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After the War

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AFTER THE WAR

You can walk for hours in Paris
and never find romance.
You can read for weeks in the Bible
and never know love.
You can go to the doctors
and get on their lying scales.
You can drive to the gym every day
and never feel strong.

And yet there were confidences
over the burnished wood,
a girl asleep in a corner, smoke
curling from the mouth of a Vietnam vet,
his hands fumbling with papers
on which nothing was written.
I know how it is
to drop everything you touch.

The straw is gone from my hair.
The charms are gone from my wrist.
I listen to the memory of friends
fade like a thrush through the forest.
But I remember ponds where we skated,
yellow sands where we lay,
windows that looked out on rooftops and pigeons,
the bus we rode, dazzled by Chinese faces.

You sit on the steps of the L.A. "Y,"
waiting for the rain to subside.
Why wouldn't you look for love
in any possible place?
This gift I give you
that you did not take.
I kept it for you
over all the years.