

# *Kevin Bowen*

## HELMETS

We found them hidden down cellars and back rooms, stuffed in old duffles and lost corners of closets. They popped out at us, dark clowns from the war's Jack-in-the-box trunks. We put our heads in for size, felt their weight and mystery, drew lots to see who'd be Japs or Nazis. Some days we searched them sounds of blood red beaches, the boom of guns, the stench of places whose names were cut in them with jagged teeth-like letters. A few still wore dents from falling, or showed holes where the bullets had passed through, frayed green remnants of camouflage peeling off. We wore them in fear of being caught, the father's grim shadow looming suddenly in a door. His look to stop us. Some nights we woke delirious from chills and fevers, haunted by odors of saki, snaps, moonshine, dream-like images of women and children weeping, the secret labrynthine passages to death those carved out spaces contained.