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# Winter, Kurdistan

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## WINTER, KURDISTAN

The dip brims from Kenson's lower lip  
like a pinch of fresh mulch. His breath fogs  
the Humvee's side-view mirror  
and behind him, the Zagros  
white with morning snow.  
Kenson's mirror was shattered  
after the IED south of Kirkuk;  
now I let him use mine. He punches  
my shoulder again, *Get up*,  
and looks back to the mirror, taking the razor  
from cheek to jaw, the faint scrape like a shovel  
far off on asphalt.  
He splashes the blade  
in the silver canteen cup,  
runs the razor chin to neck.  
When a thin hair of blood  
streaks below his throat,  
he doesn't wipe but lets it dry—  
a scab to fall in the mountain air.  
Even my retinas  
shiver; I shut my eyes  
and as that slow scrape on Kenson's skin  
puts me again to sleep,  
I feel the hand of Drill Sergeant Grant—  
his way of inspecting our shave:  
wipe up slow, the back of the hand  
on the cheek, feel for the pricks  
of stubble. When he'd take  
his hand away, move to the next boy,  
I could still feel that warmth  
fading on my skin  
like the small fires  
from Kurdish herders  
waking above us in the hills.