

“After Tet”

by Michelle DeRose

The 37th Medical made its slow
way south down the QL-2, the only
firearm amidst the carefully stowed
surgical supplies in the hands
of a twenty-eight year-old father of two,
his recent oath to do no harm
wrapping gauze around his trigger finger.
Families lined the road, children
with baggy pants, ballooning pockets, hidden
hands. Any one of them could hold
a grenade, he was told. They looked
for all the world like his own; the road,
his blue vein from crook to wrist,
to hands that might once again cup
the small head of a newborn.

Michelle DeRose lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she teaches creative writing and world, Irish, and African-American literature. Her poetry has appeared in various literary magazines and sites, including *ONTHEBUS*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Dunes Review*, *The Healing Muse*, *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Sulphur River Literary Review*, and others. Her father served as company commander of the 37th Medical in Vietnam in 1967-68 and was able to cup the heads of two more newborns of his own after his return to the states and his family.