

DAVID MASON

*How He Sleeps*

My friend remembers his war—  
the Germans, then Greek on Greek—  
relives a mountain massacre  
when he hid in the woods for a week.

At night when he's safe in his bed  
he makes himself open his hands,  
releasing the long-held dead  
together, strangers and friends.

He flees to a sheltering sleep,  
dropping what he can't carry.  
In dreams he doesn't weep  
and there is no hurry.

## We

While Harold's men were twitching under William's arrows,  
Byzantium and Rome beheld the Saracen,

but here, among the pock-marked faces of the cliffs  
an interplanetary stillness, plumbed kivas

sending smoke at night to the penetrating stars  
until this place became its own catastrophe.

And now we pitch our tents and tour the dusty ruins  
and circle back into these hidden canyons, thirsting

as we all would in a desert, not for water only,  
but markers of essential solitude, the cairns.

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You'd think a desert sky would open to the truth—  
out of the bowl of earth, into the basket of heaven.

Just there, and there, and there, the lights of jet planes cross,  
dragging behind them gutturals of burning fuel.

A culture beamed to dishes in remotest yards  
until the flare-out we cannot believe will come.

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"Once the grandfathers touch us we will never be the same"—  
a cemetery note I saw in North Dakota,

the offering on the grave a beer and cigarettes,  
half whimsical and half in earnest love to those

who knew how small our lives have been, our best ambitions  
nothing to the layered canyons, humanity

dominionless unless it comes to know itself.  
But here the settlements of centuries leave stone

on stone, visible they say from space, impressive, left  
to long conjecture of the bland acquiritors.

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The campsite wakens, the canyon fills with human chatter,  
new stirrings of mobility: tent sounds, car doors

slamming as the loading up takes place, caravans  
of individual motive fanning out from roads

to highways, then to Interstates, the busy hubs.  
What we have learned may never be a help to us

until reminded of it by the dome of stars,  
the gimcrack kivas of our living rooms, our selves.

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