**Ozymandias**

I met a traveller from a faraway place, who told me about a ruined statue they saw in the desert.

It had two giant legs, but no body. Nearby, half covered in sand, was the face of the statue. Even thought it was broken you could still tell from the expression on its face (frown, sneering mouth) that it was a statue of someone who had once had a very cold, commanding personality. The sculptor had done a good job of portraying the way this king ruled over people: with a mocking hand and a greedy heart. It was almost like those emotions were still alive, because you could read them so clearly from that dead piece of stone.

On the pedestal (base) of the statue was an inscription about the king. It said “I am Ozymandias! I am such a great king that I rule over other kings! Mighty people, look at all the amazing things I’ve done, and feel inferior!”

But there’s nothing left of the kingdom this king once controlled. Around the statue is nothing but sand, stretching away for miles.

**Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night**

Don’t calmly and peacefully welcome death. Old people should passionately fight against death as their lives come to an end. They should resist the oncoming darkness of death.

Smart people at the end of their lives understand that death is inevitable. But, because they haven’t yet said anything powerful enough to shock the world like a bolt of lightning, they refuse to peacefully accept death.

Good people, seeing the last moments of their lives pass by like a final wave, mourn the fact that they weren't able to accomplish more. Even small actions could have made a difference in the world. So they resist the oncoming darkness of their deaths.

Daring people who have lived in the moment and embraced life to the fullest, metaphorically catching a joyful ride across the sky on the sun, realize too late that the sun is leaving them behind, and that even they must die—but they refuse to peacefully accept death.

Serious people, about to die, realize suddenly that even those who have lost their sight can, like meteors, be full of light and happiness. So they resist the oncoming darkness of death.

And you, dad, are close to death, as though on the peak of a mountain. Please show me the passionate emotions you feel – cry, be angry! – I would see it as both a blessing and a curse. Do not calmly and peacefully welcome death. Resist the oncoming darkness of your death.

**“Dulce Et Decorum Est” is a Latin phrase meaning “it is sweet and fitting to die for your country”. This is something soldiers were told to encourage them to sign up for the army in WWII.**

Bent under the weight of our packs like beggars, knees unsteady, we are coughing like poor and sick old women and struggling miserably through a muddy landscape. We turn away from flares (a German tactic of briefly lighting up the area in order to spot and kill British soldiers) and begin to march towards our camp. The men are so tired that they seem to be marching asleep. Many have lost their combat boots yet continue on despite their bare and bleeding feet. We are so worn out that it’s like we’re blind, or drunk, and don't even notice the sound of the dangerous poison gas-shells dropping just behind us.

Somebody cries out an urgent warning about the poison gas, and we fumble with gas masks, getting them on just in time. One man, however, is left yelling and struggling, unable to get his mask on. He looks like someone caught in fire or lime (a chemical weapon used to blind opponents). Through the panes of a gas mask, with poison gas filling the air, it seems like he’s underwater, drowning.

I have a reoccurring dream I can’t escape, where that dying solider comes towards me, choking and drowning.

If you could experience such a suffocating dream… if you had to march behind that wagon where we put him, watching his eyes rolling in his hanging face, hearing him cough up blood from his ruined lungs at every bump in the path (reminding me of cancer or other diseases that kill innocent victims)… if you had to do that, then maybe you wouldn’t be so keen to tell children who are hungry for a sense of heroism the old lie that "it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country."