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EXPERIENCE/REFLECT/CELEBRATE



FIREFIGHT PRESS: Trench Art Series



2026 BROADSIDE SERIES

AUGUST 2003: BAGHDAD IRAQ

We were in a convoy of 12 vehicles transporting Iraqi prisoners to Abu Ghraib.

On top of the trailing Humvee, I covered our 9:00 o'clock position.

Through the sights of my Mark 19, I watched Iraqi children
playing in spent ammunition--
three large piles of it beside the road,
empty brass from last night's assault.

The shell casings shimmered in the sun and heat.

Reflected light dappling their sweaty, wary faces,
the boys rolled shell casings
between the fingers of small, clever hands.

Bare feet freckled with dried blood raised up a fine dust
that lingered in the air.

Their play was awkward in the aftermath of we-all-knew-what.

When they saw us, they ran toward us shouting,
their voices inaudible over the machine noise of our heavy vehicles.
One of them kicked a pile of brass into the air.
I watched them through my scope's crosshairs.

They eyed my weapon and me—both dangerous novelties—
with distrust and what looked like resentment.

Our vehicles rolled through the small village at speed and left it behind.



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book

BLOOD, WATER, AND STONE
available now from Spartan Press.



About the writer:

Mansa Lamont Bey is an American poet and writer from Cleveland, Ohio. His artistic stance centers on the experience and expression of identity and indigeneity. Bey's passion for the literary and for the performance arts converge in work that is emblematic of the connection between the cosmos and the community. As an Army combat veteran, Bey found his love for poetry as a soldier during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Since returning home, he has honed his craft as a poet and writer and has transformed his therapeutic release and hobby into a profession.

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