

Midnight Journey

Denise M. Coyle

Walking along the granite wall
don't know what propelled me to be here at such an hour.
The leaves are stirring as the winter's breeze begins to pick up.
There's not a soul in sight...
least none that we can see
even the sentinel seems more like a ghost to me.

The wall holds a haunting quality
as the moon reflects off each name individually
I sit before this wall
I don't know a single name
not one...

Yet as I sit faces appear to me...
sad and lonely eyes...
full of memories
those eyes still haunt me to some degree
as I sit... I become their confidante.

Each one seems to take their turn and begins to speak...
I feel like one of them, their stories so vivid that they take me there
Stories of heroes, comrades and times history wishes to forget
That's why I know these stories may never truly be told...
though they live in the heart of every vet.

I know not one...
no name triggers a memory
yet together I feel as though we are brothers...
in a bond that knows no end.

For these are the men I admire...
these are the men I mourn
For they are the soldiers that gave their lives for mine own
they sacrificed all for the freedoms I now know

From wars that span this nation's history, these men come...
to speak in this place where eternity and reality meet as one
they speak to us...
in ways only our soul can understand.

And if you were to stand before this wall... here
where I now sit...
you would see the medals
the pictures of boys who became men and never returned
Images of children who come here to visit their fathers or grandfathers
The letters to brothers, fathers, sons and comrades...
Purple hearts, Crosses, a Star of David and a Rosary or two
Teddy bears, flags, Lucky Strikes and fresh roses
All lined against this granite wall
with untold stories accompanying them all.

Were you to stand here, you would feel it
the raw power of what they gave...
the sacrifices that were made.

So I sat and listened
and in the end, as the moon began to fall
the sun began to threaten
they all began to fade...
Yet one remained
as if waiting to catch a glimpse of one more sunrise.

Slowly he smiled and turned to me
He whispered... thank you
And when I could only ask why...
his reply was simple but direct
“Thank you for listening, for treating us with dignity...
for appreciating what we have done...
but most... what we have sacrificed.”

With those words...
he faded away
I stood before this lonely wall...
not really feeling very lonely at all...
as the tears streamed down my face...
the morning sun rose to kiss this wall and hold it in its embrace.

As I wiped the tears away
the only words I could think to say...
were Thank You....

I stood there for a few more moments...
each name carved upon my soul....
slowly... I turned and walked away

prouder than I ever thought I could be...
though I doubt I could be any prouder than I already am,
to be the daughter of a Soldier...
who served in Vietnam.