



this i dream... for Peace

by George Ella Lyon

"I dream of a world where we remember not only those who died in battle but those who used their lives to bring battles to an end."

To most people in this country, the war remains conveniently far away. But for my cousin Sarah, it's soldiers at the door, medals on the table, a future in ashes.

This Memorial Day I sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" and pledged allegiance, not to this war or this administration, but to reclaim my country with its founding ideals of liberty and justice for all. I went to the Memorial Day Observance in Lexington Cemetery in memory of Isaac, 21, blown apart in Afghanistan, whose ashes are scattered somewhere in the woods where he grew up. Isaac was a patriot, prepared to die for his country, for you, for me. And he did die.

I came to grieve for him and to honor his sacrifice, no less supreme because his life was a chip in a power game; one chip in a huge stack bet on the control of oil and all its riches.

Isaac is as dead as if this war were just. He was as committed to defending his country as if the government of Iraq had waged war on his home state and he had enlisted to fight against them. His young spirit was bent to revere and obey no matter what. He could recite the meaning of each of the steps required to fold the flag that covered his coffin into the triangular symbol presented to his nineteen-year-old wife. They had an extra flag already folded for his mother.

We watched on huge screens as the women who loved him received these flags. Earlier the screens showed Isaac the baby, the toddler, the dirt-bike trickster, the karate student, the black belt, the commander of his ROTC. Isaac's wedding. Isaac atop a cliff in full grunt gear in Iraq, Isaac commissioned a Sergeant in the desert of Afghanistan.

War has always been epic waste and horror, and the folks in the trenches have repeatedly told us so. From the distance of the homeland, we make meaning as best we can, we hallow devastation with flags and flowers and rhetoric. But Isaac is dead and his wife's life, his parents' lives are shattered, and no one is better off for it. No one is safer or freer. Some folks are richer, yes, but most of us are poorer because of this war. The Iraqis are living a nightmare. Every day more people around the world hate our country. Our nation has brought a hydra-headed monster into the world.

I dream of the day when no one sends their beloved off to kill and be killed, I dream of a time when all the world's children stand on ground that never blows up, beneath a sky from which no bombs fall. I dream of a world where we remember not only those who died in battle but those who used their lives to bring battles to an end.

George Ella Lyon, 2007



George Ella Lyon

George Ella Lyon (www.georgeellalyon.com) writes, teaches, vigils for peace, and sings with PUBLIC OUTCRY to protest mountaintop removal coal mining. For more about her work, see also MySpace.com/publicoutcryky.

Janie Bynum

Janie Bynum (www.janiebynum.com) writes and illustrates for children and designs/creates for adults (www.bynumcreative.com). She hopes to contribute to change for all—here in the U.S. and abroad. It's time for a better evolved, more compassionate world.

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Illustration by Janie Bynum

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