" Jack called, a few yards away, already sniffing the air. No compass or map for him—he oriented himself by his nose, since we rarely landed close enough to a fire to see smoke from the ground. "Let's get this taken care of and start an early dinner."

I snorted. "Someone's optimistic." The position of the sun told me we still had a few hours till noon, but this wasn't a city fire, with a shiny fire engine and hydrants to stop the blaze.

No, the only way to stop a fire out here was to suffocate it. Find the Pulaskis and shovels the spotter had parachuted down, then use them to dig a trench wide and deep enough that, without grass or underbrush to catch, the fire wouldn't have fuel to keep itself roaring. Sometimes we had to cut down trees, haul water in from a stream, or toss loose dirt over smoldering patches, but most of our time was spent digging the fire line.

Once we'd hiked to the fire's perimeter, I slammed my Pulaski into the earth, driving a furrow like the hand of God divided the Israelites from the Egyptians, so the plagues and the Angel of Death couldn't cross over. This far, and no farther.

The fire could rage all it wanted, but it wasn't getting more of the forest today. Not if I could stop it.



I let slip a groan as I set down my pack to take a swig from my canteen, slowly rolling my shoulders in a stretch. As always, it felt like the fire had gone out of the underbrush and straight into my muscles.

Eight hours of backbreaking work had clocked us in well within the 10 AM next-day containment goal the Forest Service used as their baseline for a job well done. Jack and I had taken two short breaks for our K-ration meals, the same dried stuff the troops ate on their missions, but then it was back to the unending digging of the fire line.

Two-man fires felt different than the blazes that called out our full eighteen-man crew or the infernos that requested jumpers from base camp and several of the spike camps combined. No mules to haul supplies and water, no cook assigned to rustle up grub over a makeshift wood stove, not as much camaraderie to pass the time. Still, it was better to be stuck here with Jack than someone like Shorty Schumacher, who could talk a fellow to death.

“Come on, Gordon,” Jack called back, his flashlight bobbing in the murky twilight, ahead of me as usual. “Another half mile, that’s all, and we’ll be out of here.”

“Another half mile, and I’ll die of exhaustion,” I grumbled.

Jack laughed and forged ahead. “Don’t be stupid. The bears would get you first.”

Too much energy to be real, like one of the black-capped chickadees that flitted around us during morning exercises, taunting the smokejumpers who needed to work so hard to be able to fly. Even in college, Jack had been that way, the handsome athlete everyone was drawn to, with the same winning smile as his sister, though they didn’t share any other features.

Just a few steps behind him, I managed to push my aching body forward.

On most jumps, we stuck around overnight and in the morning walked the breadth of the burned area, checking for pockets of hot coals to smother. We kept an eye out for snags—trees still standing upright, but with their roots burned out from under them. “Silent killers,” Morrissey called them, and he’d seen his fair share in three decades of forestry work.

Tonight, though, the midwinter sun set early and temperatures dipped below freezing. Morrissey had ordered us to report when the blaze was extinguished, then hike the few miles to the road and let the lookout who had spotted the fire come back to check for damage. A small blessing, anyway.

Once we’d made it to the highway, we radioed in our location and huddled within sight of the road. It wasn’t long before we heard the rumble of an engine, and a dull-colored truck rounded the bend in the distance.

“Now, that’s service for you.” I elbowed Jack and pointed out the truck. “Roadside pickup.”

He grinned and pinched his nose. “Sure, just like garbage collection back in Philadelphia.”

After a long day’s work, we sure didn’t smell like a Macy’s perfume counter. Not to mention Jack was just as broad-shouldered as me, so it would be a sardine-and-shoehorn fit inside the truck’s cab. *But at least it’ll be warm.* When had I last felt my toes, numb as chunks of ice even while wrapped in government-issue wool socks?

Inside, the ranger, who looked like he could have started in the forestry department under the *first* President Roosevelt in 1905, introduced himself as Arthur Calhoun and offered us slabs of jerky wrapped in wax paper. “Made ’em myself,” he bragged, lurching onto the road.

I gave it the old college try, biting off a chunk. Back home, I’d never been much for food you had to gnaw like a beaver. Then again,

back home, I'd never seen a beaver outside of a zoo. Now, though, the salt and hickory of the meat tasted better than the sweat and smoke I'd tasted the rest of the day. "Thanks for the pickup, Mr. Calhoun," I managed around the mouthful.

"Just doing my job." Our driver gunned the engine and rocketed down the road, making me jostle into Jack. "It's four hours or so to Flintlock Mountain, so best get comfortable. Been years since I drove all night like this. Normally, I'd tell 'em to make you wait through the night in those sleeping bags they drop in, but it's a chilly one, no mistake." Mr. Calhoun grunted. "Can't get a moment's peace, even in winter, I guess."

Next to me, Jack leaned forward. "About that. Isn't it odd that we had a blaze so long after fire season?"

I kept myself from rolling my eyes, but only barely. Leave it to Jack to care about probability when all I wanted to do was sleep. He'd be finishing up his training to become a top-notch high school calculus teacher if it wasn't for the draft.

"Don't know that I'd call it odd," Mr. Calhoun said thoughtfully. "Sure, we don't get much lightning this season, and things are wet enough with snow that they don't usually catch. But for every usual, there's an unusual, y'know?"

But Jack wouldn't let up. "Last year we had one winter fire in the whole state of Oregon. Morrissey told me this was the fourth fire report in the past six weeks."

"Like I say, these things happen sometimes." Mr. Calhoun took a turn I thought would send us into the snowy ditch, but righted us jerkily. "Now tell me, did you boys get a deferment for the smoke-jumping, or were you 4-F, some old injury or the like keeping you back in the States? If you don't mind my asking."

I glanced uneasily at Jack. Usually, forestry employees had heard about the conscientious objectors working fire duty, but every now

and then, the farther away we got from the base camp in Missoula, we'd find someone who didn't know.

Here we go again.

"Something like that," Jack said, at the same time that I said, louder, "Neither, sir. We're with the Civilian Public Service."

"With the what, now?" Before we could explain, Mr. Calhoun twisted to look at us, swerving wildly across the blessedly empty road. "Hold on, you're not some of those conchies, are you?"

"Yes. We are."

Mr. Calhoun swore, swinging his eyes back to the road. "I don't believe it. *Conchies*. In my truck. That's some nerve you've got, dodging the draft."

I clenched my teeth. I'd heard it all before. Shirkers, cowards, bums. As if we weren't making any sacrifices. The truck's cab seemed to shrink, like there wasn't quite enough air for all three of us.

"It's not draft dodging," I said, trying to keep my voice even and rational. "We've chosen to serve our country in a non-combat role because we don't believe anyone has a right to take another man's life."

"Huh. Tell that to Hitler."

I bit back a smart reply and waited for Jack to help me out. Two against one, we could make a strong enough case that Mr. Calhoun would leave us alone.

But Jack only shrugged, suddenly withdrawn. "It's between us and God. Just a matter of conscience."

Mr. Calhoun snorted. "Like blooming heck it is. If everyone was like you, why, we'd all be wearing swastikas and humming Germany's national anthem right now. Or Japan's, for that matter."

I had a standard comeback for that, and it came out quick and sharp. "If everyone was like us, there wouldn't *be* any wars."

For a moment, I thought Mr. Calhoun was going to dump us on the side of the road to walk the hundred-odd miles back to the Flintlock Mountain District. But he kept the battered vehicle on course, even speeding up, like he couldn't wait to be rid of us.

"Puh," he huffed. "That's an excuse if I ever heard it."

I felt a sharp pain and realized I'd formed my hand into a fist, fingernails cutting into my palm. *Calm down. Breathe in deeply. Let the anger go.*

I wouldn't be like my father. I *wouldn't*.

Slowly, I let my fingers relax, one by one. "I know it seems strange, Mr. Calhoun, but we've done a lot of thinking." I shifted to face Jack, prompting him out of his unusual quiet. "Right, Jack?"

But instead of answering, Jack faced the truck's window, as if he could see anything between the frost-laced glass and the darkness.

He's tired, that's all. Both of us were. This wasn't the time or the place for a debate.

"Just doesn't seem right," Mr. Calhoun muttered. Despite the large bundle on the dash, he didn't offer us any more jerky.

In the cold silence that now reigned in the cab, I felt my smoke-reddened eyes droop shut.

New Year's Eve. Almost 1945. Three years since Pearl Harbor.

We were doing the right thing. Of course we were. And if that meant building fences, digging trenches around dozens of fires, and arguing with old rangers until this crazy war was finally over, so be it.

I just hope the end comes soon.