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Rip Van Winkle
Elke Erb

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Elke Erb

RIP VAN WINKLE

Five peeled tree trunks I saw as I came to: my bed, and puddles and scattered tins. I recognized our trenches by the concave yellow clay walls, but found not a single soldier. Ergo, war must have gone home, the comrades didn't want to disturb my sleep, didn't wake me. I hoisted myself to the edge of the trench and scanned woods and fields: May, blinding sun. In the woods, that nevertheless shrank back in fear, a cuckoo calling. Here I was, alone, a senile machine gun, a toothless cur that couldn't fasten on any-body, in woods that nevertheless shrank back in fear.

Translated from the German by **Rosmarie Waldrop**