

The Things I Burn

John Vương Quốc Vũ

The photographs
I burn
a chest full of ribbons
your handsome face
the stars on your shoulders

I struggle to shred the evidence
of the accomplishments in life—
the day we got married
the moment you left home
to defend the country
the letters that protected me
from losing my mind

Your hand in mine
smolders out of reach
your proud smile curls up in smoke
your long lashes ascend
like the (rem)embered wings
of sleepless fire flies

A rise of ashes the words
that will *again* save us
from the bloodletting
when
the enemy
comes

John Vương Quốc Vũ was born in Sài Gòn. Vu's writing has been anthologized in various publications, including the *Perfume River Poetry Review*, edited by Vuong Quoc Vu, the Asian American Writer's Workshop's *Topography of War*, edited by Andrea Louie, and James Adams's *Against Agamemnon War Poetry*. Vu's photographs have been exhibited in various venues in San Francisco and Oakland. He lives with his wife and two children in Oakland, California.