

Hears a different drummer

Literature



The invasion would start tomorrow. Jonathan stepped from the military parade and did not look back. He ignored the shouts of his section leader and the women on the street. They did not matter to him anymore. He had made up his mind about war. It was not something he could do.

The sound of the drums stopped very suddenly as he entered a library and shut the doors behind him. In the bathroom he took off his hat and his uniform shirt and left them in the sink. He did not want them anymore. Parts of his childhood began to come back to him. He had forgotten them while he was in the army for some reason.

When he was five he had found a shrew in a bush by the side of the house and wanted to keep it as a pet. His father told him shrews were not safe animals and he had to let it go. The next day it was dead, after one of his father's dogs had attacked it.

In middle school he had never wanted to join the sports team, but when he suggested taking home economics to his father the older man had shouted at him until he did. He had hated every minute of the football games he was forced to play, and the way all the other boys acted.

"You have made me very proud, boy," said his father after they won a game, but Jonathan liked losing games more than winning them because he did not have to go to the parties and pretend to be happy.

He joined the army after high school, because he was afraid of his father. But in the parade he had decided that he was more afraid of having to kill another human being in the war. Jonathan walked through the library, looking for a book about how to live peacefully when his section leader burst in through the doors of the library shouting.

"You have made a big disgrace of us!" he shouted. "Get back out there

now!”

“ I refuse,” said Jonathan. “ As of right now, I quit the army. I don’t want to be violent and hurt people.”

The section leader’s face turned purple and he left, only to come back later with some military police. They took Jonathan to trial for desertion, and he plead guilty. Because there was a lot of media attention on the case, they did not execute him and only gave him a sentence of ten years.

In the end, Jonathan was in jail for only a few years, because he got time off for good behavior. He had spent time in the library teaching some of the poor inmates who could not read how to do that. He regretted the time he had had to spend away from his family and his friends, but he felt that it was not his fault. He had only acted in the way that he had to act.

As he stepped away from the jail and into the morning sunlight, he felt a smile coming onto his face. Now he would be freer than he ever would have been if he had stayed in the parade with everybody else.