

THE POOR LAND GIRL AND HER STORY

As I woke up at 06:15 rubbing my sleepy brown eyes, I had 15 minutes to get dressed, brush and pull back my long, matted blonde hair and eat breakfast (a piece of soggy toast) before I had to leave for the morning egg collection and cow milking. As I went into the kitchen for breakfast as usual, Josie and Mum weren't awake yet. After I ate my toast I started off the day with what has been normal ever since Dad went off to war two years ago.

"Elizabeth hurry up you're late," Farmer Joe bellowed from across the paddock.

"Sorry Joe I'm coming," I replied nicely, "it's only 06:32 so I'm only two minutes late," I mumbled to myself. Farmer Joe was a nice man, but when he woke up on the wrong side of the bed he was not very delightful. The food for the animals was getting very slim, there was only two bags of chicken feed left for the chickens, and three lots of hay for the cows, I knew this was not going to last them through winter, which was coming up in around five weeks. I will try my best to get them food but it's not that easy in the middle of the Mid Canterbury region, an hour away from the nearest town. I am quite sure they will die of starvation within the next two weeks. We get food delivered to the farm, but it's not coming for another four weeks.

After a long day of work I stumbled across the paddocks and into the small little house where I live. When I get home it's 05:51 and I have nine minutes until blackout time. I hate blackout time because it's dull and boring. As blackout time approaches I start to cover up the windows with wood, usually I see Mr and Mrs Brown, but they were not there, I thought I should wait a few minutes and then they should be setting up. As Josie, Mum and I finish setting up I peep through a small hole in the wood, Mr and Mrs Brown haven't even started setting up.

"Mum, Mr and Mrs Brown haven't covered up yet and I'm going to tell them," I shouted,

"Elizabeth darling it's too dangerous and what if you get caught, we need you on this farm, you're the best 16 year old Land Girl we've got," insisted Mum,

"Don't call me that ghastly name mother!" I explained,

"Mother you know Elizabeth doesn't appreciate being called a Land Girl," Josie whispered in her soft little eight year old voice. While Mum and Josie were talking this was my time to warn Mr and Mrs Brown. I snuck out through the back door.

I got to their door and warned them well enough. Now I have to get back without getting caught by the Patrol Police (guards who patrol the streets at night to make sure no one is out). I crept across the road, then in the distance I see the faint headlights of the Patrol Police truck. I dived into the bushes. The Patrol Police were getting closer and closer every second. I ducked down even further, I pray that I will not get caught and I can go inside, pretend nothing happened and go through the rest of the blackout time (two hours). The guards must've seen me because when they stopped right in front of the bush I knew I was going to Solitary Confinement for at least four months. I heard the guards chatting amongst themselves, probably planning out how they were going to capture me. I was 100% right. Within 10 seconds I was being handcuffed. Mother must've heard all the racket and poked her head out the door.

“Elizabeth Margaret Parker!” Mother shouted from the door, “What is going on here, I told you not to go out!” This is the angriest I’ve ever seen mother in the whole 16 years I’ve been alive.

“Sorry mother, I should’ve listened to you, I’m ever so sorry,” I yelled, as I burst into tears. “Your daughter is being taken into Solitary Confinement for five months,” bellowed one of the guards.

“Please officer, please!” sobbed Mother, then off went the waterworks. I felt sick as I watched my mother get pulled back inside, I felt worse when I saw Josie poking her head around the corner watching in horror.

“Everything will be alright,” I whispered to myself as I sat shivering in the back seat of the truck. I was terrified. I thought about how much Farmer Joe and Mother were struggling, Mother especially. We have been having financial problems ever since Dad went off to war, but I’ve been helping out with that by working on the farm. I worry about Dad, I’m scared that I’ll never get to see my father ever again.

“Oi you get out,” the guard hissed. I’d been so busy crying I hadn’t even noticed the truck stopped. I climbed out and walked towards a towering building with barbed wired fences surrounding it. My throat was getting uncomfortably dry, and I was getting extremely nervous. The guards pushed open the big wooden doors and we entered a cold concrete hallway with rooms on each side. I got shoved into a cold dark room with a small window with metal bars on the outside. In the corner was a very uncomfortable looking bed with the thinnest mattress you could ever imagine. This was going to be the longest five months of my life.

A week had passed and I was already missing my lovely Mother and bubbly little Josie and every night before I went to sleep, I can hear Mother’s voice trail along the corridors trying to find me. The guard walked passed and shoved my breakfast tray under the bars, I couldn’t complain about the breakfast, it was the same as ours at home. At 10:00am we were let outside to get fresh air. Most people had friends that they walked around the courtyard with, I walked around by myself hoping someone would want to walk around with me. For dinner we got disgusting undercooked pasta and a ridiculous sized slice of meat.

It had been two months and I was really hoping the next three months would go by a lot quicker than these two months have. I was so bored I had resorted to scratching a line on the wall for every day that went past. The days went past and they went past slower than ever. The food was getting worse and the boredom was getting unbearable.

Another two months had passed and if I didn’t get out of this dump in the next 30 days I was gonna lose it. A guard came and opened up my cell, I stepped out and I was taken outside the gates. I was pushed into a truck that looked the same as the one I arrived in. I was squished in between two big shouldered guards. I wondered where we were going, maybe I was going to another prison because they didn’t have space for me, they could be taking me to the Airport to send me away to a foreign country. As we turned a corner I knew exactly where we were going, as I saw the old derelict house I called home, I knew I was never going back to that concrete block again.

As the guards knocked on the door, the guards and I, stood there in the cold because winter had just begun. I heard the faint footsteps of Mother, she opened the door very carefully because that’s just what Mother did during war time. When she saw me standing

there in handcuffs looking up at her with an innocent smile the door flung open and hit the wall and Mother came running with her arms out wide and ready to squeeze me to death.

"Oh Elizabeth you don't know how happy I am to see you!" cried Mother,

"Is Elizabeth back Mum?" asked Josie from the kitchen,

"It's me Josie" I laughed as she sprinted right into my arms.

"Why did you let her out so early?" Mother asked the guards.

"We let her out a Month early for her good behaviour," muffled one of the guards.

"Well you be good now young lady," smiled the other guard as they stepped into the truck.

After twenty minutes I finally got inside, I was hungry so I went straight to the kitchen, I noticed a telegram on the kitchen table but thought nothing of it and went into the cupboards. As I rummaged through the cupboards and found some Jam and bread to make a sandwich. As I started to make the sandwich I could see the telegram in the corner of my eye, it had three bold letters on it but I couldn't tell what they were so I turned around and picked up the telegram. On the front was the name that made me sick, my father's name, John Parker, with the acronym **K.I.A.** underneath. I fell onto the chair and put my head in my arms and cried. I cried my eyes out so that after about five minutes there was a small puddle of tears. I was still crying when Mum came in,

"Elizabeth what's wrong," Mother questioned, then she saw the telegram by my hands and knew exactly what was wrong. She sat down beside me. She just sat there with her arms around me, I didn't want to move. Mother got up and put the kettle on, she made herself some tea, which was not very easily found during the war.

"Would you like something Elizabeth?" questioned Mother politely, obviously trying to be as nice as possible so I wouldn't get upset.

"Well I was just about to make a Jam sandwich," I replied "Then I found the telegram."

It was a great day, until I found the telegram, after that I just wasn't myself, I didn't move quickly in Blackout setup, even Mother told me to stop slacking off. I decided not to let the thought of never seeing my father again get to me at work the next day, so when I arrived at the barn in the morning, Farmer Joe being in a good mood really helped. But the animals didn't, I thought about how they probably weren't going to be here next week, but it wasn't going to stop me. After I collected the eggs I went into the hay shed to get the buckets so I could milk the cows. I grabbed the buckets and walked out, then I turned around because something was different, I looked carefully in the shed, then it came to me, "THE HAY!" I shouted, there wasn't three lots of hay anymore, there was much more than three. I rushed over to Farmer Joe,

"Joe, there's so many hay bales, where did they come from?" I asked almost out of breath.

"They are just from the normal delivery," stated Farmer Joe.

"But when I was here at work last there was only three bales left...oh I was away for four months that's why I missed the delivery," I chuckled. As I walked over to the cows, I thought about Dad and it made me feel sick, I don't like thinking about Dad now that I know that when I said goodbye to him for the last time as he slowly drifted away on the ship, that was the last time I spoke to Dad, now I'll never see him again.

After work I started setting up for Blackout time, it wasn't a very good day for me I mean other than the fact that there was much more food for the animals, my day was horrible. I thought about Dad all day, I didn't get much milk from the cows and when I was walking the buckets back, I spilt the milk, I didn't even get breakfast because there was no food left. Mother was not very happy today either because she got a bunch of bills in the mail

and Josie wasn't her bubbly, perky self because she was thinking about Dad, I know she was, she was a total Daddy's girl whose Dad just got taken away from her in a blink. I tried to make her feel better by telling her about how much Dad loved her, it was a bad idea, she just ran off into our room and cried into her pillow. We ate dinner in the dark because we were behind schedule.

After Blackout time I got in the shower and washed all the dirt from out of my hair. Josie had already got into bed when I got in the shower but she was still awake when I went to get dressed.

"Josie I'm sorry for making you upset earlier," I stated.

"It's alright you were only trying to help me with how I was feeling about Dad being gone," she whispered as she started sobbing. I'd made her cry again, what a great sister I am. I jumped into bed. I thought about life and listened to the trees wave their arms around like they were dancing. I thought about all the bad things that had happened in the past four and a half months, I thought about all the mistakes I made and how I should've stopped them from happening by actually thinking, other than being the clumsy girl I am. I lay in bed and I thought about a lot of things, I thought about how tomorrow I was going to wake up and I wasn't going to be sad about Dad anymore, I was going to let this teach me something, it was going to make me a better worker and a better person because that's what Dad would've wanted, this was going to change me. Tomorrow is a new day...



The next day Elizabeth did all her jobs well and thought about what her Dad would've wanted her to do.

Written By Alyssa McGinity.