

# THE REAL MURDERER

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## THE REAL MURDERER

Jacob Roberts stared hard after the departing train on Red Flynn Drive. His brother was going to the War in Europe, and Jacob had to stay home just because he was “only seventeen”. His parents could have signed for him to join the Marines like he wanted to, but they hadn’t. Jacob couldn’t join until he turned eighteen which was almost a whole year away.

Jacob kicked some loose gravel on the street with his shoes, and scowled. A surge of resentment rose up in him as

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the train chugged away out of sight and hearing around the blocks of Beacon, New York. The train had gone, and had left him quite behind.

Jacob seethed inside. His brother who was barely two years older than him was getting to be some hero while he had to stay home and do school. *It isn't fair at all!* he screamed to himself. *This is 1942 and I'm no baby! I can fight just as good as James can.*

With those stormy thoughts in his head, Jacob sulked away from the station, leaving his mother and little sister crying beside the thoughtful father.

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Things weren't looking too bright for the Roberts family. Every day bad news filled the kitchen from the turned-on radio.

"Another hundred killed..."

"Hitler makes his speech to the German people..."

"Thousands of Nazis crushing through the lines of France."

The bad news wore on.

"I wish they would capture that fox Hitler," fourteen year-old Emily declared, "and put him back in his cage *forever*."

"Didn't know he was ever caged,"

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Jacob said gloomily. Hearing War news always made him grumpy because that's where he wanted to be--in that War.

"He did used to be caged," Emily said with a look of shock at her brother's ignorance. "After the First War, he was imprisoned. That's when he wrote his book *Mein Kampf*, which means *My Struggle*."

"Huh." Jacob nodded once, not too enthused about any doings of the Nazi leader who was like a poison, poisoning everything he came in contact with.

"He thought his life was so hard," Emily continued, "that after he had risen

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to power he wanted to make everybody else around him miserable too. I can't stand him!"

"Emily!" Mother scolded gently. "Don't say that. You're not supposed to hate anybody no matter how wicked they are."

"Didn't say I hated him," Emily said without a trace of humor. "I just can't stand him. Love his soul. Hate his ways."

Emily continued talking, but Jacob didn't hear. He had stopped listening a long time ago. He was planning in his head of some way to capture that fox Hitler. But he couldn't, *there*. He needed to go to Europe. He needed to fight. He

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needed to be one of Uncle Sam's men.



James' letters home sent a wild joy over Mother and Emily, and Father grew proud when anybody asked about James. Jacob watched all this take place...and wished even more that he had gone over to the fight. He wanted the praise so bad.

One day, as Jacob was getting groceries for his mother, the clerk asked him, "So, how's that brother of yours? I heard he's the talk of all this side of



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town.”

“I guess he’s doing pretty good with himself,” Jacob tried not to sound too dull. “How could he not be when his outfit’s whipping the Nazis?”

“I suppose so,” the clerk handed him his change. “Have a good day, Jacob. Tell your family I said hello.”

“I will.” Jacob left the store with a sinking feeling. There it was again...*his brother*.



Every evening it seemed Jacob just

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habitually “forgot” to include James in his prayers when the Roberts family read the Bible and prayed. One night Jacob laid in his bed, thinking.

*Why didn't you pray for James?* a little voice asked him, making him feel a little guilty. But it was only a *little guilt*, he shrugged to himself.

*Besides*, Jacob thought, staring up in his dark bedroom, *James has got Father's, Mother's and Emily's prayers to live off from. He doesn't really need mine.*

Jacob then rolled to his side and tried a long to go to sleep. Three words

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seemed to repeat over in his mind as he lay there, *Pray for James...*

*Why?* Jacob dug his face into his pillow. *He doesn't need me to--he has everybody else praying for him.*

Finally, Jacob fell to sleep, those three words still rolling over in his mind. And when he woke the next morning, those three words kept coming to him. *I don't get it*, was his rotten attitude as he got ready for school.

As Jacob ate his breakfast, he heard his Mother comment, "I believe that all of our prayers will carry James through. He'll come back to us, safe and healthy."

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At that, Jacob felt startled. He had not prayed for his brother.

“I trust he will, too,” Father agreed.

Emily nodded, soberly for once.

Only Jacob remained motionless, unable to lower his pride somehow to be really concerned for his brother who was a hero like all of Uncle Sam’s men were. He walked to school with a grinding conscience. Would his prayer make a difference?



Terrible news came the very next day.

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Jacob was walking home from school when he saw that an Army car parked in front of their house on the street.

“Oh no,” he made a groan, knowing that an Army car at their house meant bad news.

“It’ll be next week,” an officer was saying, coming out of the house. “A week, no sooner!”

Jacob stared with dread filling his whole body. *James can’t be dead. He can’t be!* He heard a noise behind him and looked to find his sister arriving home from school.

“What does that officer want--you?”

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Emily asked, staring at the two officers walking down the walkway.

*Me?* Jacob almost smiled. How he wished it was. He dreamed nothing better than to wear a uniform, hold a gun and to have a shoulder full of medals-- just to be one of Uncle Sam's men.

"Dunno." Jacob answered, and Emily frowned.

"It'll be a week!" the officer repeated over his shoulder just before climbing into the Army car to pull away.

"No, no!" Emily suddenly realized what this might mean. "Not James!"

She ran to the house in tears, lugging

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her bag of school books. Jacob followed slowly, dreading to hear the news. When he came up the walkway he heard his mother crying, and his father telling Emily who was sitting on the hallway floor, “We’ll see him in a week, Emily.”

When Jacob stepped into the house, Father looked at him, “We’ll see him in a week,” he repeated, swallowing.

Jacob felt the color drain from his face, “Is he...?”

“Not dead, son, but badly hurt.” Father’s voice was low, like he was keeping himself from crying. “He’ll be coming home in a week.”

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“But so badly hurt he won’t even recognize us!” Emily sobbed, her shoulders shaking as she cried into her arms over her drawn-up knees.

Jacob stared hard, open-mouthed, and felt a lump rise in his throat. It might have all been different if he had prayed for his brother! But he had been so stubborn and proud. His prayer could have made the difference. Why didn’t he love his brother? It wasn’t James’ fault that he had to stay behind.

Jacob rushed to his bedroom, let his bag of school books fall to the floor with a thud, and threw himself onto his bed.



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And let the tears come. If his brother died...it would be all his fault!

Jacob boxed his pillow with horrible regret. *Why did I do it? Why did I let hate rule my life? Now my brother's all mashed up from War. Why did you do it, Jacob!*

Jacob could not stop crying. He had to bury his face into the pillow to muffle his noise. His plans to capture that fox Hitler was fading fast now--now that he realized what a fox he was. He had wanted to capture Hitler because Hitler was a murderer, someone who deserved to be captured and imprisoned.

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As Jacob looked well into his soul, his searching mind remembered something. He remembered a Bible verse that had been read not too long ago. It was 1 John 3:15, "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer...*"

Jacob screamed inside, *God, how can I be? How can I be!*

Thinking real War now made him imagine all of the screaming torpedoes, screaming bullets killing and battering screaming men. Even Uncle Sam's men...they were no exception. Though a hero in the fight, they still got the wounds--that's what made them just a

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better hero, just a tougher man.

As Jacob began to realize his horrible mistake, terror of his brother dying replaced his previous hate. *God, please forgive me! And, please, don't let my brother die. Please make him well. I do love him, I really do.*

Jacob sank his face into the pillow, laying there, still. He had thought his life over. He was going God's way now. He chose love instead of hate.

As hard as he tried, laying there on his pillow, he could not condemn Hitler now for being a murderer when he himself was one according to God's

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thinking.

*Really, Jacob, he asked himself, who  
is the real murderer?*

**THE END**