



The Sunset's Flares Have Streaked the Sky

Сергей Орехов (Панкратиус)

The sunset's flares have streaked across the sky,
I lie inside the trench, a grenade in my hand.
The clay smells of blood, of iron and of smoke,
the day slips quietly past the shattered land.
A hoarse wind wanders, drifting over the field,
the earth beneath my body breathes its weight.
Somewhere a bird is weeping, gone hoarse in the dusk,
as if it knows: a life has met its date.
Somewhere beyond the scorched and shadowed treeline,
that same cold holds another's hush in the gloom.
Another soldier lies in a damp ravine,
listening, as I do, to the heart's deep room.
Perhaps he whispers a name, soft and his own,
perhaps he looks at the sky, the way I do.
And over us both the same still heaven shines,
dividing neither living men nor slain...
The sky goes out... The dusk falls down, grown weary...
The wind strokes softly the wet and yielding grass.
And in my palm the thing falls silent, quiet,
the thing that once could cut a fate in two...
The world grows stiller on a soldier's breath,
God draws nearer in the final hush.
I lie inside the trench — I set the grenade down,
and dawn is already rising up in me.
The sunset's flares have written through the sky,
the old hell settles, ash, within my heart,
and I am whispering "God" as I pass into Your garden,
"Though I never knew him..., he's no foe, but a brother..."

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