

2008

## Season Cracking

Matthew Miller  
*Denison University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Miller, Matthew (2008) "Season Cracking," *Exile*: Vol. 55 : No. 1 , Article 16.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol55/iss1/16>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

MATTHEW MILLER

## SEASON CRACKING

A note in the church bulletin asks us to pray  
for our troops'. I circle

the apostrophe out of habit, shift a friend's  
pocketknife — left behind

after two hours of shooting on an ice-dry  
December afternoon. A jacket

bunched to couch the rifle, a sloppy set of rings  
sketched on the cardboard

of a Christmas ornament box. We scabbled in frost-  
limp grass for the empties.

The chill snuck into thighs where they pressed  
the ground. I wonder, now,

if they were already practicing — if the laughing

at a miss was a cover. If  
their aim wavers as some rust-heap drifts to a stop  
ten feet from the checkpoint,  
its driver slumped, kaffiyehed, dribbling blood.  
I don't know if they remember  
that cold of Ohio's snow-dusted December earth  
on their thighs as an IED  
turns the chassis into liquid and splinters. Into  
them. I remember  
the sting of sawgrass and ice on our fingers  
as we combed for brass.  
Their heat almost thawed the dirt they clung to.  
We could never find them all.