

FRAYED

The setting, Kabul, is a landscape of hopelessness and dusty barren dreams.

Goalless futures await the next rash of reasonless violence. This here is shattered society of drifters, dry skin and throats and bleeding sinuses and empty stares like discarded bottles in a plastic trash bag, melting.

Seeing nothing, just reflections of themselves, worthless to those of the First World.

They dwell in the Last.

They are the ruined unredeemable refuse who call desolation home and their frayed days lives. What else do they have but this?

What else could they possibly want but anything?

The forecast says hope for tomorrow but all I see is this, and the rest is a figment of someone else's imagination.

My thumb has become callused from holding the strap of my rifle, my spirit from looking out the window on the drive to work.

A man and a wheelbarrow pass. "Why bother to build what will only be destroyed later this week by a misguided pawn and an explosion?"

A man with no legs sits in the road and waves at our convoy. At least he's glad we're here. No legs, yet he sees hope in our presence. "If a man with no shoes feels sorry for himself until he sees a man with no feet, why am I the one miserable after seeing a man with no legs?"

PA'S PAUSE

That plush puppy stares blankly, with black obsidian eyes, under the wood of a table made for coffees; not always a drink we drink

Over here there's an Ernie waiting for a Bert that's not there

in the middle on the carpet, sits plastic housing from China for Little People that goes

Kreellushh, Ingl, Ingl, Crie, Crie, et cetera and all from a speaker for the amusement of babies.

Colored keys

Big button electric

Music made from molded substance Primary blends for undeveloped eyes under the TV,

the Legos and books and everything waiting,

pause and be still

everything waiting on "Mini-Tush" that's the BABY asleep

Write your lesson to stay awake and blow

your nose to clear the smoke of cartridges

fired today at a range.

Let's let some tea and an hour of telly stifle your nerves as they tingle.

Let the baby rest and you, too, for the toys will be there hand puppets and rattles.