

Forgotten

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Johnny Bishop had difficulty opening his eyes which wasn't unusual for him, his eyes always seemed stuck after deep sleep. He attempted to raise his arm to wipe away the sleep but it was fixed in position by his side, in fact he couldn't move either arm.

There was a great deal of pain in his legs. He tried to turn his head but was unable to do so. He had trouble breathing and thought he was in a dream. There was something on his face. He tried to open his mouth to call for his mum but he seemed to choke on a substance in his mouth.

He lay that way drifting in and out of consciousness. The pain in his legs kept waking him up, he really did want to go back to sleep. Johnny had gone to bed early last night and thought he must still be in bed but he wasn't sure. He could feel clothes on him but there was something heavy on top.

After what seemed a very long time voices penetrated his senses and the weight on his body was lifted,

"Hang on son you'll be alright now." Two men raised Johnny through the rubble.

"Careful Tom" one said, "It looks like his legs are broken"

"Put him straight in the ambulance, Mick," said another "We will look at him there. We might have to stop digging soon, it's getting dark."

Johnny was aware of bells ringing but they sounded muffled he knew lights were shining even though his eyes were still closed.

"Is he going to be OK?" asked the driver.

The medic was washing Johnny's face.

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"Too early to tell," he replied.

Johnny thought he was swimming. The trouble was the water was hot and he didn't remember the water in the swimming baths ever being this hot before.

After the dust and muck was washed from his eyes he found he could open them only to close them immediately due to the lights. He was strapped down to prevent him rolling about in the ambulance.

"Don't worry you'll be all right. You are going to hospital. What's your name" asked the medic.

He opened his eyes "Johnny," he said, then drifted off into a deep sleep, the morphine was taking effect.

It was some time later when Johnny regained consciousness. He was still not sure where he was, then a face appeared in front of him. It was a girl in a funny hat,

"It's a nurse," he said

"Yes it's a nurse," said the girl. "I'm nurse Jenny and you are in hospital"

His mind was in a spin and he couldn't yet fully understand what had happened to him. He wanted to ask, why am I here and where is my mum.

In fact his mum was outside the ward waiting anxiously for news of her son. It was now twelve hours since Johnny was dug out of the debris after their house had been badly damaged by the blast from a V2 rocket. It was 1944 and the Bishop family was living in a two-up two-down house. The blast had demolished the upper floor but the downstairs rooms were untouched.

Johnny never recovered fully from his injuries. His legs didn't set correctly and this caused him to walk with a limp subjecting

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him to some ridicule at school, particularly from the girls. He was also prone to fainting fits.

A few years later he was in my class at Pretoria Road School Canning Town. He sat next to me in the Art Class and on one occasion he fell slowly behind me across my back.

I remember asking, "What's up Bish? Dropped your rubber or something?"

I moved forward and Bishop fell to the floor. The teacher rushed to him, forced his mouth open and put a wooden rule between his teeth. Apparently this prevented him from swallowing his tongue.

He was taken away by ambulance and I never saw him again. I asked around what happened to him but no one seemed to know. My mother said she didn't know the family. Eventually I heard from a teacher that Johnny had died, there was no announcement at the school.

Johnny Bishop just seemed to be forgotten.