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
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
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