

In The Heat of Battle

—Kerry Pardue

Forty-four years—
a long time
To remember your face
but you are still here
to remind me about
the price of war
away from the power of the poem.
The day you died
Bullets and blood
Explosions. Metal ripping into skin
I am treating a wounded soldier.
My fingers and mind, busy,
Rush to stop the flow of blood.
You pop up out of your hole.
Three feet from me
Our eyes meet. We are both surprised.
By instinct alone
I fire once.
You stop mid-moment
stare deep into my eyes
A look of total surprise
As if to say I can't believe
you shot me

In slow motion
You fall to your knees

No sound from your lips
Just a flow of blood

You are the age of my own brothers
Who have no knowledge of what war is
They are still playing baseball, attending school
Chasing after girls

I just wish
That you too
Didn't have to learn
What happens in the heat of battle

I just wish neither of us knew about the realities of war
I would have rather of taught you about baseball
Watch you chase after girls
See you grow into a man