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Test Fire

Hugh Martin

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TEST FIRE

After we drive into the barren hills
where the earth unrolls
itself for miles, where the soil
is stale as cookies sent

in boxes from the Youngstown
USO, the gunners fire
their machine guns
to the smooth face

of a ridge wall—
small explosions of dust
lift to the sky
like fading desert larks,

and the rest of us shoot
from our knees, our chests...
When we're done
there is the rain of copper

casings across the dirt,
so as we convoy
back to the FOB,
from nowhere the bedouins

come to collect the shells
in sacks like coins,
not one left behind—
and then the wind

molds our boot-prints,
our tire-tracks
slowly back
to the landscape's shape.