

# PRAYER

This anonymous piece is a reflection on a video this student produced in WRT 205. The video can be found on the *Intertext* site: <http://wrt.syr.edu/intertext/XXVII/media.html>.

*Have you ever imagined what it would be like when you squeeze that trigger—and what you would feel at that moment of impact? When that bullet makes instant collision with your skull, will you find peace of mind? Do the hurt and pain finally come to an end? Will your demons finally leave you alone? And most important, will God understand and forgive you for all the wrongs that you have done?*

To be honest, I didn't know what I was doing or what I was thinking when I signed on that dotted line. I was just a lost, myopic, and obtuse kid trying to find himself. I guess I was trying to find stability, guidance, and discipline in the military. Unfortunately, I didn't find any one of those things. Instead, I found heartache, pain, regret, and demons that haven't left me alone since. But I guess that's just life—*right?*

Not every job in the military is equal. Of those who wear the uniform, less than 10% are in frontline combat positions, and of that 10%, less than 1% have my job. I was an 8404 Battlefield Corpsman with a victor unit. For the non-military folk, that's a front-line combat medic with an infantry unit. In

layman's terms, we have a very high death ratio.

When I started my training, preparing to go into the Fleet Marine Force, my very first Marine instructor was a battle-hardened man named Staff Sergeant William Bee.

When I looked into his eyes for the very first time, I could tell that he wasn't scared of



# TO GOD

any man. He always seemed ready for combat at a moment's notice. He carried himself in such a manner that when he spoke, I took his words to heart.

Many years later, I learned that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from his deployments. This was my introduction to PTSD. Since then, I've been slowly familiarizing myself with this difficult subject that is hard to grasp unless you've actually experienced it firsthand.

I chose this artwork in the style of anime with its overexaggerated, distinct features, including huge eyes, a small nose, and funny dialogue. These features, common to anime, help to create a lighthearted form of youthful entertainment. I wanted to take an art form with elements of innocence and cuteness while illustrating the pain and hurt of PTSD. I chose anime because I always try to be different in a society that accepts nothing but the ordinary.

For the animation process, I drew up some sketches and worked with the only artist I knew who was capable of animating the project the way that I wanted. This artist specializes in anime, so it was a relatively easy process. My main goal for each frame was to ensure that all the cute, stereotypical characteristics of anime remained intact until the end.

I chose the narration between the protagonist and God simply due to my own faith and the paramount position that God occupies in my life. If I were to ever find myself in this situation, God would be the last entity to hear my voice.

The music is royalty-free and used with permission from Mattia Cupelli. I chose this piano music because I felt that it matched the light tone of the anime while also foreshadowing tragedy. The voiceover was done in two takes and recorded on an Apple iPhone. I didn't even put pen to paper when it came to the narration—I just visualized myself as a person going through PTSD and what I would say to God before the pain was too much to handle.

I created this piece to channel my own pain and hurt into an art form. I've lost a few brothers recently—two of them are shown at the end of the video. Ivan Gonzalez Jr. took his own life in November of 2018 at age twenty three, and Mario Griffith passed away at age twenty four in August of 2018. Both men were in my unit, and Griff was in my squad. I just wanted to honor their memory in some way.

What's the message behind this artwork? Refer back to the second paragraph.... Or better yet, let me write it again:

To be honest, I didn't know what I was doing or what I was thinking when I created this artwork. I was just a lost, myopic, and obtuse man trying to show the world that PTSD is real—and that it hurts. And maybe He heard my prayer and helped me create this artwork so others know that they're not alone. Because this pain isn't imaginary—it's real.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255**