

Listening for the Hum

Sean Taylor

Lying alone in the dark
is the hardest thing.
Alone and listening.
It is way too quiet.
Stripped of my gear and my M4
makes me feel more vulnerable.
Vulnerability equals death
even though an M4 won't protect me
from what I am listening for.

I listen for the hum of the rocket,
not the explosion.
An explosion means I am still alive.
I can measure the distance in my mind
like a lightning strike.
Oh, that hit around the hospital
or maybe just outside the wire.
I hope everyone is OK.
It is the hum that is scary.
The hum means it hasn't hit.

It is especially hard tonight
being in a place I do not know.
A small base in the Hindu-Kush.
A black-out F.O.B.
in the middle of nowhere.
Quiet, way too quiet.
Way too dark!
Not thunderously loud and bright,
like my room at Bagram.
The jets drown out the hum and help me sleep.
No jets here in Kalagush.

Why am I here?
Not a deep existential pondering,
just a curiosity.
I know why I came here the first time.
Write a story about our medics
serving at a small remote base in the Hindu-Kush.

Been there, done that!
So why am I back?
Nothing too deep,
just listening for the hum.
That's my job tonight,
listening for the hum.
It is way too dark and quiet!

I know that sound.
It found me here.
(BOOM)
That was way too close!
(BOOM, BOOM)
They must be walking them in
(BOOM!)
Where's my gear?
(BOOM!!)
Oh God, what is happening?
(BOOM!!!)
Where is my gear!!!?

“Sean, what's wrong!?”
Didn't you hear it?
“Sean, you're dreaming!”
I'm home?
The kids!!!
That must have hit right outside their room.
Oh God, the kids!!!
“Sean, you're dreaming!”
I know I am dreaming,
but that hit outside their room!!

The kids are sleeping.
Everything is fine outside.
My dog wags his tail,
happy to play at this time of the night.
I sit down and check Facebook.
Brent says the 10th Mountain will be coming home soon.
Good.

I should go back to bed,
but the quiet is too loud.
Listening for the hum

will drive me crazy.
I need the jets.
I don't hear the jets.
I hear the quiet.
The quiet is just too loud!!