

Two Poems

Matt Salyer

Med Quarters

Stuck and pinned and braced, the broken soldiers
drowse at SIQ, stiff as the tin
woodsmen in Oz. Grease easy, Joes,
and huff and bluster, you, like the cowardly lion

or a bag of smashed assholes. Chug Monsters
and Red Bull, show somber tats to your boys
of skulls, black ace of spades, and dread
things from a wild America. The eagle's tight as

hell. I want to leave.

There are no doctors at SIQ,
only iodine glass curio cases of iodine
bottles and bottles of tongue

depressors and someone called the provider
who gives us pills. We snort the pills
and wait to use the phone. We use the phone
and wait to leave. It's up to the provider.

At zero dark, they hook us in a dream
and they tug us out by the cheek. We ball rank
linen in lockers, piss, look at the piss color,
and match it to a chart above the shitter.

It's like a game: clear, pastel, amber, red,
dead. The Army is always playing games
with my cock. Sometimes I wish the provider
would play with my cock. Sometimes I wish

she was a real doctor. She'd be good.
I like the way she eats; she peels an orange
like a surgeon, her filed nails driven
in until they've pierced the thick flesh

and pried the innards loose to sprinkle
with confectioner's sugar. Outside, the flaking
trunks of the pines are piled round with needles
like cut hair or stacks of kindling for effigies of

the provider: my little unused ring of fire.

Man Tyger Organ

Mr Downey, Lt Pyefinch and Poor Munro went on shore at Saugur
Island to shoot deer. We saw many tracks of them, as well as of tigers;
at three we sat down to refresh ourselves when we were told a fine deer
was near us. Downey and I jumped up I heard a roar like thunder, and
saw an immense tiger spring on Munro.

—The Gentleman's Magazine, 1793

And they leapt past the brilliant ballad
boy in handsome scarlet
broadcloth and esquire buttons

where the brass lions spread their haunches
on the bright smelt faces of glint
shields. Calcutta's a quiver of light

shot at brass buckles or the spent
casing of sloughed bullets.
On the long island, the lost

white tooth of an island, the long
rifles bend the stride of barking deer until they
crashed like surf; red crabs crack

beneath their hooves and quiver
in rows like scales of a breathing world.
Rider, esquire, asphixiator,

gentleman, you: dismount,
remove jam and biscuits and veal pies
from a white basket and lie

in the day licking flesh
and smears of gelled fruit from your hands
like a cadger

or a brass lion. Calcutta's a quiver
of dreams but better, but real.
Biscuits in India taste realer than biscuits

on crowded beaches at Weymouth.
Bengal is realer in Bengal.
Men are. In the mangroves,

bright minavets screech louder than scarlet
bellies, gaur browse in the leopard's whiff,
and whorls on the she-oak throw nets for the sun.

No "human mind," one hunter recalled,
"could form an idea" of that place. It shook
your heart loose from a tangle of you

and the cookoos hushed. Hush
(where the tiger butters its teeth with its tongue):
tigers are realer in Bengal, and fortunate sons.

