

MEMORIAL DAY

I went to war.
Yes, I went to war.
I was young then, and proud
and, not knowing, I went to war.
I was young then
and so was the world, my world:
safe, secure, believing.
I didn't know, then,
I would see boy-men
without faces,
without arms, legs, souls.
I didn't know, then,
they also went to war
but didn't come back.
The boy-men looked at me
with fear,
with hope,
with longing,
begging for some small thing
from me.
But, I
sent them to war,
not knowing,
and they didn't come back. Oh,
sometimes parts of them did:
Charles, with half his face
Leon, with his charred body
Jack, with only one eye
Crazy Lee, playing over and over
"Pretty Woman" and
"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds."
Lucy in the sky; Officer on deck!
Not knowing what to say,
I said nothing.
Not knowing what to do,
I did nothing
but hold their hands.
So many hands,
hearts needing to be held.

But I sent them,
the others,
who didn't come back,
not even in parts,
but in boxes,
boxes with flags hiding them
from me.
The endless list of names,
the "Dry Dock" kept
my personal body count.
And I went to war
day after day after
week after week after
month after month,
endlessly,
Yes, I went to war
but
not all of me came back.

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