

THE LETTER

Written by
Robin Johnston

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1st Draft

RobinJohnston75@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST & HILLSIDE — NIGHT

The blackness of night.

Muffled BOOMING NOISES can be heard in the distance.

FLASHES OF LIGHT erupt, illuminating the far horizon.

The flashes outline the SILHOUETTE of a man!

A LONE SOLDIER, in his early thirties, unshaven, exhausted is scrambling up a hillside.

He wears soggy stained military fatigues, khaki body armor, army boots, a large military backpack and a muddy plastic poncho.

He has an automatic rifle slung over his shoulder.

He STUMBLES up a rough stony path, hauling himself along with gloved dirty hands. On either side of him is an impenetrable dark forest.

The soldier stops to drink water from his canteen and consults a laminated MAP, with his small torch.

Noticing MOVEMENT out the corner of his eye, he WHIRLS around quickly and AIMS his weapon.

A bedraggled feral-looking OLD MAN emerges from the forest like a spirit.

He seems to be suffering from shell-shock and instantly puts his hands ABOVE HIS HEAD, terrified.

LONE SOLDIER
I won't hurt you.

The Old Man looks back at the soldier blankly. The soldier lowers his gun and nods to the old man to move on.

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)
Wait.

He searches his pockets, and takes out a PHOTO.

SOLDIER
Where is this?

It is an old, stained, dog-eared photo of a small WHITE COTTAGE on a green hill. An idyllic scene.

The old man nods and POINTS further up the track.

The soldier nods too.

LONE SOLDIER

On your way.

The old man points to his mouth. The lone soldier sighs, and hands him some food bars and his water canteen.

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)

I doubt I'll need it now anyway.

The old man smiles.

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)

Good luck.

The old man goes on his way, staggering back down the hillside on his own.

The soldier watches him, then continues on his journey uphill.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The lone soldier sits cross legged at the entrance to a TINY CAVE overlooking the valley, trying to stay dry.

The FLASHES OF LIGHT continue far away on the horizon, as well as that endless distant BOOMING NOISE.

In the soldier's hands is a LETTER wrapped in plastic, with a yellow and black 'Lion and Unicorn' seal.

He stares at it, weighing it in his hands.

It is raining heavily and water drips down over his poncho hood. He keeps his automatic rifle close by.

A powerful SEARCHLIGHT BEAM suddenly reaches up out across the dark valley, up into the hills.

The Soldier DUCKS DOWN out of sight instinctively and takes out a small pair of binoculars out his backpack.

He looks down into the valley below.

The searchlight is mounted on the back of a TRUCK. Around the truck are many MEN, more SOLDIERS. They are dressed all in black and heavily armed.

They are hunting for someone. For the lone soldier?

The armed men search the hillside with powerful flashlights. The SEARCHING BEAMS dance about the forests and hillside.

They discover someone!

It looks like the old man who was hiding in the trees. The soldier can just hear their SHOUTING as they demand the old man come out.

The terrified old man does so, putting his HANDS UP. One soldier grab the lone soldier's canteen out the old man's hands and shows it to the others.

They all aim their weapons at him, and the lone soldier can just hear the old man PLEADING for his life!

When the Old Man is clear of the trees the armed soldiers OPEN FIRE, cutting down the old man in cold blood!

The lone soldier WATCHES all this coldly, without flinching for even a moment.

Then he RETREATS back into the safety of his cave, out of sight.

EXT. HILLSIDE TRACK - DAY

It is a strange morning, the sky GLOWS RED, and DARK CLOUDS SWIRL above the soldiers head like a huge hurricane.

The lone soldier STUMBLES as he climbs scree and stones over a barely seen mud track.

Then he stops suddenly and squats low.

He can see DARK FIGURES at the edge of the horizon, probably the searching soldiers.

As they pass by the lone soldier sits up, and keeping a low profile keeps on climbing.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFF FACE - DAY

Grubby GLOVED FINGERS stretch over the horizon, gripping the edge of a the cliff.

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)
 Siegfried! It's Siegfried!
 (to himself)
 Jesus.

There is a pause. The air is unnaturally silent, no birds, no wind, just that constant distant BOOMING noise.

Then the cottage door CREAKS OPEN.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - COTTAGE - DAY

The lone soldier sits in a wicker chair CHOMPING a white bread sandwich.

LONE SOLDIER
 Thank you, sir. All I've had for days
 is some rat packs.

He is eyed keenly and with some suspicion by a MAN sitting opposite, in his sixties, clean shaven, smartly dressed and with a distinct air of AUTHORITY.

This man has a black PISTOL HOLSTER under the left arm and a double barreled SHOTGUN sits next to him within easy reach.

He is the MINISTER.

MINISTER
 You're welcome, Private. Nice up here
 isn't it?

LONE SOLDIER
 Nice enough.

MINISTER
 How long have you been traveling?

LONE SOLDIER
 Six days. Sir.

MINISTER
 Were you tracked?

The soldier nods.

MINSTER
 How many?

LONE SOLDIER
Seven, maybe eight. They had a
vehicle.

MINSTER
So, they'll be here soon?

The lone soldier just nods again.

LONE SOLDIER
How long have you been up here, sir?

MINISTER
Long enough.

The Minister leans forward conspiratorially.

MINISTER (cont'd)
You've brought the letter?

The lone soldier nods again.

MINISTER (cont'd)
I'd very much like to see it.

The minister reaches out his hand.

The lone soldier carefully unzips a POCKET deep in his body armor, taking his time, which irritates the minister.

Then the soldier takes out the sealed small plastic YELLOW ENVELOPE, with that Lion and Unicorn seal on it.

He looks it over, then reluctantly hands it to the Minister, who SNATCHES it from him, frowning.

The Minister quickly opens the seal. Inside is just a folded piece of PAPER.

The Minister unfolds the paper carefully and reads its contents.

There is just the tiniest FLICKER OF EMOTION across the Minister's face.

Then he folds it again neatly, places it back in its sealed envelope and pockets it, staring out the window.

Through the cottage window he can see the tiny black figures of MEN approaching.

The soldiers in black!

The Minister seems surprisingly unconcerned. The lone soldier eyes him closely.

LONE SOLDIER
I'm guessing that letter...is
classified, sir?

MINISTER
You guessed right, soldier.

LONE SOLDIER
Sir, I've been searching for this
place for days. The rest of my squad
are dead in a ditch. We all had
families-

MINISTER
We all had families, yes.

The Minister turns again to look out the window.

Those men are still coming. Then he hears a CLICK. A gun safety switched off.

The Minister turns.

The lone soldier is pointing his sidearm at him.

MINISTER (cont'd)
What will this accomplish now,
Private?

The Minister turns away contemptuously, stands up straight and looks out the Cottage's main bay windows, as if awaiting the inevitable.

The lone soldier keeps his gun aimed. He is SWEATING. The minister glances back at him, noticing this.

MINISTER
It won't be long now, Private.

LONE SOLDIER
Sir, I'd like to see that letter now.

MINISTER
It won't do you any good.

LONE SOLDIER
Sir, I'd still like to see it.
Please.

The minister ignores him. The soldiers outside close in.

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)
Sir, give me that fucking letter!

The Minister glances at the lone soldier with contempt.

He takes out the letter, CRUMPLES it in his hand, then TEARS it to pieces!

MINISTER
Pick it up.

As the lone soldier LEANS DOWN to try to reach the paper, the Minister instantly DRAWS his own pistol, and FIRES!

His bullet misses the lone soldier, cracking a window.

Without hesitating the lone soldier SHOOTS, hitting the Minister TWICE in the CHEST.

The Minister gasps, and collapses to his knees, bleeding.

LONE SOLDIER
You shouldn't have made me do that, sir. I just wanted to know.

The Minister smiles grimly, his mouth bleeding.

MINISTER
Like I said, it won't do you any good. Not any of us, now.

The lone soldier stares at the dying man coldly then steps over him and SCOOPS up the torn bits of paper.

Then he looks up.

He can see those ARMED MEN still climbing up the green grassy hill, fanning out in a line as they draw closer.

The lone soldier DUCKS out of sight.

CUT TO:

He places all the bits of the LETTER on a wooden table, placing his pistol next to it.

Then he look over the bookshelves of the cottage and finds plastic TAPE, and quickly sets about REPAIRING the letter, the contents of which still cannot be seen.

In the corner the Minister's eyes close and he DIES with a sigh.

The lone soldier looks from the Minister, then the window.
The armed men are almost at the cottage!

CUT TO:

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

The lone soldier RUNS out onto the grassy hill, with THE LETTER and his gun in his hands.

The distant booming noises can be heard again in the distance. The sky is darkening.

He can see the armed men CHASING HIM as they see him bolt from the cottage!

The lone soldier runs to the edge of the CLIFF beside the cottage and kneels down next to it on the grass.

He FLATTENS out the letter and reads it.

A look of SHEER HORROR passes across his muddy face and he clasps his grubby HAND across his mouth, muffling a SCREAM.

TEARS start to fill his eyes.

CUT TO:

W.S. of the grass hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

A GRIEF STRICKEN CRY can be heard as the SOLDIERS IN BLACK close in on the lone soldier.

The lone soldier kneels and VOMITS onto the grass.

Behind him the soldiers in black STOP IN A LINE, aiming their WEAPONS. Their identity is CONCEALED by black balaclavas.

The lone soldier holds up his hands, stands up slowly and looks back at them calmly.

SOLDIER IN BALACLAVA
Hand it over! We'll let you live!

LONE SOLDIER
It won't do you any good. Not now!

The lone soldier smiles with relief.

He LETS GO of the letter, and it flutters AWAY on the wind, disappearing over the cliff!

The other soldiers cry out as-

The lone soldier aims his PISTOL at them!

LONE SOLDIER (cont'd)
It won't do you any good.

The soldiers in black FIRE all their weapons in UNISON.

W.S. of the hills as the GUNSHOTS are heard.

Birds in the trees are disturbed as the harsh sound rebounds among the hills.

They fly off into a DARK RED SKY.

Then it is just those distant BOOMS that can be heard as-

The BLOOD SPATTERED LETTER, taped in plastic, DRIFTS away and OUT OF SIGHT!

The sky DARKENS.

Flashes of light ILLUMINATE the distant dark HORIZON.

THE END