

English 100, First Place; Professor, Dr. Jacqueline Wilson-Jordan

Mind of a Soldier

Sean Johnson

COLDMIND

I can hear the beautiful melodies of trance as I dance around my room. Music is high, loud as a concert. I'm free as a bird, I can fly. I can stand on clouds; I am on top of the world. I open my eyes, am I dreaming? At first it is dark yet light enough I can see my breath. I close my eyes slowly and open my arms wide with my head pointed up looking to the sky. I feel so cold and lonely; am I the only one in this place? Where is my family? As I walk down this empty space, I question my integrity, I question my faith. I don't know who I am anymore. I am torn; I am a used book with dust. I have cracks that each tell a story that no one can read. At the end of this space I walk up to a window; I can see light, and I can hear voices. I put one hand up on the window and stare at society. I see people; I see my family but they can't see me. I cry and drop to my knees; there is no hope. No one will see me, no one will hear me and no one will ever understand me. I am a United States soldier and to you I am only what you see on the outside.

PRISON

I'm not a lab rat. I refuse to force feed myself pills to make me happy. The doctor says I'm improving. I wake up every morning with the same routine; I jump out of bed and get dressed for first formation. My uniform looks as good as ice cream sounds. First formation is over, and I go to my scheduled appointments. I talk about my feelings to some stranger who is only there for a pay-check. While I'm talking the only thing I can think of is what bar I'm going to go to, and who I'm going to bring home. I will drink away my pain, and everything will be okay. People are really pissing me off lately. I get stared at like I'm some homeless guy wearing dirty clothes begging for money. Fort Knox is where I call home. It is like a prison with brick walls and someone telling me what to do every minute of the day. I wish I could just leave.

FLASHBACK

I am driving down the road with my music blasting. I am in my own world when I strike a pot hole. Suddenly everything goes silent; things slow down as if I am in slow motion. I am in Afghanistan driving; I can hear my gunner yelling at me, "Go right! Go right!" so I swerve to the right. Seconds after, there is a loud boom; I can hear shrapnel hitting our truck. We keep driving and laughing it off because the bastard Taliban has missed us. In a split second I snap out of it and realize I am in a ditch. A bystander stops and knocks on my window to ask if I am okay. I look at the guy with a grin and say, "Yeah, just had a flashback that's all." The guy looks confused and gives me a wave as he heads back to his car.

STUPIDITY

Do you ever want to break things? Do you ever get so angry you could just snap? This could be one of the reasons my ex-fiancee Leslie left me. If it wasn't a fight because she left the blinds open, which I hated when she did that, it was because I didn't take the trash out. There was always something. She called me crazy; she said I wasn't right in the head, and I needed help. She didn't understand what I have been through, and she doesn't have the right to tell me what I am. Until the day she has to pick her friend up off the ground and put her in a body bag, I don't want to hear shit. I sometimes would yell at her. I never put my hands on her, although there were times I thought about it. I had to put an end to this relationship, so I went out and found this beautiful girl named Sarah. The girl was a catch, I must say. We hung out a few times, and then I decided to invite her over to my house. My fiancee Leslie was at her parents' house because we were fighting. Sarah and I were watching TV when I saw Leslie pull up in her dad's truck.

I panicked and told Sarah to go up stairs to the attic. Leslie came in and told me she was here to grab her things. She started to head straight for the attic door. I asked her what she needed from upstairs; my heart was racing faster than the cars at the speedway. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. She told me to move and went up the stairs only to meet Sarah face to face. I thought there was going to be a fight and then Leslie turned to me with pain and anger and said in a sad voice, "Really John, why?" She started to run for the door when I stopped her. We argued for a good ten minutes. I finally gave up and walked away.

I walked to Sarah's car that was parked out front and sat in the driver's seat. Leslie walked up to me, begging me not to go; she said "Don't do this, John, Please don't do this," all while

crying. I looked at her as she laid on the ground with one hand on the door, her eyes set on me. I shook my head and said, "I can't do this shit anymore, Leslie." I said "Please let go of the door," and I started to drive off. I could see her in my mirror sitting on the curb of the road with her head down, but I kept driving.

REALITY

I'm not blind to the fact that I have issues. I can see that. I live day to day with regrets and pain. If I could take two steps back and change; take three steps back to get rid of the regret that lingers, I would. The fact still remains; I'll never be right. I'll never be the same.

I look in the mirror and see the same ole same. I see shame; I see the bullet that came from my gun and hit that kid with the AK. I can't hold back the tear that falls so gently down my cheek when I think of LT. I think of Leslie on a daily basis, and I think of the people in different countries. I think of the people who don't have a family. My mind is a ticking bomb ready to go off at any moment. I want to change the world; I want to be a better person. I want people to remember me as the one who made a difference.

None of this will happen until I can clear my mind and say my piece. I think of my life as a volcano ready to erupt. I have been in some tough spots in my life. It's time to change. I will rise above and fly; I'll fly like no one has ever flown before. I will stand for what's right; I will keep my integrity and pride. Live life to the fullest, I was once told. Live like today

is your last day. I will always remember long sleepless nights over-analyzing each mission, thinking I could have done something different. I will always remember Leslie and the way I left her when she needed me the most. I left her with a broken heart and she suffered, always asking herself why. I will always remember LT's beautiful face and the way she could light up a room with her beautiful smile. She had the best laugh. I'll remember the day I put her in a body bag and cried myself to sleep. These memories will stay forever, and I will cherish them, good or bad. I have learned many things, not only about others, but about myself as well. In order for me to get better I need to step up and make a change. I will do better; I will be better, not only for love, but to forgive myself and learn to fly above and beyond. With this said I will never forget; I will forgive and rise.

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