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PTSD

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PTSD
MADISON HINRICHS

My life is happening all at once
 day
 night
 week
 year
it's all the same to me now.
 Now
 that I have come back
 Now
 that I have seen
What is this?
 This never ending,
 ever aching,
 pain
blossoming inside me,
 etched
 into my soul,
 etched
 into my mind.
When a car door slams,
 I see
 my once solid comrade
 shatter into a million pieces,

like broken words, blown to hell
across an empty page.

As a baby cries,
I see
his wife's tears
when I had to lie and say,
"Heaven gained another soldier."

I walk in the annual Fourth-of-July parade,
I walk as
crowds of people stand in line
just to shake my hand and say
"Thank you for serving our country."

Thank you, they say.
they say
thank you.

What is this?
They're thanking me?
They're thanking me and beneath my skin
I burn for the unforgivable sins of this hellish world.
My soul contorts as another mis-informed
civilian shakes my sweaty, blood stained hand.

They say thank you,
and all I see
is the starving faces of helpless people,
helpless people that I could have saved,
but I killed them instead,
and for what?
My government?
My freedom?
Bullshit.

I am free, my country is free, and those
starving faces were no threat to that,
and even if they were... Why is our happiness

worth so much more than theirs?

Sure, freedom comes at a price,
but sometimes it is too damn expensive.

Think about that next time you shake my hand
and say thank you.

Thank you
for killing innocent civilians.

Thank you
for following orders blindly.

Thank you
for playing God.

Thank you
for ruining your mind.

I see myself
point and shoot

I see myself
duck and cover

I see myself
scream and cry,
blindly in my sleep.

I see myself
walk and wave,
and smile for the children

I see myself,
throw them candy
across the empty air.
like the misplaced limbs
of another exploding soldier

I see myself.
I see my country.

And...
I
am
ashamed.

But the world just
keeps on turning.