

My eyes close, as the world gets colder. I was selfless, my country called me, and I answered. They said they needed strong bodied individuals to help defend our citizens. As I feel my energy seep away, I think back on my life, on how I got here.

I wasn't the best in terms of school, but I cared. I cared about classmates, stood up for those who were picked on, not afraid to get physical. And I did, I can't tell you the amount of times I was sent home, but the message was clear, I will not stand for the disrespect of the most vulnerable in my community.

There's been a lot of unrest in our country recently, my mom lost her job at the factory recently so my dad picked up more shifts to help make ends meet. Our situation isn't unique. People are getting fired, and they're starting to panic. You can smell it, louder than rain on concrete, bringing a stinging sensation.

I don't remember a lot of classes, but something stuck out about this particular day. It should've been happy times, we were graduating soon, fledglings, ready to jump out of our nest into the real world. But obviously, it wasn't. I remember it so clearly, showing up to history, our teacher was there, but so was someone important, you could tell from their uniform. Our teacher said the officer was commandeering the lesson for the day.

We learned about international conflict, we learned about how our great nation is under threat from the foreign radical groups trying to overthrow their current dictator. Sam, one of my friends I've had to protect multiple times over, I think it's cause he's smart and that annoys people, asked an interesting question: "Why are we protecting the dictator, isn't that everything we're against?" The officer looked at him, initially, with the eyes of a predator, but then recomposed himself and answered: "Great question, as the defenders of the free world, we want stability, for everyone. These radicals are looking to change the world order, and impede our freedom, which is unequivocally anti-American." Sam paused for a second, thinking about the answer. He accepted it and the lesson continued. After the lesson, they were talking about the benefits of joining the army. I enlisted to help my country regain stability and to help my family make it through tough times.

But here I am, only 2 days after arriving on this strange unforgiving land, bleeding out. I can't get Sam's question out of my head. Did he accept their answer, or maybe he understood that the officer wasn't on his side and any further dialogue would just perpetuate himself as a target. I wish he was brave like me, brave enough to stand up like I had so many times for him. And yell. Yell at the officer and tell him that he's wrong. Maybe then I wouldn't be here, maybe I wouldn't be bleeding out in this sand. But it's too late for that. How am I going to help my family now? I hope the money they'll get from my death will help them through their tough times. I wanted to be selfless. I was selfless, but I see now how that was used against me.

They used me. I wanted to protect those who couldn't protect themselves. I see now, the so-called radicals are just like me. They want to protect their family. Living in poverty, just like me. I wonder if their parents just like mine had to skip meals so I could have some. If like me they only got to see their parents Saturday evenings because they were working extra shifts. I wonder if they're cold tonight. It's so cold, so co...