

Poem of a Soldier

By 2nd Lt. George Bruner, U.S. Army

*You praise the man I was, and curse the man I am.
Depending on which God you love, who I will be may be damned.
Yet still I'll sell my soul for you, I'll save us all from our worst selves,
I know no other love than this, I fear no other hell.*

*I am what I am, 'cause I was made to be.
I raise the mountains, bring them down, and push the seven seas.
I reap the grapes of wrath, I am the hand that feeds,
I am the brimstone falling from the angel wings.*

*I damn the damned, and bless the weak.
For the lame walk, and for the mute speak.
The poor and oppressed find their rest in me,
I break the chains and bring forth the free.*

*The destroyer of worlds, I am become of death.
I am enveloping nights, approaching bayonets.
I am the darkest valley where the sword is whet,
the shadow of death is my silhouette.*

*I was forged in a fire lit long ago.
Born of a crucible not my own.
Yet by this birthright in man am I mold,
I am strength multiplied by a thousand fold.*

*I am the photos of loved ones, now nothing but memories.
I am folded flags, torn, tattered and history.
Yet it is I who held high these in Pyrrhic victory,
I am the Idea that we've died for, for all of eternity.*

*I am the scorching heat, I am the bitter cold.
I am the broken sleep that shakes your soul.
I am the naive youth, and the fearful old,
I am the hell you pray you'll never know.*

*I am a soldier, and no one asked me to be.
I raised my right hand and said "God, send me!"
I am the man that the boy I was wanted to be,
The incarnate nightmare of my enemies' dreams.*

*I am the comforting safety we've known at home.
I am the cogs of wars we hope we won't.
Pray you never need me, yet when you do,
I am also the fear which caused you to.*

*I am the cherubim, and original sin.
I rule the fallen world, and the broken men.
From the depths of the waters to the roaring winds,
I am new beginnings and imminent ends.*



Sniper Spc James Wanser keeps watch in the early morning hours of 8 September 2011 while his battle buddy catches a few precious minutes of sleep in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Spc. Ken Scar, U.S. Army)