

MARIO CHARD

Round

State departments of transportation use military artillery to control the avalanche threat above mountain highways. Occasionally artillery ordnance does not explode upon impact, a potential risk to hikers after the snow melts.

—United States Forest Service

1

All night the sound of water
in a ditch. No dreams to speak of.

Not the cannon shells
across the canyon or their routine

sound. Snow
pulled from the mountain like a sleeve

torn from a shoulder.
We inoculate our son. In the needle,

the same virus we hope his body
will defeat.

2

In my father's dream
it is the ditch that wakes him,

*All night the sound of water
in a ditch. No dreams to speak of*

voices coming from the lawn.
Outside, men stand with their arms uncrossed,

*not the cannon shells
across the canyon or their routine*

men who ask him for his boots.
When he slips them from his feet

*sound. Snow
pulled from the mountain*

he sees water spilling from the tops,
water running from the porch

*torn from a shoulder.
We inoculate our son. In the needle*

and gutter, water where the ditch had been,
the mountains all made low.

*the same virus we hope his body
will defeat*

3

I woke, waited
barefoot by my window

*In my father's dream
it is the ditch*

until the cannon shook my roof again,
sent the smallest avalanche

*coming from the lawn.
Outside*

it had not meant to
barreling from my shingles.

*his boots.
When he slips them from his feet*

In the dream
I saw men standing where the ditch had been,

*water spilling from the tops,
running*

then only half
their bodies stranded in the snow.

*where the ditch had been,
the mountains all made low*

4

When they said it was a boy
hiked farther than the others on the mountain,

*Woke, waited
barefoot by my window*

stumbled on the live round
in the grass and pine needles where the shell

*shook my roof again
the smallest avalanche*

struck in winter,
I dreamed I also picked the metal from the brush

*had not meant to
barreling.*

to see it better,
knew its risk by weight alone,

*In the dream
I saw men standing*

ran the shell back quickly
to my father.

*then only half
their bodies stranded in the snow*

5

*When they said it was a boy
hiked farther than the others on the mountain,*

*stumbled on the live round
in the grass and pine needles where the shell*

*struck in winter,
I dreamed I also picked the metal from the brush*

*to see it better,
knew its risk by weight alone,*

*ran the shell back quickly
to my father*