

Even the Snow is Loud

Brady Peterson

It is winter and there is snow on the ground.
A young American GI scouts an Italian
village, behind the advancing tanks
and infantry, looking for a possible
base the second tiered command
would need as they move forward.
He makes his solitary way
through the ancient town, past the stone
rubble in the street. The guns are quiet
now, and yet the noise never really
abates. Even the snow is loud.
He looks inside the door of a building
still intact, but the feel of it is wrong,
and he moves on.

His thinking is cluttered.
In his mind he sees the riddled
body of a woman, once pretty
he imagines, though death
had drained any beauty
from her face. A collaborator
perhaps, someone who had slept
with a German officer, shot and hung
for the Americans to see. The dead
were everywhere, but this one
clings to him.

He touches the edge
of an envelope in his pocket.
An old letter read and reread,
written by a girl he barely knew,
a girl who had married him
suddenly one afternoon in November
when the urgency of a moment
seemed to be enough.
But now she hadn't written in weeks,
or was it months. I haven't heard
from you, but I know you are writing,
he says to her in his own letter,

but he fears it isn't true. He tries
to visualize a woman too beautiful
to remember, too beautiful to really
love him, and his thinking
is cluttered with the image
of two faces fusing into one
as he descends the stairs
into a basement full of German soldiers.