

Heart of the Enemy

Jenny Pacanowski

The day you waved at me
For the first time
The convoy was
Transformed
Into a parade
I lowered my weapon
Waved back like a beauty queen
In desert camo...
A parade of freedom
Of winning hearts and minds
Of this liberated country
My mission was clear
I was present
We had arrived
To help
To save
To heal
To love

We convoyed into your village
With our green ambulance
The leaders
Presented you and the other children
For US
To poke and prod with our instruments
Of medicine

I taught you about cough drops
How not to swallow it
Whole
To take in the medicine first
You nodded
And I smiled
I listened to your hearts
The bounding and the slushing
As blood pulsed through your veins
My heart burst with purpose
We lived another day
Together
Immersed in war

I left
You stayed
I was assigned
To the road
To convoys
You went to begging
Then to rock throwing
We laughed when we saw you
Flicking US
The bird

Until ...
The explosion silenced us
Your screams were deafening
Or was it mine?

I scrambled around the crater
The dust was blinding
Until I saw the blood

Desert sucks up blood
Quicker than water

I saw you!
Running away
With that cell phone
That detonator
In your little brown hand

Die You Little Motherfucker
You were no longer a child
With a beating heart
Sucking on cough drops
YOU ARE A THREAT
Running across your desert
Of Sand that rakes my skin
Much like your existence
Rapes my idealism

Die you Little Motherfucker
You have come into a world
That hates you
Wants to kill you
You little terrorist
We can't tell the difference between insurgents and civilians
You all look the same to us
Different than US
You are the enemy
Die you little motherfucker

I see 2004 like a movie
Reeling backward in my mind
Drawing forth the
Moving targets
I mean....
Civilians
I mean....
Children
I mean...The Detonators

You are THE blurry in my pictures
You are as indistinct as the shambles of concrete
You call "home"
How do I return home?

What if I said I didn't know?
I didn't know how to stop the machine
Not the convoy
Not the war
Not even myself

I reached out...
But my weapon
Separated us
I wanted to pull you in
Close
But,
All you could feel was
Cold hard steel

What if I said
I was sorry
We ever occupied
You
I want to hold you
Redefining
Love unconditionally
Giving you my blood
After we had gutted
You
Your country
Please help me
Put away
My gun
My armor
My hate
And redefine my love
For humanity
Including you
Please
Let me come home
Please
Let us all come home
From the war
Inside
US ALL

Jenny Pacanowski is a poet/combat veteran/facilitator/public speaker/actor. She collaborates with Impact Theater, Poetic Theater Productions, Bedlam Outreach, The Military Resilience Project along with many other organizations. Most recently, Jenny has performed at the Lincoln Center Atrium, The New York Cultural and Ethical Society, Poetic License: Kicking down Doors, LaGuardia Community College Veteran Week, Aquila Theater@ GK arts center and many more. Her goal is to help veterans and civilians by healing the wounds of war and military culture through the arts. Jenny hopes by creating smoother reintegration programs; it will facilitate lowering the suicide, homelessness and addiction epidemics that plague our veterans.