

Tom Barrow Closing: Resolution and Ending

Resolution: the problem is sorted out

Mrs. Barrow kept a tight grip on her son's hand.

"He's a real hero. A fighter-ace. Captain Daniels said so," she blinked back hot tears as she spoke to Tom's sister, Anne, who had just joined her mother beside Tom's hospital bed.

"I know mum. I know," came Anne's soft reply.

Tom lay sleeping on the bed, wrapped in bandages from head to foot to cover his horrific burns. He was sleeping as the coast guard recovered his limp, broken body from the sea; sleeping as the nurses painstakingly applied wet cloths, hour after hour, to try and save what was left of his charred, peeling skin; sleeping as he was moved from one bed to the next, to make room for the influx of allied casualties that kept on coming, day after day. He would still be sleeping when his poor mum and sister were ushered out of the Red Cross auxiliary hospital for the twenty first time with the reassurance that 'tomorrow might be the day'; while Sister Jameson secretly wondered whether it might be more of a blessing if sleep consumed Tom forevermore.

That night, amidst the groans and cries of his comrades lying in the beds around him, wracked with their own pain, grief and regret, a small sound escaped Tom's lips. Inaudible to everyone else in the room, it served to jerk Tom awake and he sat bolt upright. Despite the severity of his injuries, he felt no pain; instead a numb heavy sensation seemed to press in all around him inducing panic and fear. He grabbed at the bandages around his face and gasped in a lung full of air as they were flung aside.

An explosion of questions burst inside Tom's head. Where was his plane? Why wasn't he wet? Or cold? He threw his arm protectively across his head. Where were the bombers? Were they looking for him? Where was he? These thoughts sent him into a frenzy of thrashing and shouting and trying to stand (but falling) out of bed. It took three nurses over half an hour to calm him down and relief came as the drugs were administered and sleep once again washed over him, bringing escape from his terror until the next night. This became the pattern for Tom, night after night, for many weeks while during the day he slept, seemingly peacefully.

Ending: how does the problem get solved?

One morning in late September 1940, when Mrs. Barrow was reading the newspaper to Tom like she did every day, a small flutter flickered across Tom's eyelids. Anne, who had been dabbing Tom's burn cream onto his forehead, thought she had imagined it at first; she stopped what she was doing and watched until she saw the fluttering increase.

"Mum, mum look!"

The two women peered intently down on Tom as he eventually opened both eyes, the room blinking in and out of focus as he struggled to adjust to the light, and the intensity of colours and shapes around him. The panic he'd suffered night after night had faded; replaced now with an aching sadness mixed with relief. Months and months of rehabilitation stretched out before him, but he had turned a corner.

"Hi mum," he smiled, "I'm back."