

Had society been genderly equal, the protagonist's story  
wouldn't have been a flash fiction, but a novel.

## A Flower Among Trees

by

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I bumped my head hard that July morning. It was six o'clock when I was awakened by the startling sound of gunshots. I was in my warm, safe bed and a war in my hometown was the last thing I had expected.

My village was a small and peaceful one of a fair weather. In most days of the year, the sun looks gently upon us, touching us warmly enough to keep us warm, but never too hot and cruel. Northern winds blow with ease, bringing us the coolness of the ocean which is a thin line across the horizon from where we live. To the south resigns a calm crystalline river which glitters and sparkles in reflecting the sunlight - or moonlight - that falls upon it. Green grass, beautiful flowers, and firm trees grow up healthily alongside the road of white stones and pebbles. The stones that form the bank of the river are as white as the pavement of the rising and descending main street. The kind natives usually are out and about at this time of day, but because of the horror that awaited us outside, all remained inside.

I made my way to my own window with newborn fright. I peeked outside only to see smoke in the distance and troops gathered in

the public square. They wore dark gray uniforms with matching militarily beréts. Their manly, dutiful appearance sent chills down my spine until I recognized one of their faces. It was the village's baker! As my eyes shifted from one face to another, I became aware that the men standing outside were our men. Then, my eyes fell upon a warm face hiding behind the nerdy glasses I have gotten used to seeing ever since I could remember. He was my brother.

Brian is older than me by seven years. By the time I was in junior high, he had already finished college and returned home. Not a minute to soon, either. By that time my aunt, whom we've been living with since children of seven and fourteen, had passed away due to heart failure. In her will Brian and I were to inherit her estate and everything else that was in her possession. Even when she's dead she looked after us. It has been two years since her death and Brian and I still refuse to forget her. In our hearts I call her mother, and I know Brian does the same.

I immediately rushed out of my room and down the stairs to join the men outside. The thought of them being traitors crossed my mind at first, but when I saw Brian with them I knew that this couldn't be the case. Brian was raised by a pure-hearted woman, so there is no way he could ever betray his sense of duty. I knew at once that this must be a militia he and the neighborhood had formed to stand against the threat that was upon us: they had formed an alliance to protect our town.

Once I was out in the sweet dusk of the morning, a cool breeze came against my skin delivering a warning. It told me to get properly dressed or risk catching a cold. But I ignored it and headed towards the men. It wasn't anything to be alarmed of, at least not as much as the advancing enemy troops that wanted to take away our country. I wrapped my arms around myself and marched towards them barefooted. I hadn't dressed properly after getting up from bed; I was still in my short nightgown and, having placed a robe on my bare shoulders, I was practically naked. Once the mens' expressions had become viewable from where I stood, I saw the dismay on their faces. Before I was in range for them to hear me, I saw a local cobbler alert Brian of my

approach. Brian received me with the same look.

'What are you doing here?' Brian questioned me with a strict tone and a firm look in his harsh eyes after seizing my arm tightly and marching in the direction from where I came. He marched in a military-like manner.

'Brian, what's going on?' I asked naïvely.

'None of your concern. I want you to go back home and stay there.' He issued an order.

'Brian,' I objected as I struggled to keep my foot down; to stand my grounds. 'I'm not a kid anymore,' I exclaimed like a sixteen year-old would, 'I know a war's coming. I want to help.'

'I'm not playing around, Elinor. Go home, now!'

The way he shouted it made it clear how serious he was. I stood against him - facing him - looking into his eyes. He had cruel eyes at that moment, ones that told me that he wouldn't back down from this argument if his life depended on it. He was so serious that he had failed to take me seriously. I wasn't joking; I wanted to join the militia as well. I have ears, I could follow orders to protect the town; I have a brain, I could help with preparing plans; I have fingers, I could hold a rifle and pull the trigger. But no. Brian didn't even consider me even though I saw boys much younger than myself wearing that same uniform and beréts. What experiences did they have in such situations that I didn't have? Have they ever been to war? No. So what is it that makes it okay for them to defend their country at the front while I stay at home?

I backed down as I was expected to and let my brother go back to join the other men. With my broken heart, I captivated my strong desire to start my own revolution of some sort. I had neglected my robe at that moment; I felt it slip down to the ground. There was a gentle current of wind blowing from the north, but it wasn't strong enough to blow away my robe. I stood there watching Brian go to battle while the wind made my white nightgown dance. Right then and there my eyes were directed by some force to look at the greens next to our house: The small and delicate flowers danced in the wind, red and yellow and pretty, but the strong trees stood firmly against the wind.