

New Poetry by Kathleen Murdough: "He Signed Up"



Are My Midnights / *image by Amalie Flynn*

"This is what he signed up for,"
my mother says when
my brother graduates from West Point.
He always wanted to be a soldier,
so she and I pin the bars on his shoulders.
He's twenty-two, we're fighting two wars,
and one will come for him in the end,
but first it comes for our friends.
Kills one in the summer, and then
it comes for my brother, too, and

takes all
the light with him.
His dawns are my midnights.
We talk over the noise of firefights.
For an entire year
I don't sleep or write
because poetry can't abide the war-
not yet-
The phone rings at 2AM, and
at first, I think he's dead.
He's not.
But he's not coming home.
He's going to Baghdad instead.
This is the moment I don't forgive.
120 days of moments come after,
and years I spend trying to
recapture his laughter.
Sometimes, I look at him
and still see the war
that I never signed up for.