REMAINS

Simon Armitage



WHAT HAPPENS? A veteran's memory of a shooting continues to intrude after deployment.

BIG IDEA **A shooting that seems finished remains mentally present because responsibility and uncertainty have not ended.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

"probably armed"

Qualification

The threat was never completely certain.

"possibly not"

Counterweight

The alternative possibility keeps moral doubt alive.

"blood-shadow"

Compound metaphor

A physical trace becomes an image of persistent memory.

"bloody hands"

Guilt imagery

The ending makes the narrator's own responsibility impossible to wash away.

FORM

A dramatic monologue in colloquial free verse; a short final stanza concentrates the personal aftermath.

CONTEXT

Armitage's The Not Dead project drew on veterans' accounts. The poem explores trauma without making every veteran's experience identical.

COMPARE IT WITH…

War Photographer: memory and responsibility. Poppies: conflict beyond the battlefield.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Shooting

CONVERSATIONAL, THEN GRAPHIC

An apparently routine account becomes a vivid description of bodily destruction.

Return home

INTRUSIVE AND REPETITIVE

The setting changes, but the killing returns through perception, sleep and dreams.

Final admission

ENTRAPPED AND GUILTY

The narrator's focus narrows from the group to personal responsibility.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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