

## Hold Me Desert

Hold me desert,  
let me seek in you my doom,  
the same sought by those that never returned,  
like those four heart in Samarra,  
gripping the hum-v doors in the fire,  
taking their skin completely off,  
stuck to the handles.

Release the burn inside me empty,  
the same felt by my skin leathered under the noon-sun,  
drying out life's ambitions to breathe,  
to take cover from the mortar,  
to want to see my brother.

Tell me desert,  
Is your wrath purposely committed?  
Do you give us heat for the sake of your laughter?  
Do you laugh?  
I do not know your face  
yet I feel your cheeks smile,  
when the sand fills our weapons stopping the release,  
when the dust storm prevents our eyes from seeking a roadside bomb,  
when the water is too hot to guzzle -  
our convoy too far from home.

Hug me desert,  
don't let this soldier wander endlessly into memory,  
keep my soul from recalling those that are no long here,  
keep those moments at your side,  
care for them as a mother does a newborn,  
cherish them as the door handles did the soldiers' skin,  
remove the grains from my bags  
wash the dried blood imprinted in my mind,  
and kill the thought that my foot ever placed a sole on your earth.

## **Injured Pockets**

The good days passed without worry  
beyond seeking mortars landing.

I forget to put gas into my fuel efficient car,  
bills and credit card dues stacked high.

Nothing will happen if I just sit here  
a little while longer, surfing the internet.

Landing after landing near our building  
awakens soldiers from afternoon naps.

A neighbor slams a muffled door  
below my second floor apartment.

They must be arguing again about his  
late night binges with rowdy crowds.

Her slamming doors and yelling keeps  
me up in the night, I'm jealous of them.

Friends stopped asking me about dust on  
my clothes and to clean my messy pad.

Night after night metal pulverizes stiff  
desert near our T-walled living quarters.

T-walls are concrete slabs that square  
around our compound to protect us.

Various agents of death fly, sit, and walk  
to make us fall a final defeat from life,

an uneasy endeavor we try day to day.  
The envelopes stack sharply in my room.

My injured pockets are inhibited to speak  
valued words, my broke merit of eloquence.

## Contracts

Hunched over from last night's guzzling,  
Sergeant Nobody laughs into the toilet.  
Out comes flags, covered women, road  
side bombs, and a large signing bonus.  
Nobody washes out his mouth with soap  
made from the fat of the city's gasoline.  
Any shirt in his closet will do for today,  
just another waltz around head stones.  
Neighborhood cats chase dogs around  
corners, rats dine on duplicate contracts.

Piles of books once owned by his past  
soldier buddies follow him everywhere,  
Only a few more figures pitched into the  
road are Nobody's bloody clothes he'll  
take back to his abode. He closets them.  
Country outings always wind up as yelling  
competitions between his wife and kid.  
"Finally we speak," he'll say at the end.

How do you feel as a Mrs. of Nobody?  
All duplicated gasoline doused on you.

Maybe he should pick up a book from  
one of the piles and read cover to cover,  
the women could be unveiled, the bombs  
undetoned, and no contract bonus.

Harrowed by smiles and warmth, Nobody  
longs for shaking ground and a kevlar,  
Yet he'll never return to that life again,  
they'll never let his hand on another gun.  
Killing the enemy is one thing, murdering  
a whole family is another -- wife, son, soul.

## Engraved

May the desert grant us life  
never known in our hearts,  
the long, dry days beneath  
perilous rays of loneliness.

As it took us under its wing  
the rays blended our figures  
with the sand,  
tucked behind our image  
lay our bare bones  
far from this moment.

Etched in dust are names,  
these silent names speak  
through the halls of light  
during the quieting sunset,

these names are the same  
names carved in stone  
half of a world apart  
in our fields  
with other stones alike  
echoing the same silence  
and beautiful rings  
in the sunset halls,

these names are heard  
every time we hear the sounds  
played at the ceremonies  
where we all stand watching  
enlisted and officers give  
salutes to empty boots,  
these names are those  
held to our hearts  
with the same passion  
driving us to remember  
the pain we endured  
for our time in the desert,

these names are what  
give us what life before  
was not able to give us.