



In Country

Hugh Martin

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In the Iraq edition of wartime for American soldiers, fear of being blown to pieces by hidden explosives frequently loses out to the wildest enemy of all—boredom. This is the wartime footing—six years in an M1A1 Abrams tank—that Iraq War veteran Hugh Martin makes use of to create his own masterful poetry. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Grantland*, and numerous other prestigious journals, and *The Stick Soldiers*, his first collection, won the A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize.

Test Fire

—south of Jalawla

*After we drive through
the barren hills
where the earth unrolls*

*itself for miles, where the soil's
as stale as boxed cookies
sent from the Youngstown*

*USO, the gunners fire
machineguns at the ridge
wall's face—small*

*dust-explosions lift
to the sky like faded desert
larks while the rest of us*

*shoot from our knees, our
 chests, as copper casings
rain like loose change*

*across the dirt, then
as we convoy back
to Cobra from nowhere*

*the Bedouin come
to collect the shells
& stuff them in sacks*

& after they go: only

*boot & footprints,
a careful cursive of tire-tracks.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (November/December 2018)

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