

## **Disgorged Olive Pips by Russell Sacks**

The skirmish was over.

We sat under the hot sun on the dry, dusty sand - clay figurines protruding from the earth, like the emergence of golem.

Firing a FN Mag machine gun, close to a thousand rounds of 7.62 mm a minute, changes you and your enemies forever.

The dead had been put aside by our medics - our dead in black body bags, their dead arranged in a line, head to toe, facing upwards, into the sunshine. Our wounded were evacuated by helicopter. Their wounded lay either dying or not, in the vicious heat.

I could sense Sami sitting next to me, close, as only brothers-in-arms sit, shoulder touching shoulder, with a tender, solid energy. There was no need to look at him or talk to him. His presence alone, was reassuring.

"One for all and all for one", was the platoon's motto.

We sat on the bare earth, like disgorged olive pips, accepting that we would never become saplings. Our roots had been severed.

The smell and the heat tormented us. The silence was deafening. My mouth ached for Turkish coffee.

I could see support soldiers moving about. I could hear them talking. They were doing what needed to be done after a skirmish. We were no longer any part of them. The world had over-ripened for us two. Gods floated high above and angels fluttered about while young soldiers aged perversely.

It should really have all been over for us too, I thought. But no, the sun still shone as it moved across the sky. We were still a part of the orbiting planets.

As if a director had been given the wrong script, the thick, heavy, black, final curtain had not come down for me. My end had not occurred. Confusion filled my mind, like water trickling into a reservoir. It would burst out again some peaceful day in the future.

Only the two of us recall the skirmish. The other five saw their heavy, black curtain come down. They would no longer bear witness.

It was left to us to witness their mothers' tears, their faces racked in spasms of pain, trying to silence the screeches in their throats, while the generals emptied empty words upon the coffins of their sons.

It was left to us to hear the sound of mother earth shattering on plain pine coffins six feet below, while we stared into the sky looking for a god to prevent us from shattering too.

We understood now that only a shattered mother can bury her son.

I wished then, to become part of that earth, leaving no marks behind, just like the sandcastles I built on the beach as a kid, before high tide washed away all human traces.

Sami nudged me with his shoulder to calm me and offered me his lit cigarette. Our eyes met. I saw only numb, dark emptiness.

I felt only his saliva on the filter of the cigarette.

*To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori.*  
... wrote Wilfred Owen.



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Written in the last 5 years

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