

Daniel Sarioglu,

Dr. Kayle Nochomovitz,

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Weekly Free Write

Ningen was just a couple of blocks away from home, and during his thirty-minute trek from school, he had just the right amount of time to replay parts of his debate to himself in his head.

“So you think peace can happen and continue indefinitely?” Kokka bellowed, “... read a book, Sekai!” Ningen noticed the pen his classmate was nuzzling over his ear and how it had finished writing something on the piece of paper sitting on the shared desk in front of Kokka; he distinguished the word “stupid” spelled upside down for him to read. Ningen looked back at his own piece of paper, which barely had any notes on it and remained dry like his mouth, but his eyebrows filled up with indignity and bravery, and his mind gave him an excellent retort he’d deliver righteously.

“It’s just, we aren’t supposed to fight in the first place!” Ningen argued with volume. “Would you pick up a gun and just shoot someone?” But when he finished, he didn’t receive the praise he had expected, as his teacher was reading her newspaper and many of his classmates’ heads were on their desks. Kokka barely addressed his question when he condescended a response.

“Ugh, read...” “Read...” Ningen tried to remember what Kokka had told him to read, but it was a book that talks about apes becoming men and the strongest ones living, or something along those lines. After failing to understand most of his classmate’s tricky words and pompous

expressions, and possibly thanks to him dozing off in his previous biology class, he was intimidated by Kokka and didn't know what to respond.

"Well, sure, just! Ugh!" he fumbled, as his voice cracked to the amusement of the couple of classmates that were, in fact, listening.

"You speak out of your ass, Sekai." Kokka chuckled smugly. He had placed one hand inside his pocket and started to walk back to his desk while he pulled his pen from over his ear and reached for his well-organized pencil case. "It's not that simple, if you knew things about the world..."

"Aritomo!" The teacher interrupted diplomatically yet sternly. "Well done with your passionate and well-structured arguments, now that's enough, and your grade will be dropped thanks to that language, thank you."

As Ningen turned the corner to enter his street, he thought to himself. "I could have said something like... 'it's an old book, you got that from the textbook!'" "No, it was too tangential and not smooth enough," he thought. Or maybe he could say something else such as "well, we're not animals!" and after a few steps, he thought of "well, we're not animals, but maybe you are!" Or maybe something more smooth that implied that Kokka was an animal and that humans weren't savages like he was. But he didn't want to insult him; he didn't want to insult anybody because he knew that a debate on wars and peace wouldn't be settled by personal insults irrelevant to his points.

Ningen knew and understood much of this matter; it was why he chose this topic; specifically, he was passionate about peace and often debated with himself about it in these thirty-minute trips to and from school. He thought of this idea after seeing the poverty and destruction the ongoing war had bestowed upon his country; his family even helped his neighbors

when their house was destroyed by an American bombing raid. He very simply could not understand the series of events that would lead to people very intentionally killing other people.

Coming home from his philosophy class once, and on his many debates with himself, Ningen thought about humans being called “political animals.” It obviously made sense that people would fight. Like he fought his brother for disagreements or dominance, or like his father fought his coworkers for more money and better living, but no fights that he knew about were worth living or dying for. He concluded earlier that day, before recalling his debate, that wars happen because people disagree about things they consider worth dying for. In a more advanced society than the current one, people wouldn’t die for the things they currently did. And after he failed to make his point in the debate class, he also concluded that people who preferred to talk out of self-interest and superiority rather than listen to others should not be the most heard.

After his debate, Ningen decided he would learn and study to somehow prevent fights, especially severe ones, and to give voice to the people who, like him, currently didn’t know how to express their very well thought ideas and desires.

But just as he was walking up to his family’s house and saw his mother cooking beside the window, he also saw a blinding flash of light that almost burnt his eyes; in fact, he barely had enough time to ask himself, but he wondered whether his eyes were in flames. His body was flung away tens of feet down the road in the opposite direction of the bright light, as an immense surge of pressure crushed his limbs. A terrifying burst of sound came along with the wave that tossed him like a ragdoll, and for the few milliseconds he was flying through the air, he saw nothing but red. Red air, red floor, red houses, red water, the town of Hiroshima was first white and then red.

Once the dust settled after days and months, and the quietness engulfed the decimated town in dark red rubble, there was nothing but the sound of silence with no cries for help or mercy.

As for Ningen and his pledge to give voice to people like himself: the only sound leaving his body was the babbling of the minute flames from the black embers that were once a human being.