

Memories from the Front

Erica Yu



I was fourteen when I first left my parents. That morning, I put on my shabby uniform, which I had stolen from my cousin, and looked into the mirror with pride. My mama was weeping in a dusty corner and papa was standing still beside her, staring at me. Hardly did I feel sorry for them for having their only son enlisted as an under-aged soldier in honour of the king. Papa slapped me hard out of anger when I walked to the door, but then he hugged me out of love before I bade my final farewell to them.

Having walked for a distance away from home, I felt tears rolling down my cheeks. They hurt as if they were corrosive to my flaky skin. Hobbling to the barracks with my heart heavily attached to home and my girl, I felt tortured with each step I took.

I met James, another enthusiastic under-aged soldier, in one of the barracks. Later that day, we were taken aboard one of the giant ships and deployed to France, thus marking the start of our military journey. On that crowded ship, I was pressed against the railings, on the verge of falling into the bloody red sea, reflecting the sunset, reminding me of my girl and the cheerful time we had shared. The thought of leaving her for the war had broken my heart. As I was gazing at the edge of the chilly ocean, the fond memories warmed me up from the inside. As I turned around, I saw the harbour. Before we knew what had happened, we all got off the ship and were ready to witness the “spectacular” scene of war.

A week later, James and I were separated. I was sent with some other taller soldiers to another camp, which was nearer to the front – everyone knew what was lying ahead of us. We were all sent to the front the following morning. There at the front, trenches with scattered corpses were our only shelters. Those were the toughest days of our lives – bullets rained down day and night, flying dust blurred our sight and the soil remained moist with blood. I lost my innocence gradually after I had gunned down a German for the first time. I knew that my days were numbered. However, it was too late to regret joining the army.

There was no going back!