

New Poetry from JD Duff

Night Flash

You've been having nightmares again.
The cruel shaking of a body
resisting slumber.
Hands twitching,
chest jerking to beats
of unknown song,
playing over and over
like memories you sold at a tag sale,
buried on the Tuscarora trail,
dumped in a white room
at Bethesda Naval Hospital.



Jules Tavernier, Heart of a Volcano Under the Full Moon, 1888.

I awake to the moon beaming
unto a lonely bed,
find you out back where dreams

smear on a blurry canvas of recollection,
and ghosts rise from wooded corners of truth.

I climb under the poncho liner
that covered you through
countless peaks of ice
and frost, Persian sandstorms,
fighting holes where you used
the cloth to shield you from walls
of claylike dirt.

The June breeze dries the sweat
around your lips. I lift a rifle
from your chest, place it beyond
the reach of ready palms.

A single leaf rests
on your cheek.

Cicadas cry for their lost
as I hush your silence with a kiss.

The Homecoming

It rained for a week
after our mailman's son
died in a roadside bomb
attack near Al Karmah.
The sky wept
as half-mast flags
blew gently
on the prairie's haze.
Signs of well wishes
bowed in store windows,
bellowed from alters of diverse
domes of prayer,
rested in alms of flowers
and fried dough.
A Corps led procession,

thick with mourners,
crowded the lot
of the pearly
mountain church.
Bagpipes sang
for a Lance Corporal
draped in dress blues,
mother betrayed
by dark dismissals
of nightly pleas,
father wilting
to soft hymns
for his broken boy.
The lone sibling
stared at the casket,
wondered why he survived
the trashings of war
while his brother
lay in a box,
waiting for rifles
to speak his praise,
a dark tomb to welcome
another lost Marine.

Seal of God

Foxholes and submarines led you to farm life
where you graze the vast splendor of still land.
Crickets speak to the quiet hush of night
as an elusive sky captures secrets,
spits sins in large chunks of hail,
disrupting the tranquil flight of time.

Faith's armor shoves you in church
where peace is offered between pews
and sounds of crossfire muffle

the graceful hum of atonement.



William Holman Hunt, Cornfield at Ewell, 1849.

You sneak home through cornfields;
stalks reek with bruised dents
of blistering flesh.
Wounded frogs leap past
thick tridents of reticent thought,
darkness dismantled by the crippled promise
of a swelling cherry dawn.

The euphonies of children
replace cancors of slivered screams
as the wind blows you
toward our kitchen, where we break bread
with an Amish farmer
and wait for God to heal us.