

Darkness from Tarin Kowt



That year I spent in Tarin Kowt in the heart of the Taliban.
“Shadow Governors” from the Popalzai tribe,
their black robes, henna beards and body odor.
We venture into the city’s heart for a shura that would never be
The suicide bomber who would be the darkness harbinger on his motorbike
That darkness creeps an inch closer
He anticipates his chance to strike, as I sense his shadow
My rounds strike him in his lungs and heart
He missed his chance this time
yet he remains by my side not willing to give me up easily
Sadness is the color of my blue eyes,
that my soul a darkness is distant and foreboding
My heartbeat is the sound I don’t want anyone to hear
pumping fear and anger on my pillows in the morning
before I drink my first cup of coffee
After Tarin Kowt, I can never be myself again and unguarded
My darkness smells like sweet-salty sweat that makes animals uneasy
like doors slamming,
and a falling feeling while sleeping.
I feel nothing afterward but darkness
Darkness is the color I paint on a colorless canvas knowing more missions are to follow
Why am I here?
Whiskey burn, blood shot eyes, easing into my inebriation
Sirens causing me to react to contact
— seeking cover,
toes pointed to target and feeling the rush dancing with darkness
once again I realize I have no fear
Once again I see my darkness clinging to me at every turn
As before his taunts are unrelenting,
his motor humming in the shadows

—Maj. Adam Carson