

New Poetry by Peter Mladinic: “Fist”



AIR THICKER THAN / *image by Amalie Flynn*

In Okinawa I made a fist
and my fingers stuck together
that stop over night
my one stop before Danang,
between two worlds,
the flag burning, tear-gas
U.S. and the Vietnam rat-tat-tat
automatic fire, the LBJ
How many kids ... and the sandbag
fortified bunkers. Didn't

see anyone die, only the dead.
In Okinawa, planes
on the runway, the air thicker
than Danang's.
The smell of napalm,
how real for some.
I stood holding a metal tray
in a chow line, slept
in a top bunk, spit-shined boots
so their tips were mirrors.