



Ni Shagu Nazad! Not One Step Back! Chapter Two

By DarkPower343

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Unarmed and terrified, what will the unsung heroes do?

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I ducked my head to my knees as four bullets pinged on the truck. More men screamed and wept as the machine-guns ruthlessly tore into their bodies. "God dammit!" Viktor shouted. "We need weapons!" "We can't get any weapons without getting shot!" I shouted back. "I know that!" More men kept

screaming, the guns kept firing, and I vaguely remembered the Commissar's words. ' They have not enough ammunition for their soldiers, ' I was tempted to look back at the machine-guns as I contemplated whether that was even true or not, but remembered the soldier who had done the exact same. I was sprinting alongside Viktor when I saw it, a soldier behind a tree peeked out at the machine-guns, his left eye had been blown out completely, and the bullet had torn a messy hole in the back of his head when it exited his skull. I shivered and huddled behind the truck as Viktor mumbled to himself. Why? Why did this have to happen? Why did we have to fight this war? Where's my family? What are they doing? Are they safe? I mean, they're miles behind the other side of the Volga, but, how can I know for sure? What if the Germans have found another way around? Or what if there are being robbers or kidnappers taking advantage of the chaos caused by the war? "Dmitri!" I heard. Frightened I looked up at Viktor. He shook me. "Do you hear me? Answer me Dmitri!" I shook my head and swallowed nervously. "I hear you! I hear you!" He nodded and sat back against the truck. "We need to focus! Dazing off..." He shook his head and waved a hand. "No good! It'll be the death of us Dmitri!" I nodded. "R-right!" "We NEED to get rifles, but how?" Viktor asked himself more than me. Something exploded some distance to my left and I ducked my head between my knees. Dirt and some foul smelling substance showered me and I looked back up and around. I saw fifteen men's chests and stomachs explode as bullets ripped them apart, blood gushing out of their mouths and wounds as they fell face first. I didn't want to believe that I'd just seen that. I didn't want to believe that I just saw an entire platoon gunned down within seconds of the battle. Boomf! Boomf! I heard from the distance. Viktor looked up as the sound repeated itself for fifteen seconds, somehow overriding the bloodthirsty screaming of the machine-guns and declaring that what it meant was far more powerful and extremely important. Then it stopped. There was a soft whistling, which grew louder and was joined by another whistling and then another and finally the machine-guns stopped as Germans screamed and shouted and one of our men yelled for everyone to stay down. The barrage of explosions that followed were deafening at best, I dove down, curled in the fetal position as I covered my ringing ears. The earth shook violently, chunks of concrete and stone hailed down on us, and somehow, I just barely managed to hear the screams of men dying in the barrage. Artillery. I'd only seen the guns, I'd only heard that they could destroy tanks, but as I covered there, desperately hoping and praying that I wouldn't be blown to hell by the artillery, I realized, that there was no hope against such devastating power. Such devastating and undying devotion to the destruction of men, would one day destroy everything I loved and cherished. And that day would very well be this day. My ears were ringing when the ground stopped shaking. I slowly opened my eyes, and looked around, our soldiers were still running up the banks, up into the lines of fire and. Wait. The machine-guns have stopped. Was the artillery meant to neutralize them? As I sat up a single shot rang out, and one of our men dropped dead right beside me. My eyes went wide as I scrambled away from the body, and the machine-guns resumed their raging screams in a softer, wounded growl. Viktor grabbed my collar and yanked as hard as he could, and I fell face-first into a horrid smelling mud made by the dead man's blood. Viktor dragged me through it and slung me against the truck. "Listen to me!" He shouted. "Listen to me Dmitri! Listen! Listen to me!" He shook me as I panted, unable to respond.

"Don't run! I've seen this before! Don't run! Running makes it worse! You hear me?" I paused, but I nodded. "Good," he whispered. "Because this battle is far from over!"