

The M-388

Grade	<u>12</u>
Fiction	<u>X</u>
Poetry	<u> </u>
Nonfiction	<u> </u>

The atom is easily the smallest article of reality known to man. It's also what makes up the very fabric of everything. Alas, these small things also wield the greatest power in existence, the nuclear reaction. It can power cities for decades... or destroy them in seconds. I am one of the lucky ones, for I was never on the receiving end of this power. In fact, I once yielded this power, this massive behemoth of destruction, and it stood on a tripod that was almost half my height. This beastly thing was the M-388 Davy Crockett recoilless rifle, and it tore apart the very building blocks of reality to cause the most amount of destruction in a single explosion known to man.

It was a warm summer day in southern Nevada. The sky was almost clear, except for some small clouds that lazily dragged across the blue sky. We were about 20 miles east of the Toquima range, with a wide open area of desert between the mountains and us. Small desert shrubbery such as cacti and other plants dotted the landscape without any order or pattern. The only connection to civilization was a small dirt road from the east that eventually lead to the highway. The reasons for such a distance are uncountable, but secrecy was easily one of the most prioritized. The only other person with me was another Lieutenant, Lieutenant Redfield. He was your stereotypical pretty boy with brown hair, brown eyes, and a chiseled face. He was a tall lanky fellow at about 6 foot. He was unloading the charge from the jeep as I set up the tripod. "Think this will scare the Reds?" He asked in a lighthearted and playful tone.

"I wish, all this will do is destroy a tank or two." I responded with a little bit of worry in my voice. The Reds could attack at any moment in Europe or on the Korean Peninsula, it was a good idea to keep our technology superior to theirs.

Lieutenant Redfield hefted the sub-caliber piston into the barrel and shoved it down. "I'm a superstitious man, Macgyver," He started, "Can you grab the shot?"

"I'm on it," I responded, moving to the jeep and grabbing a steel briefcase. Although it was small, the payload weighed an easy fifty pounds, and was a hefty thing to carry. I brought it over to the tripod and opened the case. It looked like a small version of the *fat man*, and packed a much smaller punch than its bigger counterparts. The briefing specifically stated that this warhead was the mid sized version of the w-54, detonating with a force of fifteen tons of TNT. I picked it up and, just for a moment, pondered how much power was in my hands. The same power that was used to destroy cities and topple an entire empire, and it was in the palm of my hand, just on a smaller scale. I lifted it up to my chest and slotted the tail-end of the bomb into the smooth bore of the launcher.

"Do you have it zoned in?" Redfield asked, a clear undertone of worry in his voice.

"It's all set up and ready to launch, now we just have to wait for the Colonel."

It took another fifteen minutes for the colonel to arrive from the dirt road. He was short, stout, had a grey mustache, and even had a cigar in his mouth. He exited his Jeep with a clipboard and pen in his hand. Redfield and I straightened and gave him a crisp salute. "At ease," he began, "Let's get this show on the road, I'm already late to my meeting with the higher ups."

"Yes, sir!" I responded, running to my position with the launch button. I looked to Redfield, who gave me the thumbs up, bracing himself by laying on the ground behind a rock. He still kept his head above the rock, for he still wanted to see the massive explosion. I looked to the colonel, who waved me forward with a disinterested wave. I stood next to the launcher, leaned slightly forward, and pressed the launch button. The charge ignited, and the payload flew away with a whistle. There was a solid three seconds of silence before a column of smoke appeared almost a mile away.

I thought it was pretty wimpish at first, then we got hit with the sound. Even with ear protection, I knew I was going to walk away with Tinnitus. Then, a split second after the sound hit, the pressure wave hit. My internal organs clung to their very existence as I was knocked off my feet and tossed three feet back, landing hard on my tailbone. I knew it was going to be bruised for weeks afterwards. As I lay on the ground, the rest of the pressure wave washed over me with an intensity I never felt before. Finally, it passed, leaving all three of us in shock and awe.

"If that doesn't scare the pants off the Reds, I don't know what will." The Colonel stated, wiping the dust off his sunglasses, "You boys alright?"

"I'm alright, sir" I answered

"Same here, sir" Redfield said behind his little shelter of his rock.

"Alright, I need you two to pack this up and head back to base for debriefing."

"Yes, sir!" Redfield and I said in unison.

The Davy Crockett launcher was meant to be used in mid range combat, and was easy to deploy and pack up. It only took Redfield and I two minutes to pack up all of our

gear and put it in the jeep. The only thing we left behind in that desert was a crater the size of a semi-truck. The debriefing was slow and tedious, as always. The problem with this testing was the fact that it was top secret, therefore we had three times the usual paperwork. I almost fell asleep four times during the three hour meeting. Yet looking back at it now, every ounce of paperwork was worth it. I got to witness the power of the atom before my very eyes.

It's not debatable at this point; the power of the atom is the biggest and best form of weaponry known to man. The only thing the Crockett did was make it small and mobile. I'm glad I got to witness such a weapon in action, for the world is on the brink of change, and I just witnessed that change. I hope mankind can forgive me for toying with such awesome power.

