Chapter 30

Bombs and More

 My name is Walter Hale. I have black and gray hair and hazel eyes. I was 54 in 1945.

 The skies were clear save for the occasional aircraft flying overhead, and the air was humid that was typical for a July day out on a Pacific island. I was trapped inside Headquarters for quite awhile planning strategies for the upcoming bombing raids. Being a 4 Star General does have some perks such as private lodging and facilities, but some draw backs is I no longer get to see action up in the sky like the men under my command. My wife, Ella, always complains that I am too reckless and it's a good thing they won’t let me back up into the skies. Especially since one of our two children just recently had a baby. I do agree with my wife, though, since one day I do wish to go home where there is no more threat of invasion from foreign powers.

 I think back of my home of Green Bay, Wisconsin and how the weather would be nowhere near this hot or humid even in July. I can only think of home for so long until one of my aids relays the message that I am wanted back inside Headquarters. Back to work again I guess.

 My staff and several other officers have come together so that we can discuss how best to soften the possible landing areas if we are to invade Japan. To begin this, I have proposed the action of constant bomber raids. This plan has been approved, and on July 10, the 1,000 bomber raids against Japan began. For the rest of the war, there are almost nonstop raids every day and night against Japan’s industrial centers. On one of the first days, we dropped so many bombs onto Tokyo that 51% of its area was completely destroyed.

 Many more plans were drawn up and put into action not long after the initial planning phases. One such being that on July 14, we sailed our fleets close enough that the first U.S. Naval bombardment of Japanese home islands took place. We were all prepared for what was soon to be the invasion of Japan as this war seemed to be heading toward. During this bombardment, the target had been Kamaishi, Honshu. The main being the Kamaishi Works of the Japan Iron Company where we demolished 65% of everything. Other targets had been every single iron works present on the home islands.

 All seemed to be going well until I received the toughest encrypted message I had ever seen. According to this, on July 16, the first atomic bomb had been successfully tested in the U.S. From what I had previously been informed on, the original budget for this bomb was $6,000 but the budget was bumped up to over $2 million. The testing had taken place primarily in Alamogordo, New Mexico. I received a call later from President Truman about how I should prepare my base for the incoming equipment for the bombs. He must have decided that an invasion on the Japanese homeland was not practical.

 For the weeks leading up to the drops, we still lead bombing raids against major targets but also sent reconnaissance missions to not alert the potential targets that a mission of two or three planes were a threat.

 Finally, the day came on August 6 where the B-29 Super fortress named Enola Gay was flown by Colonel Paul Tibbets. In her bombing bay laid “Little Boy”, the name of the Uranium bomb. At 8:15 am local time, the bomb was dropped over the heart of the industrial center at Hiroshima. Just 57 seconds later, it detonated about 600 meters above ground with the force of 13 kilotons of TNT. One mile around the initial drop point, or ground zero, was in complete and total ruin. Reports came back of 70,000 to 80,000 Japanese citizens and soldiers were killed immediately and another 70,000 injured. By the end of all this, many more would die from complications of injuries.

 Just two days after this bomb was dropped, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. They proceeded to advance into Manchuria in northern China were some Japanese soldier still held their ground. I advised against us bringing in the Russian’s help, and I seemed to be right considering they waited until after we had dropped the most powerful weapon in the world.

 After waiting several days, the leaders of Japan did not budge in their assertion that they could still beat the United States forces. So, on August 9, a B-29 Super fortress called Bockscar flown by Major Charles Sweeney flew up over Japan. In her bomb bay lay “Fat Man”, the Plutonium bomb. At 11:01 am local time, the bomb was dropped over one of the target areas of Nagasaki. 43 seconds later, the bomb detonated about 469 meters above ground with the force of 21 kilotons of TNT. The radius of this blast was one kilometer of total ruin. About 40,000 to 75,000 civilians and soldiers were killed immediately, and many more would die by the end of the fall out. After this drop, Emperor Hirohito and Japan's Prime Minister Suzuki decide to seek an immediate peace with all Allied forces. I was 54 years old. Maybe finally I would get to see peace around the world.