

# Song of Napalm

By [Bruce Weigl](#)

*for my wife*

After the storm, after the rain stopped pounding,  
We stood in the doorway watching horses  
Walk off lazily across the pasture's hill.  
We stared through the black screen,  
Our vision altered by the distance  
So I thought I saw a mist  
Kicked up around their hooves when they faded  
Like cut-out horses  
Away from us.

The grass was never more blue in that light, more  
Scarlet; beyond the pasture  
Trees scraped their voices into the wind, branches  
Crisscrossed the sky like barbed wire  
But you said they were only branches.

Okay. The storm stopped pounding.  
I am trying to say this straight: for once  
I was sane enough to pause and breathe  
Outside my wild plans and after the hard rain  
I turned my back on the old curses. I believed  
They swung finally away from me ...

But still the branches are wire  
And thunder is the pounding mortar,  
Still I close my eyes and see the girl  
Running from her village, napalm

Stuck to her dress like jelly,  
Her hands reaching for the no one  
Who waits in waves of heat before her.

So I can keep on living,  
So I can stay here beside you,  
I try to imagine she runs down the road and wings  
Beat inside her until she rises  
Above the stinking jungle and her pain  
Eases, and your pain, and mine.

But the lie swings back again.  
The lie works only as long as it takes to speak  
And the girl runs only as far  
As the napalm allows  
Until her burning tendons and crackling  
Muscles draw her up  
into that final position

Burning bodies so perfectly assume. Nothing  
Can change that; she is burned behind my eyes  
And not your good love and not the rain-swept air  
And not the jungle green  
Pasture unfolding before us can deny it.