

A Definitive History of Quitting

Samodh Porawagamage

Just a teen, semi-supervised,
once I detonated a bomb
to see how parts explode with fire
into other parts.

Most nights at home after camp,
I woke in fear of shooting
my dog in the head, but then he'd jump
on bed and lick my face.

Others thought I had loved
Defense College until one day in training
I tightened my grip too much
around NK34's neck and he

nearly swallowed his tongue.

The silence of taking him
to the hospital in a lorry
felt like it's nothing

to quit—just duty and having
excelled at it. Later, the uniforms cleared me
and diagnosed some condition in him.
He even called to apologize and, in his stammer,

I knew who was behind it.
On leave, I wrote a whole book within days
and never took to memoir.
My father, the Colonel, visited to tell

a stray cat he used to feed
had gone missing. Dad stayed optimistic
like only he could.
I imagined the cat stepping on a landmine

and bursting like a balloon.
It was found dead in a well and I wondered
what Dad did with it.
Mum said that I insisted on as a kid

burying dead fish in water
not knowing what it meant,
as if buried in-ground the fish, surely,
wouldn't be able to swim.

Samodh Porawagamage is a Sri Lankan poet who writes about the 2004 Tsunami, Sri Lankan Civil War, poverty & underdevelopment, and colonial atrocities. His debut poetry collection *Becoming Sam* is forthcoming from Burnside Review Press in 2024. He is an uncontrollable fan of grumpy cats and monster fish.