

# “When Warriors Talk”

by Earl Weiglet

Six months in and I know that Soldier's name  
walking through the yard between towering HESCOs in the dark.  
I can tell by this one's gait or that one's stance or the other one's lean  
against a Humvee bumper. For just a moment his face glows  
as he draws on a cigarette. My Brother.  
Low laughter, a muttered buzz as something funny, probably a little nasty  
passes between them.  
A cot creaks and a cough as another one murmurs on ...  
and even in the slur of sleep I know who it is by his voice.  
The food is bland but there's plenty of it to wash down with coffee  
black as a drip-pan and we talk—  
talk about home and sports scores, what's in season and yesterday's mission  
and the enemy and politics, the joker in the turret who ND'd a round over the Chaplain's head  
before the convoy pulled out the other day, who has gone stateside...  
but we *don't* talk about last night's Ramp Ceremony or the Stryker hulls out back  
or the guy they had to pin down in the bed of the Hilux on the way to the Role 3 to be sedated by  
the docs after he locked and loaded in his hooch last week,  
or that big sad guy from a neighboring unit who wanted to suicide by MP,  
or about how damned homesick we all are! I guess who needs to voice any of it  
when so much is spoken at a glance?  
And just like that, we're home.  
Why can't I shake it and why, after All this time, the hell  
don't I feel quite right in plain clothes or in a crowd, and why cringe at  
“Thank you for your service?”  
But, sometimes that thankful One wears a hat emblazoned with Green and Yellow and Scarlet and  
a knowing eye and I catch my breath and I thank him for his  
and we move on, each choking down his own lumps for his own reasons.  
And maybe you get this poem and maybe you don't  
and maybe that's OK.

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**Earl Weigelt** grew up in Jackman, Maine and came to love the woods and waters of the North Country early. With family ties to service running deep, he answered a call to ministry right out of high school. Over the years he served as a youth pastor, summer camp director, educator and administrator at a small Christian school, served as a reserve police officer, and entered the US Army as a Chaplain in 2004. Having majored in religion and literature in college and holding a Doctor of Ministry in homiletics from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, he has always had an affinity for poetry, but really turned to it as a means of expression during and since a deployment to Kandahar, AFG for OEF 09-10. While much of his poetry comes out of his experiences in the outdoors, a good deal of his work has been inspired by his time in the military. Some of his poems have been featured in *The Smoking Poet*, *The Aputamkan Review*, and *Goose River Anthology*. He lives in Winslow, Maine with his wife Carol and serves as State Chaplain for the Maine National Guard. His son's family resides in Harmony, Maine and his parents still live in Jackman.