

Veteran

by J.A. Moad II

Born of war and the lie of lies,
uniformed into silence,
a signed away life in pursuit of a *Service*
commanding you to hold onto some book or flag
clinging to *Patriotism* as if it's a guiding star
leading to a future of promise and certainty
until coming home breaks upon you in a wave you can't see—
an invisible bomb blast smoldering inside.
and there's the *Duty* to be back,
to be right, to be all there and forget,
the day driving memories back into light,
into a war that won't let go—
won't allow you to escape the world of *Honor* you're supposed to hold high
like a *Flag* hoisted on the moon, a fluttering shadow from a lost place and time.
and you can never *Reconcile* the day with the night—
the ghosts in the mind—the holes in the thoughts,
until they tell you it's *PTSD*, and you listen and you hear
and you see it in the eyes of the mirror,
everything lettered into a name for what only you
and those like you can know,
men and women searching for a healing word and voice—
a gentle guide into every night's desperate end
where you find yourself over and over again
staring into darkness and pain, secrets and boxed up tears
waiting for everything in the world
to die