

Summer 1976

Julie Naasko Deutscher

Sprawled beneath a canopy of Kansas oak
we squeeze last drops of grape otter pops
then heave their plastic sleeves
aside our banana bikes, spent
after a long day's ride over town's cement.

Sprawled beneath a canopy of Kansas oak
we while away
elbows crooked and crisscrossed
hands pushed behind our heads
forming pillows
against the pokes
of the parched
buffalo grass.

My brother and I
dream in nature's bed, and oh
we have such long lazy hours ahead.

Sprawled beneath a canopy of Kansas oak
I imagine I have no legs.
Knees bent
bare thighs climbing from terry-cloth shorts
to summer-scabbed peaks
with nothing down the leaside

but phantom calves, heels, toes.
Hip muscles conducting thighs
in a symphony of stumps
pumping playfully
in the shadows of liberty's light
thousands of miles from Vietnam
where my dad
sprawled
beneath a canopy of jungle palm
legs blown to bits by a bomb.

Julie Naasko Deutscher is a writer from the Pacific Northwest who is currently at work on a collection of poems that reflect on her relationship with her beloved Vietnam Vet father, and how his war experiences marked the life of her family.