

New Poetry by J. Scott Price



Captain Who?

That gut-black October night, a security patrol set out:
a platoon of Afghans
and two of us. They,
cloaked in toughness; we,
in mountains of gear, humped
an unseen base plate of irony
that chuckled, unheard.

Since the first tribes found common ground
with naming a common foe
and Allies first align side-by-side,
the dog sniff test begins— the unuttered,
unmetered tango that discretely discerns
the order on the Totem of Men.

Let's see what they can do, the closemouthed metronome
for the mission first cadence thrummed on the drums-of-tough.
Respect doled only
to those standing
when the pounding is complete.

Our security objective below, the key terrain far too far
above,
we must sweep the elevated ridgeline for threats.
Afghan comrades lead us up
and up
and up
that mountain until we
could take no more. Wheezing
far from the top, we stop, defeated,

conceding victory in this unavowed war.

They smirked in the dark, unseen. We, it seemed,
were merely piles of panted breath,
exhaling vanquished pride.

At this critical point of concession, something suspicious up
ahead in the dark.

Few mutual words to discern the threat, only frantic mimicry
of Charades-Gone-Bad to help:

but we all agree,
my NODs are needed now.

Leaning forward to green-light detect, I find no threat. But
with strained abdominals abused
and glutes pulling up the rear too loose
we are all ambushed by the unexpected—
a jarring, yet-almost-polite, puny
poof.

Not a valley rumbling show of force that loosens all inside
but a dry, mundane-almost-nothingness
that takes the Afghans by surprise.

The Lion of Ghazni
they dubbed one of my friends
in awe of his courage and his heart,
and I secured my place on their Totem
as the anointed
Captain Fart.

B Hut

“Brand Vision: Making the best air conditioner in the world.

Brand Mission: Making life better.”

Chigo Air Conditioning Co., LTD

Chigo heats, Chigo cools
with labored breath that soothes
ambient air despite never taming
the beastly space inside the plywood shell

where 12 guys retreat from the daily 15 hour duties
that composes their yearlong song with
just one more mundane or horrifying measure.

There are melodies of boredom and harmonies of fear

and it serenades to unrestful-sleep the

12 guys crammed into their plywood shell,
smaller than a suburbanite's play room.

There's plenty of opportunity to partake
in olfactory unease, and plenty of opportunity
to never really be at ease.

Stacked high and hard against the walls, poncho liner
privacy offers only illusions of solitude
and enough space to retreat into that illusion
just to be somewhere else during sleep.

Steadfast Chigo, their toolbox-sized comrade
high on the wall remains unnoticed
unless deemed malingering.

Chigo will usually be abandoned ,
unthought-of when the song is done.

But one fated Chigo has a terminal task to perform,
never envisioned during engineering,
nor tested during production, for

aimed with a rock and Allah's will,
released with a wind up clock,
a discarded Soviet rocket rains
through plywood
and Chigo braces, unmoved
to shear off a detonator

that would have ended the song
in cacophony instead of a story that begins,
"You ain't gonna believe this shit..."