

Cold Sunrise, Bedrock

by D.A. Gray

Still awake in our fighting positions
we felt mud seeping through the sleeves;
cheeks rested on the pillows of rigid
rifle stocks.

Something in the woods
of Eastern Europe whispered; I heard
the trill of a nightingale, and footsteps
on wet leaves, displaced young branches,
their bending and snapping back –
a sound too steady for human feet.
That hour when the eyes lied,
we leaned against the rock edges, listening.

I could feel the rifle's hard plastic grow colder
against my face and knew morning
would break before long. Dark saw-toothed
leaves began to separate from other dark
leaves.

A breeze.

And as the forest exhaled
a thin blue flame cut a trail between the trunks.
As the earth began to warm heat retreated
upward out of our bodies and in its absence,
in that hour of daybreak, cold came down.

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