

# 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.