

Memoir

Benjamin Wall-Feng

And when the war ended we took to the street
passing out blankets and scraps of cold meat
passing out quiet and quick on the ground
as the kids in the alley passed bottles around
as if they had anything left to eschew—
you were their hero and I was there too.

And you were as hopeful as when we first met
Your conviction in happiness hadn't died yet.
You'd mutter the mantra you'd given our corps
("Pray for the wounded, the starving, the poor")
as if we had anyone left to outdo—
you were their hero and I was there too.

And once we fed soup to a girl in rags
whose hands trembled tight around old metal tags
and always the poet, you touched her good arm
said "When the sky opens, we'll keep you from harm"
as if there was anything left to fall through—
you were their hero and I was there too.

And part of me snapped like a branch in a flame
so I took your clothes and your breath and your name
and left you a gray, splayed-out heap on the floor
(prey for the wounded, the starving, the poor)
as if I had anyone left to become—
and I was a hero, and you were no one.

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