

The Infinite Doctrine

Vol. 1

5 Short Stories Written By Scott Donnelly

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The Infinite Doctrine: Vol. 1

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“Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it, we go nowhere.” – CARL SAGAN

“You see things; and say ‘why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say ‘why not?’ -GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For while knowledge defines all we currently know and understand, imagination points to all we might discover and create.” – ALBERT EINSTEIN

IN THE DEAD OF WINTER

It was supposed to be a simple ‘hold down the fort’ mission. I didn’t expect it to turn into a game of survival. And it couldn’t have happened in a colder time. The winds were heavy; blowing the falling snow into my face, making it sting. The howl of the wind made it hard to hear my squad - wherever they were. I sat in the snow bunker we’d dug out by hand, gripping my machine gun and pulling my ski mask down over my face. It was the dead of winter and we were fighting a war.

I had seen a few of my team member’s fall to the ground after being shot; I had known these men for years. But I had to stay strong and fight my way out. I, as well as the rest of my squad, couldn’t lose this battle. It was out of the question.

Through the blowing wind and drifting snow, I could hear footsteps crunching on the ice outside of the bunker. The bunker was cold and small but it certainly hid me well from the enemy. The crunching in the snow was getting closer. This was it - I could fight my way out or die trying. At this point in the war, it didn’t matter to me.

I gripped my machine gun with my gloved hands and waited - staring out of the bunker into the looming dusk. I heard enemy soldiers yelling. It was obvious they had spotted more of my soldiers. Their yelling was followed by the loud pops of their pistols and the returning fire of machine guns. I closed my eyes

until the gunfire passed. Then the footsteps started again; closer than before.

I leaned forward to the opening of the bunker and peered out. Three enemy soldiers stood to my left, holding their weapons, looking at me.

I screamed a lionhearted scream and lifted my machine gun towards the center soldier. I gripped the trigger and didn't hesitate to pull it back until it scrapped the metal behind it. The ensuing blasts from the gun were of a sonorous and fierce nature; one in which I held back no mercy. The center soldier dropped to the ground like a rock and as I swayed the fire spewing machine gun side to side, the other two dropped without even enough time to raise their weapons.

I gathered myself and stood up, looking into the vast, snow covered land. I saw where a couple of my men had bravely stood and taken their last breath. I also saw an approaching band of enemy soldiers running in my direction. I glanced around again, noticing that I was the only survivor in my squad. I faced the oncoming men and took a firm stance. I raised my gun up to them, but they were already firing on me. I ducked and rolled in the snow. Was I hit? I wasn't sure. Between the cold, the blowing wind and the excitement, I didn't even feel if I was shot or not. Forcing myself back to my feet, I aimed my machine gun at them and began to pump out round after round into them. One of them dropped immediately. Another showed weakness as he

grabbed his shoulder and rolled around in the snow. The others keep pursuing me. I looked through my crosshairs; explosions lit up the dimming sky behind them. The spotlight was on me now. As they cracked off shot after shot at me, I began to race towards them, holding the trigger back on my gun.

The deafening scream of the gunfire was then overpowered by someone calling my name.

I saw the storming soldiers ahead of me stop and put down their weapons. In a state of confusion, I turned around, and peered through the falling snow. Was one of my men still alive? Then through the snow and the overcast of the approaching night, I saw my mom standing in the front door.

“Tommy! Dinner!” she yelled to me. She had been calling my name for a couple minutes, but I guess I let my imagination keep running. I turned back to all my neighborhood friends and dropped my toy gun.

“I’ll see you guys tomorrow!” I shouted.

They replied with the same, and I ran up to my house to have dinner with my family. The war was over for now, but hopefully we’d have another snow day tomorrow.

THE MAN WHO SPOKE WONDERS

It was very cloudy. Looked almost as if it was about to rain. But that didn't stop me from taking Kona for a walk. Kona was my beautiful Labrador retriever; chocolate with a white belly. We took walks almost every day depending upon the weather.

On this particular day, I was having problems with my ankle. I had twisted it a day earlier playing touch football with some friends. There was a bench in the park Kona and I was walking through. It was close to the road, at the bus stop. We made our way to it, and I tied Kona's leash around the leg of the freshly painted bench. I sat there for a moment, cracking my ankle back and forth, trying to get the pain to subside. It worked sometimes, but others it hurt worse. This time it seemed to be working.

There was a spit of rain that hit my jeans, followed by a very light mist. It wasn't enough to make me want to leave. It actually felt good, since the temperature was well into the mid 80s. It was warmer than it should have been this time of year.

To my right, across the street, there was a construction truck. Three men were standing outside the truck with the sewer grate open. They had a ladder going down into it, and a few tools lying besides the orange cones they used to direct the traffic around them. The three men, probably in their 40s or so, were yelling back and forth at each other, swearing up a storm. I was never one to use swear words, as I didn't see the point. There are

plenty of other words you can use to express yourself without being vulgar. From where I was sitting, and what I had seen, none of the three men seemed to be in the right - it was a pointless fight.

To my left, was the playground. There were not very kids out this time of year; probably too hot for them. But there were two smaller children, around ten years of age, falling victim to a trio of older kids. It was common for older kids to show their age and bully their minors around. It showed that you had power over someone, and that's the only reason someone would bully. Deep down, they don't want to hurt anyone; they're just looking for attention.

I felt a thud next to my right, and turned to see an older gentleman had plopped down on the bench besides me. He was probably in his 70s, and had very thin gray hair. He was dressed nicely in a suit and bow tie, and his face was complemented with very thick-framed glasses. He carried an umbrella at his side, and had set it horizontally across his lap. He stared straight ahead and gently tapped his fingers on the umbrella.

The man turned to the right and looked across the street at the three workers swearing at each other. The man smiled, and then glanced to the left, looking past me. I knew he was staring at the children bickering at each other, so I joined him in looking. The two older boys were in the middle of pushing the younger ones. I

moved a little, as I was about to get up and stop the bullies, and then was stopped by a hand on my shoulder.

The older man had his hand on my shoulder. I sat back down on the bench, and turned to him as he retracted his hand.

“You can’t stop kids from being kids.” He said.

“I know, I was just going to try and -” I began, but was immediately stopped by the old man.

“You have kid’s fighting to your left, and adults fighting to your right. Don’t you always find this happening?”

“Sure. It’s human nature.” I responded to his question.

“I have too been sick of this behavior, for quite some time now. You can’t change the world. But the world can change you. Most of the time, for the worse.” He said.

I sat there, not knowing exactly how to respond to this man. He was probably just talking for the heck of it; showing his age perhaps? But his words made sense. The man tapped his chest, suggesting he had something in his suit pocket.

“I have my ticket. I am taking trip away from this place.” He told me, as I wondered where he could have been going on this bus. It just went across town.

“You visiting family?” I asked him.

“Sure am. I’m going to where I use to live. A place where this,” he pointed to the kids and then the adults, “won’t be happening. It’s a much nicer place.”

I thought about how a place like that would be. This man, who I have never met before, could really make me think. He continued:

“I’m taking this trip to get away from the world’s problems. A vacation I am not sure I want to come back from. A place where there is no fighting between each other. A place where the sky is always blue, and the grass is always the greenest it can be. Where the clouds above you hold endless possibilities.”

There was no place like this, and I was starting to think he might have been a little crazy. I wanted to know what destination the bus ticket in his suit pocket actually said. It was probably just the next township over. However, his speaking intrigued me. He had a very smooth voice, and it was almost soothing listening to this man speak. I let him continue:

“I want to wake up in the morning,” he said, “and not have to worry about the dangers, problems and stress that lay ahead of me for the day, you know?”

“I don’t think you can ever escape stress.” I told him.

“You’re wrong. You can escape stress. You just have to learn how to deal with it first. Then the rest is simple. Love is another reason I’m taking this trip. I’ve never been in love, and I know for a fact that this trip will supply me with enough love.” He said as he looked down the street. Traffic was held up down the street for some reason, and there was a police barricade. I looked with

him, and could see the bus that was going to be stopping here was stuck in the traffic.

The man turned to me. “Looks like an accident -probably just someone in a rush to go nowhere. It happens all the time. People put total strangers in danger just to accomplish something for themselves. Is that what life has come to in this day?”

I just nodded my head. I agreed with what he was saying. People now a days are ridiculous. Then I thought of what he said a few minutes ago, and asked, “You have never been in love?” “No. Never. I mean, I was married for 55 years, but was that love? Or just a way to pass the time?”

Now he had me hooked. This guy was either crazy, or the most intellectual man I have ever spoke too. “What do you mean? Time passer?”

“You know. Someone to be with until you finally get to take this ‘trip’? Trust me. Everything you have every wanted will be at the end of this trip. The happiness shared by all. The smiles. The inspiration. The incredible feeling of success and amorousness.” He said.

By this time, I was stunned. I wanted to know where this place was he was talking about. “Sir, if you don’t mind my asking. What does your bus ticket say?”

“Why do you wonder? Do you too want to go?”

“Yes. This place sounds like the perfect place to be.”

“If I were you,” the old man began, “I would get your ticket, and go as soon as you can, and while you’re young. I should have taken this trip many, many years ago.” He said smiling. The man took a deep breath and stared straight ahead again.

I heard the sounds of cars getting close. I turned and saw that the traffic had broken up and the bus was on its way. Some cars were already passing by us. I turned to the old man. “It was nice talking to you sir. Here comes your bus, and I hope you have a great time wherever it is you’re going.”

The old man turned and looked me in the eye. “Thank you young man, I will enjoy myself. But I’m not taking that bus.”

I must have had a confused look on my face, as he stared back at me with a hint of a ‘you-didn’t-know-that?’ look.

“But you said you had a ticket out of here?” I asked. The old man responded by opening up his suit coat and revealing a pistol.

“I do have a ticket out of here.”

ONE TOUCH

It's late, and I am finally lying in bed. In the dark, with no worries the rest of the weekend. A long day at work, followed by dinner with the family, and watching my cousins' football game at the high school. It was time to call it a night. I'm sure I would be able to get to sleep with no help, but it was just normal for me to flip on the TV, and let lights in the dark room, and dull volume put me to sleep. But, like I said. That's normal. I think I will try something different tonight. Maybe pop on my headphones, and let some light alternative put me to sleep. I grab my headphones from my nightstand, put them over my ears, and flip on my MP3 player. Now it was time to relax.

The music has been playing for almost an hour. My conscious fades in and out, and I see visions of dreams I could have had. The annoyingness of a repeated song, finally grabs my attention. I open my eyes, and touch a button on the MP3 player. It illuminates in a blue fog, and when my eyes finally adjust, I see that I have accidentally hit the constant repeat button. Disoriented from the fading in and out of dreams, I press another button, which I didn't really mean to press. My settings screen comes up.

Come to think of it, I don't think I have ever messed with the settings. What kind of settings could you possibly need for listening to synced music from your computer? I fumble with the

buttons for a moment, then I hear a voice. Two voices actually. It's two women talking.

"We're going to do this now. Just as instructed." the first woman said. The second woman sounded a little younger in her voice, and replied with, "I understand. How are we going to take this one?"

"We're just going to grab him, and leave. One touch is all it takes."

I couldn't understand what I was hearing. This wasn't one of the songs - or anything - I put on my MP3 player. By now I was fully awake. I yanked the headphones out of my ears, held down the off button on the player, and dropped them on the floor next to my bed. I yawned, and then rolled over onto my side, and shut my eyes. Silence was what I needed.

"Are you ready?" The first woman said. My eyes shot open, and I rolled over. I began to feel slightly faint. Who was talking? It's late at night, all the lights are off in my house, and there should be no one else in here but me. Intruders?

The second woman answered, "Almost. I dread doing this. I hate doing this."

"I know you do. None of us like it. But it's what's got to be done."

"I know."

"Come on then, lets take him".

I looked at my closed door, where a bright light illuminated from beyond the other side of it.

“Oh God.” I said, as I sat up in my bed. I had all my focus on the door. The light grew brighter and brighter. I heard the women talking about.

“Just one touch. Then we leave.”

“Gotcha.”

The door began to slightly. I screamed out, “Get out! Or I’ll call the police!” I began feeling faint again - that screaming seemed to take my breath away. Were they leaking some kind of gas in the room or something? What did they want?

The door opened more and more. The light flooded in, and I finally saw the form of the two women. Two beautiful women. Absolutely gorgeous. They were both wearing white dresses. Though their beauty was that of angels, I was still afraid of what they had planned. I felt dizzy, and as they were walking towards me, and reaching out for me, I closed my eyes and tightly held them shut. I could still see the light on the other side of my eyelids.

“Grab him!” One woman yelled.

“One touch! That’s all it takes.” the other woman said.

I felt one of their hands touch me on the shoulder, another on my chest. My ears began ringing, and I heard a defining pop come from inside my head.

Everything was silent. I opened my eyes back up, and looked down at myself, lying in bed. I looked to my side and saw the two beautiful women, smiling at me. I smiled back. I was home.

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