

## The United Divide

Her lips taste cold and feel like blood. I press my lips harder against hers to entice a response. Her arms swag downwards and her lack of strength is heavy in my arms. I can't pick her up, but in my kneeling position I kiss her lifeless body to let her soaring soul know that I will still love her even in death. In this night of scattered, sprinkling rain drops I cannot feel my sadness drip down my cheeks but my heart swells with it.

"Let her go! We've got to keep moving!" a militia man yells at me.

Savannah is burning – again.

They say history repeats itself; take Europe as an example. The Greeks understood ownership and began the Western expansion. They lost their foothold and it was replaced by the Romans who lost control over the region after too many foibles from a squabbling empire. Charlemagne re-aligned Europe with war as did Napoleon and Hitler.

Europe has always been a divided sub-continent. Religion, language, commerce and the disparity of knowledge and wealth has roiled its soils for eons. In the latter part of the twentieth century Europe was once again united, peacefully, under the European Union. Yet, as the old orders have shown, it was not meant to last.

Europe had united as a means to prosper and compete against the super-nations of the U.S., Russia and China. However, when member nations fell into financial chaos or went to war for self-protection against invading neighbors the European Union suffered for these consequences and, to save themselves, they shed these burdens from their ranks. Europe, as always, had been united under false pretenses by empyrean usurpers who were planning their dissents upon the nescient population in the shadows of their forced democracy. The sub-continent was never meant for unification since each peopled valley and mountain had always enjoyed their solidarity. We believe these facts to be our sacred truth for legal separation.

"Grenade!" someone shouts.

Savannah is burning and it is an ill omen that we take with heavy breath and lowered brows. And in my arms my sweet blond haired, blue eyed Josie is dead this night; dead and gone along with our ambitions.

Her body shields me from the blast but I am knocked back against a car. I recover, but time has slowed into a quiet blur of shapes and sounds. I see a militia man fire his rifle and it looks like photographs. His muzzle spits fire and then his angry, bearded face lights up; boom-picture, face-picture, boom-picture, face-picture, boom-picture, face-picture.

A man falls next to the car that I fell upon and I find myself back in real time. He is alive and I curl my lips in anger, drop Josie and ram my knife into his throat and it thuds against his spine. He grabs at me but I twist the knife and stare into his eyes to let him know that I am the one that killed him.

We never wanted to unite. That is why we fought the first war and why we started the second. We are not like them and they are not like us. Why should we be forced, no, oppressed to stomach their ideals?

A hand touches my shoulder and I thrust my knife towards my assailant's abdomen. My eyes recognize friend and my muscles reverse its motion.

"Whoa... easy now," the bearded militia man says.

I put my knife into my sheath and I crawl through the dark, rainy streets to where my eyes lead me – Josie.

She is lying on her side and I gently form her body into a respectable position. I part the blond hair from her face and cry into her dead blue eyes.

"She's lost, but we need to continue our fight," the bearded militia man says. He fires a few shots into the distant darkness.

I close her eyes so that her corpse will see no more failure.

"She is not lost because I – we – will never forget," I say.

I grab my rifle and follow the remaining remnants of our battalion; only six of us left.

Savannah is burning because the President issued the Sherman Plan.

Our hearts might be buried in graves dug by the enemy but we will pass down our memories so our descendants never forget.

I shoulder my rifle and scan the streets for a target. My brothers-in-arms fire wild shots at the apartment windows with bullets and grenade launchers. Their ruse works; a few of them take to the streets to flee for safety. A man and a pregnant woman are running hand in hand. I calculate my shot for wind, distance and prey speed. The iron sights of my weapon are aligned just above and in front of her.

Josie, my love, and our fight for individual freedom are gone this rainy night. We will never forget and we will never stop trying to secede from the oppressors.

"The South shall rise again!" I scream and pull the trigger.

## Critical Analysis of a Short Story

1. What happened after the trigger was pulled?
2. What led you to this decision?
3. Can you provide reasons for why your analysis might be wrong?
4. List examples that your original analysis might be wrong.
5. In relation to this story, why do you think it is important to prove to yourself that your way of thinking might be wrong?

Sept. 1, 2012