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The Final You

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The Final You

I wish I could have known
the final you I saw—
with stars and stripes laid out
above your serene face.
You never looked that peaceful
when you were passed out on the floor.
Or when, with folded brow, you tried
to make a point to a spinning room.

My friends with hands bruised
in drunken handshakes
who didn't believe — "He's got the flu,"
did not have the same
undying respect
that your fellow agents and superiors had.

Shoulders back
facing into the room
stood your peers,
hands clasped before them, protecting
their flawless manly image.
I wondered if even one tear was shed.

I know that I let many fall
on the shoulders of my friends.
But not for what I'd lost as much
as for what I'd never had.

I deeply wish that I could have known
the final you I saw.
The one of love
and peaceful strength
that you drove inside and crushed.

Eric Franzone