

WHAT IT MEANS WHEN A
CROWD IN A FARAWAY NATION
TAKES A SOLDIER REPRESENT-
ING YOUR OWN NATION,
SHOOTS HIM, DRAGS HIM FROM
HIS VEHICLE AND THEN
MUTILATES HIM IN THE DUST

THERE IS A MAN who felt great trepidation. He felt anxiety and unease. These were feelings foreign to the man. He'd never felt this kind of untouchable ennui, but he had been feeling it for a year. He sometimes was simply walking around the house, unable to place exactly why he was tense. The day would be clear, sun above, everything good, but he would be pacing. He would sit down to read a book and then quickly get up, thinking there was a phone call he needed to make. Once at the phone, he would realize there was no phone call he needed to make, but there was something outside the window he needed to inspect. There was something in the yard that needed fixing. He needed to drive somewhere, he needed to take a quick run. The man had seen the picture that morning, in the newspaper. He saw the picture of the soldier's body, now on the ground under the truck. His uniform was tan, the soldier's was, and he lay on his back, his boots almost white in the mid-day sun, pointing up. Meanwhile, the man was sitting in his home, comfortable, wearing warm socks and drinking orange

juice from a smooth heavy glass, and was seeing the dead man in the color photograph. The picture caused him to gasp, alone in his home. He studied the photo, looking, he realized, for blood—where was the soldier shot? There was no blood visible. He turned the page, tried to move on, but soon returned to the picture and looked to see if any of the citizens of this faraway country were in the frame. They were not. The man stood up. He watched smoke billow rightward from a factory on the horizon. Why did he feel violated? He felt punched, robbed, raped. If a soldier was killed and mutilated in his own country, the man would not feel this kind of revulsion. He doesn't feel this way when he hears about trains colliding, or a family, in Missouri, drowning in their minivan in a December lake. But this, in another part of the world, this soldier dragged from his car, this soldier alone, this dead unbloody body in the dust under the truck—why does it set the man on edge, why does it feel so personal? The man at home feels this way too often now. He feels tunneled, wrapped, dessicated. His eyes feel the strain of trying for too long to see in the dark. The man is watching the smoke from the factory, and though there are many things he could do that day, he will do none of them.