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Quota

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After Our Blood Can Save Them
by Jordan Eagles

I'm sweating gas-station coffee
and estradiol metabolites
cause our 5 PM poetry
workshop catchesme yawning at four

and this glass-walled
campus art gallery
is a greenhouse in the
leveling beams of
sundown's skinned kneecap.

I lean and peek
at the placard beside Eagles' print
which offers
*...materials: screen-printed blood of a
transgender service member...*

Rusty pinpricks,
long-since oxidized,
arranged in a matrix
à la comic-panel
halftone,

coagulate into
a G.I. clutching his scalp
like Rodin's *Thinker*
if emptyheaded
or mad,

still brandishing his bayonet,
its blade lopped short
by a careless margin,

as though it's immaterial
who gets gutted.

I pass my finger over the crook
of my elbow,
now tattooed with
a lotus flower,
its aubergine petals
obscuring the
ruins of another war
we'd rather forget.

Would you bare
your forearm
and ball your fist
without asking why
America needs
all this blood?