

Greg McBride

MEDEVAC CHOPPER

Looking up, one of them thought

*It could be
a hummingbird. The way it floats and quivers
over the clearing.*

But the rotor blades blew
a storm of wind that howled the dust and pebbles,
pelted their eyes, rippled the paddy beyond.
Settling from side to side, surfing a shaft
of driven air, its blast spasmed and flattened
high grass until the skids jolted onto the pad.

They rushed as a scrum into the clamor,
bent to the force that pushed at their chests,
reached into the cargo bay and found the war
delivered again to their hands, soldiers
on stretchers arrayed like logs. One led,
one followed, hefting the load, schlepping
to the ER, which was tethered to weather
the gale, its air-stiffened walls trembling ahead.

Their sweaty hands slipped round the wood handles,
the whipped air now at their backs. Wounds wept
and pooled on bellies, and with each strike
of each boot, IV lines swung wild in the wind.
Off duty later, they peeled away
the fatigues and closely inspected
this arm, this leg, their own shaven heads.

