

Operation Emily

A World War story of Love and Loss

"Stars shining bright above you, Night breezes seem to whisper "I Love You", Birds singing in the sycamore trees, Dream a little dream of me".. Margot Bingham's "Dream a Little Dream of Me" is lulling softly as Frankie Ramone lay in his silk white sheets, sleeping as peacefully as the day he married. The birds were chirping and he could feel the cool French breeze blowing in his bedroom window colliding softly with his soft dark skin. He felt a hand sliding up his white tank top and along his neck, It had to be his loving wife Lisa he thought to himself peacefully... but at that same moment the soft voice of Margot faded and his eyes shot open to see the outstretched bloody arms of Captain Pierre Debuchy slump from around Frank's neck and onto the ground next to him, Frank saw that the Captain had been lasarated in the back by anywhere from 15-30 bullets, bullets that would have and rightly should have hit Frankie. Frank felt the shiver of fear and the cold fingers of death rush down his spine as he tried to get up, but as he pulled himself up using the tracks of his FCM 36 tank, he found out that a 6 inch shard of aluminium had lodged itself into his thigh making it quite incapable of holding his weight. Frank pulled the Meunier rifle from under the now limp arm of Pierre and used it as a crutch, he used every ember of strength he could muster, almost passing out with the sharp piercing pain that shot up his body and propping himself up he dragged his body around the tank tracks, all the while his friends and foes alike were slaughtering each other with bullets, bayonets and daggers, his unit was burning in the FCM 36 tank and he couldn't help but to try and help his brothers in uniform out just as Pierre had helped him judging by the ashe and burn marks on his blood soaked uniform. Frank reached in and ripped Jacques LaFont out of his seat, Jacques was a 16 year old boy who enlisted under false pretences to get away from the constant physical battering and psychological trauma he was receiving from his stepfather. Frankie was just reaching back in when he felt the cold steel blade of a german bayonet slide in and out of his back leaving a cold trickle of blood to flow steadily down his back and leg. Frank was weak but still turned to wrestle the attacker to the ground however just then there was an explosion a few yards away which sent Frankie, Jacques and anyone else in a 50 yard radius flying through the air.

Frankies eyes once again shot open, he was screaming and tried to flail his arms but realised he couldn't move a muscle, he woke to a crowded hospital ward full of his wounded fellow countrymen, covered in a cast from his neck to ankles and in unimaginable agony, he could feel the shrapnel which was still buried deep in his thigh and the deep incision that pierced half way through his back.

3 months had past and the calender read January 1940, Frank couldn't see much in his weak state which caused him to drift in and out of consciousness but he certainly seen her, a brown haired, green eyed girl who had these deep beautiful ravine like dimples running through her cheeks, she had a smile that would brighten up the darkest of hearts and eyes as green as the Irish fields she came from, eyes that Frank thought he could get lost in forever and still live a happy life. All the other soldiers saw "Nurse Emily" as a piece of meat, but Frank saw different.. to Frank she was the sole reason for ending his night terrors of the war and for saving him from himself as the cold steel blade of his army issued pen knife would often find its way hovering over the veins and arteries on his wrists. Frankie was different from the other soldiers and Emily soon started to realise that, often staying on to talk to him after her shift ended. A few months had passed when Emily came into him late and woke him up crying, she told Frank that France had surrendered and she had to get on a boat back to Ireland, she wanted Frank to come with her but in his condition he couldn't even get out of bed and by golly did he try.

Frankie wrote letters to the address Emily gave him often but never did get a reply, 6 months to the day Emily exited his now miserable life, he was discharged and given the "Honour medal for courage and devotion" for attempting the rescue of Jacques whom had died in a coma two weeks after the explosion. Frankie had long since realised that both Lisa and his son had been all just a hallucination and therefore caught the first flight to Ireland, to Camp in County Kerry to be exact. He searched for days until he came across the O'Donovan farm he had an address to, Kerry was much different to Paris Frankie thought to himself, the houses were miles apart and the fields were an unorganised mixture of hills and valleys whereas Paris was littered in small studio apartments and narrow winding roads. Frankie was about to knock on the small rickety red door that had been severely weathered and flaked paint, when something caught his eye across the road, a single white rose, Frankie hobbled across the yard on his crutch and picked the rose, on his way back he glanced in the equally weathered pane of glass to see Emily lean across a wooden table and land a kiss on the cheek of a dark haired giant of a man with a prominent bone structure in his facial features, Frank didn't take time to notice the wrinkles on his face and the light grey hair. Frankie felt his heart collapse into the pit of his stomach and saw the rose and card slip out of his fingers, a tear trickled down his cheek, through his black stubble and dripped onto the white woolen jumper he had received on leaving the hospital ward. His world started spinning and he must have knocked over a flower pot on his way out because it caused Emily to run outside in her blue dress and white frilly apron, Emily looked longingly at the muscular figure which hobbled away at a distance, she knew she wouldn't catch up but she also knew the muscular man had to be her Frankie. She picked up the letter and the rose and read "My Dearest Emily, your hair is winter fire, January embers, my heart burns there too, Love always and forever, your Frankie" and at that moment her heart melted. She didn't quite know why Frankie left but she was determined to find him as soon as dawn struck, unfortunately for her, Frank had left by dawn and went to live his life forever broken hearted that his Irish sweetheart had moved on so fast, he spent the next few years in a mixture of reliving the war and waking up in cold sweats to hanging a rope on one of the attic rafters and tying it around his neck while standing on a rickety brown timber chair, he looked at it as a game of odds, if the chair broke and the rope didn't.. It must be fate, afterall Frank had nothing to live for but cheap beer, horrific nightmares of the burning faces of his friends and enemies alike, he had made his peace with his foes as he began to realise they were all human under the uniforms, and heartbreak. He lived in a musty flat and lived with a record player, a fridge, and a mattress. This continued for years until he began to get senile and admitted himself to a 'maison de soins infirmiers' or nursing home in our native English. Emily was unhappy in Ireland and moved to France a few years after Frank's visit to Ireland in search of her one true love, once she had heard of a Frankie Ramone, a 68 year old black man who had been admitted to a nursing home, thus putting his name back on the grid, she followed up the lead. She rushed to suburban Paris, walked in the door and there he sat, in the conservatory of the nursing home, a much smaller but still as charmingly handsome Frankie Ramone. She checked in as a visitor and walked in and sat next to the shrivelled man who didn't quite notice the woman's arrival, Frank didn't remember much but when the beautiful grey haired woman with eyes as green as the fields she came from placed her hand on his, and he looked into her perfect eyes and saw the dimples that made him feel so much in a time where he felt nothing, they made him fall much much harder. His crystal blue eyes gave a glint which hadn't been seen in years and his tough grey skin, as weathered as the window pane, curled at the edges of his mouth. Frankie placed his other hand on hers, he didn't know if it was a dream but either way he didn't want to leave that moment, some would even say he got lost in her eyes!

Frank died 2 years later while Emily lived only a few days more, but while Frank and Emily didn't live long after, I would say in those years they lived the loudest!

Frankie Ramone of Paris, France (30-9-1918) and Emily Donovan of Kerry, Ireland (26-7-1920) got married on the 2nd of December 1988, Frank died of a heart attack on the 4th of December of the same

year. Emily sat at his grave every day until she too died of a heart attack two weeks later, doctors would say she died of a heart attack but if you asked me, I'd guess a broken heart.

The End ;)