

## Like I'm Forgetting

R O Y S C R A N T O N

I gave my grenade vest and kneepads to Wood when he was leaving.  
I quit wearing my DCU top last spring,  
    except on election day.  
We had bedbugs and I had to throw my boots away.

I don't even know what all's in several large boxes and footlockers  
in my mom's attic, class As and sergeant stripes and  
campaign ribbons. My beret? Did I keep that fucking  
thing, shaved and shaped and proud and clean?  
I quit wearing my field jacket and my cutoff BDU shorts.  
I quit when I realized it looked like fashion, like all the  
hipsters in camo in the street, the urban-garbed club kids  
in spangles, stripes, and flash.

I threw out my dress shoes, but I still have boots in my mom's  
attic. I miss shining the toes, rubbing them into gleaming  
black mirrors, squared away like a motherfucker. I miss  
the scent of burning polish and the push of water-soaked  
cotton, every Sunday, three pairs.

I keep an empty magazine, but I had to turn my rifle in. By the time  
I got to Fort Sill it wasn't even my rifle anyway, but just  
another 16 from the Arms Room. *My rifle* smelled like hot  
oil. She had a 203 and a three-point sling and she was clean  
and smooth and heavy, and I left her in Germany in the  
basement of Charlie Battery, 1/94, setting her down and saying  
goodbye after our days and months together. Sometimes still  
when I get up from the table I reach like I'm forgetting.

I quit driving, basically, mostly, after we came back. I logged  
enough hours on highways and alleys, I'd had enough  
steering wheel, windshield, overpass, roadside trash, IED.  
I wanted to walk, ride a bike, take the bus, close my eyes.

I want to keep everything and I want to throw it all away.  
I box it up. I take it out. Just like the stories I tell, now and then,  
opened over beers or whiskey, folded away like a closed mouth.

I walk down the street and see the faces of soldiers I knew flicker  
by, like ghosts, and turn into strangers.



UNC SHOWERS.  
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