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Pictures of Vietnam

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PICTURES OF VIETNAM
(for Mom and Dad)

Michael Raffaele
Featured Poet

Today my eyes scrolled through photos older than my body
And my mind traveled back three decades an hour.
I put on hundreds of different faces and cried hundreds of different tears
With black and white hands projected out to me through an old war scrapbook.

First I arrived on the Cambodia shore-
With the New Testament strapped to my helmet
And the rifled song of war stringing my back-
Pointing to the clouded sky amped up for the barracks-
Kissing my stripes with the stars of America on my forehead.

Then I found myself crouched fetal position on a tiled De Nang market square-
Attached by the fingertips to my little bui doi brother
Who rested cribbed in an empty bullet box on New Years Eve.

And I played tug of war with men I've never met on a blue beach in Nha Trang-
With huddled tribal children giving my foreign lens the peace sign-
Framed by the camouflage of my soldiered arms-
The hail of my photo lens now interchangeable with the flicker of my gunfire.

The afternoon I slept in the sun under the new remnants of an old Hindu temple-
My head rested on a warm gatling whose firepower I can't even put into words.

I was exposed to a fatigued march through the central province of My Son-
Where I heard my boy cry from his bed laying so many still lives away from me-
While waves and waves across my fathers yawned through protests of peace
As I raised a lively lily to their hollowed barreled eyes and begged them to bring me home.

UNTITLED Ashley Danielle Siebert