

Long Live War

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The nameless soldier ignored the sweat running down his forehead and stinging his eyes. He didn't have a choice: strength was a requirement and not an option out here, especially when he was alone. He thought of the words the sergeant had said--he didn't understand them, but he guessed they were meant to be motivational. Sometimes he wasn't so sure, though. They were supposed to be motivational, so why did soldiers say it with suicide on their minds and sarcasm in their tones? If it was good, why was it screamed in fervent delirium? Why did men down bottle after bottle to forget it? It was the only English he could read or say: two years of military training had been effective at drilling it into him. He didn't even understand the words in question--just parroted them to please everyone. It was funny, he thought, he could kill a man with an English weapon but not propose peace in the English language. It didn't matter, English or no, there was no one to talk to, so he just repeated the military mantra over and over. It was all that kept him sane, as he sat in the heat, waiting to kill a man he didn't hate for a country he didn't love. It was all that kept him sane as he waited to watch an English war unfold underneath an African sun. All that kept him sane, and he didn't even know what it meant. What did it mean? What did those hopeful words in that hopeless tongue mean? What was the meaning of "long live war"?