

A Little Boy with Bananas

—Travis L. Martin

Brown hair hangs over brown eyes

Looking at brown feet

Standing on the brown earth.

A little boy with yellow bananas

Needs a green dollar to feed his family for a week.

A twinkle in his eye—

Reminds me of a freckly-faced, spoiled kid brother—

Then again, the boy could have been me

In another life.

My white hand reaches for my black wallet.

The little boy's hope is sparked.

But I come up empty handed.

His best broken English—

A futile attempt to earn that green dollar.

I could feed his family for a week.

A little boy with bananas, eyes full of a little brother's charm...

Contact—left. Explosion, to the rear—

Driver-side mirror vibrates, displaying images of dark black smoke.

White hand moves towards black gun—exposed—

Ducking down—pinging sound of metal striking metal—exposed.

Realization: brass hitting the roof from on top of the hatch,

Machine guns fire in all directions.

Get up you coward, you were trained to fight!
Charge handle, find enemy in a crowd full of people.
Boy with bananas: just one in a mass of running bodies.
Someone finds a target—twinkling eyes fill with flames of hate—
Another explosion to the rear.

Bodies fly while others lie motionless.
What are they shooting at?
Rounds hit—four stories up—200 meters away—take aim.
One round hits, still no target—
Weapon jams—charge handle, load bullet, fire, jams again—helpless.

Convoy moves, brass stops hitting roof.
“Go, let’s go!”
Truck engines roar, everything else silenced.
Bodies lie motionless while—
A little brown boy stands over a brown man clutching a black grenade—
Brown eyes connect with brown eyes
That stare straight up from the brown earth.

A brown hand drops a green dollar;
It lands on a white shirt turned red.
Yellow bananas lie scattered,
I will never look at my kid brother the same.
Brown eyes drop transparent tears and my white hands begin to shake.
I drive full speed away from the city.
How dare I look back?