

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

*Moriah Erickson*  
**Premonition**

I look  
at your little boy body, round  
about the belly still, and can't help smile  
at the thought of you.

Today you kiss my cheek  
and run off to murder  
squirrels, your machine gun  
*blat-blatting* as you chase them  
along power line tightropes.

I peek out the kitchen window, humming  
the Star Spangled Banner under my breath  
as I coax flavor into tomato sauce, fresh from the jar.

You, dirty smiling three-year-old  
quickly become soldier,  
crawling on your elbows under razor wire through mud,  
government-issue weapon a sash across your chest  
I forget the sash you have not yet worn,  
bright yellow and orange reflector tape, your middle  
school safety patrol uniform. I forget  
your lousy grades, how you stay out past curfew, how  
you crash your dad's truck when you take it  
without asking. You don't ask  
what we think of you joining the service, you just do.  
We don't know until too late.  
There is no talking you out of this.

I see the flag they hand me, folded  
just so, and my heart breaks in  
red-white-and-blue.

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That night, like all others, I kiss your cheek  
freshly scrubbed and pink, tuck you  
into your bed with your stuffed horse beneath one arm  
and pull your cover up to your chin.  
And in that one sweet kiss goodnight  
I taste only shrapnel and the dirt  
of your fresh-dug hole.