

M . K . S U K A C H

Eye of the Needle

—Sunset, Parwan Province in the Hindu Kush
mountains, 2009

That's bullshit, man. No one wants
to be here. No one wants to be
in a wilderness. For the sake of what?
Your rosary of bullets isn't saving you.
No one wants this place. Its quarrelsome
birds, smoke, stink, darkening mountains
no one wants to cross for the sake of this
godforsaken country of souls or anywhere
else for that matter...anywhere you have to divine
safe passage through the aperture of your sight.

War Story

Sitting in the Hartford International Airport with my grandfather, former WWII POW TSgt Hugo Cappelli, 423rd Bomb Squadron, 306 Bombardment Group, 40th Combat Bombardment Wing, 1st Bombardment Division, Thurleigh Airfield, Eight Air Force; Engineer and Top Turret Gunner whose B-17G, “Belle of the Blue,” was shot down by German fighters Tuesday, 12 September 1944, at 1128 hours.

“What used to get me were the guys that been, maybe, once.
And maybe not even in the shit, not forward like us.
They got a thousand pictures of guys they don’t know.
They got a rusted rifle and stories about crappy food.
Got a Bronze Star for just being blustery about everything.
Homecomings would really get to me. This one guy was wearing his.
It got caught on his wife’s dress and fell into her bra. Priceless.
She jiggled her boobs until it dropped between her legs.
As the guy bent down to pick it up, this hulking ruck slid off
his shoulder and pulled the rest of him to the ground.
The wife turns this beet red and the guy staggers back up
and cracks her right in the mouth. But that wasn’t the thing.
It was the guy’s two kids suddenly retreating behind the wife,
while he stood fumbling to find the spot for the Star over his heart.”

Platoon

That's the gunner, with his drinking paycheck already half spent
falling out of his back pocket, clanging beers in the circle of men,
who rock on overturned paint buckets after the last day's labor.

There's the driver flopped in the belly of the wheelbarrow,
acknowledging their toast then bathing back under the stars,
long roaring convoys of them hurdling across the sky's dark road.

Here's the Doc half hunched out of the cab of their lumber truck,
cigarette cornered in his mouth and jabbering back the punch line
of an old joke about that hooker and the girlfriend and that last time.

Hard to imagine how all look easy, rested, still geared up in tools
hanging prepared from belts and vests, lifting hard hats to share
a grin. I don't think it's hit them, yet, that now they build things.

Past the beds of debris, racks, tarps, and the hulking dumpster
beached in the driveway, the foreman steps into the porch light
saying something that quiets the crew, who turn, eyes up, ready.

M. K. SUKACH is an active duty officer in the United States Air Force. His poems and fiction have appeared in a number of journals to include *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *The Hamilton Stone Review*, *Cellpoems*, *Poetry Northeast*, *The Blast Furnace*, and *The Citron Review*. He served three tours in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.