

## **Motionless** by Vaastav Anand

They brought my dad's coffin back. The American flag on it lay there still. Inanimate just like my dad. I remembered what he used to always tell me, "Son, if you want to be the best sniper in the world, always remember to make the moving non-moving." So, I decided to become what he was and joined the sniper school in the US Army.

After graduating, I was sent to Afghanistan where on the very first day I had to handle a hostage situation at a bank in Kabul. I set up my gun and was ready to be the hero and save the day. On my captain's command I took out the leader of the terrorists but the other sniper missed. The other terrorist began open firing and I had to readjust my gun quickly to neutralize the threat. My team congratulated me over the team radio.

I went to the bank to see what I had accomplished. I was shell-shocked. I couldn't feel my hands, my legs refused to move and there were goosebumps all over my body. Bodies of children lay on the floor and their mother sat beside them breathing yet lifeless. I stood still. My captain told me to move on saying that it was routine and that I would get used to it. I never did.

I returned home. The laughter of the neighbour's kids reminded me of the shouts of the Afghan children and the cries of their mothers. I decided to lie down on my bed with my eyes closed, yet I could see the image of the mother clutching the dead body of her son refusing to let go. I was motionless. The next day I was awarded a medal of honour. I am sure my father turned in his grave.