

Personal Reflective Piece Practice

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I bolted upright. Sweat dripping from my bushy eyebrows. The back of my throat felt like sandpaper. I looked around. It was as dark as the great abyss in which one finds himself when he first takes another man's life in cold blood. The slivery light of the moon shone between the gaps of the dreary curtains which hung like head of the lonely soldier whom had finally been broken of all hope. I heard it again. Gunshots. My blood ran cold. I leapt out of bed, and reached for my side expecting to find the cold metallic feel of my combat pistol but instead, found the soft cotton of my pyjama bottoms. I ran down the stairs, my heart beating and adrenaline pumping. There it was again. The metallic click of the a grenade being unpinning. A muffled scream.

The repeated gunshots. This was all too much. I rounded the corner. A bright ambient light shone from the next room. I could hear running. Commands being shouted. Were they here? Were they attacking us? I ran into the room to find my son sitting there with a white controller in his hand, smiling with delight as he repeatedly shot the virtual figures on the screen. To me they weren't virtual. They were friends. Friends which I lost.

Nostalgia overcame me. I crashed on the couch. My son looked over with a hint of worry before looking back at the screen and getting another kill. What had become of me?

"Go to bed" I whispered. "But daaaa! Its only 11!" he wailed.

"LIGHTS OUT!" I screamed, like countless drill sergeants I had encountered in the field. He looked over and without another word



left the room. The sounds of gunshots echoed in my head as if it were a broken record. I curled up in the foetal position on the dusty, floral couch and wished I could go to sleep, but I knew such a wish would never come without the reoccurring nightmares which I lived through



each night.

A singular tear escaped my eye, for the countless people whom not only I had lost, but Australia had lost. It slid down my coarse cheek which had been conditioned by the harsh Afghan deserts. I can only being to imagine that same tear falling down a mother's eye, wishing it was not their son which had to be lost. I sulked back up to my room, dragging my conscious behind me but wishing I could just let it go forever. Ruby lay sleeping, with an aura of tranquillity surrounding her. The pale moon light illuminated her soft, serene face which resembled something of an angel sent from above.

She was my guardian angel. She protected me from the lurking insanity which threatened to consume my mind. I climbed back into bed, trying not to disturb her, yet failing all the same.

She turned, and whispered in her silky voice "You had another dream didn't you?" She knew me too well. No matter how hard I tried to bury it; she always knew it was there. I didn't say anything. She didn't expect me to either. She nestled in the crook of my arm and quietly fell asleep again. A brief smile fluttered across my rugged face.

I knew why I entered such a dreadful war in the first place. To protect the people whom I loved and cared for. I knew sleep wouldn't come. It was a futile effort, similar to the millions of soldiers who train day and night, and in the end their young life's (loss of innocence) come to an end by a single bullet or a horrific bang. I shook the thought out of my mind. The war effort was not futile. It was a necessary evil. The death of millions for the benefit of billions. That's what they told us.

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