

The Casualty of Truth

Because we came from the same town,
if you can call Queens a town,
and I had gone to school with his cousin,
but mostly because I was his Lieutenant,

when I cleared Walter Reed
I called his parents. Told them,
He didn't have time to feel a thing.

Later, I visited his wife. Told her,
*He wrapped his last breath
around your name.*

I did not tell them
how defective armor plate,
brittled in the manufacturing,
had shrapneled on first contact,
torn his face off.

Nor of the bloody trail we left
getting him to cover in a ditch,
his every breath a bubbling gurgle
until an incoming RPG silenced life.

Head and shoulders in a field.
Most of his legs in the road.
The rest of him hamburgered into the sand.

Nor that they shoveled
his fragments into a body bag
after the medivac team
did what they could for the living.

That there is more sand and gravel
than husband, son or soldier
buried in his coffin.

When truth is obscene,
lies become sacred.