

# New Poetry from John Milas



Ford Ice Cream Truck

## Parade the Beef

*"I declare this meat tasty and fit for human consumption."*

*– President of the Mess,*

*CLR-27, Landing Support Company,*

*Camp Lejeune, 2009*

we charge our wineglasses to toast the dead  
marines of the eighteenth century the nineteenth twentieth  
twenty-first century their immaculate ghosts seated in  
the empty chair at the tiny table draped in  
black cloth in a candlelit corner of the ballroom they fork

ghoststeak through their lips it piles  
on paisley carpet centuries of steak piling  
while I can't figure out how to light a cigar

the smoking lamp is lit the floor open for fines  
Sergeant Steele wears the wrong colored shirt

beneath his midnight blue coat Sergeant Steele  
say it ain't so that's erroneous drink from the grog  
we're too young to drink the spiked grog but  
the staff NCOs don't stop us Lance Corporal  
Butler's gold PFC chevrons gleam without crossed rifles

say it ain't so Lance Corporal Stapleton  
passes out in the woodchips under the playground  
swings before we march back in after  
shedding a tear for Lord Admiral Nelson Sergeant  
Newman grips my white belt to balance drunk

we drop back in our chairs before  
Sergeant Newman falls out slobbering  
in my face saying he'll fight anyone for me he's  
got my back forever he's always  
had my back because he says I'll always have

his even though that motherfucker put me on  
an extra hour of barracks duty he's right then  
his fingers slip off the edge of my shoulder

## Salt peter

Our Kill Hat shreds his vocal cords while  
we wait outside the chow hall for dinner,  
his sweat-soaked charlies a shade darker  
now than when he first suited up in the  
DI hut. He screams *□Chain of Command*  
and we scream into the San Diego sky:  
*The President of the United States, the*  
*Honorable Mr. Bush! Vice President of*  
*the United States, the Honorable Mr.*

*Cheney! Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Mr. Rumsfeld!* □And so on and so forth. On November 5, the Kill Hat wakes us up to tell us what happened the night before: *□Obama is our president now, you understand me?* We understand because we will be punished for not understanding a single thing he says□. The Kill Hat screams to repeat the chain of command with these new changes before breakfast. Simple enough, because nothing has changed. We are still the rejects of America, as he reminds us. We shit across from each other in doorless bathroom stalls and piss three bodies to a single urinal, sometimes four. None of us have had an erection in weeks. Rumor has it they put something in the eggs.

## **Episode of Hate Channeled Near Ice Cream Truck at Mojave Viper**

Donatello's green head severed at the neck on a wooden stick, two white orbs embedded in that purple mask, eyes they've trained us to gouge, to tear out with our fingers, bloody. I let my rifle hang by the sling and hold the face in front of me, jamming my free fingers into the turtle face. In my head, *□Execute. □From my mouth, Kill.□ □Kill.* The gumball eye pops free, cords of rectus and oblique muscle pouring from its ragged orbit. Frozen gunk drips from my nailbeds, ants trailing to the sugar at my boots. I gouge out the other eye and suck frozen brains

from his skull, as they've trained us. Then I drop what's left on the ground and scream my throat raw at it and smash it with my M16 buttstock and roll around in ants and dust and if there weren't more marines waiting behind me the terrified ice cream man would probably slam his window shut.