

The Last Page

Vietnam

The airport shuttle driver arrives at dawn.
When I complain in jest about the hour,
he fires back a phrase, then translates:
'Vietnamese for *Tough shit, baby!*'
We pick up a woman bound for France
and he unloads, as if between men
there was untold conflict. Her long blonde hair
curls in tendrils toward her waist,
she leans forward, a hand to his shoulder.
Thirty years after Da Nang, he brought gifts
to an orphanage, wooden toys, no guns,
the children too young to have known our war.
I put it, I tried to put it behind me. I watch him
squeeze a thumb and finger to his temple:
I pressed it all in here. When I was a boy,
no one said a word about the war.
For all I knew, the country didn't exist,
a place as distant as Paris,
the French model city for Saigon.

Keith Ekiss