



The Last Stand

I watched as he stole into the sunset
Head low, tears falling like silent rain.
I heard him mutter as he passed me,
“I’m right. I’d do it again!”

He shuffled away in the shadows,
Defeated, a weary old soul, full of pain.
But I knew him and knew his position.
What had happened, I just couldn’t explain.

He’d been my friend when a young man
Full of fun, full of life and high ideals.
He’s signed up for war when it broke out
Fought with courage and nerves made of steel.

But today, I barely recognized him,
His gait so much slower than then.
Yet his was the shoulder that bore me
His courage gave me my life back again.

Back home I watched as he raised up a family.
Strong sons, and daughters who cared.
He toiled hard to make the world better
For his own and those whose circle he shared.

I’d watched as his hair started to grey some,
But his head was still high, his shoulders did not bend.
Cancer had stolen away his one sweetheart,
But couldn’t move him from her side ‘til the end.

Still with wisdom and dignity he lived on,
Not embittered, nor entitled, never defeated.
His laughter still rang out, his ideals still shone out,
His self-worth unchallenged as others he greeted.

But today, something drastic had happened,
Something changed, so much was destroyed.
He met an old friend at the diner for coffee,
When he mentioned the election his friend was annoyed.

They talked briefly about values, about right and left,
About what seemed right and what seemed wrong.
Others joined in unbidden, ridiculing him for his stand
Labeled him racist and right-wing, foolish and worthless.

I sat there bewildered, belittled - and betrayed him.
I let them rant and rave, let them rag on and on.
He looked over at me for some courage.
I left him alone with his taunters,
I left - just hurried on home.

But I couldn’t forget that I knew him, knew his stand,
His ideals - they weren’t wrong.
They’d given him courage in battle, to save a friend,
and though wounded, fight on.

I wondered what really had happened.
Why had I changed but he had stood strong.
I wondered why society was so rabid
When he was right and they were so wrong.

I wondered why I hadn’t spoken,
Taken his side, helped carry the load.
But I ran like a coward in silence,
Now hid in the shadows by the road.

I still couldn’t break free of the fear
That had bound and gagged me so long.
My head hung low in the shadows
I know I was gutless and wrong.

I wondered why, the next morning,
Had my country foolishly followed the siren song
The left, the politically correct, the lying rubbish,
We’d heard and read was all wrong.

Next morning I waited at the diner,
Watching anxiously for my faithful dear friend.
I needed apologize, say I was so sorry.
Try somehow to make some sort of amends.

When he didn’t come in, I picked up the paper,
Looking past the new version of lies.
Flipping futilely through all the pages,
My heart skipped a beat at what hit my eyes.

There was my friend’s picture as I clearly remembered
So smart in his old uniform.
He’d died in the night, no one really knew why.
I left the old diner alone and forlorn.

Could I ever make up for my silence?
I knew I only could try.
The world may be wacky and twisted,
But never again would I be silenced.
I would stand for the right ‘til I died!