**The Battle of the Bulge:**

After the Allies had freed France and defeated Germany at Normandy, many thought that World War II in Europe was coming to an end. However, Adolf Hitler of Germany had different ideas. Early in the morning on December 16, 1944 Germany launched a major attack on the scattered Allied forces in Northern Europe. The German offensive would come to be known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The Battle of the Bulge was the last major battle on the western front in Europe during World War II. It was Germany's final attempt to drive the Allies off of mainland Europe. Hitler believed that a successful offensive could drive a wedge into the Allied forces, allowing the German army to advance to Antwerp, a key supply port for Allied operations.

The Battle of the Bulge took place in the thick forest lands of the Ardennes on the Franco-Belgium Border. The cover of the forest, as well as the cold and snowy weather, proved advantageous for a German offensive consisting of 200,000 troops and nearly 1,000 tanks. The Germans caught the American forces by surprise, breaking through the American lines and killing thousands of American troops. When the Germans attacked, they pushed back the center of the Allied forces' line. If you were to look at a map of the Allied army front, there would have been a bulge where the Germans attacked.

Despite the quick advance and the overwhelming forces of the Germans, many American soldiers held their ground. The Battle of the Bulge is famous for all the small pockets of American soldiers who attacked and harassed the Germans as they tried to advance. One of the famous small fights that occurred was at Bastogne, Belgium. This city was at a key crossroads. The US troops of the 101st Airborne Division and the 10th armored division were surrounded by Germans. They were ordered to surrender or die. US General Anthony McAuliffe refused the German demands for surrender with the simple word "Nuts!” His soldiers managed to hold out until more US troops could arrive.

It was small groups of American troops throughout the front who dug in and held out until reinforcements could arrive that won the battle for the Allies. General George Patton's 3rd Army was able to reinforce the lines within a few days of the initial attack turning the tide in the American’s favor. The First and Third U.S. Army pushed back the “bulge,” which was fully contained by January 1945. The battle was the last great German offensive, and it had been Germany’s final chance to stall the Allies advance into its homeland.

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