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Weight and Balance

Alicia Dietz

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Weight and Balance

Alicia Dietz

You used to wake up to sounds
of mortars exploding 10km from your dust-filled tent.
Or the rev of rotors
starting to turn
and the slow grumble of the chopper engine.

You have awakened to the melody of revile,
the soothing rhythm of soldiers calling cadence;
to the crackling of snow
and ice shifting in your two-man igloo.

Now,
on most days,
you wake up only to hear
the soft sound of your alarm.

On others,
to the imagined echoes
of those memories.

And sometimes
waking is something you willingly do.
So you can accomplish a new mission,
a mission struggling to find purpose;
cause –
craving the balance
on which you used to rely.

You used to wake up
knowing a century of men and women
depended on your actions,
decisions,
knowledge,
humanity,
and trust in them.

Today
you can barely find a dozen.

So sometimes
waking is something you reluctantly do.
For in the depths of REM,
you are there with them.

And it is real.
For a moment.

With Michael
in your office,
shaking his hand.
Commending him for volunteering,
for stepping up to join his fellow brothers.
For going,
even with a pregnant wife.
For being a model for others –
especially to his daughter
who he would hold only once.
But who may forever feel
her father's presence.

It is when you wake
that you feel his presence
in his absence.

It is in the house of your subconscious
that you sit with Sara
talking about leadership,
flying,
empathy,
and risk.
Where you take her on a test flight
to see the beauty of 'The High One'
over 150 miles away
but who begs you to touch it;
it is so close.

That majestic mountain is what dreaming feels like –
being 150 miles away.
No, 1,500 miles away.
If only.
Being an immeasurable distance away
but begging to reach out your hand
and touch.
If even for a moment.

It is when you wake
that you feel her presence
in her absence.

You wear a bracelet to remember.
No, you wear a bracelet for others.
Not to remember,
but to realize.

And so you make it your new mission
to find a way to communicate.
To serve your penance for surviving.
To make work,
a community,
progress.
To make peace.

It is when you wake
that you carry the weight;
you search for the balance.