

TONY SIMS

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## Soldier

He went away to a war once  
made him tough and wily  
put inches on his chest  
to hang a medal from  
taught him cap-badge Latin  
potted regimental history  
bizarre geographies  
of bar and brothel  
drilled him in simple skills  
with bayonet and grenade

when fully trained  
unleashed him on a hillside  
in the crump and panic of a battle  
among psalms of singing shrapnel  
left him for dead  
blood ebbing from boots

came back and married sensibly  
a plain girl with a soft voice  
who cooked like his mother  
and, like his mother,  
kept a spotless house  
took a job as watchman  
but fearful of silences  
changed to the clank of a dairy.

in time seeded parts of himself  
to tell his story to  
but didn't  
befriended a dog instead  
grew tulips and forget-me-nots  
fat leeks and abundant beans  
in a tidy garden  
where solitude ripened  
where sometimes he started at a sudden sound  
or saw menace in a thrush.

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**TONY SIMS** was a soldier in the British Army in The 1950's. He served in an artillery regiment in Hong Kong, narrowly missing a posting to Korea. On leaving the army he had a career in UK immigration control. He took up poetry in the 1990's, and had some success in well regarded poetry magazines. He now lives in the Cotswolds.