

September Morning

by Emily Bertholf

They are carried out
over shoulders of running soldiers.

Naked bodies pass
to outstretched arms,
laid into stretchers and cars.

We stand and wait
as darkness bleeds
into our bodies.

Fear consumes days
nights, leaves us tangled
over tripwires of terror.

Two booms break the reverent sky.
The roof explodes like a thundercloud,
becomes a torrent of shingles and ash.

Children and troops run
and fall, shot from behind
while running free.

I search the list of names on the wall,
the wall where days before
our children lined up in anticipation,

Vladik...
Vladik...
Vladik...

I tread over charred floors, fallen

basketball hoops wrapped in explosives
strung like Christmas lights.

He is here
without me.

Kept out by force,
I wait for someone
to save him, to save us.

I am alone, drifting
smoke on a September morning.

