

“Where I’m From”

By Robert E. Lee

I am from a fine cold rain,
from fog flat and low in the treetops, like a soft roof.
I am from the anger, the bitter breath of truth.
I am from He who believes absolutely in God,
Bow down Thy Heavens,
O Lord, and come down,
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
I’m from thunder, low, distant thumping,
Ominous: angry.
I am from those who’ve heard nothing,
but joy in the night around me.

I am from a grave drowsiness,
feeling the weight of the Union Army,
the massive blue-force pouring my way.
I am from the urge: to press on and get it done,
The ‘King of Spades’
I’m from the finer gentlemen in England,
thanked by an old gentleman with tears for the return of his blind horse.
I am from He who dreamed of little girls, dancing a cotillion,
and herds of great horses, thundering by black canyons of clouds.

I am from a sense of enormous unnatural fragility, hollow glass,
with pain in the chest.
I am from Rooney Lee, wounded,
From no time for a letter to my wife, that troubled woman.
I am from the night in Arlington,
When the news came: secession,
From a paneled wall and firelight...outside there was cheering in the streets,
bonfires of joy.
I’m from the army that would march against my home, my sons.
I am from an army that loves me,
an army that does not blame me,
an army that does impossible things for me.

Inspired by George Ella Lyons’s “Where I’m From”
with text taken from *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara
By Allen Wang