

Photograph

By pixiepumpkin

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Story for Remembrance Day Contest...

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Red. It's all I see in the once luminous ocean that once sparkled with the magic of a thousand sea creatures; only now every grain of sand is tainted crimson and every fish is surely dead. Poisoned. There is only one thought when I look at the ocean: it reminds me of the Red Sea from the holy bible, only the actual Red Sea is as holy as God himself and isn't painted in blood. I feel the swaying boat underneath me lurch and I am suddenly thrown onto the metallic scented shore. My grizzled hands clutch onto the gun and aim for their target over the sand dunes. I can hear the shouts and agonized screams echo from all around me as the ones who have lost, fall in a bloody heap and the victorious move further into battle. I find myself trip over a mangled body on the ground and – while trying to climb to my feet – my hands grab the soldier's on the ground. Rather than have his fingers loosely curl over a gun, they're holding a small black and white photo. The soldier is sitting on a small beige couch with a young girl and boy sitting comfortably in his lap. Why is he holding a photo? There wasn't a single weapon within his range. In the midst of war, I hadn't the time to ponder on that and needed to move on. I pass more fallen soldiers spread among the sand – many missing limbs that have probably receded with the tide. I desperately try to focus on something else or do what my son says, "daddy, think of your happy place." I think of my home: my beautiful Canada. I close my eyes and see my wife – eyes as sweet as saccharine. I see our placid little cabin on our private hill overlooking the village. I breath in sweet peony blossoms in the air. I see my sons and daughters frolicking through the fields. Then, I make the mistake of blinking and find myself back in cruel reality, standing in the shallows of the ocean. Time seems to stand still – as do I. I can hear the reoccurring moment of bombs smashing into the earth and the thundering explosion that I'm suddenly engulfed in. Just like that, I'm on the ground. I hear the sounds of war above me. I feel the sting. I hear the blood trickle like a gentle fountain over rocks. I can't get up. My mind traces back to the soldier with the photo, and I only wish I had the strength to reach into my pocket and grab the photo of my family – fore I now see why the soldier held the photo rather than a gun. He wanted to die being remembered as a courageous man who was fighting for the sake of his family and not just to win a battle. I reach into my pocket with the strength I don't have and take out the photo of my beautiful wife and kids; the ones I've fought to save. I hold the blessed photo to my heart – the sea will not take it.