

## Blood Brothers

Back to bed. I rescind  
my early morning attempt  
to be free again  
from the toils of war.  
Not the breaking, battering, sinking, or shattering,  
but my confidence in being sure  
of my duties performed along the tour.

*Could I have saved him?  
Made the tourniquet tighter, the dose of morphine a little lighter?  
An open cavity heaving with doubt, the clinging life seeping listlessly out,  
a ripe fragmented carcass pulverized with pain,  
clawing at his own entrails,  
trying to deactivate  
the nervous system's sympathetic strain.*

*Knuckling hard against his wounds,  
making them deeper, opening them wider,  
I watched as he dug,  
clawing fingers weeding and winding  
through thick tangles of tender veins spilled and binding,  
thrashing limbs grinding hard amongst the gore,  
tendrils overflowing from his hollowed out core.*

*I pawed to find the calibrated syringe,  
clean, sterile, defined along each little ridge.  
Morphine injected, subcutaneously administered.  
Twenty milligrams, enough to kill his brain,  
to sever all awareness within the amygdala stem.  
His heart wasn't supposed to stop,  
to seize, twist and clamp, suffocating in a knot.*

Eviscerating consciousness,  
a strange, inhuman predicament,  
excising the soul at a hallowed expense,  
a sacred act of god at the hand of mere men.

More whimpers, I roll, burying my head against the dread.  
I pray, dear God, just a single sin,

I'll trade my sodded soul  
if you'll let me sink away within.  
Take away the memory.

*The scene's missile-like trajectory, how it sailed against us straight through the day,  
slicing through our stupid innocent haze.*

*The crash, it came, a massive spin of triumphant rays.*

*As it sailed, we rode, the bird slamming hard against the mountain's jagged nose.*

*Pressurized rivers of torched scorching flesh flood through the tubes in our breast  
with murky stale blood caked over wounds still spurting fresh.*

*Hanging slivered propellers thumping, endless drones frantically rotating, and  
alive, we roam, searching for salvaged life to maintain in this Hell.*

*Gnashing teeth, we sever his limb, the saw grating hard against pure life exposed within,  
drowning, hot blood gurgling in his throat, a bubbling well rising up, the chopper's  
engine sputtering while we worked, sawing, sawing back and forth,*

*it spit and fussed and grumbled, a seething cat hissing against us.*

*His protruding femoral artery, cauterized, dead,*

*and now he could be,*

*but a shattered mortuary grave of dismembered ligaments.*

*Analgesic for the pain just in case,  
and something to take the memory away,  
his body no longer alive and free,  
it's our distended cut of meat.*

*Rising and falling,  
a heavy pull one more time,  
he wheezes a sigh,  
the closing breath of a stolen life.*

I wanted to shriek. I wanted to cry. But faith, in something, fell strong upon my mind,  
numbing the pain, taking me away, giving me a chance to enslave my Righteous Ways  
for no good were they there, caught amidst vile winds of a rabid war waged.

I tucked them in snugly and bid farewell,

a shackled frozen soul buried within the impenetrable skin of my muscular shell,

and joined my men to forge ahead through the imminent throes of our final descent.

They paint the honor we want to perceive,  
the life, the love, the valor, the land of the free.

Promise, sacrifice, dutiful service,

these are Our starched uniformed soldiers.  
War, ladies and gentleman, lies  
in the eyes of the beholder.

Blown bodies strewn across the battlefield's gaping hole,  
no ritual exactness, no cold caskets paraded for show.  
Like the political event of the day,  
bringing the pretty primmed president our way:

A crash so violent no formal identities declared,  
to a singe the bodies were charred, in death, this, they shared.  
Death's domino rows spit from the plane's underbreast  
down the rattling conveyor belt they flow, my noble men rest.  
Draped on every coffin, bleeding white starry stripes,  
remains flow down the tarmac,  
a somber image coming home to  
an honor stricken widowed wife.

The president arrives, all pomp and show,  
touching down in Dover, his staff in tow.  
Landing just a minute past noon,  
he slips in the motorcade, hidden from view.  
Down the tarmac he rolls towards the grave,  
finally emerging on its grey ashy face.  
Silently he walks, making his way  
a hundred solemn meters to bestow American praise.

*"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen"  
rings out hollow, a feebly executed rhetorical rue.  
Half-mast the flag flutters against the waning day,  
I wipe away a tear, bowing my head to pray.*

But now, there is silence.  
Cold, dark, alone again.  
A lifeless empty drone,  
Honey? I think I've come home.