

Blood Memory

by [Charles Hughes](#) in the [January 2024](#) issue

A field where nothing grows appeared to me—
A onetime dream, so far, not long ago—
Much as you see in pictures: no man's land.
Nowhere I've been in waking life, although
I seem to know this place; I'm running here,
The path I'm running on bordering trenches
And craters, interweaving scorched remains
Of trees, from time to time bypassing rubble,
Once lived-in rubble, house, barn, church, its cross
On top but sideways like a fallen arrow.
Unhurt, unhurried, I'm (I sense this) meant
To be here, running at this jogging pace
In the direction pointed by the cross.
The evil thing still happening here must be
The why of it, this running here, alone.

Thunder far off? Explosions. Intermittent,
Persistent clatter—of?—machine-gun fire.
Louder and louder as I run. White flashes
Nibbling away the dead gray sky ahead;
Their fleeting shapes recalling cut white flowers
Left on a grave to fade to next to nothing.
The darkness has not overcome the light,
I'm saying, praying—running faster—when,
As if God's providence has run amok,
Bursting white flashes, now bright rain, consume
The sky, then the booming shaking wakes me up
Before the peace, before I've heard my name.