

Dorian Gray

by N. Jed Todd

For Rocky

I've your picture in my shaving mirror
Stuck there in the corner.
Before, taped inside a wall locker;
On the cover of my leader book;
Stuck next to the SINCGARs in my HMMWV.

Saw you when I was calling in our checkpoints,
And they called in a call for fire.
When we pretended not to hear the CO's queries,
And when the nine-line missed the window.
You were watching there in your prom tux.

Seems to me I'm just the same age as I was then,
And that through the years you just grow wiser.
But the mirror says something else altogether,
I go gray and wearied, wounded and afraid,
And yet you stand as brave and strong as ever.

One of us died that day in body, the other in soul.
Gunned down in a rain of 'friendly' fire,
It wasn't the one that went to war,
Nor drunk and looking to score.
Wonder now what you'd do here, if it was you out on patrol.

N. Jed Todd is a father, husband, retired Army Master Sergeant, and a Texan, in that order. As a Russian linguist working in Signals Intelligence and Psychological Operations, he served in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Cyprus, Mali, and Central Africa, not necessarily in that order. His wife, Ami, and daughter, Meera, tolerate him in no order at all.