

## **THE BOMBERS MOON**

The headlights lit up the falling snow, and the great bulk of the mountains loomed above the narrow single track road as it made its lonely way through the vast emptiness of the North-West Highlands, on that Christmas Eve night. Inside the Ford Corsair patrol car the old cop and the young cop sat quietly in the warmth as the old cop puffed on his pipe, occasionally brushing the ash off his row of medal ribbons.

Suddenly, the clouds parted and a great moon appeared, bathing the glen in light. The old cop turned to the cadet and said "And this lad is what we used to call a Bomber's Moon. Good for aiming, but deadly dangerous. The German nightfighters could see us miles away".

And then, as they turned a bend, just above a lochan, they saw a pre-war MG sports car pulled up in a lay-by, with a young man, wearing an RAF greatcoat, bent over the bonnet. The old cop stopped and spoke to the man, who explained that he had an ignition problem, but would be able to fix it, although it would take a while, and asked if the old cop could do him a favour. "My Fiancée lives a couple of miles up the road, and I wonder if you could let her know I will be a bit late. Oh, and could you give her this as well please?" and handed the old cop a package. The old cop put it safely in his pocket and they drove off in the moonlight.

They soon located the cottage and knocked on the door. A lady in her fifties answered and invited them in, and they sat by the open peat fire while the old cop explained why they were there. She sat silently, listening to the story, and when the old cop handed her the package, she took it and held it quietly for a minute. She opened it and took out a hand-knitted woollen scarf which she pressed to her face, whilst tears flowed down her cheeks. The old cop got to his feet, went to the kitchen and came back with a cup of tea and placed it in her hand.

And then she began to speak. "We were always together, from childhood, and he loved me more than anything, even more than his old MG. When we were courting we used to park in the lay-by up above the lochan. It was our special place, and it was there he asked me to marry him. And a week later he was called up to the RAF. I knitted him this scarf because it could get cold in the cockpit of the bombers and he wore it every time he flew. And he was due leave, but had one final mission to complete before he could come home. He was going to drive all that way on Christmas Eve in his old MG to be with me, just as soon as they landed. And then, over the darkness of France, the moon came out - a Bomber's Moon- and the German fighter appeared from nowhere. They never stood a chance. And the next night, there was a knock at the door, just like tonight, and I rushed to answer it thinking he was here. And there stood two Officers. And I knew. I got his MG taken all the way home and have kept it in the byre ever since. I have loved him all these years and I knew that, somehow, he would let me know that his love for me was still as strong as ever. And tonight he has".

And the tears continued to flow down her cheeks, but now they were tears of joy, not grief, and the old cop rose silently and left the cottage, with the young cop following. And, as they passed the byre, they went in and lifted a dust-sheet and there was the MG, silent and cold.

They got back in the Corsair, not a word being said, and went back to the lochan. The MG and the man had vanished. Not a tyre track or a mark was left in the snow. As they drove off the old cop lit his pipe again and puffed for a while. Eventually, he turned to the young cop and said "During the war, over the wilderness that was occupied Europe, I saw many strange things. Things I could never explain, and tonight you too have seen the inexplicable. I am due to retire soon, but you have thirty years ahead of you and my advice is that you should say nothing. Nothing at all, until I am long gone, and the lady is long gone, and you are retired. Promise me that lad". And the young cop gave his word.

And the years passed, and the years turned into decades, and the old cop, the young cop, and the lady kept in touch, with never a word said about that night. And one fine summer's day the lady was laid to rest above the lochan, with the scarf held in her hands, and soon afterwards the old cop also passed, and was laid to rest with his pipe and his medal ribbons in his hands. And on the night of each funeral a great Bombers Moon rose into the sky above the mountains.

And the young cop served for over thirty years and he kept his promise until the time came to tell the story. And that time is now.

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