



Battlespace Latvia. (Photo courtesy of the Canadian Joint Operations Command)

# Trust

Maj. David A. Inouye, U.S. Army

"I'm glad you told me what happened."

"I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"I know you're busy ... with everything."

The bruise on the young specialist's face is dark maroon and black like the Baltic sky. Thunder to the north heralds a storm. The rumbling evokes the rocket artillery during the night, explosions miles away yet close enough to evoke death pounding on the van.

Anne motions up the stepladder. The planning vehicle is an Army truck hauling a container with expandable walls. Better than working out of a tent and quick to displace but far from luxurious. The only light comes from computer screens. Anne climbs into the shelter and opens the window hatches. "We're trying to save power."

The specialist nods. "Do we know who all died?" She speaks with a Southern drawl.

"We don't have a full picture."

*But I alone am escaped to tell thee*, Anne thinks. Was that from the Bible? Or *Moby Dick*?

The specialist lingers beside the door. Grime blends into her camouflage. Her rank patch hangs from the worn-out hook and loop on her ballistic vest. Her nametape is absent from the armor and hiding beneath it on her uniform. Anne recognizes her from the G-2 intelligence staff but can't recall her name. And the specialist knows Anne or she wouldn't have limped all the way here.

"There isn't much we can do," Anne says.

The specialist half-smiles. "I know."

"Not right now, at least. He's with G-2?"

And he is the reason the specialist is here, bringing the report and raising painful memories from years earlier. But Anne is a major now, and all of that is in the past, isn't it?

"I don't think he's coming back."

"He ... deserted?"

"Maybe it's better this way. Maybe he's dead. I hope he's dead."

The specialist retreats from the window light. The bruise across her cheek seems to expand as if drawing upon the shelter's stink of body odor, filth, and oil. Muddy boot prints crisscross the floor. Notes and papers pile into skyscrapers on the folding desks. Meal ration litter jams every nook and cranny.

Anne's father, the Wise Man, would walk into her messy room and say, "Beethoven would feel right at home here."

She sits at her desk. Everything aches. Pain in her muscles and bones. This is a nightmare, but not one she can escape by fighting to consciousness. The Russian artillery spared her node of the dispersed command post. She should feel lucky. If she had spent a few more hours at the main node last night ...

"Were you able to reach the aid station?" Anne says. "Don't know where it's at."

Anne remembers that slight drawl from garrison. She often worked beside the G-2 staff during exercises and training.

She turns to a map on the wall. Road networks and urban sprawls interrupt swaths of green and brown. Bold lines act as territorial demarcations, irrelevant to the red diamonds representing units of the Russian army stampeding west. The headquarters expended so much effort dislocating every twelve hours, avoiding enemy collection, and fleeing conjectural range rings—no longer so abstract after last night's barrage. *Where were the command nodes yesterday?* Anne wonders. *And where will they be tomorrow?*

She touches a spot to the north. "I think the aid station is up here."

"I'll be fine."

"But your face. And you're limping."

"At least I've got a face. And I can still walk."



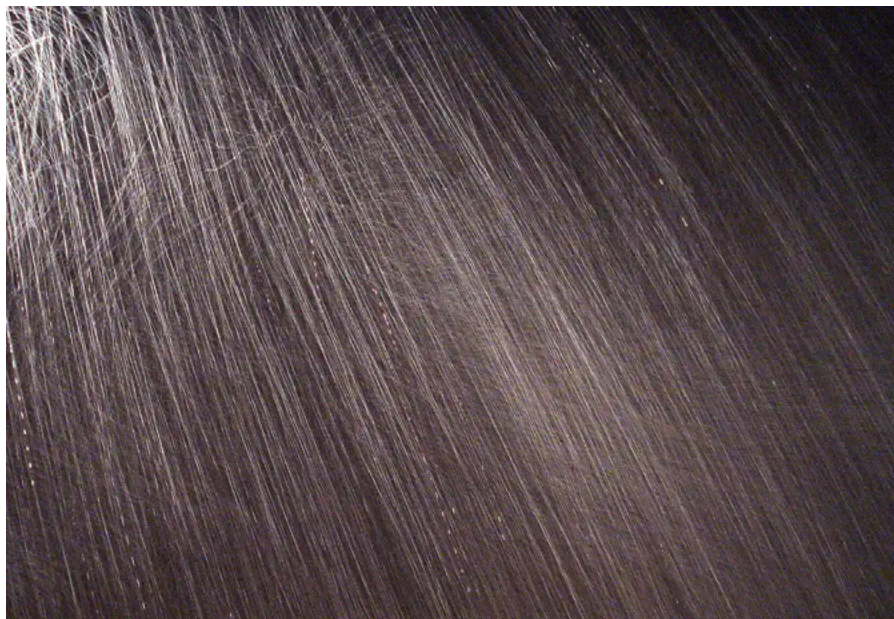
Monitoring intelligence on the unfolding Russian advance. (Photo by Edric Thompson, U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command)

Anne gazes out the window at the gloom above the forest canopy. Warning systems should have detected the drones, assuming that's how the Russians found the fleet of command vehicles. They were supposed to be survivable and mobile, but that was during the exercises back in the States, in motor pools and open fields without concerns of rain or mud or jamming and collection. Safety through dispersion. The smoking craters and blackened husks that have replaced the main command node suggest otherwise.

This war relies on information arriving in the shelter, and she is supposed to be collating, synthesizing, and interpreting the information, not gazing at the Baltic sky. Except the enemy cast its vote to obliterate the free flow of signals

**Maj. David A. Inouye, U.S. Army**, is a space operations officer with the Integrated Joint Special Technical Operations Proponent at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He holds a BA in history from Gonzaga University and is pursuing an MFA in creative writing from Southern New Hampshire University. He has served as a current operations officer with the National Airborne Operations Center, a division space chief, and a battalion intelligence officer, and he has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.





Heavy rain. (Photo courtesy of AlmazUK via Flickr)

and electrons. Expected gigabits per second evaporated into mere kilobits against the withering glare of Russian electronic warfare.

The specialist sets her weapon down and unclips her ballistic vest. The nametape on her uniform reads WATSON. Anne remembers, now. Specialist Watson with the signals intelligence team. Anne listened to her briefings back home. She's small, but her words carried well through the conference room. Her voice is a whisper now, difficult to discern against the drizzle.

"I'll take you to the aid station," Anne says.

"I'm fine, ma'am."

Anne smiles, slightly. Formality amid chaos, between women who've suffered similar injury. And not from the Russians.

Watson points to Anne's monitor. "Is that important?"

A message sits in her inbox with a bold declaration of urgency. Data has snuck past the Russian bear and manifested as comprehensible information.

Watson's limping gait contrasts the steady patter against the roof. She stands behind Anne and grunts with pain as she leans forward. "That's from Sibylla? The artificial intelligence system?"

"Yes," Anne says.

"We talked about it in G-2 but I've never seen the messages."

Anne grabs her notebook and begins scrawling the brevity codes and coordinates and percentages from the computer screen. The information is unintelligible to anyone without the right clearances and need-to-know, but that's the tradeoff for receiving the message on the battlefield. The obscurity allows the United States intelligence community to disseminate data derived from top secret sources and methods down to networks with less security but greater availability in a warzone.

She resolves the coded communication via the Rosetta Stone

in her memory. Indistinct recollections from garrison. A block of training for a once-hypothetical conflict. Once she finishes, she double checks her work. More bad news. A common thread weaving through the conflict.

"G-2 should already have this, right?" Anne says and pictures the classified systems in the Analysis and Control Element's shelter vehicle. The ACE fuses intelligence from collection activities across the globe in an effort to find and destroy Russian targets. They're also the only command node with access to the nation's top-secret networks.

Watson nods. "Maybe."

"Are the high side networks up at the ACE?"

"Some of the systems are up, but ..."

Anne reaches for her desk phone but realizes the futility. Radios are the only reliable means of communication, and even they've been spotty—at least according to vague reports and rumors. The shelter van hasn't been up on radio since the encryption compromise: a lost cryptographic device leading to fears the Russians had gained access to U.S. communications. Hasty orders to dump the fill. Promises that new encryption would arrive as soon as possible. In this conflict, as soon as possible is as good as never.

"We need to get to the ACE," Anne says. "Was the G-2 ...?"

"He was at the main."

"What about the deputy?"

“He left to help ... reconstitute.”

“Who is at the ACE?”

“Chief ... I suppose.”

“Can you walk me there? If not, just point the way.”

“I ... I’m okay to walk.”

Anne hefts her armor and weapon from the corner. Watson dons her gear as well. They look the same,

“Does G-2 know what happened last night?” Anne says.

“I told our sergeant major.”

Anne glances back at Watson. At first, she doesn’t understand but then it’s obvious. The reason Watson hobbled to the pathetic van in the first place. Watson’s emotional account drew Anne into the past, but she

“The mission comes first. That’s what her commander said years ago—back when Anne was in Watson’s place, back when the greatest threat was a red box on a garrison training tracker, back when Anne realized not everyone is on the same team despite what the posters and commercials proclaim.”

now, a desk jockey and an intelligence analyst playing soldier in the woods. She leaves a note with the details of the coded message. Will anyone even come back here to a node bordering on irrelevancy? The planners left this morning to become section heads. The occupiers of a van that wasn’t worth a Russian rocket are now leading the fight. The driver is asleep up front. A few soldiers snore beneath nearby vehicles and camouflage nets.

Anne clatters down the stepladder. Watson follows with staccato faltering steps. Anne wishes she could do more, but the priority has shifted, hasn’t it? The mission comes first. That’s what her commander said years ago—back when Anne was in Watson’s place, back when the greatest threat was a red box on a garrison training tracker, back when Anne realized not everyone is on the same team despite what the posters and commercials proclaim.

Out in the forest, the canopy offers little protection from the drizzle. If anything, the leaves and branches contribute to the precipitation, collected rainwater dripping to the earth. The moist detritus stinks or perhaps it’s the odor of the distant and dismembered dead wafting miles from artillery points of impact. Even in the wilderness, she can’t escape it.

The war.

*Where ignorant armies clash by night*, Anne recalls. The Wise Man, the college English professor.

can’t remain there when the thunder could become rocket explosions.

“What did he say?”

“Take off a few hours. Get some rest. Nothing he could do now.”

Anne clenches her hands but isn’t sure where to direct her anger. She said the same thing, after all. Not much we can do. The excuse she heard years ago even though there were many things people could have done. But even regulations, policies, and procedures crumble against inertia and indifference.

“We don’t know what happened,” Watson says.

“With the attack.”

“Did drones spot us?”

“I don’t think so, but maybe.”

“Why not?”

“All we talk about is drones. If the word *drone* pops up in a report, everyone starts scrambling to find it and jam it or blow up the base station. Nothing was flying last night.”

“So, how did they find us?” Anne says.

“Phones.”

“Everyone turned in their phones.”

“We did. You guys ... I mean ...”

“Officers? I didn’t even bring my phone into theater.”

“But everyone *important* has one. The general signed an exception memorandum. Cell phones are part of the contingency plan in case of jamming.”





"There has to be more to it than that."

"Maybe."

"The Russians don't care about memorandums."

"They do if it helps them find us."

The G-2's Analysis and Collection Element is a nest of vans hiding beneath gigantic nets mimicking dense foliage—camouflage promising concealment against overhead collection, whether from drones, manned aircraft, or reconnaissance satellites. Anne hopes those promises hold more weight than the assurances of the command post's survivability. The shelter vans resemble those across the headquarters although several ACE trucks host trident-shaped antennae pointed toward the heavens.

Anne follows Watson to the largest van. The interior is twice the size of her planning space and much darker despite the glowing monitors. Analysts sit hunched in front of workstations. Their features emerge from the shadows as they turn to look at the door but then vanish just as quickly as they return to their briefings and reports.

"Chief," Watson says once they reach a desk in the far corner.

Staff planners review the unfolding situation based on limited intelligence. (Photo by Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Henninger, 173rd Airborne Brigade)

Anne doesn't recognize Liam at first. He used to sprint loops around the headquarters building every morning. Anne could never keep up with him. He looks up, features aged and drawn, etched with the defeats and retrogrades of the past week.

"What is it?" His voice is as craggy and furrowed as his face.

"I have something from Sibylla," Anne says.

Liam studies her and then nods, slowly.

"I'll be outside," Watson says. The rain has drawn grooves in the dirt on her face, like tears.

Liam's screens display terrain maps with blue and red symbols depicting friendly and enemy formations, graphic control measures illustrating plans and orders, tactical tasks for units that exist on paper but surrendered their existence during last night's attack.

"Did you see the alert?" Anne says.

Liam gazes at the maps. He isn't wearing boots or socks. The coffee mug on his desk is empty. A crumpled

sleeping bag lies beneath his workstation. He lets out a long breath and swivels his chair toward a monitor with a yellow sticker that reads TOP SECRET. His inbox hasn't updated since last night. The Russian bear has clawed even the ACE's great antennas.

Anne opens her notebook and sets it beside Liam's keyboard. "I copied the curtailed report from my system."

"When did this come through?"

"Twenty minutes ago."

"Is anyone else tracking?"

"Don't know. That's why I came here."

He reads the message again. "We need more data."

"The raw data is top secret. If your systems are down ..."

Liam returns to his map and zooms in toward the message's coordinates. He searches for one of the red symbols and then repositions it westward. "This might ... track with our assessment. They might be trying to probe for a weak spot and then punch through. Maybe it's the reserve force. But we can't be sure."

"Can we get more information?"

"Not from here."

"This is the ACE."

"Our comms have been down since last night. All our support flexed to the new command node. We're displacing in three hours, anyway." Liam regards his map and points to one of many blue icons within a blob of green. "We could tell the G-3."

"What about the commanding general?"

"The CG is dead."

"I know. I mean ... The new CG."

"He'd ask too many questions."

"Then we can tell him—"

"Sibylla is NOFORN."

"Yeah, I know. So what? Anderson is—"

Liam shakes his head. "General Anderson was with the CG."

"So Kowalczyk is in charge?"

"Tentatively."

Brigadier Kowalczyk is one of their deputy commanding generals and part of the foreign exchange program between the United States and Poland. Security cooperation. Building relationships. All well and good, but information marked as NOFORN—Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals—means U.S. eyes only, and Poland isn't part of the United States.

"We'll just show him the data," Anne says. "He doesn't need to know the source."

"He'll ask questions."

"We'll tell him what we—"

"Exceptionally grave damage to national security."

Anne almost argues but Liam is right. They both signed the same indoctrination agreements and nondisclosure statements. A responsibility to protect classified information. They aren't the ones who determine the caveats, the degrees to which allies and partner nations can view U.S. intelligence. Those decisions come from high up the chain, as out of reach as the satellites orbiting overhead. "Fine, let's go talk to the G-3."

"I need to stay here and run the ACE."

"You're black on comms."

"We're still processing reports."

"And sending them where?"

Liam tilts his coffee mug and studies the brown stain inside. "Did you drive here? The new command node is three clicks west."

Anne sighs, inwardly. *Fatigue makes cowards of us all.*

"We walked."

"You and Watson? Sergeant major said she had some ... female issues."

"That isn't what happened."

"Something happened?"

Anne clenches her hand but then forces herself to moderate the ire. This isn't the time or place—when is it ever? Men can throw temper tantrums about typos on slides or hurl inconvenient reports across the room, but she doesn't have that luxury. Curses or tears even when deserved and necessary only undermine her credibility. Is that why Watson traipsed through the woods to a remote planning van instead of confiding in anyone here?

"Anything else I should tell the G-3?" Anne says with forced calm.

"Just say your info tracks with our assessment. And if you see the G-2, tell him the same."

"Colonel Forrest made it?"

"I don't know."

"So who's the G-2?"

"I don't know."

The rain has become a downpour by the time Anne escapes the demoralized shadows. She grips the stepladder railing to avoid slipping on the metal. The lightness she felt earlier has surrendered to the weight of her armor. Watson stands in the shelter of an

adjacent trailer. She's put on a rain jacket with a hood that encloses her face.

"How'd it go?" Watson says.

"I need to get to the command node."

"Where is it?"

Anne unfolds a grubby map she took from Liam and points to a spot further west. "I'm sorry to ask this, but ..."

the realities of warfare. At least the continued jamming indicates the Russians still assess NATO as a threat. For once, Anne hopes Moscow is right.

Anne watches above while Watson focuses on avoiding trees and hills and ditches. The forest canopy obscures the sky, but Anne finds little comfort in the notion of concealment. Electronic eyes can discern heat

“Russian jamming has thrown the operating picture into disarray. Every U.S. fighting vehicle in Eastern Europe is sending a best guess of its position based on old or degraded data. Promises of enhanced signal strength and dedicated spot beams and assured position, navigation, and timing have gone out the window against the realities of warfare.”

"But you need a driver."

"If you're not feeling up to it ..."

"I'd rather be sitting in a truck than standing here."

They head to a row of tactical vehicles beneath a makeshift garage of camouflage nets. Tire ruts crisscross the mud and lead into the forest. Watson pulls herself into the truck, right leg dangling. She settles painfully into the hard seat and starts the engine. Anne helps guide the vehicle away from the node and then climbs into the passenger side once they're beyond the illusory perimeter.

"You know where we're going?" Anne says.

"West."

They glance through the rain and dirt-smeared windshield.

"And where's west?"

Watson points to a compass jittering on the dash. The device looks older than both of them combined.

Anne wakes the vehicle's digital tracking screen. Friendly unit icons have scattered themselves across the map. An error message announces the system's failure to acquire a navigation signal from the Global Positioning System. Russian jamming has thrown the operating picture into disarray. Every U.S. fighting vehicle in Eastern Europe is sending a best guess of its position based on old or degraded data. Promises of enhanced signal strength and dedicated spot beams and assured position, navigation, and timing have gone out the window against

and movement far better than human vision. She isn't sure she buys Watson's assessment. Everyone on the staff attended the briefings about the dangers of emitting a signature on the electromagnetic spectrum. The Russians are experts at sniffing out the invisible signs inherent to modern warfighting. In a conflict where encrypted communications are risky, connecting to an open civilian network is suicide.

"What did you do ... afterward?" Watson says.

"I'm sorry?"

"Back home. That training last year. The instructor asked if anyone knew someone who'd been ... You told everyone what happened to you."

"You were there?"

"I thought what you said was really brave."

"My boss didn't. He said my story undermined the process."

"Because nothing happened to the guy?"

"As if it were my fault."

"Why didn't they do anything?"

"I got drunk at a dining-in. He drove me home. Later, he said I told him yes. I didn't but that wasn't good enough for legal. He and the commander were both West Pointers. I remember he was wearing that damn ring when ... What mattered was he had his Ranger tab, and everyone liked him. I was just the butter bar loggie from down the road."

"I don't have any proof, either."

"If he went AWOL, it'll help your case. Unless he speaks Latvian, he'll be like a turd in the punchbowl when the Army comes looking for him."

"Assuming we win."

Anne almost raises her carbine when the soldiers appear from the forest shadows. Their weapons distinguish them from the Russians. Watson slows. The men look into the vehicle and wave it through. Rain-damp face paint trickles into their vacant eyes.

Watson parks near a trio of shelter vans. Soldiers mingle atop the vehicles and fiddle with antennas and aeri-als. Not a good sign for the flow of information.

Anne slogs toward the vans. She's about to ask for directions but then the G-3 lumbers down a stepladder. Colonel Sandoval is tall with black hair going gray. He looked young for his age when she arrived at the command. He doesn't look young anymore.

"Sir!"

Sandoval barely glances at her and almost collides with Watson. Stubble on his cheeks. Red stains on his uniform. He brushes past them.

She catches up. "Sir!"

"What?" he grunts.

"I have something you need to see."

He glances over but keeps walking to the forest. "Fine."

"I got a message from Sibylla."

"Who?"

Anne lowers her voice. "The artificial intelligence that's supporting targeting for the war."

"Who are you again?"

"Sir, I'm Major—"

Sandoval scans her rank and name patch before checking the unit crests on her shoulders. "So, what did it tell you?"

"A Russian tank formation is crossing the border. Down near the main bridge at Echo. At least two brigade tactical groups."

"How does your AI know this?"

Anne clears her throat. "Sir, it's not my AI. I'm just on the distro list. But the sources are ... reliable."

Sandoval's voice takes on a harsh edge. "If it's not yours, then who owns it?"

"N-No one in our command *owns* it."

"Where is it? We're sure as hell not getting information here, so how does it know about these Russian tanks?"

"The servers are at Fort Meade."

"Let me see the message."

Anne holds out her notebook. He stares at the pages and blinks. "This is chicken scratch."

"I showed it to Chief Wright. He said it tracks with G-2's assessment. Maybe it's the reserve force we were tracking."

"I want to see the report. The *actual* report."

"The information is on the high side."

"Does it look like we have top secret access here?"

"No, sir. That's why they send an encoded message so—"

Sandoval reaches a tree and stands in front of it. He looks back at Anne. "Excuse me. I've gotta piss."

Anne retreats and turns away. *Men advertising their shortcomings*. The patter of rain on leaves. The splatter of urine against the tree.

"What is G-2 doing with all of this?" Sandoval says.

"Sir, they're black on comms, so ..."

"So, nothing, in other words."

"Liam thought I should bring this to you."

"Chief Wright? Good man. Yesterday, he told us we were outside artillery range." He finishes and barges past Anne back toward the shelters. "We're in the middle of an operation. I need more than messages from the cloud. This is just some algorithm searching Facebook and Google Maps."

Anne feels her stomach tighten. *And this is like arguing with a piss-covered tree*. She doesn't know how Sibylla arrived at this particular assessment but her knowledge of the system offers ideas. Impressions resolve from the code in her notebook. A wobbly cellphone video depicting the red-eye dazzlers of a main battle tank through the morning fog. Communications intercepts of gruff Russian voices. Hashtags complaining of armored columns tearing up the streets. Satellite imagery of blocky machines traversing fields and roadways. A patchwork of classified and publicly available information uniting into an assessment. Sibylla is an entity of ones and zeros analyzing the work of a nation at the speed of light. Yet the best intelligence in the world is only as good as the one delivering the message.

"Sir, the sources are ... a little more extensive."

"What about *our* sources?"

"You'd know more about that than me, sir."

"We haven't seen jack around Echo."

"Do we have anything looking right now?"



“We have outposts.”

“Any drones?”

“We haven’t flown beyond line-of-sight in twenty-four hours. Between the jamming and missiles, it’s impossible to keep anything in the sky.”

“Then Sibylla is the only source of reliable information.”

“You’ve got five minutes.”

“Sir, what about the reserve?” Anne says.

“Bring me real information. I’m not devoting assets to track down a ghost formation. All you’ve given me is a line of chicken scratch.”

Watson approaches Swaine. “Sir, how do you know what the Russians are saying?”



The best intelligence in the world is only as good as the one delivering the message.



“Major, did you stop to think this might be a deception effort? For all we know, your AI saw decoys instead of real tanks. G-2 said we attrited their reserve below combat effectiveness. A high confidence assessment if I recall.”

Watson steps forward. “Sir, that was only based on a few signals. We never ... saw anything.”

“High confidence,” Sandoval says.

“Sibylla only sends a message if it assesses beyond a reasonable doubt,” Anne says.

“This isn’t a damn courtroom.”

“Sir!”

They turn toward the voice from a tactical vehicle near the perimeter. A rotund figure extracts himself from the passenger door. He almost trips as his foot catches against the frame but then he hurries toward the group, avoiding the mud and puddles. The black oak leaf of his lieutenant colonel rank is the only blemish on his pristine uniform. He starts to salute, hesitates, and then runs his stubby fingers through his damp hair.

“Sir!” Swaine says again.

Sandoval sighs. “What is it?”

“We need to discuss messaging.”

“Post whatever you want.”

“General Anderson said I had to run everything by him after—”

“He’s dead.”

“I know. Of course I know. But the Russians are already influencing the information environment. They say they wiped out the command. We’ve got to seize the narrative.”

“Because that’s my job. I keep track of what they post. They’ve got dozens of accounts running right now and—”

“But how, sir?”

Swaine sighs and extracts his cell phone from his pocket. “With this, obviously.”

“Sir, we’re not allowed—”

“We have a memorandum. This is government-issued. Encryption. All the bells and whistles.”

“That doesn’t matter, sir. If you’re connecting to—”

Sandoval and Swaine climb the stepladder into the operations van. Watson starts to follow but Swaine holds up his hand. “We’re pursuing decision dominance here. Getting our message out is what’s important. We know what we’re doing. Don’t let intangibles corrupt our mission.”

Anne clenches her weapon. “Sir, were you at the old command node last night?”

“I was getting approval for my— for *our* messaging. Thank God I left before ... Well, I was close enough to feel the blasts. We went back, of course, afterward. Tried to help.”

“They might have targeted us through phone signals.”

Swaine snorts. “I’ve had my phone since we arrived in theater. Drones must have spotted us. Isn’t that what G-2 is always warning about?”

Sandoval ushers Swaine into the shelter and then looks back at Anne. “Bring me something *real*.” He shuts the door.

Anne leans against one of the vans to keep from sinking to her knees.

“What now?” Watson says.

"Maybe we go back to the ACE. See if anything populates on the high side."

"He wants to read it, though."

"We'll print the report."

"The ACE is out of toner."

Anne chuckles and shakes her head. She can't help it. The absurdity of it all.

Could she have done more for Watson? The young specialist came looking for her in the miserable chaos of this battlefield. She trusted Anne more than the system, the Army, or any of her supervisors and superiors. All for pathetic promises to do more once the fight is over.

Anne touches the notebook in her pocket. The chicken scratch is a lifeline from the far side of the world, but

“The men in charge want hard evidence before making decisions. Their dependence on permissive environments has addicted them to having whatever they want whenever they want it.”

"We should get out of here," Watson says.

She looks at Watson. Pale face and blue eyes. Streaks of dirt running down her face to her chin. Rain or tears?

"I'm going to stay. I'll ... talk to the other planners. I'll find someone who'll listen."

Watson seems to withdraw further under her rain hood. "I appreciate everything, ma'am."

"I should be the one thanking you."

Watson returns to the tactical vehicle. She shouldn't be driving alone but no one seems to care. The soldiers on the perimeter wave her out as she passes. Anne watches until the truck vanishes into the trees and shadows, heading east closer to the frontline.

Anne wonders if she'll regret the decision to stay. Maybe she won't have the chance to regret it. The artillery strikes last night were thunderstorms against the earth. What do rockets sound like before they hit—whistling or approaching freight trains or nothing at all?

warnings and indications are useless if no one will listen. The men in charge want hard evidence before making decisions. Their dependence on permissive environments has addicted them to having whatever they want whenever they want it. If they refuse to learn from Russian rockets, they aren't going to let the lone planner from down the road contradict their worldview.

The storm clouds are a mountain looming above the forest. The weight of that darkness will soon collapse and crush everything beneath. Anne stares into the gloom and thinks of a poem the Wise Man once read to her:

*And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night. ■*

**Work cited:** Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach," *New Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1867).