**The Dogs Of War Play Frisbee In An Empty Hotel Pool**

by Danielle Baldock

The pool in Zadar is full of soldiers. Shouts echo off cracked blue tiles, shiver off dry cement. Heartbeats like war-drums, you imagine attack.

All Spring echoes of war have swirled amidst the laughter on your Contiki bus. You’ve skirted French battlefields. Walked Mathausen with ghosts. In Gallipoli the cavalcades of graves are punctuated with poppies.

By Yugoslavia, the tour’s theme song blares out amongst crackling radio warnings and war-talk over breakfast. Split is sharply struck off your schedule by shattering bombs. In Dubrovnik, you press your face against ancient stones, listening for whispers of nations rising and falling. The tour goes on, less laughing now.

Below you, haystacks of rifles lean like bonfires amidst the sun-lounges.

Black uniforms run and leap. You see now they’re laughing with Henk and Kevin and Wayne, a red frisbee whirling. A soldier looks up, grinning with your brother’s round cheeks. You wave, inscribe his face into memory.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

Home, finally, you’ll watch Yugoslavia exploding on the nightly news. Search faded newspaper-photos and smoky TV flashes, fingers tight-crossed he won’t be there.

But for now the Dogs of War play frisbee in an empty hotel pool, laughing wild against the dark.