

THE DAY THE WAR BEGAN.

The day the war began was the day you watched your brother pull the wings off a butterfly and said nothing. You wanted to tell your mum, but your brother said he'd smash your dump truck if you did, so you swallowed your words and looked away and have been doing so ever since.

The cultivation of peace begins when we teach even young children respect for the environment and all of lifeforms, so that even young children can stand up for what they believe in, knowing that their silence can mean approval.

At nine, you were invited to an animal circus by your best friend's family. The crowd roared when the ringmaster cracked his whip to make the lion jump through a hoop, but once again, you swallowed your feelings and cheered along with the crowd.

Since colonisation Australia has lost one hundred native flora and fauna species, among them thirty-nine species of mammals. Extinction rates are increasing due to the effects of global warming. In a peaceful and sustainable world, citizens of the earth act up for conservation, and speak up for the welfare of animals.

Still a child at twenty-one, you joined the army. Months of sit ups, push ups, weapon handling, and shooting could have never prepared you for what you saw when you were deployed to Uruzgan. Children with vacant eyes living alone on piles of rubble. Children without water or food. Children carrying guns. Every time you saw them, you wondered if you were a war hero, or a war criminal.

Imaginings are the birthplace of action. Imagine a world where instead of battlegrounds there are peace grounds, and instead of aerial bombs there are love bombs. In a sustainable world the soil is red with minerals not blood.

Back home you soldiered, building an exoskeleton around the empty place inside of you. You travelled to Thailand for a holiday and after gorging at a hotel banquet, you walked the street. When an emaciated beggar with one leg asked you for money, you looked away and walked on.

World hunger is political, caused by war, displacement, climate change, government corruption, inequality in education and income, marginalisation, and economic systems that favour industrialised nations over developing countries. Conversely, a world without hunger means accountable and fair governments who focus on equality and inclusivity, and put into action peace initiatives and climate strategies.

At thirty you bought a farm, got married and had a couple of kids. When the drought hit and you couldn't water the crops, you got drunk and punched holes in walls. Afterwards you sat in your chair, hung your head in shame and listened to the dull thud of your heart.

Climate change has contributed to an escalation in domestic violence because of scarce resources. This in turn imposes even heavier costs on communities, public health, and economies.

On a family camping trip, you drove off the main road, trampled through protected forest, and chopped down a tree to feed the fire. Your children threw stones at birds and fought. When it was time to go, you left white ash and litter behind.

The ash of that tree is the ghost of your excuses. Trampling through protected land and littering, adversely impacts natural habitats and is harmful to flora and fauna.

At forty-three, you sold the farm and became a fly in/ fly out miner in Boddington. Once again you were at war with the Greenies, who protested about mining causing erosion, sinkholes, loss of biodiversity, and contamination of soil and water. But you needed a job, so what was the fuss?

Destruction is a boomerang, but so is creation. Instead of talking about climate change, become a climate changer.

At fifty-nine you were divorced and a part time dad, and every night you saw it on the T.V. Floods. Fires. Famines. Pandemics. A world spinning out of control. An unease in the pit of your stomach told you to do something, but what could one person do? And besides it was too late to save the world.

Saying it's too late to do something, means you are condoning doing nothing. Help reconnect the pieces of the broken world by acting.

You're seventy years old now, and spend your time reflecting on all those times you looked away, said nothing, and made excuses for your behaviour and everyone else's.

A world in crisis, means there's no time for reflection without action. Redefine what's possible, and then do it, which keeps hope alive. Only then can you stand back and watch your actions ripple like stones thrown in a pond.

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