## Private Red

## by AMTL

Don't shut your eyes, behind them the terror lurks, but it will find its way out through open eyes.

Light another cigarette. Let the smoke inside you, let it caress your body, turn your skin yellow, your teeth yellow, your eyes yellow.

When you marched back into town after the war, your red hair had been scared bone-white, its color bled into European soil through wounds of fallen comrades. Your favorite nickname existed only in the bright red cherry smoldering at the end of your smoke.

I smoke too, you know.
Yesterday I sat outside your house
at gray predawn
while the crows
circled overhead.
I lit my cigarette on a candle
and dipped the tip in wax —
waxen like your lungs must have been

when you gave me that Christmas candy a few weeks before you became too sick to see me.

While you were choking, my aunts said they saw angels; celestial, they flared like a flame cased in wax, then vanished.

I don't think they'd lie about something like that.

You were buried on a chilly morning with a fitting military salute a salute to you?

Ten years later, we still can't scrub the yellow from your walls.