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Poem: "The Beech Tree" by Noel Werle

Many women bear the burden of war via association with veterans. Their life-supporting, at times life-saving efforts too often go unrecognized or unacknowledged. The following poem by a compassionate women was a timely gift that made a difference - (Noel Werle - March, 1980) - "The Beech Tree"

In the night the rain comes.

I run out with soup pots, buckets, a cauldron.

I sit alone in the dark with the sound.

The beech tree stands apart in the woods.

Its smooth gray skin stains, then soaks up the wet.

The only part of you I know is your voice.

I keep it in the beech tree.

I press my palms flat against its clean strength.

Your skin wet and cold

you wake in the night.

You can't stop talking.

Rain fills the soup pots, the jungle, the war.

(How did your voice stay so clean through the war)

You talk on and on

of children in the streets reaching for candy,

machine guns from behind you

cut off their hands.

Of a baby grabbed from its mother,

a bayonet severs the head,

its mouth stays open.

You watched and did nothing.

You say you did nothing.

You think writing letters was nothing.

Rain drips from parchment leaves of the beech tree

soaks into the soil.

You dream that a beautiful woman hangs on your wall.

She doesn't have all her parts.

When you wake in the morning your skin is warm

your heart beats slowly.

You smile, but

I watch your eyes in their black wire cages.

You think I don't notice your hands as they gesture.

A panther, captive, moves that way.

I reach across the table for your hands.

I hold them in mine.