

A NEW WORLD

WASIQUE HASAN

In all honesty, the device was a disappointment. That was the general feeling around camp when the scientists had brought out their finest creation — the pinnacle of their research. To your everyday soldier this seemed like a load of hogwash intended to convince the brass that all their funding had gone into something worthwhile. One way or the other, everyone would find out what this bad boy could do before the sun went down.

As the crew carefully loaded the device into the aircraft, incredulity was etched on their faces. None of them could believe that this stocky, bulbous contraption was capable of any sort of destruction. It was completely un-aerodynamic when compared to the tall missiles that tapered to a fine point. And those could be depended upon to clear a whole bunker on their own. This just looked like it could destroy a solitary tank...on a good day. Nevertheless, the men were battle-hardened professionals and embarked on their mission right

at 1300 despite their doubts.

Even if the men had no faith in their new tech, the mission was one that they believed in. Pearl Harbor had awakened a thirst for vengeance in every soldier. The faces of their mates were still fresh in their minds. Blood could only be repaid with more blood, and these airmen were willing to get it at any cost.

As they neared the target zone, all was quiet. Since their target was fairly out-of-the-way, it would probably have no anti-air ground support either. Still, war is nothing if not unpredictable and this team were ready to clear any surprise resistance.

Inside the aircraft, a private was hunched next to the bomb. As the rhythmic motion of the plane coaxed his nerves away momentarily, he let his gaze wander. The bomb was called 'Fat Man', according to the engraving on it. As ridiculous as the name was, he had to concede that the scientists did in fact have a sense of humour. And it did kind of fit.

In the midst of these quiet musings, the pilot had brought the aircraft almost to the drop

point. All was clear so far, and it seemed they would face no resistance. Looking down at the radar, the blinking blimp got ever closer to the target. Soon the town was clearly visible, despite the moderate cloud cover that shielded them from view. The pilot took a deep breath and began counting down. "5...4..." Meanwhile the private was on his feet, hand on the lever, mumbling a panicked "Hail Mary".

"...3...2...1..."

click

The green light was on in the back, and the private pulled the lever in one swift motion. As the hatch opened, everyone inside was buffeted by the cold air. 'Fat Man' vanished from sight with a faint whistling sound.

They could hear the bomb warnings wailing thousands of feet below.

They waited.

They stood rooted to the spot.

Just when it seemed an eternity had passed, it happened.

There was an intense flash of bright white light that blinded all. But they could still hear it. Like the deep, guttural roar of a lion, it

was reaching out from below.

When the sound finally arrived, it brought with it a shockwave. By the time the aircraft had stabilised, everyone could see again.

They wished they couldn't.

Down below, a great ball of flame was shooting up into the clouds. They could almost feel the singe as millions of tonnes of pure heat spread everywhere. The place where the town used to be was now enveloped by a mushrooming mammoth flame that wouldn't stop rising. At one point it seemed as though the men had opened Pandora's Box, and that the destruction would swallow up the whole world.

Then, thankfully, *mercifully*, it stopped. The plane started to put some distance between it and the visible Hell on Earth. Most of the men didn't want a second look at their handiwork. The private couldn't help himself, however. With eyes glued to the glass, he looked long enough to see the mushroom cloud die down.

He wouldn't be the same since.

On that day the old world as they knew it took its last breath, and in came the nuclear age.

