**Penny Rock Poetry**

**BEFORE THE WAR**

I wonder what's the matter with him.  
He's not the way he was before.  
He's not the way he used to be.  
The way he was before the war.

He had no way of knowing  
What horrors were in store.  
Then communication ceased  
When he went off to war.

He left while only in his teens.  
Now he's so much older.  
The warmth of his youth is gone.  
His spirit's so much colder.

His eyes look deeply haunted.  
He has no joy anymore.   
He doesn't laugh and rarely smiles.  
He stares down at the floor.

He speaks in cryptic code.   
He talks of blood and gore.  
Then lapses into silence   
Since he came back from war.

I wonder what he saw there  
That fills his eyes with fright.  
All those unknown terrors  
Keep him awake at night.

Certain sounds will startle him  
And send him out the door.  
Will he ever have peace again,  
As he had before the war?

He turns away from mirrors.  
Who he sees must frighten him.  
There's no respite in his mind  
Because all his thoughts are grim.

I don't know what to say to him.  
I can't talk as I did before.  
He's not the person that I knew  
Before he went to war.

He doesn't even look the same,  
So pale and so thin.  
It's like another person  
Came back inside his skin.

He used to be such fun,  
So easy to adore.  
It's like he disappeared  
When he returned from war.

I wonder what became of him.  
I never see him anymore.  
He's not the person he once was.  
I mean, before the war.

**DON’T LOOK AWAY**

If you want to wage a war,  
Don’t resort to euphemisms,  
Just call it by its name.  
It’s not a skirmish or a conflict,  
An unpleasantness or game.

If you want to support a war,  
Then look it in the face.  
Remember all the loss of life  
Is part of your disgrace.

You can’t avoid the consequences.  
You need to see them.   
You need to look them in the eye.  
Mutilated bodies with empty, glassy stare.  
That’s how it looks when youth is forced to die.

There are sounds that you must hear,  
The cries and screams of death.  
The loudest sound is deafening silence  
After their last breath.

To look at what you have destroyed  
Requires courage and humility,  
Decency, and respect.  
And you must admit to your participation  
And own up to its effect.

You can’t look away from atrocities,  
Or ignore the waste of lives unfinished.

Your choice to engage in legal massacre  
Renders all humanity diminished.

**COULD YOU REALLY HAVE A WAR?**

If you saw humanity in others,  
Could you really have a war?  
If no one was willing to fight  
You’d have to close the door.

If you saw others as your brothers,  
If you were interested in their customs,  
If you could see your common ground,   
If you thought of them as friends,  
If you weren’t concerned with being "right",  
If you didn’t feel the need to judge,  
If you wanted to give and share instead of take,  
If you had tolerance and patience,  
If you had faith, hope, charity, and love,   
If you knew that they did too,  
If you could see life through their eyes,  
If you saw connection instead of fearing difference,  
If you didn’t see through the eyes of good and bad,  
If you didn’t need to impose your views on others,  
If you valued their lives as much as yours,  
If you exercised love instead of hatred.  
If you understood we’re all just versions of each other,

Could you really have a war?

**A LITTLE TOUCH OF TORTURE**

Torture once, and torture twice,  
And torture once again.  
It’s been a long, long day.

Can’t remember so much fun,  
We must do this again.  
It’s been a long, long day.

It’s just a few of us at play  
Don’t make a fuss.  
It’s just some silly pranks  
We mean no harm.

So, let’s beat, berate, humiliate,  
And kill a couple too.  
It’s been a long, long day.

We torture them, they torture us,  
It’s simply quid pro quo.  
It’s been a long, long day.

We up the bet. Why get upset?  
It’s like a college haze.  
It’s been a long, long day.

You shouldn’t mind a bit if it  
Was your own daughter  
On the receiving end of friendly slaughter.

So, tell some lies and fabricate  
To let your conscience rest.  
It’s been a long, long day.

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