

The Worst Fear

****Chapter Summary: The Worst Fear****

On April 13, a significant escalation in conflict was noted by Captain Foster, the chief engineer at Fort Sumter. He documented improved aim from Confederate gunners in his engineering journal, describing their increasing intensity as they targeted the fort. The Confederate forces utilized "hot shot," which resulted in injuries to four men when a shot struck a ground-level embrasure. A more severe incident occurred when an explosive shell ignited a fire in the officers' quarters, prompting urgent warnings from Foster to Anderson about the potential danger to the fort's gunpowder cache.

Contrasting the tense atmosphere at the fort, Confederate Assistant Surgeon Parker enjoyed a calm morning on Morris Island, celebrating the lively spirits of his fellow soldiers despite the ongoing battle. He expressed discontent over Fort Sumter's focus on Fort Moultrie, feeling it overlooked their own contributions. After breakfast, Parker and his comrades were stirred by loud cheers from the beach, where they witnessed Fort Sumter ablaze.

As the fire grew fiercer, mortar shells and incendiary cannonballs continued to rain down on the fort. Captain Doubleday recognized the immediate risk to the powder magazine, ordering the transfer of gunpowder barrels even as the fire spread. This hazardous task interrupted by incoming projectiles was perilous, with men struggling to protect the gunpowder from igniting. Despite their efforts, the relentless heat from the flames and explosions made the situation increasingly desperate.

Smoke choked the air as Doubleday evaluated the dire conditions inside. Many soldiers attempted to evade suffocation by lying low or escaping to open air. The intense flames and tumultuous sounds caused significant concern; as smoke billowed around the fort, Doubleday ordered a show of defiance by firing back at the jubilant Confederate forces celebrating their apparent victory.

On the city's Battery, civilians gathered to spectate the destruction of Fort Sumter, while Doubleday lamented the inaccessibility of his artillery to retaliate effectively. As the chaotic scene escalated, structures within the fort began to collapse, and the loss of defenses became evident. Over on Morris Island, Confederate soldiers remained relentless, showering the fort with cannon fire, which exacerbated the burning structure.

At precisely 12:48 PM, Confederate gunners successfully struck the flagpole of Fort Sumter, causing the flag to fall and invoking a wave of jubilant cheers from the Confederate forces, symbolizing their moment of triumph amid the chaos of warfare.