



Where has he gone?

Meg Datcu-Romano

November 3, 2015

They said that the war was over. No apologizes said, but just for a second, the sounds stopped. The cracks became less frequent, and the bullets silenced. So did the screams. All of theirs, at least. Oh, but I could still hear my mother's tears. As they fell to the ground, filling the silence where my brother was once. A lifetime ago. The quiet of my friends when their letters arrived. The looks shared when their flag was raised over ours.

They came quickly after that. Suddenly, everywhere I looked, was one of them. A crest blazing over their heart. The disgust in his eyes as he spat at me. Our crests used to blaze like that. But they did nothing to prevent the shots that pierced. My brother begged them not to take me. They wanted the young, the simple-minded. Little boys with little toy guns. Little hands to dig the graves. He threw himself at them, so perhaps the youngest boy would live. Without complaint, he was gone the next week. I cried with him every night, counting the days we had left. I told him to take it back, to let me go. Every night he refused. And without another word, he swiftly turned and boarded the already crowded bus. He sent one letter, on Christmas, explaining how busy he had been, apologizing for not writing sooner. That he loved us; not a single word when or if he'd come back. He just turned eighteen. My thirteenth birthday had come and gone, with not much celebration. Three years since I've last saw him. Since the day he boarded the bus for me. Yet Mother still goes quiet at the mention of his name. That was so long ago.

The knock on the door echoed throughout the empty bones of the house. Mother held him so tight, her tears where dried by his shirt. He held me as well. Although his hands trembled. Like he was unsure. Unlike the strong arms that embraced me the day of the bus. And somehow I could hear the hollowness in his chest, I could feel it. And his blistered, bandaged fingers struggled to grasp the silverware at dinner. He stared intently at my Mother as she spoke, yet his eyes glazed through her, unfocused. His smile was pushed and tight at the corners, although Mother never seemed to notice. Her little boy was back.

He screams at night. In torture, as if he is being ripped apart. He wakes with scabbed hands where he had scrubbed the blood seeping into his mind. Those where the nights where no one slept. I squeezed my pillow to my ear to muffle his agony. And if it's possible, the silence got louder, the emptiness so complete, it demanded to be felt. The wound had closed, yet the scar remained. And our tears still fall where my brother used to be. If the war is over, where has my brother gone?