

After the battle

War



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A jumble of limbs and skin, not that I knew it, I was just another fragment of the landscape, a surface of khaki and blood, surrounded the shore, clouded a dusky pink where a ship sat deserted and alone. Sand gatherings were sleek as they followed the wind and flustering specs as sharp as glass, were deciding where to settle, inspecting every body, join it for a while, but would soon be gone.

Now my clothes are crusted with blood, a gunshot so neat can rip through your body; like a mole it burrow's within the depths of flesh, blood and bone, stopping at nothing to pass to the other side. A gunshot so destructive, can take no longer than a fraction of a millisecond, to puncture your heart, to suck the air from your lungs and leave the blood to empty your veins hour after hour. Hour after hour... its time to bleed. I could no longer feel the bitter sting of the burning sand on my open wounds, nor the suffocating inner walls of the tunnels, carved by a bullet, still seeping. All I could feel was a general ache, the fact that I'm still alive, seems inadequate.

I feel like a tap that has been left on, drip, drip, waiting for my life, to be effortlessly, cut off. I could well be melting and the taste of the fluids dripping from my face is recognisable, I am drowning in my own blood, sweat and tears.

Hesitating to open my eyes, I think of a rusty gate as the weight is so difficult to lift, secured with glue-like mucus, sharp and jagged in some places, my eyelids seem to be made of metal, brittle and disabled by age and rust. How long had I been here?

Had I grown old in this battle?

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I feel altogether robotic, like a machine that had been broken, no longer a human but just another tool for those who are better than I am, either them or the person left in me gave me the strength to open my eyes, as that gateway is like lifting numerous tonnes of weight. But to my dismay all I saw were gashes of light that came to me like a stampede, the sand was on me and everywhere, each grain an annoying little bee, my eyes become a hive of little sand and blinding white, just being in existence.

I sharply shut them again, I'm back in my own little world, but is that place really where I'm needed? Again, the shutter doors must open, the jagged edge is now broken, it seems a great weight off my mind when the entrance is clear, the gate is now satisfactory and lifts quite swiftly, I am free, freed into what? I'm stumped between a prison and a mass A and E. Everything around me is death, leads to death or inspires it.

Ghoulis faces looked at me from all around, but with no expression. Their features lie beneath the murky layer of dust and dirt. One who was settled very close to me, has deep red stains all around his mouth and nose, it is visible to see the dried out tracks where blood had quickly escaped through his lips and nostrils, and even faint fingerprints where he must have rapidly checked the bleeding. He had been shot only once, in his neck, one move for one life and that touching of his face was likely to be the last move he ever made. His right hand lay on the sand, next to his neck, his fingertips too, tinted with his own blood.

I suddenly realise that something was holding me up, I couldn't understand why I hadn't known this before, as it was far too close to my skin considering

my vest, shirt and thick jacket, soon my awareness makes it somewhat painful. The sharp jagged material had formed a spear, and it took a moment to think about getting myself out of this awkward position.

The gunshots in my leg and side were holding me back, but I had to use anything else I had in the world to push me away from this pain.

... I can see my wife, that blinding white is now lighting up her big brown eyes, those same eyes that believed so much in me all that time ago, stand right before me as if they never left...

If this was all I had, it had to be enough to get me through this day; I must survive, if only for that.

Stand up.

I hesitantly move my boot soles onto to the flattest sand I can find, even now my leg is vibrating with pain, but I must go on.

Stand up! Come on man! You are weak! You're no use to any of us down there! I won't ask you again boy!

My knees unbend themselves and some miracle had led me to my feet, from where I immediately fall into the almost aight sand bed, it agitatedly buzzed around me, stinging and biting on any flesh available. But it was the distinct scream that will always haunt my mind, I didn't before this imagine I would ever fear my own voice, as it shattered the silence I lay hoping and praying it would not wake anybody up, I preferred to be alone. Or close to it, as my gaze now met that of another pair of eyes drained of all emotion.

I looked at him, I wanted him to look unhappy, I wanted to feel sympathy, but it looked at me with pride, it had died in honour, it had done his duty, so nothing mattered.

I reached out and gently pulled his eyelids over those misty eyes, and already began to miss him. I looked over him towards the admirable surroundings, where I always wanted to come, huge cliffs towered above me, crowned with beautiful plants, the vague outlines of which I saw swaying, almost dancing beneath the beautiful sunlight. The heat had done nothing but added to my pain, but the sky now glowed, its rich blue tones comforted me, I had done well, this I knew as I released my thoughts into the cloudless sky, where I stayed, 'til the end.