

Mom bought me toy soldiers.

They had angry faces and big guns and I loved them, I brought them in my school bag that day. I was thinking about the soldiers so I forgot what day it was and Metal Voice surprised me, it talked from the ceiling.

“Announcement,” in that big ugly voice, right when Mrs. Jones was talking about circles and how perfect they are. (setting)

They tried to make Metal Voice sound like a she, but it sounded wrong, like how a car’s face kind of looks like a person’s face. Mrs. Jones said “*shhhh!*” and we went all quiet like a mouse because that’s what you are supposed to do. “It’s your first Remembrance Day, first graders,” she was saying in her singing voice, when Metal Voice talked from the ceiling again. Metal Voice was so rude, interrupting her like that. Mom says to never interrupt anybody. She interrupts me sometimes though, I never asked her why. I think it’s because she doesn’t want me talking about grownup things like the news and God in front of the other grownups.

“Today, November the 11th, is Remembrance Day. At 11:11, you will have a moment of silence, and it will last one minute.” I looked at the time on the desk and it said 11:09. One minute is a long time, I didn’t know if I could wait so long.

“Before you begin, your Head Teacher has requested a one minute slot to make an announcement. One minute begins now.” I heard a crinkly sound and then there was Head Teacher’s real, she-sounding voice coming from the ceiling. Funny how Metal Voice bosses Head Teacher around, I thought Head Teacher was the boss of everyone.

“Hi students, I hope you’re all having a great morning.” *I’m doing okay*, I wanted to tell her.

“I want to talk a little bit about Remembrance Day. I know that nobody has ever told any of you about Remembrance Day, but I will share a bit of what my mother told me.”

Mom told me a lot too. Don’t play outside at night, don’t eat too much candy it makes your teeth rot, old people are always right. I listen to mom, I’m a good baby, that’s what she calls me, I’m her circle boy. But mom didn’t tell me nothing about Remembrance Day. She said she doesn’t even know what it is about, I say that it’s when we don’t talk for one minute but mom said it should be more than just that. Dad said someone told him it used to be two minutes, that’s silly.

“My mother was told a lot of things as a child that many people have forgotten now, and she told me that Remembrance Day was all about ones. The ones in November eleventh, the ones in 11:11. She told me that one stands for united, and that Remembrance Day is about remembering the unity in our United Provinces of North America and remembering our unity in

the face of the horrible things happening in Eurasia, and that the silence is for the soldiers fighting those terrible people there, so that they can hear God's voice helping and healing them."

I thought that God's voice must be real strong if it can heal hurt people. I asked mom before why I can't see him and she told me to not ask that to anyone else. She says God stays in the sky and doesn't come down unless it's super important. I thought that was dumb, why play hide and seek if nobody asked you?

"She told me that Remembrance Day is to help us remember the Great Ravine, and how, even though it was a tragedy, it was part of God's plan in helping us get rid of Satan's followers in our great country. Remembrance Day is a reminder to never forget that we are the good people of God, and that we are helping Eurasia find Him too. In this minute of silence, even we can hear and feel God with us, helping us through these times with His gentle hand and telling us that we are doing the right thing. My mother—"

"One minute of silence begins now."

Stupid Metal Voice, interrupting the teacher again.

I tried to sit still but my legs didn't want to, they wanted to run. I looked over at Bobby the fat boy who was sitting next to me but he had his eyes closed. Bobby was always talking about his dad who was in the army. He said his dad was a hero every day because he was in Eurasia killing razies. He said his dad had guns that could shoot things that blow up and kill five razies at once.

I tried to sit still and feel God's hand. I imagined that it would feel like a warm blanket, and then he would say "You are doing well, Johnny, you are doing the right thing." And I would tell him we were helping people find him and he would stop playing hide and seek and I would see him, and he would look like grandpa, bald and missing the front two teeth, and he would smile and be proud of me. But I didn't know how shooting the razies helped them find God, maybe God was waiting for them to wake up in the sky? The window was open. I tried to feel his hand. I felt cold.

I looked at the map on the front wall that Mrs. Jones said was very old, almost one hundred years old, because it still had a line in the middle of North America that split it in two. She said there used to be two countries but then they teamed up to beat the bad Eurasia. I was squinting, trying to read the words on it when Metal Voice talked again.

"One minute of silence is over. Please resume your daily schedule. Thank you." I didn't say *you're welcome*.

Mrs. Jones started talking again about what Head Teacher said about Remembrance Day but she was just repeating so I wasn't listening, I was looking at Bobby. He had opened his eyes now and he saw me looking. I was thinking about my toy soldiers with the big guns and then I thought about Bobby's dad with his big gun that could kill five razies at once and then I thought about the war and the razies and then I asked Bobby, quietly, who he thought made

Remembrance Day. And then I asked him why did they make it. Because Head Teacher said her mom knows a lot but she didn't say her mom knows who made it. Bobby didn't say anything for a while and I could hear his brain going *chug chug chug*, thinking like a train. Finally the train got to the train station and Bobby looked at me again.

"I think it was made by the smart people they show on the news, for remembering the right side." He was looking all serious and everything. "Dad told me that razies are always lying by pretending they're not different. But dad said there was an experiment and the scientists said razies have a lower IQ than us and don't feel so much pain. They're so dumb, I bet they can't even do math."

We giggled. I didn't know what Mrs. Jones was saying anymore but I didn't care.

"Watch, I can memorise all the two times in the multiplication table." Bobby was doing the numbers again.

(Setting) I stopped listening because he showed me before. I was thinking about a whole year ago when I was five and I saw a razie on the Public Screens when it was showing the news. The corner of screen had "live" on it but that didn't make any sense, screens are just pictures.

His face was dark, maybe it was dirty. He had a beard that looked sticky, he should wash it. The soldiers around him had guns but he didn't have a gun. They were just like my soldiers. Maybe Bobby's dad was one of the soldiers.

The razie had a sign made of cardboard and it had some words on it that just looked like scribbles, and he was shouting something. The soldiers called him a razie but the news person called him an "Iranian" and said he was yelling something all stupid and full of lies, and then the soldiers pushed him and he fell and dropped his sign and they stomped on it and were laughing, that was not nice. He got up and his eyes were not seeing anything even though they looked fine, and he was saying "peas, peas, peas" in a weird way. I wanted to yell at the screen "he wants peas," but they wouldn't hear me anyways. They pushed him again and he was falling and he grabbed a soldier then they were all shooting and it was blurry. Then the screen switched and it was Kirkman's Toothpaste, making your teeth shine.

I was gonna ask Mrs. Jones about the razie but then she said it was play time so I got my toy soldiers from my bag and put them on the desk and made them shoot each other, *bang bang*. One of them died, he fell off the desk. I didn't mean want him to fall, it was an accident, he was one of my guys. Then I was looking at the other soldier. Stupid company making toys, the soldiers were the same, how was I supposed to know who is the good guy?