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A young man stood on a road in a city far from home. He held a piece of metal and plastic designed to kill other people in the most efficient way possible: a gun. His name was Juan 'Johnny' O'Brien Ramirez.

His father, Miguel, had come from little Mexico to the United States of America. He met Louise O'Brien in Texas and she became Louise Ramirez when she married Miguel.

They had four children. The oldest was named Sarah, but the family didn't talk about Sarah anymore. She was a homosexual, which meant that she only fell in love with other women. The rest of the Ramirez family, like many people in Texas, thought that she should be in love with a man, so they pretended that she wasn't there at all.

Johnny came next. The two youngest children had died of pneumonia when they were very young, and that made everyone very sad.

Johnny lived with his mother and father until he joined the United States Marine Corps. The Marine Corps believed in God, like Johnny did, and Protected the United States of America, as Johnny would.

Johnny was very proud to become a Marine, and his parents were very proud of their son. So, ninety-six days after he graduated, he was very proud to be going to Iraq—a country very far away—to defend the United States of America (and the people of Iraq).

He would be defending freedom and democracy from people called terrorists. Johnnie knew what terrorists were: terrorists were people who hated freedom and God and tried to kill Americans. Most of them were Arabs, but you couldn't tell them apart from the others because they looked the same.

The President of the United States of America had said that most Arabic people were nice and good people and Johnny trusted the President so he agreed with this. But he couldn't understand why the people in Iraq didn't love the Americans who were saving them from tyranny and evil. These were bad things and meant that everyone was not free, like in the United States of America.

People died in Iraq almost every day. People who didn't like the Americans being in Iraq used guns, like the one Johnny had, and grenades, like Johnnie had. They tied bombs to their bodies and blew themselves up near crowds of people. One of these people in a crowd was called Tom Johnson, and he was one of Johnny's friends. When he died Johnny was very sad and very angry. Johnny didn't like the people who lived in Iraq as much now, because one of them had killed his friend.

One hot day—it was always hot—Johnny himself was standing on the road doing his job. He was guarding a checkpoint. He was checking people to make sure that they weren't dangerous. If someone were dangerous,

then they would be arrested.

Johnny felt the road rumble. He looked up and saw an old van coming down the road. It was moving very fast. Johnny thought that it would get to the checkpoint quite soon if it did not slow down. He waved at the van to make the driver slow down, but the driver didn't. The van kept moving very fast. Johnny waved again just in case the driver had not seen him. The van kept moving.

Johnny had been taught what to do if this happened. He put the back of his gun to his shoulder and pointed the end of the barrel at the car. He then lifted it a little higher and pulled the trigger. The bullet went up into the air. It was meant to warn the driver to slow down. But the van still didn't stop. It just moved faster and faster.

Again, Johnny knew what to do. He looked along his gun again but this time he aimed much lower. The bullet hit the tyre and ripped the rubber. The van wobbled and swerved a little, but it didn't stop. It was still coming, just like before.

Again, Johnny knew what to do. This time he aimed at the front of the van, where the engine raced. He pulled the trigger again, but this time he held it for a little bit longer. Three bullets came out of it this time, one after another. He hit the radiator and water started pouring out of the engine, but the van was still coming.

Now it was very close. Johnny could see the people in the van. A man was driving, and a woman sat next to him. They both looked very sad and scared. They were crying.

Johnny couldn't see much now, but still he knew what to do. He aimed his gun again. This time it was pointed at the man driving the van. Johnnie saw the face of the man driving and he also saw his friend Tom, lying on the ground. Tom was lying in blood, his own thick red blood.

Johnny was smiling. It wasn't a normal smile, it was a smile that came from seeing lots of people like Tom, lying in lots of blood, not just people from the United States of America, people from Iraq too. They had all just stopped, like Johnny's little brother and sister who had been sick when they were babies. Johnny knew one more didn't matter.

He pulled the trigger.

A man who was going to a hospital with his pregnant wife died. His wife was in labour. They were both scared, so scared the man knew he couldn't stop. His wife hit her head on a piece of broken glass in the car and she died. Her baby didn't know. Her baby never knew anything; not very long after, it suffocated and died.

Johnny died too. He put the end of his gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. He left a big mess on a road in a city far from home.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Annemaree Dalziel and Deyel Dalziel-Charlier.