

Shell Game

Elizabeth Barrette

I fit my fists into the craters. They felt rough against
My fingers. Columns of red marble, the color of
Drying blood, held up the ceiling. Our Russian tour guide
Told stories in her indifferent English, but I barely heard.
Instead my ears found three old veterans in an alcove,
Reliving the war in their native tongue that was still
Mostly a stranger to me. They saw me – smiled –
Beckoned me closer. Liver-spotted hands pointed out
Line-of-fire between the pockmarked pillars and the
Buildings across the street. Hairs quivered erect on my
Neck as the soldiers spoke and I kept them company
In their memories, in the cathedral, in Moscow.
The stories we don't hear have the most to say; the things
We don't see most need to be seen. Someone has to
Watch the ones who think history is just a shell game.

