

remember? You stood there stunned at his conviction, his willingness to do what was right rather than what was easy.

The ninth grade soldiers promised you teeth, eyes, and ears of their enemies, promised to make you trophies out of the blood they've spilled, the bodies they've left behind to mark you as their next conquest and you did your best to blush honestly, as if to make them believe that the best way to your heart is through murder, through victory, through patriotism, so they would not make you their next conquest now. You began incubating a crush on the boy who coughs up oil late at night when you and your mother's wine could be alone.

