Remembrances at the Black Wall

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Remembrances at the Black Wall

Jiffy Pop popcorn
Packed into boxes
With riddles
(Why did the man throw the
Clock out the window?)
Copied off of Dixie cups
In my child scrawl
And sent to a far away jungle
Where only Dad, mail, newscameras
And my imagination
Could go.

Sitting in front of television
Coloring, trying to stay
Between the lines,
I hear
Vietnam
And look up to see
The men run through the trees;
The men crawl in the mud;
The men carry away the bleeding men;
The men lie waiting, not moving
In the rain of bullets;
The men lie dead;
I look for their faces
Hoping not to see my Dad.

I frost the window with my breath
As I watch the mailman leave a stack
Of envelopes my Mom shuffles through
As I lean on the chair arm.
At the end of her search
She tells me there’s no letter from Dad
And hurries to start supper,
Closing the kitchen door behind her.
Pearson - Vander Broek

I stand behind my mother,
Looking past her for him in the crowd—
Gray haired women with overnight bags,
Young women with children
Dragged behind,
Men carrying bulging green bags.
Then I see him,
He hugs Mom and lifts me
In one arm.
His shoulder feels rough on my cheek
And his soap smell is new.

I wake up with his screams
And the imaginary rat-tat-tat of bullets,
Moans of soldiers,
Buzz of planes.
He yells, “Run, run,
Let’s get the hell out of here.”
And I curl up tight,
Fearing the face-painted-green
Soldier crouching in my closet
And jungle vines creeping
From under my bed.
I pull the blanket over my ears,
Watch the shadows,
And pray for silence.

The chicken and noodles are ready
So I go after Dad.
I find him in the car,
In the garage,
And ask him where he’s going.
He orders me inside
But I say I want to go with him
And he looks at me
Then cries
And shuts off the engine.
Rememberances at the Black Wall

We watch the nurse
Unlock the door
Then step into the whiteness
To face his back
As he looks out the window
With his deadened eyes.
I sit in the red leather chair beside him
And comment on the changing colors of the leaves.
I ask him if it’s beautiful.
He shakes his head
And describes the blood covered limbs
He sees on the peaceful lawn.