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For the Unknown Hero

It is quiet in Arlington. There is an atmosphere not of uneasiness, but one of silent respect. My feet move steadily to the click of the man's heels in front of me. The white marble tomb reads, "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier. Known but to God." Beyond the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, there sit 400,000 white crosses, each with a story of the same weight and gravity as the unknown man who lies before me. The humbling sacrifice of these men and women seems too great a blessing to be returned with the simple laying of a wreath. Our debt to the veterans of this great nation is one that simply cannot be repaid. Instead of offering reparations for the sacrifices they have given, we must look to honor our service members in the highest regard possible. As John F. Kennedy so eloquently said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." Veterans, who have endured such great hardships on our behalf, deserve not only respect and honor, but that we continue to fight for the freedom that they secured. Our beautiful patchwork of democracy and popular sovereignty began with a band of humble rebels fighting for the people. Today, we are still a land bound to the duties of defending that principle of government by the people, of the people, for the people. To honor their commitment to preserving our great nation, we must strive for an ideal of perfection, of greatness, of just one more step towards finally realizing those beautiful words "in order to form a more

perfect Union.” We must live our lives in honor of the sacrifices of the veterans in our communities, the service members we do not know, and our fallen heroes at rest in Arlington. By keeping aflame the torch of democracy, we will give our veterans a name: the name of America.