

Nineteen

By Mitchell Waldman

He was nineteen
dying in a field
in a foreign land.
That was all he knew.
He wasn't feeling brave
but only afraid
as he felt the life
slipping out of him.

He didn't know who was right
or who was wrong
as they argued about it
in the grocery stores
in the newspapers
at the filling stations
and he lay dying
in this field of green.

He didn't feel as if it were an honor to die
he didn't feel dignified
or proud,
just scared,
a boy longing for home.

He didn't know anything now
just the pain;
he wasn't thinking about bleeding-heart liberals
or staunch conservatives
only about all the things he wouldn't see
he wouldn't do in his life
now that it would all be over so soon
and the fear of the unknown
of what was soon to come.

He didn't know much about politics about "stand firm"
or "the right plan"
he didn't know

Writing Raw

All work appearing below is copyrighted by the author.

which candidate
was better for the country
(now he would never get the chance to vote).

He only knew
he was nineteen
and he was going to die
before he had a chance
to live
and he wasn't really sure
why.

I Will Never Know Their Names

By Mitchell Waldman

It doesn't seem like too much to think about you
once (or twice) in my life
for a few fleeting moments:
you would have been here
not gassed smoked roasted
by red-eyed wolves
that called themselves men,
for what reason?
Because you were Jews?
Because they needed someone to blame
for their unhappiness
for their misery?
I think about all of you I would have known,
would have visited
(those of you I would have liked,
would have hated).
But now it doesn't matter:
won't know you,
or your children,
or your children's children (my cousins),
ever.
They won't ever be;
could this possibly be true?
Too terrible to comprehend
that men would fry babies
and mothers
and bearded grandfathers,
why?
Gas them
and pile their bodies,
their broken limbs, in mass graves
or better yet, they'd say,
let's burn them!
Let the stench of burning flesh
taint this land forever,
but save all useable parts--
the skin of the Jew for instance is tough,

Writing Raw

All work appearing below is copyrighted by the author.

would make good lampshades--
could they have really skinned us like cattle?
Yes, they could,
they did,
we must never forget.
But for all my cousins that were
and never were
now, for one single moment,
with a single tear
I cry--I never knew their names.

box car

By Mitchell Waldman

wet dreams of hopes survived
and what is left but wonder
and brittle smiles of yours
in aging pictures

riding in a box car
no light or heat
I curl up to a stack of coal
a possible source of warmth
if it would only light

I'm sitting in an empty cup
stuck to the sticky remains
of wine once drunk

I hear the furnace roar
and dream of fire
and a better day
while someone checks the locks
and I dare not blink or breathe.

Factory

By Mitchell Waldman

It's a madhouse
It's a zoo
where the workers stand
for eight hours a day
hovering over conveyer belts
and metal rollers
concentrating on one simple motion.

the howls, the hoots
echo in the noon buzzing
of the time clock
where men sit around
taunting each other
like embittered children
chewing hastily their sandwiches of meat
(they are men who eat meat).

muscles move like new machinery
with the rust of years awaiting.
I am one of them
eight hours a day
dead
until the five o'clock buzz
and I escape from the smell
of damp wormy pine
into the air of thought
for one more night.

Awaiting the Wolves

By Mitchell Waldman

I will hold my breath
and remain perfectly still
like a bird on a limb
like a tree in the woods
shivering in the chill wind
not making a sound
or movement
hoping not to be noticed,
just standing, observing
the forest around me
as my heart beats like a drum,
awaiting the nightfall,
the wolves of prey
dressed like men,
and the gray clouds
and snow,
flakes falling on my eyelashes, nose, and tongue,
breath making a foggy mist
in the dimming light,
holding my breath
making not a peep
not a sound,
awaiting the subtle crackle of leaves beneath their feet,
as they draw closer with arrogant swagger,
awaiting the deceptively silent devastation
of the oncoming storm.

A Heart Song for You

By Mitchell Waldman

Writing simple as I do
nothing esoteric
profound
nothing from the cosmos
or beyond
just listen:
I feel lost
lost
lost
when you're not around.
Simple, to the point,
the truth.
Heart feeling heavy
when you're not there,
at night
reach in the dark
in the silence
just want to wrap my arms
around the place you would be,
where you were,
hear you whisper in my ear,
feel your breath on my cheek,
lay your head on my chest,
stroke your hair,
hold you forever
forever
forever
in my arms

the heart of the man knows
what his head doesn't
you said once
but now it knows

want to feel you warm against me
no space between
want to share the air that you breathe

Writing Raw

All work appearing below is copyrighted by the author.

drink in that first kiss
tell you I love you
watch your eyes consume the words
know that it's true
want to get back to that place

feel your heart magnet love
beating against the walls of mine
two hearts echoing as one
feel our tears intermingling
warm
a salty sea of birth,

want to get back
back to that place like no other
your small hand in mine
my hand on your hip
your eyes on mine
your lips, tongue, on mine
carry you
hold you
skin to skin
dance with you
at midnight
and say
there has never been a time
a day
a night
there has never been a love
like there is
here
now
today.

Mitchell Waldman bio: Mitchell Waldman's fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in numerous publications. He is also the author of the novel, *A Face in the Moon*, and the story collection, *Petty Offenses and Crimes of the Heart* (Wind Publications), and has served as Fiction Editor for *Blue Lake Review*. (For more info, see his website at <http://mitchwaldman.homestead.com>).