

# An Old Change



By Eugenie Tran

***“The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.”***

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

## PAUL

*The sounds of several feet around me marching in unison deafened, creating a small earthquake. The dark feeling in the pit of my stomach gradually made its way to my throat as a lump. The fellow men who I called my peers followed behind me subject to this lost battle. The smell of fear and disaster lingered in the air. Without any warning, shots darted from every possible direction through the dark clouds. Flickers of red and black flashed across my eyes. Several men behind me vulnerable and blind to the shots fell to their graves. The screams of endured agony and utter defeat pierced my ears, marking the opening ceremony of hell. My whole body ached with fear of what was waiting ahead. I felt the ground slip under my feet and rise towards my face.*

*"BOY! GET DOWN!" a voice commanded. I remained on my stomach dumbfounded and oblivious of the surroundings but looking down at my blood smeared hands I remembered why I was here.*

"Paul! Paul! PAUL!" the nurse shook me continuously. I woke up abruptly stricken by the urgency in her voice.

"Yes? What is it?" I managed to gruffly respond. She stared at me with pitiful eyes. It did not take a genius to know what she was thinking about. "You were ...," she hesitated, "dreaming again." I looked down at my hands too embarrassed and afraid to face her judgment.

*I probably look like some old lunatic, I thought to myself.*

I quickly ushered her out the room and insisted I was stable. I rubbed the sweat beads dripping from my forehead with the back of my hand. I sat down to regain my strength and mentality. My heart pulsated and I resisted the urge for it to break out of my rib cage. I looked up at the clock, it read precisely 8:00 am. I rubbed my temples, afraid to close my eyes because of the ominous visions. The silence was suddenly interrupted by an impatient knock at the door. I opened the door cautiously, only to be greeted by my relieved daughter.

"GREAT! Hi dad, kids are here. I have to work. I'll be home at 6. Bye." She rushed out, leaving without another word.

*Great, I thought, the grandkids!*

## GRACE

The familiar blue doors stood before me mocking me. It was the old peoples' home. I walked down the narrow corridors and sighed with boredom. The smell of stale cigarettes and crisp linen bed sheets travelled up my nose. Walking past the bedrooms, I saw a variety of old people all laying lifeless preparing themselves for death. The sound of pills popping and feet shuffling softly spoke from afar. I wondered to myself who these people once were. I was suddenly interrupted from my thoughts when my mother grabbed me by the shoulders and ushered me into grandpa's room with Henry. To be honest I do love grandpa, but he isn't exactly the most interesting person in the world to spend a day with. Henry came rushing at grandpa with arms wide open.

"Grandpa! Grandpa!" he yelled, eagerly jumping into his arms. Grandpa suddenly pulled a face as Henry jumped into his arms. I quickly rushed over sure that Henry had caused harm to grandpa.

"Henry," I shrieked. "Grandpa, are you okay?" He slowly let go of Henry and quietly chuckled to himself. He looked at me scrunching his face together, with his brows crushing up against each other.

"Of course, I've been in wars and battles. Henry is nothing." He assured me. "The only problem is I don't recognise this girl standing before me."

The frown lines on his forehead became visible, revealing his ageing face. I laughed politely at his attempt at a joke and rolled my eyes.

## PAUL

I sat in the arm chair in front of the television jaded by the colours flicking across the screen, and enjoyed the company of my grandchildren. The sounds of bells blared from the set, but I was already in another world. I found myself slowly drifting, being sucked into that black hole in my head. The sounds and colours around me all became a blur, as my eyelids began to close by themselves. A sudden force began to push on them making them heave downwards. Before I knew it I entered the world I once lived in and dreaded.

*The fatigue in my body and mind began to slowly fade. The sound of gunshots and screams began to grow further apart. The eerie wind blew softly in the distance collecting the lost souls. I gathered myself in search of the survivors of this violent delight. I crawled through a number of corpses not daring to look in case I recognised any of them. The concoctions of mud puddles and my men's blood soaked beneath me. Scurrying my way through, I felt a body under me still warm with a pulse. I recognised the uniform on the figure as my own. The sudden human instinct in my body triggered my hands to uncover the body's identity. I wiped the dirt from the face to only be sent aghast. The scene sent chills down my spine, sending the hairs on my neck to stand on end. It was my wingman, Dominic, lying lifelessly struggling to breathe. The sudden images of the times I spent with him slowly replayed in my mind. The first time we met at school, our graduation and the very day we both agreed to enlist for this war. I gripped him by the shoulder shaking him forcefully.*

*"No, no, no, not **him**," I thought to myself. I held him close, feeling the warmth of tears building under my eyes.*

*I looked up towards the cove's horizon to see the sun slowly rising.*

## GRACE

I opened my eyes to find a blurred vision of the television set. I must have fallen into a deep slumber. Henry was quietly snuggled on my lap sleeping too, and in the far corner grandpa was softly snoring in his armchair. Just as I began to move Henry from my lap, I noticed grandpa's expression had changed. His face scrunched together tightly, expressing feelings of pain and suffering. I instinctively stood up and paced over to grandpa to check on him.

"Grandpa." I quietly nudged him to wake up. He opened his eyes with the same look of pain, and then a sense of confusion washed over his face.

"What's wrong Grace?"

"Um, you looked like you were in ...," I hesitated, not sure to describe it, "...in pain."

After a long time of blank expression he sighed deeply.

"You young people these days," he paused, "don't miss a thing."

"What are you talking about grandpa?" I asked

"Do you dream Grace?"

"Well I have many dreams," I replied. "I have dreams about my future."

"How about dreams in your sleep?" he asked.

"All the time grandpa, why?"

"I have dreams, too" he chuckled lightly.

"About what? They don't seem happy by the way you sleep."

## PAUL

I was woken by my worried looking granddaughter. Grace was the spitting image of her mother, which sometimes frightened me. I asked her about her dreams, she hesitated to answer my questions but at the same time was curious. A silence had grown between us, there was only the sound of yelling down the hall. Our eyes met for a moment. Grace's were the exact colour of mine. My eyes then followed the trail on the wall towards the medals. She noticed where I was looking and turned to them too.

"Grandpa, what are those for?" she asked

A moment of silence passed as I recalled the memories, the good and bad. Images of the times I sat with my fellow men, the ANZAC Cove and the merciless Turkish soldiers played through my memory.

"World War I, Grace" I replied.  
She shook her head looking confused.  
"I don't understand why you fought? So many countless lives lost in battle, but for what?"

I looked at her hurt, but remembering her ignorance of the subject; I ignored it.

"The war was for many reasons, Grace. People did not just prepare to die for no reason. Do you know what World War I was about?" he asked

"Of course I do, they always drone on about it at school. The Anzacs landed in a Turkish peninsula under British orders and they fought. Simple as that," she answered.

"Well when you put it like that it sounds simple, but do you know why they fought?" he questioned further.

She thought for a while before answering,

"I'm not sure, something about land or perhaps our ridiculous pride."  
These words stung even more.

"I still remember that day clearly like it was yesterday. The 25th of April, 1915," I sighed. "No Grace, the battle was much more than that."

## GRACE

I looked at grandpa, feeling completely dumbfounded. He seemed very annoyed with me and the way I answered his questions. I did know about the war, the Anzacs came to the Anzac Cove and landed in Gallipoli.

The only reason Australia came to Gallipoli was because we were ordered to, by the British Empire. The Turkish instinctively reacted in self-defence by attacking our soldiers. The battle was all because of a misunderstanding made by both countries, because of a lack of communication. I told grandpa this and he listened carefully, by the end of it he just chuckled to himself, again.

"Is this what they are teaching kids these days at school?"

"I suppose so grandpa," I replied quietly.

"Grace, the battle that took place between the Anzacs and the Turkish was far more than just a battle. It was beyond that," he said.

I was confused. I had never thought carefully about the war. School mostly taught and encouraged us to learn about the facts and figures.

"Ha, Grace. There is much more for you to learn. The war was no where near pointless. Grace, thousands of men enlisted in this war knowing their lives were at risk. Did you not think at any point these men would have considered about what happens upon their death? How about their devastated families and friends?" he said. "The battle was between the men and themselves."

I opened my mouth to answer the question, but closed it again without saying anything, not sure of my response. Grandpa was right, the war was far beyond the fighting and violence. Thousands of men knew that fighting would risk their life but that did not endure them to stop. Grandpa gazed at me as if he was reading my thoughts .

"That's right, the war was beyond the violence and fighting."

I thought for a moment before I spoke.

"Then what was the war for?"

"The war?" he paused. "Initially the British ordered us to land in Gallipoli. We are under the British Monarch and it is ideal to obey their orders. Some people believed it was the courage, pride, mateship and endurance for our nation that drove us."

These points seem valid and reasonable; it made sense that all the men in the war possessed all these characteristics. Before I could make a comment grandpa beat me to it.

"I do agree with them, but personally I believe it was the spirit that was brought out in people during the war." He paused. "The knowledge of your life endangered made you appreciate life more."

"But grandpa I don't get it. Why would you want to endanger your life?" I asked confused.

"The spirit made you appreciate life more by making every action possibly your last. The spirit allowed us to take risks. Many of the war recruits knew the possibilities of dying, but it didn't stop them. Over 8000 soldiers died, sacrificing their life. The spirit also gave the motive and hope for soldiers to fight harder so they could return to their families and country again. The thrill of the journey and risks, even though knowing the consequences, fuelled them through the battle. Like it thrills young people to take risks today."

"Thrill? Risks?" I asked. "I don't understand."

"Well, Grace, tell me what makes you want to take risks? What makes you wake up every morning? What makes you try your hardest knowing there was a chance of failing?"

"Well," I hesitated searching hard for an answer, "I guess the possibility of success."

"That's one of the answers. All these men possessed hope. Hope for themselves, their families and futures. They risked everything and hoped for the best. Hope is what drives us, it helps young people to strive for their dreams. Take young artists today, presenting their material in hope of a breakthrough. Just like the Anzac soldiers, they fought and hoped for the exact improvement, a breakthrough."

I finally understood him, hope helped us live life. We live through life on hope, anticipating that our risks were worth it.

He continued, "Not only did this battle bring out the best in people. It also brought out our alliances and reinforced our bonds with other nations. I am sure you know what ANZAC stands for."

I nodded. "Australia and New Zealand Army Corps."

"The Battle in Gallipoli strengthened our relationship with New Zealand incredibly. Have you wondered why the only nations that use the word "mate" are Australia and New Zealand?"

I shook my head listening attentively, this day had turned out more interesting than I expected.

"The Australian and New Zealander soldiers grew a close bond which still exists in today's society. Today, the soldiers and the younger generation still march side by side in Gallipoli on the ANZAC Memorial Day. We both learnt to support each other during the battle and develop a deep companionship. Today we still treat each other like brothers. They are our mates, if you would like to put it like that." He chortled to himself.

"The battle was said to be difficult and torturous. The Anzacs had the disadvantage of the battle being at the bottom of the cove. Why did you continue to fight knowing this?" I asked.

"We fought on hope and risked ourselves to defy the odds. Though mostly for the main reason," he said. "The Australian nation, pride and spirit."

## PAUL

I check the clock on the wall, it was precisely 6 o'clock. Time passes quickly when you have someone to enjoy it with. Grace and I have been speaking about the war for quite some time now. I envy her greatly, knowing she still had the ability to enjoy the thrills and risks of life. There was a sudden loud knock at the door; Grace quietly rushed over to open it. It was her mother coming to collect her and Henry. I came to the door to wave my farewells for the night. Just as Grace left, I called her back.

"Yes grandpa?"

"I just want to say I had a good day today kiddo."

"Thanks," I said.

She grinned and gave me a cheeky grin, "you're welcome, **mate.**"

That night...

*I opened my eyes to be surrounded by the darkness and cold. The floor beneath me trembled vigorously making my back ache. Once again I was lying on my stomach. I slowly rose from where I was, it seemed like a moving vehicle. There were several other corpses lying near next to me. I was about to lean forward towards the small compartment window to see the driver, when suddenly a small hand grabbed mine. I turned around slowly afraid of the figure. My fear was only greeted by a New Zealand Officer, part of the ANZAC formation. I shook his hand knowing the end had finally come.*

***“Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability  
to cope with it.”***

Anonymous

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Teachers and Students for their perspective upon the war.