

Peace - Skyler Malone
1st Place
Frankfort Middle School, Mineral County
Grades 5-6

Rock was spending the last day with his only daughter, Star Raine, before being deployed to Iraq. They had spent the day tubing at The Wisp Ski Resort. The weather was brutal and the wind was howling, but Rock only felt warmth in his heart as he looked at the expression on his daughter's face as she flew down the snowy mountain. He knew he would hold this memory close to his heart because he would not see her over the next year. He asked a fellow tuber to take a few pictures of his daughter and him, with his camera. After they finished tubing, Rock dropped off Star Raine at her mother's house.

He went home to his one bedroom apartment and printed the pictures with his camera of them tubing. There was one of them laughing. He had gotten one of them drinking hot cocoa also, but there was one picture of Star Raine and Rock hugging good-bye. He noticed that Star Raine's big brown eyes were filled up with tears. A thought came to Rock's mind. He went out to the jewelry store and bought a heart shaped locket. Then he put pictures of them in the tiny necklace. He had the jeweler wrap it and send it to his ex-wife's address for Star Raine. He enclosed the following letter:

Every time I look at the night sky I will think of you Star. When I hear raindrops they will be like your baby steps pattering down the hall. Please wear this locket and keep it close to your heart. Stay brave and I will be brave until I see you again.

Love Daddy

The next day Rock boarded the plane to Iraq. He arrived hot, sweaty, and tired. At the base he chose a lower bunk and pasted Star Raine's pictures above his head. Every night she was the last thing he thought about and the first smile he saw. (On some days the only smile he saw.)

Several days later Star Raine received her package and wore the locket every day. Every week she sent a letter to her daddy, telling him about everything. She told him about the daisies growing in her yard that spring. She sent him a package of daisies and grass seed so he could enjoy them too. She told him about how she was starting to cook and sent him a care package of chocolate-chip cookies. She told him about her love of shopping and sent him a dog tag that she made him while at the mall. It said, "I love my Daddy." She sent him a calendar and said to count down the days until they could see each other. Rock looked forward to getting his daughter's packages and letters. He planted his grass and daisies. He savored the taste of her chocolate-chip cookies. Everyday he wore his dog tag. Rock marked down the days with a big peace sign.

When Rock fought in the war he saw death, destruction, and sadness. But Rock could not write about these things. Instead he wrote to Star Raine about wisdom; he encouraged her to learn from her mistakes. He wrote to her about living the truth, and being honest. He wrote to her about showing love to all people regardless of age, race, gender, or religious beliefs. He wrote to her about peace. He said that people should try talking and work things out instead of fighting.

Finally, the day had arrived for Rock's departure home. As the plane landed, he searched the crowd for his daughter. There she was a little taller, braces on her teeth. She wore a peace tee shirt, and her locket was shining in the sunshine. In one hand she was holding a bunch of daisies and in the other hand she was holding a welcome home sign. As Rock stepped off the plane he realized even though the war was not over, he had found his own peace as his daughter looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, "You're my hero."