

R A N D Y B R O W N

fighting seasons

Even a city boy from Eastern Iowa
follows the markets, like sports, on the A.M. radio
and has a vague sense of the harvests to come.

Feeder calves and pork-belly futures, forecasts for soybeans and corn
fill our diner conversations and our mouths
like bushel-bags of baseball stats, ideals and speculations.

The Cubs might finally do it this fall. And El Niño could make a comeback.
Into this familiar world, armed with coffee and pie,
a waitress gently probes toward a war: *Heard anything from your sons?*

Floods and droughts, blizzards and winds
are no strangers to the plains. We work the land,
the land works us. We do our jobs. Weather happens, or not.

It is winter in Eastern Afghanistan, but spring is coming.
There are no crops of poppies there—that's down south.
News is, the fighting will soon resume. At least, that's what the papers say.

Maybe this year will be our year.

RANDY BROWN embedded with his former Iowa Army National Guard unit as a civilian journalist in Afghanistan, May-June 2011. In 2015, he authored the poetry collection *Welcome to FOB Haiku: War Poems from Inside the Wire*, published by Middle West Press. His often-humorous work has appeared widely in literary print and on-line publications. Writing as “Charlie Sherpa,” he blogs about military culture at: www.redbullrising.com.