

Sometimes It Rained

by Steele Diamond

He always felt safe with a gun in his hands. Back home anyway. Russ was from a rural part of South Carolina. A place where you could brush the humidity away from your face with your hand and drink down sweet tea in glasses so big, it cooled your toes. He was not exactly out of his element here, in the woods, was all it was. Just different woods than the ones on the edge of the farm. In a different country. Instead of shooting squirrels with a .22, he had an M-16 and was trained to shoot anything.

Russ was usually on a listening post somewhere. He liked the listening posts more than the observation posts. He could blend in with the trees and just daydream his time away, but snap back as soon as some out of the ordinary sound intruded his thoughts. He was gifted like that.

His favorite place was to be back home maybe listening to his mother talk to his grandmother on the phone. They only live a couple of miles away from each other. But each day, right after lunch, (which dad called dinner), she would call. Mom would talk to her for thirty minutes or so. His mother's southern accent was thick. So thick, visiting Yankees, (who would stop at the roadside stand by the highway in front of the house), would often ask her to repeat things. Russ could hear his grandmother on the other end of the line. He couldn't make out what she was saying, but he could hear her high pitched voice. It always sounded like she was complaining about something. She probably was. He often wished he could hear her complain now.

Russ had his license, but he didn't have a car. Just an old Honda 350 motorcycle. He bought the motorcycle from one of his dad's friends, Mr Jenkins, for \$50. Mr Jenkins' wife didn't like her husband riding it. It seemed too good of a bike for \$50, but that was the

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price. It was also what Russ had saved up. His dad had a truck, but that was mostly for farm use. Maybe going in to town a couple of times a month. His dad would always let Russ drive to town. But he never let him take it on a date. That was ok. Russ would ride his motorcycle to the drive in and park in back. He would take a blanket and sit on the ground and watch the movie.

Sometimes he would go to Red's filling station. His friends usually met there. They would open those little plastic packs of peanuts and dump them into cokes. Except Van. He liked his in Dr Pepper. They would sit and talk about the girls in town, while drinking the goober filled sodas. Girls that Russ never really cared to know before he left. All but "Chairs." At least that is what everyone called her. Her name was Charity. She was really the only girl Russ cared about. Russ had different dreams about Chairs back then. Before he was here. She and Russ had been friends for... well, he couldn't remember a time when they weren't friends. They went out a couple of times in high school. When they needed a date for something. And to the prom in old man Walker's barn. But they were best friends and that was all. Until the day Russ left for boot camp. Chairs was there and the last to say goodbye. She hugged his neck tightly and kissed him on the cheek. Like a song he once heard, she whispered, "Please come home to me. We were meant to be." When he looked at her, as he walked away, he saw the tears in her eyes. It made him feel like he had to come home. A feeling he tried to remember everyday since.

Sometimes it rained, back home. He could smell it long before it got there. Looking west, he could see the sky turning gray and the rain moving towards the house. It would rain hard and bring a clean peace to the farm. Unlike the rain here. The rain here fell hard. It made a lot of noise. It was more than sometimes. It was more than most of the time.

