

“Gorgonized”

by Steven Croft

In the gate video it didn't appear
like the souped-up deathmobile
in *Animal House*, just another
dusty sedan making a sudden turn
into our ECP

But the scrape of car metal against
low profile concrete barriers
sang discordant black magic spells
into the audio, until the flower
of the explosion that rose --
and stopped me that morning
as I walked, my boots planted
in the sand in awe

and disarray clouds the camera
with sand, spills the banks
of the video monitor, runs,
its immanence terrifying,
a camel spider's crazy zigzag
over everywhere in the camp
swinging its murderous head
in its hands

I talk to my friend a month later
after his easy days in the hospital
tell him how we watched him turn
from the car bomber and run
until seconds later the picture
went black with smoke and sand,
let the scene loop from the blast
to the revenant driver darting in
again from the road, my friend
running

and he tells me about the face
he stared into for the time it takes

to lift a rifle, both fear and hatred
in the eyes, how he turned to run --
for seven seconds in the video --
for his life, for his family
seven thousand miles away,
until a speed of sound rippling
of shrapnel laid him down
to sleep