

**Don***written by Alberto Battistutti*

At the start of the II World War, Rinaldo lives peacefully in the Italian town of Dogna, surrounded by friends and family. His years of service to his country seem like a guarantee of safety, at first, but with the war raging on, even veterans are called to the front again. With Rinaldo's deployment to Russia taking him far away from home, both he and his beloved wife, Eleonora, have to adjust to their new reality apart from each other and trust in the assurances that the action will be over soon. But as Eleonora waits faithfully, at the front Russian winter is approaching fast – and despite all assurances, it slowly becomes clear that the war might not be over before Christmas after all.

“Don” is a war story that showcases human perseverance and hope in the face of even the most dire situations. The focus of the plot is split between the action-packed, high tension of the war front Rinaldo has to survive in and the calm everyday life of Eleonora back in their family home, achieving a remarkable balance between both extremes.

This duality creates a picture that is both more realistic and more impactful, using the contrast between the two settings to establish a pace of events that is dynamic without becoming overwhelming. A staple of the war story that is especially notable here are the battle scenes very prevalent in the war front plotline. These scenes are arguably too long and drawn-out in places, which eventually causes the tension they create to lose some of its edge. Nonetheless, we were impressed by their intensity and level of detail.

Another interesting artistic decision is that over the course of the story, the plot unites the same few characters over and over again despite the vastness of the setting. Although this results in a string of convenient coincidental meetings that require some suspension of disbelief, it also presents a good opportunity to create realistic layered characters, which the anonymous creator uses to maximum advantage.

All in all, “Don” presents a genuinely engaging story that is highly emotional without falling into obvious clichés or succumbing to over-the-top sentimentality. The sheer amount of attention paid to minute detail creates a sense of realism in setting and characterization, and so does the fact that even as the story does not shy from the brutality of war, it also portrays both sides as fallible – nothing more or less than ordinary people acting on bad orders in a bad situation.

As an additional plus, the plot offers an original resolution; the conclusion to the external, pressing conflict also brings closure for the internal conflict on the home front, tying the two main plotlines of the story with an almost poetic finality.

Aside from the aforementioned tension overcharge during longer battle scenes, there is very little criticism we could offer on this piece. With its good writing, stellar characterization, and honest delivery, “Don” certainly deserves recognition for the poignant messages it achieves in conveying.