

# Trust

He was always there, in the background.  
We always knew he would come back.  
Trust was the biggest bond we had, that firm hand that pushed you to believe what he said.  
To take it for the truth.

This was also the hand that pushed him. Pushed him to go,  
ultimately to die, not at all with dignity.

I guess this was his nirvana.

We never thought he'd actually go.  
None of us did. The realisation hit me weeks after,  
when dad played Glenn Miller on the record player.  
Two seconds of diamond prime time,  
before the dull crackling is interrupted by the soft pluck of the double bass.  
The tears fall, like the soldiers parachuting,  
  
reaching their end on the cold hard floor.  
Only to be dried up and treaded on,  
  
slowly fading out of life.

They fade till it is just an empty hole in my head.  
A hole only to be filled with a meaningless anecdote,  
from some purple faced general,  
who sends them off without taking a second  
to observe the real effects.

He sees men as labour, who sees them as an endless supply.  
To sweeten his deal, to profit off.  
Mum says he couldn't last a second.  
If he was a soldier, or a family member. He has no conception of life,  
if he has the heart

to send these men off.

It turns dusk, the mostly blood stained letters,  
your muddy khaki jacket,  
with an empty bullet hole in the breast pocket.  
He hasn't come back.  
He never will.

The trust is gone, just like him.

## Tom Gunn

# GONE

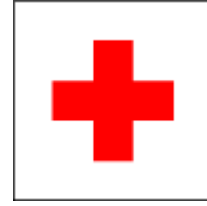
Armistice Sunday, a time of grieving  
Inscriptions of names, dyed in red  
Honour, adventure, previous experiences, you said  
John smith, a name cursed, full of lies  
As I remember our last moments, last words  
Gone

Back at the airport  
Clenching my hand, wiping away the tears  
Pointing at the planes, hiding me away  
From the fear, eating away at you inside.  
First steps onto the plane  
Always facing your back,  
You disappeared from my life  
Gone again

Waiting, waiting, for signs  
Memories of you  
Empty inside, eyes dead.  
Letters flooding into the house,  
You talk about your adventures  
Once-in-a lifetime experiences,  
Like a puppet controlled.  
You said your goodbyes,  
Talked about going off on another adventure  
With fear corrupting your mind  
Gone for the last time

Amina Sidat





# Bandages

Bandages wrapped around their hearts  
Dying in agony when playing their parts,  
of finding peace for the country they love  
When most will fly to our God above.

We ladies feel the same when they close their eyes  
Mourning for the loss of the men, in hidden cries  
“Help!” They say, my bruises and burns,  
The soldiers who scream whilst taking their turns.

Our only dreams are to make them smile,  
Hoping they can live with a comfortable lifestyle  
We are just ladies who see the blood shed,  
Of all our dying heroes fighting in deep, red.

We silently treat them with a spoon of sweetened honey,  
We’ve got hurting feet and shoulders with no sight of golden money.  
But the golden, shiniest love is what we show,  
When we treat them with endless love despite our sorrow.

Nasrin Bapu

# ATO

Tick Tick Tick  
My chest rises and falls against the seconds that pass.  
Tick Tick Tick  
My veins ache  
Tick Tick Tick  
I shake hands with the dark parts of my thoughts.

Dizzy from heat,  
I fumble with wires as time slips from my grasp.  
“you okay boss?”  
“Yeah”  
But I’m not okay. I lie.  
I’m afraid of death.  
Death inspires me like a dog inspires a rabbit.  
But I’m forced to deal with what I feel.

I snap back to reality  
The sun glares at me – mocks me.  
Dust spills over the IED  
Its silent – the eyes of the troops pierce into me.  
Unrelenting fear finally draws to a close when I begin to snip.

Kiah Page-Masterman



# What's New?

The alarm blares.  
Loud. Clear, Splitting  
The tranquil silence of a silent Sunday evening.

My mother jumps, tea spilling on our champagne coloured carpet.  
We'll clean it later.

The strong brown elastic digs into my head.  
Scratchy leather pricks my face and my Eyesight if clouded by the murky glass of The gas mask.

We stumble out into the garden, adrenaline kicking.  
The green, green grass slips under my feet.  
The bunker is in sight, right at the end.

Mother's hands frantic, pushing me inside.  
Rations on the shelves shake as another shattering sound fills my ears.  
Bombs  
And gas.  
That's new.

Faaizah Balu



# My Love

My love,  
You seem to be a leaf  
Lost in the wind of war,  
A small green blade  
Falling through my criss-crossed net,  
You're a young bud yet to bloom,  
Is this your way of blooming?

And you left,  
Consumed by pain, yet you love it,  
Ripped apart by hailing bullets,  
Yet you bathe in it,  
Me?  
Your love set me on fire  
And you left me to burn  
In my cold lonesomeness

I remember you setting foot  
Upon the distant horizon  
I wish you luck,  
And pray for me as I pray for you,  
For my heart cannot stand  
The slash of the sword  
From your loss.

Ayesha Patel

