

“A Life After War”

by Sharon Baier

Your brothers in arms bid you farewell, *Semper Fidelis*. The hardest day of your life you handed in your weapon and walked away with your head hung low. Was it in shame that you didn't die trying or was the physical pain too much to bear? No more staff sergeant screaming orders, no fellow Marine to walk beside, or covering their backs by pulling the trigger on the enemy lines.

Not a day passes you don't yearn for revenge against the enemy and to save a brother's life. It's hard to just let go, to say goodbye to a mission and the other units you left behind. Your heart, it's layered with symptoms of rage, even hate; there's no going back - your tour is over, and you can never undo what's been done. To go from immense power, escape death then come home. It's convoluted I know, from war to the mundane of daily grind, how sad that you feel safe in a place called war.

Society expects you to come home to a life that used to be, they don't understand, you can't emerge from war unscathed. You can't pick up where you just left off; it's stifling and absurd to assume you'd be unchanged by something as powerful as war. You miss the crackling of the rounds flying past your head - it was the best adrenaline rush you ever had. Society means well, but they don't understand . . . they just want it to all go away.

Its time society accepts you're not who you once were, there are gaps at home, you don't fit in while physical pain is burning within. You stand brave as you reach to shake the hands of those who thank you for your service. It was in the line of duty, but they don't understand that the war is buried within you, and life as you knew it will never be the same.

Your stagnant heart wants to move on, you're desperate to be whole but all your love and decency is drowning in your battered soul, it's that part of you that says I don't deserve. Is it fear that says you let them down, or fear that you may be forgotten? I think you're mistaken; once a Marine, always a Marine.

God says forgive thyself for whatever you feel you've done. This pain you had to endure; it was to fulfill a purpose you say you're unsure. If the suffering was tolerable and the war of little consequence, your memories would have no meaning. What good is a healer to a man who knows no grieving.

Claim your right to heal and go forth to show your brothers that be, for one day their tour will be rendered and not know what to do. Be the Marine who went before, let them see how you triumphed through a broken system that made you the man you are today - be the brother who overcame and is living proof there's a good life after war.