

Today

I dug through the dusty pile of dilapidated objects. The medley of items contained old books, out-of-ink pens, a khaki army hat and crumpled paper. My delicate hands slowly unfolded it before my brain allowed them. A browned photograph of a young, lanky woman, with pale eyes just like mine, was displayed in my hand. The armchair she was seated in had the same circular pattern as the chair in our living room. On the back, written in small, messy handwriting, said: *Pearl Harbour December 6th 1941*.

83 years ago

I trudged into the warm room and threw my coat onto the hearthrug. My fingers throbbed. I reached down to my round belly.

83 years ago 1 hour previous

At the military base, navy-uniformed officers darted through the hallways. I drew out a diagram of our little island and handed it to the administrator. With a rough grunt, he marched out of the room. I deciphered one last code from a foreign agency and stepped out the door.

Today

No.

It couldn't be.

My great grandmother, an army accountant?

No way.

I stared down at the words scribbled in black ink. Did the pregnant girl in the picture know that in less than twenty-four hours, her beloved home would be destroyed? Water dripped down my face. Her happy expression shone out of the layers of dust. Would she and her yet to be born child, meet the same fate as dozens of others?

A painful lump rose in my throat. I visualized the heaps of bodies lying on the muddy ground. My mum always used to tell me bedtime stories about war. Had she known about this photo? My eyes reddened. If only I found this photo sooner, Mum would have still been alive.

83 years ago

"Joe! Can you take a photo of me sitting next to the fire? I've loved that armchair since I was a kid."

"Coming!"

Today

I filled a glass with what looked like five hundred year old tea and placed it on Great Grandma's bedside table.

"Great Grandma, I have your medicine!"

A skinny, light-skinned female ambled in. She looked as though she was just skin and bone. "Thank you, Silvia," she croaked. Draining the glass, the elderly woman dropped onto her pull-out bed and turned on the TV.

83 years ago The next day

I woke to the sound of shrieks and screams. I shouted for my husband, but no sound came. I quickly pulled on my fluffy dressing gown and ran onto the streets. I looked onto the shore.

Warships. Stray shells flew through the air. Civilians sprinted around the road, crying for family members and friends. I suddenly glimpsed Joe, lying motionless on the ground. Dead. "No.N-no no no no no.This isn't happening!" I rasped, my voice creaking. I blinked a tear away and ran.

I cried myself to sleep tonight...

Today

An odd sort of groan rang out of the living room. I sprang down the stairs, and nearly bumped headlong into my great grandmother.

"Oh, thank heavens you're 'ere Silvia. I have the worst stomach ache. It's not usually this bad. The medication-"

I dashed to the table and raised the medicine box to eye-level. *Only take half a glass of this medicine or there will be fatal side effects.* IMy heart skipped two beats.

When I rubbed my eyes open, I saw Great Grandma lying on her red pull-out bed. I asked abruptly, "Did you live in Pearl Harbor and survive the bombing?" She smiled, the wrinkles around her mouth disappearing. For the first time, she looked like the lady in the photo. She sighed, "Yes. I still remember that day your grandfather died." I looked into her pale eyes, the ones just like mine.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have-" I mumbled. My eyes burned.

"No, no it's quite alright. I was going to die anyway. Goodbye Silvia, I love you."

"Thanks"

I watched her take her last breath, and blinked a tear away.