

## Silence. Remembrance. Hope

I stood in a moment of deep silence. Why was I here, standing in a cemetery, hoping to honour the lost? I was silent as I stood here, trying to find meaning. I wanted desperately to find meaning.

I knew about war. My mind, in a whirling tornado of images raced back and forth from the present to the past. Many had told me of the countless terrible wars. I had been told of the terrors of World War I and II. I simply imagined. I imagined the gas polluting the air, the bombs bursting left and right, and the bullets whistling by every second.

I tried to imagine the massive craze of fear, storming about in the minds of every single soldier. Dread in their hearts that the next minute might be their last. Agony at the thought of losing loved ones.

Still, here I stood. Trying to find meaning in a moment of silence.

Then I saw his face. The image of a crinkled old man I had seen recently projected in my mind. I had seen him, weary and slow, while he was entering a church for a service. He smiled. I saw his face which had seen the evils of war, death, and darkness.

I asked myself, "Why had he risked his life? Why had he, being innocent of the cruelty of war, risked his life?"

The answer rang clear in my mind. This man's smile, old and wrinkled with the ages, seemed to say to me, "Don't forget me. Don't forget my sacrifice. Many who I loved died for your freedom. Please, remember us with all of your heart."

I felt a sudden rush of emotion at remembering that man. Kind. Silent. Hopeful.

Hope.

That was why he had risked his life. That was why so many died. They sacrificed themselves because they had hope for the future. Because they had hope for freedom.

I searched deep inside myself to find meaning. Silence. Remembrance. Hope. That was why I was standing here with these tombstones all around me, cool to the touch.

I choked back tears of sincere emotion. Memories of the scars of war, of the kind man, of the silence that was given to honour the lost. Memory. Memory. I, like many others had encountered

many memories today. Memories of hope, memories of the lost, memories of silence that surrounded Flander's Fields, and memories of love. I now knew why I was standing in this cemetery, struck by silence. My purpose here was to honour the sacrifice of the lost. I, with all my heart, for the rest of Remembrance Day, and the rest of my life, would answer the call of the hopeful veteran. With a deep breath, I stood in silence, whispering, "Remember. Remember the hope of the veteran, this reverent silence, the sacrifice of the lost, the memories of love, and of bravery."

Then, the moment of silence ending, I looked up, changed. I would never be the same.