

Java - Training is Over

*Arlington National Cemetery
August 4th 2006*

As the beautifully grained wooden casket was about to be lowered into its final darkened quarters, seven woefully shot bullets burst forth into the gloomy skies above. Repeating two times over for a final count of twenty-one, they rang out through the now sudden downpour and grieving mass present.

Final words were being said, when a small figure emerged from the back of the multitude. As she walked unknowingly towards the façade, not knowing what she might see, her innocent eyes looked up towards her protective custodian who was clutching her hand. Her mind was blank as to what this all should mean, as the little girl asked the question that was on everyone's lips.

"Who's in the big brown box, Mrs. Swanson?" the little girl inquired. The old woman knelt down, feeling a wave of pain and sorrow come crashing through her heart and soul, as she answered very sympathetically, "The man in there was a very brave soldier who gave his life protecting people like you and me from the evil of the world." The child, who could not be more than five years in age, looked up with tears starting to well in the corner of her big brown eyes. "Is he my daddy?" she asked as her apple shaped chin started to quiver in the rain.

The atmosphere of the funeral was misery enough for those attending, but to witness the innocence of a child trying to conceive of the notion of death was torturous. The woman picked up the little girl, now very wet and cold, and said with a voice of reverence "Yes my dear, that is your daddy. He loved you very, very much".

The child clambered down and walked towards her fallen father. She took one of the little yellow daisies from an assortment and placed it atop the wooded slab. She looked down at the massive surface and proceeded to whisper, "Now it's my turn to protect you, daddy". As the casket was lowered down, the crowd looked on in admiration and regret, as they saw not a tear fall from the delicate child. What they didn't observe was the soldier behind her, starting to sob like a child.