

Mud, River, Stone

Joaquim: All I want is to be a civil servant, have a suit and ride the bus to my office building. Seven stories, the tallest office building in the city. Have a telephone and an ink pen. A commode. I could have read good, but the war came to my village. And took me away. Ten years, you know. My father was a farmer. His father. His father. It was my destiny. But the war was all around us, in the stories of men who spoke of it with respect. The war was a distant monster, too far away to make me scared. Then men without limbs began to appear and beggar children wept for food. The sound of gunfire rippled through the forest. Rat, tat, tat, tat. And the war was upon us. I was the youngest son, I was given up to the rebels to fight for freedom. It was either bullets or children. And children are less valuable. Ten years later, we are victorious, and I am not a child. My village is a clearing in the forest, taken by the war. And the land is barren, there are no farmers left. This peace is a curse. There is too much time to think. I was a good soldier. Do you know what it means to have been a good soldier? I was told that things would be better if we won. That the man with the glorious voice spoke the truth.