

Statement of Intent:

In this piece of writing I am trying to explore the contrast a soldier experiences after coming home from a war to his peaceful country home. It will be written as a descriptive piece, focusing only on the soldier's inner experience of the world around him, rather than a narrative. I am aiming to set a somber, slightly tragic mood, reflecting the impact war has on human psychology.

They had told him it was all over. He didn't believe them. He stood there at the door, remembering a memory which was now so close. His memories had been tainted a saddening, nostalgic yellow by the darkness of the war. But now, the sky seemed so blue, the grass so green, and the sun so bright. Not three nights ago was his world only that of earth, blood, and rot. Now the vibrancies of peace seem to him only blinding.

He knocked. A moment passed. Soon, he could hear the sound of footsteps moving towards the door. The handle turned, and the door opened.

Emotions cycled through the entirety of his being as he held her in his arms. The joy he expected turned into a deep confusion. He had gotten so used to the smell of the rotting of his dead comrades, that her smell of rose perfume broke him down to tears. They both tried to speak, but no series of words was sufficient, and thus they both stood at the door, speechless, and in tears.

When they spoke, it was of the little things. He preferred it that way. He had no intention of reliving the last five years, certainly not with her. He only wished he could forget. Forget the constant shooting of bullets, the sight of his dying comrades by his side, and the rats crawling through his clothes as he lay awake in the bunkers.

He felt more at peace with her in his presence. Alone, he walked the corridors of his home as if a patrolman. Each creaking floorboard turned into the snapping of a branch. The birds outside turned into the whistling of bomb shells. He understood the war was over, but his nerves remained tuned to it, expecting death where death was no longer.

He found everything around him to be so delicate. The ground beneath him was no longer that of blood and diesel, sucking him down as if considering him already a dead man. It was now firm and stable, which although admittedly more comfortable, now made even the ground alien to him. He had forgotten the purity of water, the way it refracts light into patterns which seem so beautifully fragile. Even the air seemed undisturbed to him. No longer did it taste of metal and dirt. He himself had lost the elegance and delicacy he once possessed. All his movements now seem so rough and barbaric amidst the tranquillity of his environment. After all, war consumes or mutilates all those it deems unfit to survive.

They were right. The war was over. But the scars it has left on those who lived through it, endure.