

**Senior Essay 1st Place**  
**Faith O.**  
**Branch 244 – Perth**  
**Zone G-6**

## **Daddy's Little Girl & The Cold, Cruel World**

*The Effect of Separation of Loved Ones Due to War*

A tear on a cheek. It slides down her face, tainting what was once a smile. The air – holds invisible pieces of paper tied to strings; each containing questions. Questions, more questions. It seems as if a hand reaches down to add to the mess of words accumulating above the silence that hangs like a cloud over the scenery. She stands not as still as stone but rather as quiet and as peaceful as a lamb. Liquid emotion seeps from her eyes but from the outside, no one around can hear her dreadful cries. “Papa!” “Papa!” Cold air strikes her face as she wonders if perhaps her father is now in a better place. Her young mind wanders and ponders the thought of all the killing, for what twisted logic would call such a crime fulfilling? She imagines her father – an image of love within a torn landscape, holding a weapon he knew not of and would rather forsake. But he took the place, he decided to fight and despite how it tormented him, he was told to do what was right. Loyalty to your country over dedication to your family – is that how it’s supposed to be? The day he departed, he told her he would soon be home and if she kept him in her heart, she would never be alone. And so, each night she would whisper a quiet prayer for her papa, begging angels to shelter him from the blazing bullets and the cold, the hunger and the mold, the holes in his shoes and the tears in his clothes, for all this she quietly concluded: “Papa, please make it home”. Even as she played with the other children, her mind remained plagued with worry. For the space her father occupied became temporarily filled with sadness and fury. Sometimes she would kick and scream where no one would hear, questioning why he had to go, why he couldn’t stay near. And meanwhile, he was oceans away; fighting a war he opposed for reasons he could not say. But every day, he would wake with dedication in his heart, dreaming of his little girl back home, even as they were apart.

As time passed the weeks seemed to compile like the ever-increasing number of bodies splayed across the battlefield. The blood he saw convinced him that it was indeed real. But he had to force himself not to feel. As soldiers fell like dominoes, one after another, he wondered how they would react to the news – their sisters, their brothers. But his mind never did wander to the possibility that he could become one of them. Another tally on the casualty list, a “five out of ten”.

One morning, the sun rose and resembled a hue as sinister as night. Once again, he rose to the familiarity of life in the trenches and the stale smelling stench. Although a normal morning was taken by surprise when his ears registered the sound of distant cries. Following – the sound of shots; *ringing, ringing, ringing*. His mind racing as he tried to imagine what the day would be bringing. Suddenly, the earth shook in slow motion, blood began to spill in volumes like the ocean. Men drowning on land, flailing as they struggled to stand. And in the final moments before he was swept away by the tide of a bomb, he thought of his little girl and passed into calm. Far away, her mundane world seemed to rattle, when the soldier came to the door to tell of the battle. Knees knocking the hardwood floor, she cried out for her papa as a hole in her heart tore.

Feet planted on the frozen ground she now stands; with grief in her heart and his photograph in her hands. All she has left is but a memory, of the man that was her papa and the space where he used to be. More than anything in the world, she wanted one last time to be called daddy’s little girl.