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Have you ever heard the word *sonder*? According to the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, it is “the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you’ll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.”. It means everyone around you has a life just as immersive. It means around you are thousands of people living out their own stories in which you might be the villain, the hero, or just a person who is there for a moment and then gone, never to be seen again. It means that every single person has a beautiful life you might never get to know. Everyone has a different and diverse life, even in the infinitesimal details.

This means those soldiers buried in the Tomb of the Unknowns, they had likes and dislikes, regrets, and memories. They had their own story to write, with blank pages stretching out ahead of them, waiting to be written. They had chapters they would rather not think about, and some they read again and again. They had an entire life to live, but they cut their story short for us. People they would never get to know. They died for

people who might have been just the extras in the book of their life. And after such an unselfish act of heroism, they did not receive fame or glory, only the chill of the grave. They never got to say goodbye, they never got to live their future. Some were never even claimed, many were nearly forgotten. Nearly.

As Americans we felt the pain it must have caused to give up their life for people they never met, to end their life cold and alone in the middle of a war. So we honored them. We picked them up from the cold battlefields where they took their last breath, where their story ended. We carried them home, brought some to their families, brought others to rest in a great cemetery. We wrote their stories on our hearts, finishing what they could not. And so we decided to honor them in the greatest way we could. We took a few of those who were never identified, whose stories would never be read, and laid them in a tomb. None of them were known. None of them would ever get to see how their story would have ended. So we laid them down, and covered them in dirt from the French battlefields where they died. We quarried the purest of gold veined Yule marble and sculpted into it the symbols of peace and valor and victory. Inscribed on the tomb are the words, "Here rests in honored glory an American Soldier known but to God." We gathered at their burial, all the Medal of Honor winners and gold star mothers, all those people who had lost something in a war.

We set up a guard to protect them, for they are a symbol of something far greater than ourselves. The Old Guard is highly trained and immaculately dressed, to honor the

messiness in which the unknown soldiers ascended from this Earth. And now they have achieved immortality, for we lifted them up in honor and changed the ending of their stories to one of glory. They are no longer The Forgotten who died alone in chaos, without a warm touch or loving words. We have made them The Remembered! They have a view of the cemetery like none other, where they can see three hundred of their fallen brethren arrayed in neat rows of white crosses. They may be unknown, but we have crafted their sacrifice into an example of who we are. Though their stories were ended too soon, and their time on this Earth was too short, we will use them to demonstrate we are proud Americans and we do not forget our debts. For in giving their lives, they ensured we could live out ours. So let us carry them in our hearts, and through our actions bring them a victory that can not be achieved by force, only through gentle love.

And so I ask I would be allowed to carry to them a wreath, not just adorned with flowers, but with my gratefulness. I am here today because of them. My story will not be cut short because of them. I want to experience sonder there, in the presence of heroes who do not need to be known to be honored, respected, and loved. I want to be in the presence of three wonderful soldiers who represent something so momentous that they are protected by the best guards in the army, twenty-four seven. I want to be near people who represent the greatest of loves, the type Jesus himself took part in. The sacrificial love. I want to be able to say goodbye, because they could not.