

# 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 close-mouthed 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..."