

L W S H A R P

Poets in War

I
Improvised.
That's what Hannibal and
Mr. T did when
The garage was
Surrounded and they only had
A leaf blower and propane
Tank

The platoon thinks
I'm crazy cuz
I giggle every time they
Tell us to
Raid a new IED
Factory

II
Midnight in green light
Creeping up the alley
Thumb and finger tense
Under the loaded rifle

Pause at the gate
Static crackle on the radio
Red Set
White Set
Blue Set
All stations this is Black 6 go
Clash of the Gate; angry shouts
Women wail, an old man cowers

Two boys squirt out the back
Shirtless and angry that the night
Can't hide them anymore

III
Even before you feel the
Shock wave
Crush your head like it's
Hammered
Into a tomato soup can
You see
The dust and grime instantly
Atomized
And the truck is filled
With a brown haze that
Chokes
Your screams

Much later someone will show you the video
From 20,000 feet it looks tiny and
Silent, Just a puff of brownish-black
Smoke that wafts away quickly
Exactly the opposite of how it was.

Now when you retell the story
You almost forget the part
Afterwards where you joke with McCann
Hey who spilled all this water on my seat?
I don't know sir, but the bastard spilt it on mine too!

IV

We lived in a burnt out mall in North Baghdad
Next door to the remains of a luxury
Hotel with a gigantic swimming
Pool that was filled with stagnant black muck that
Looked like Mickey Mouse ears from the helicopter.

Outside we erected gigantic concrete walls, and
Inside built cramped plywood rooms with
Portable AC units so we could sleep, in between
The explosions and the raids.

At night, when it was cool, I climbed up
The frozen escalator to the roof and
Gazed over the sandbags, and through the
Camouflage netting at the bright lights and
Buzzing traffic below and tried to pretend
That it was just a metaphor for something sane.

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