

OpenDoor magazine

YOUR WORDS MATTER.



NEW BOOKS TO
READ!

TEARDROPS

OF THE

OCEAN

**HOW DO
WE
REMEMBER?**

WAR

AUTHOR

FEATURES



welcome to the

**OPENDOOR MAGAZINE
AUGUST ISSUE!**

WAR is a very tough subject. And divisive. Some battle an inner war, it is something that exists only in the past for others, and a part of everyday life for many. This theme was born from two thoughts – 1. August marks the bombing of Hiroshima and the aftermath that saw whole families disappearing through death and 2. it feels more and more that we are marching towards civil wars in more and more countries. Seeing history repeat itself yet again.

Join us as we explore WAR through the words and minds of these writers and artists.

We continue to get more submissions each month and we are so thrilled and honored to continue to get and be trusted with your words. If we could, we would choose everyone and every piece. It is heartbreaking that we can't. But we ask that if you submit and are not selected – please keep submitting and sharing. Even if you aren't selected for a specific issue – your words don't matter any less.

Thank you for continuing to share our magazine with your friends and family and allowing our audience to keep growing.

- Kassie & Mel

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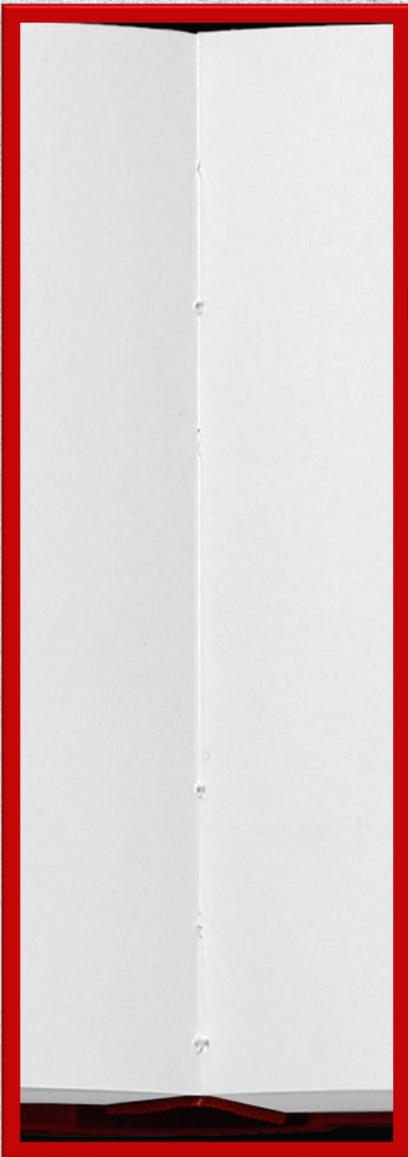
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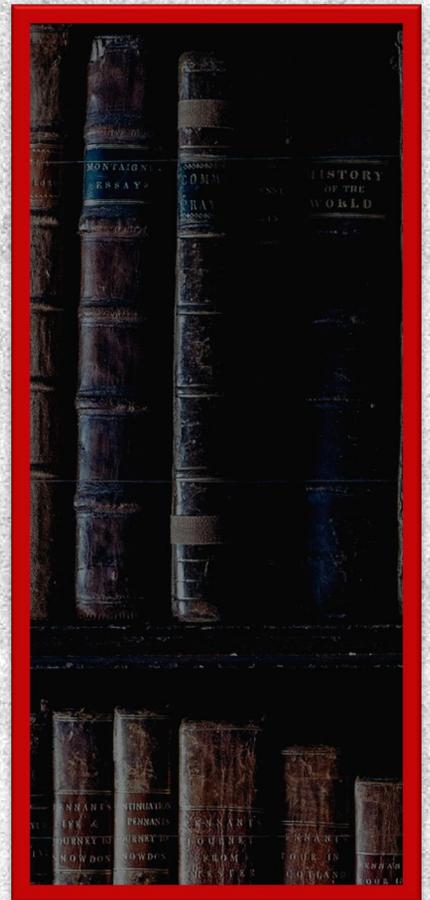
WAR IS WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN
"GUAGE FAILS"

- Margaret Atwood



August Features

61 RECOMMENDED
BOOKS



What are
our
co-owners
up to?



KASSIE J RUNYAN

Co-Creator



Watching:

Ted Lasso Season 2 – already just as delightful as season one
Schmigadoon! – a comedy musical? Yes please
Both on Apple

Reading:

Right now, my biggest read is my upcoming novel, *The Death and Life of John Doe*. Finishing my final read through before approving the early reader copies! Pre-orders open in August and the book comes out November 16th. It's the story of a man who leaves the world he knows and ventures out into a nomad life trying to find his own past. It's already been described as "gripping," "emotional," and "a future movie" – and I'm so excited to share my debut novel with the world.

Listening:

Currently trying to catch up to my husband in listening to the podcast *1865* – a phenomenally told view of the struggles of Edwin Stanton as he tried to preserve President Lincoln's legacy after his assassination. It's gripping – which says a lot about a historical podcast. So much so that my husband has gotten so far ahead of me leaving me to catch up!!

<https://www.KassieJRunyan.com>

<https://www.Facebook.com/kassiejrunyan>

<https://www.Instagram.com/kjrunyan>

<https://www.Twitter.com/kassandrerunyan>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvSEcLEfE196OE_Ya2LNNN3kjFp82Ktt2

KASSIE J RUNYAN – CO-CREATOR

HIROSHIMA

Kassie Runyan
United States
<https://www.Kassiejrunyan.com>

mother mother
where have you gone?
we couldn't find you
as it rained bombs
your children need a hug
but there is none
i scan for your face
and ask the nun
no one has seen you
but it still rains bombs

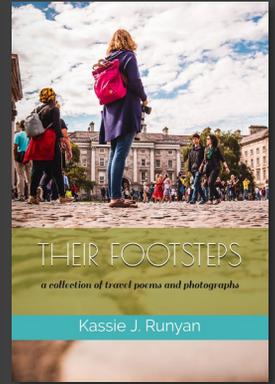
father father
where have you gone?
you went off on a ship
and now they've won
we haven't heard from you
even now that it's done
how do we reach you
without a gong
oh father, we need you
but you are long gone

sister sister
where have you gone?
i left to steal rice
but there was none
now i return
to the ghost of a small one
hope you found a friend
or a rock to climb on
but deep down i know
you left with the dawn

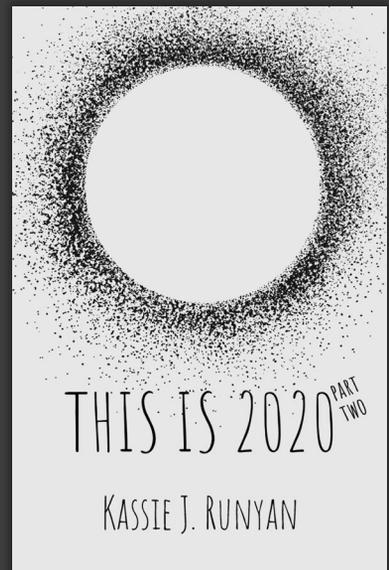
brother brother
where have you gone
there is no one left
for you to show brawn
they've left you alone
only memories of bygone
is it worth the energy now
to keep fighting on
or drift to sleep for the last time
leaving only a yawn



Purchase your
copy of **This is
2020** [HERE!](#)



Purchase your copy
of **Their Footsteps**
[HERE!](#)



This is 2020 Part Two [HERE!](#)

MEL HAAGMAN

Co-Creator

Watching:

Atypical follows the life of Sam, an autistic teenager and his family. It is witty, insightful, accurate and very relatable. You will fall in love with Sam and his whole family after one episode!

Reading:

Sunset by Jessie Cave – Ruth loses her sister and best friend in a tragic accident and the story follows her days without her. Ruth's grief is tangible and quirky. I couldn't put this book down. Ruth relied on her sister for everything and now she is gone, she has to dig deep to carry on like Hannah would have wanted.

Listening:

Good 4 U – Olivia Rodrigo



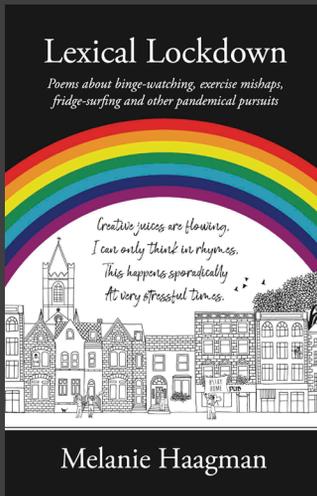
<https://www.Facebook.com/girlontheedg90>

<https://www.Instagram.com/girlontheedg90>

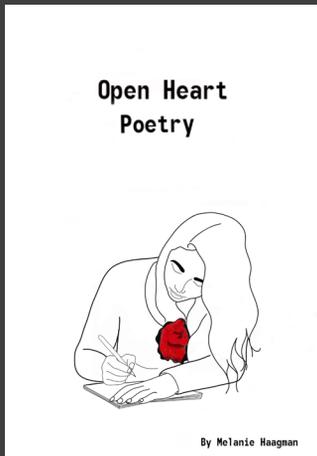
<https://www.Twitter.com/girlontheedg90>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjh8b4Y7gSFGKewzPKZH8lw>

MEL HAAGMAN – CO-CREATOR



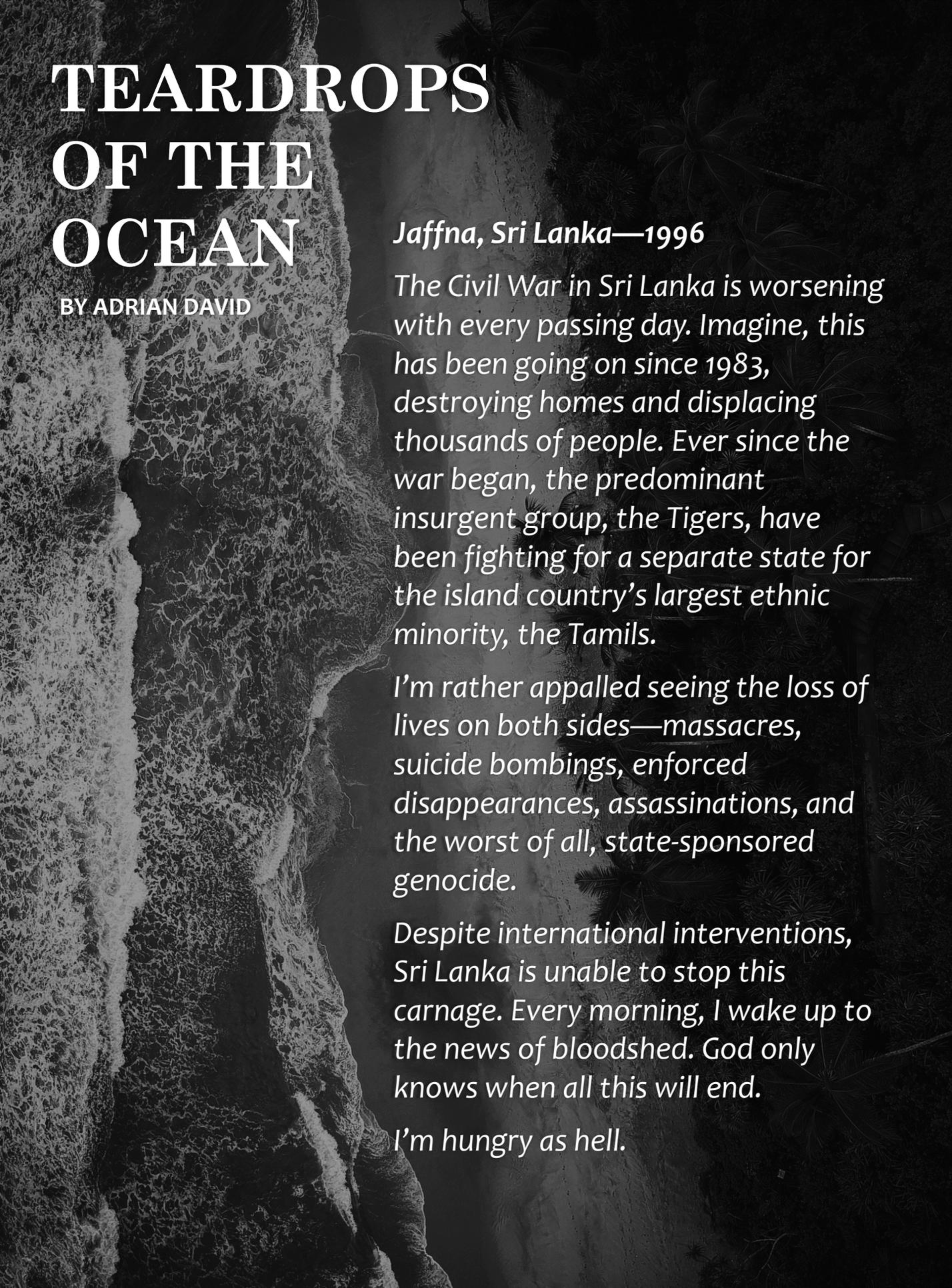
Purchase your copy of
Lexical Lockdown [HERE!](#)



Purchase your copy of **Open
Heart Poetry** [HERE!](#)

Mel Haagman
United Kingdom
<https://www.facebook.com/girlontheedge90>

I want to understand you,
What has led you to be here?
I want to hear your story,
What you crave and what you fear.
I want to know about your choices,
What you've accepted and declined,
I want to know about your future,
And what you hope to find.
I want to know about your influences,
Through the life that you now live,
I want to know if you hold a grudge,
Or can you easily forgive?
I want to learn your mind-set,
The core values that you hold,
And how you keep so grounded,
With the beliefs that you've been told.
I want to show you respect and trust,
To be open and to share,
And I will cast no judgement,
In this space, I'll show you care.



TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN

BY ADRIAN DAVID

Jaffna, Sri Lanka—1996

The Civil War in Sri Lanka is worsening with every passing day. Imagine, this has been going on since 1983, destroying homes and displacing thousands of people. Ever since the war began, the predominant insurgent group, the Tigers, have been fighting for a separate state for the island country's largest ethnic minority, the Tamils.

I'm rather appalled seeing the loss of lives on both sides—massacres, suicide bombings, enforced disappearances, assassinations, and the worst of all, state-sponsored genocide.

Despite international interventions, Sri Lanka is unable to stop this carnage. Every morning, I wake up to the news of bloodshed. God only knows when all this will end.

I'm hungry as hell.

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

Why did I scribble this line at the end of today’s journal entry? It’s no surprise, given my rumbling stomach. The good news is that my lunch will be here soon. Sitting in front of an empty table, I look around the interior of the nondescript restaurant I’m in, trying to spot the waiter.

Within seconds, a plate of steaming egg hoppors and a bowl of lamb curry adorn my table. Ah, nothing can beat the heady aroma of authentic Jaffna cuisine. I wield my fork and spoon like a hungry animal about to ravage its prey. Did I hear a familiar tune? Oh, not now!

I dig my phone from my shoulder bag as the ringtone plays.

“Is this Hannah McCarthy from Reuters?” comes a hoarse voice over the phone.

“Err... yes.”

“Meet me at City Park in fifteen minutes, sharp.”

“Hold on, who’s this?”

“You will know soon.”

“Sorry, I’m busy. I have a press conference to attend in a few hours.”

“Never mind! I have a lead for an explosive news story. That’s all I can give you over the phone. Are you in, or should I find another journalist?”

“Wait!” I blurt out. “I’ll be there.”

Without wasting time, I wolf down a few bites of the egg hoppors before paying the bill and heading out in desperate hope of finding a cab. After close to ten minutes of waiting, I hail a cab. A stream of questions clouds my mind along the way to the park.

Who is he?

Of all the journalists in Sri Lanka, why me?

Is it because I’m an expat who isn’t allegiant to either the Sri Lankan or the Tamil side?

Or is it because I’m a journalist of exceptional repute?

The last question isn’t valid. Ever since I was deputed as the war correspondent in Sri Lanka three years back after covering the Yugoslav Wars, I’ve not made my mark here. Though I’ve covered quite a few stories, I’m still searching for an interview that will catapult my career.

“We’ve arrived.” My cabbie brought the car to a jolting stop in front of a serene park. Reaching for some rupees in my shoulder bag, I pay him the fare, along with a handsome tip for speeding up despite the traffic.

Within minutes, I’m inside the park. It’s scorching hot. The park is empty except for a few pigeons.

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

“Hannah!” A voice calls out to me. Walking further, I spot a man on a bench.

“You’re late.” He points to his wristwatch. I scan him—mid-20s, brown-skinned, thick beard, well-oiled hair, and a dark green T-shirt. A backpack rests on his shoulders. His bloodshot eyes shuttle left and right to see if anyone else is around.

“Sorry about that.” I extend my hand.

“No time for pleasantries!”

“You were the one who called me, offering a scoop.”

Silly me, I should have hung up, rather than agreeing to meet a total stranger.

“Not just a mere scoop. It’s beyond that.”

“Well, I’m all ears.” I settle myself on the bench.

“I’m a Tiger. I want to give you an interview—about our struggle, our pain, our cause.”

Many journalists in my circle, who share a clandestine relationship with the Tigers, have interviewed quite a few militant leaders. It’s not that I don’t want to interview a Tiger. Judging by this guy’s age and demeanor, he doesn’t seem to be a high-ranking militant. Going by his English, he seems educated, but that’s not a reason to consider him. Though I’m desperate for a break, I’m not desperate enough to interview a rookie. I’ve got bigger fish to fry.

“Thanks, but no thanks. I’m quite busy today. Maybe we could do this tomorrow or some other day?”

“I won’t be alive tomorrow.” His face is stone cold.

My jaw drops.

“I’m a Black Tiger on a mission,” he adds.

Gosh, he’s talking about the Black Tigers, the wing that carries out suicide bombing missions! To date, they have assassinated ministers, politicians, and even an incumbent President.

He continues, “And I’m going to blow myself up three hours from now.”

Absolute silence.

I gulp, trying to process what I just heard.

“What?!” My head swirls with confusion. “If you’re telling the truth, why are you revealing it to me? What if I...”

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

“Do you think I’m so dumb that I didn’t think of that before? We always have a Plan B. If you turn me in, my substitute will bomb the place. Our mission will succeed no matter what.”

“I don’t want to get involved in your mess.”

“I’m here on my own accord. My high command doesn’t know. The reason I’m meeting you is to get some things off my chest. Whether you publish it or not is up to you.”

I brush off his cocky attitude and excessive self-confidence. It’s not every day a journalist gets to interview a suicide bomber. Who knows? This could even give me my much-needed break.

“Let’s do it.” I pull out my voice recorder from my bag. “Give me ten minutes. I’ll think of some questions.”

“I can’t spare that much time.” The restlessness in his tone is obvious.

I turn on my recorder and set the ball rolling for an impromptu interview. “Let’s start with your name.”

“It doesn’t matter. What matters is my cause—the reason I am still fighting.”

“Hmm, tell me. What makes you fight for your cause, even if it costs you your life?”

“Before that, I want to ask you a question.”

What does he think of himself? Am I interviewing him or vice versa?

“Fire away.”

“Do you know what the world calls Sri Lanka?” His left eyebrow twitches.

“Teardrop of the Indian Ocean.”

“The teardrops...” He points to himself. “The teardrops belong to us. For decades, the government has denied us our rights in all walks of life—jobs, education, housing, and even basics.”

“I hope all this will end someday.”

“Do you mean it?” He looks devastated. “Even if the war ends, what about my people? Will their lives get better, or will it worsen?”

“If you care so much about your people, why are you going to blow yourself up?”

“Let me ask you another question.” His bloodshot eyes pierce through me. “If someone barges into your home and tries to rape your mother, will you be a silent spectator? Or will you grab the kitchen knife and defend her chastity?”

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

“You have a point. But that’s completely different.” I reason.

“No! Our land is our mother. If someone tries to uproot us, we will retaliate. Journalists like you continue to speak up for conflicts in the other parts of the world like the Middle East, but you turn a blind eye towards the bloodshed in Sri Lanka. Our war is the forgotten war.”

“Please understand. I’m neither belittling your cause nor trying to lecture you. What I’m saying is that violence is never the answer. If you all had peacefully protested instead of taking up arms in the first place, things would’ve been much better.”

“A peaceful protest is a prerogative of the privileged.” He smirks. “It’s nothing but a farce that gets ignored by most.”

“Says who? Remember South Africa—look at what Nelson Mandela did. Look at what Aung San Suu Kyi is doing in Burma.”

“Remember Tiananmen Square?” he shoots back. “They butchered the protesters like street dogs. I could give you more such examples. Peaceful resistance isn’t an option. We need a revolution.”

“I disagree. Change begins with you. Take to the streets, hold placards, and make your voices heard.”

“Not over here.” He shakes his head. “The government turns a deaf ear to our cries. The sound must be loud to make them hear. It has to be that of an explosion.”

“Eleven years back, militants from your outfit shot dead 146 Sinhalese civilians who were praying at a Buddhist shrine. Is this your revolution? For God's sake, how could you kill someone who’s praying without even a bit of empathy?”

“That was collateral damage. But I’m not saying what we did was right.”

“Are you even weighing your words?” I stand abruptly. “The blood of countless innocent civilians is on your hands.”

“We’re retaliating, not openly declaring war.” He stands up too. “Don’t look at us using the same lens through which you view the other outfits who are wreaking havoc worldwide. We are neither religious fanatics nor extremist ideologues. Rather, we seek freedom from the shackles of oppression. When the Sri Lankan government fires shells on our people, you can’t expect us to hand them flowers in return.”

“I understand but stop justifying your actions like an apologist.”

“You won’t understand.” He clenches his teeth. “You Westerners don’t give a damn about what happens over here, or any other third world country for that matter. Close to one million were ethnically cleansed in Rwanda. The so-called international media never covered it enough. Be it the US, the UN, or the EU; no one came to help.”

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

“That’s sad, yet true. I can empathize with your suffering.”

“How could you empathize? Have you suffered? Have your people suffered? No! My mother was stripped naked and killed, her breasts were severed. Was yours? My fourteen-year-old sister was sexually assaulted by a gang and left to die. Was yours? You know nothing!”

“Oh God, I’m terribly sorry for you. I can’t fathom what you went through. But that doesn’t mean you should take an eye for an eye.”

“No! The government destroyed my family. Now, they must pay.”

As I look into his grief-stricken eyes, I’m filled with sympathy, with a need to save this man in front of me. My mind jumbles together. I imagine the possible locations he’s heading to. There might be government officials or worse, civilians in it. I can’t allow this to happen. Wait! Didn’t he say that there’s a Plan B—the substitute bomber? Though I know I can’t do anything to save the lives of those in the location, I feel the least I can do is keep him from doing it.

My eyes no longer see him as a murderer, but as a victim of countless murders committed in front of his eyes—the ethnic violence fueled by majoritarianism, along with the rapes, the hatred, the bloodshed caused by forcing people to think one person bleeds blue and the other, red.

Turning off my recorder, I search for my next words as if my life depends on it.

He stares at me with deep attention, searching for a sign.

“Being a war correspondent, I’m no stranger to the horrors of war. I have felt the blood-bathed blankets of silence and seen the ruin of famine. Five years back, when I reported the Yugoslav Wars...”

I’m hoping he listens through the cacophony of my mind. The screams of the dying. The bombs. The clang of shells bouncing off the ground to accompany the drumroll cadence of automatic rifles salvaged from the wars. Sounds that might play all day inside his mind. I imagine these are the thoughts that haunt him.

“Stop it!” he yells. “You believe we are the same because you have seen such things?” He grabs me by the crook of my arm, bringing me closer to his face. “You know nothing!”

He lowers his head and disengages his grip. Tears are now battling to crest over his lids. Are these tears of sorrow, or the tears of a man no longer wanting to live?

Sweat stimulates the hair follicles along my neck. I shake off the shiver.

Focus, Hannah!

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

“Do you believe this is the only path to justice?” I demand an answer. “Is this the example you want to set for the next generation? Would the elders, long gone, be proud of your actions?”

His eyes lower in shame, gazing at my shoulder bag.

“Dammit... Look at me! Does this make you better than any of them? Do you even see an end to all this?”

“Th... they... they must all pay.” He whispers as if he needs to convince himself more than me.

I want to comfort him. This can't be right. He is a monster who is ready to destroy the lives of many. But I can't help but think that there is still some good in him.

“Let me ask you a final question.” My inner thoughts flow through my words. “If you still think this is a necessary act, I will forget this meeting happened. All I need is an answer. Okay?”

Intrigued, he takes a step back. A pain so evil and deep-rooted, a tsunami of hurt, is evident.

“Fine. Ask your question and let me be on my way.”

Millions of words string together in my mind as I prepare to ask this one final question. A question that might soon save this one life. I know that today won't be the day I will save lives, plural. What I do know is that today is the day I will save him.

“When it's all done, once you have finished your mission and there is nothing left but ashes, what then? What will happen when your spot in the ranks is replaced by the next willing mind? To what end?”

Looking right into his eyes, I continue, “When will this war end if the government keeps adding names to the list of people they've killed? When will this war end when innocents are massacred because they are around the ones responsible? When will this war end if every time your people kill a murderer, they produce one? When does this all end?”

My feet move forward, slow and steady. I am now chest to chest, face to face with him. My instinct tells me that I should embrace him, despite my mind knowing that he would take it as an attempt to disarm him.

“This is for my people... for their right to call their home, home.” He mumbles midway. “The mission... this mission... my mission...”

“Which mission? This was never your mission, to begin with. You were exposed to the collateral damage caused by tyranny and the ensuing retributive violence brought forth by militants. It's not that there was much hope for diplomacy, but since the start of the bloodshed, no one has attempted to cease attacks either. What difference will your life make if tomorrow, your death is equated to terror? You could live, rather than die in a war where nobody really wins.”

TEARDROPS OF THE OCEAN – ADRIAN DAVID

He buries his face in his palms. “All I thought about until now was this day. The day I would gain my place among my courageous comrades. One step closer to freedom for my people. I searched for redemption, a way to clear the debt of lives lost. But...”

“But... but what?”

“But in hindsight, I think otherwise.” Rivulets of tears stream down his cheeks. “I think living is the real redemption. I don’t want to die. There are many other ways to fight for our cause.” He

I hug him in a desperate bid to console his wretched soul. We remain in a comforting embrace for quite some time. The optimist in me assures him that everything is going to be all right soon.

Finally, he wipes his tears and tries to pull himself together. “I feel like a changed man.” The lines of misery slowly disappear from his face. “I won’t die today. Thank you for helping me.”

With a faint smile plastered on his face, he leaves the park. I wave goodbye, not knowing what he would do or where he would go next. But I’m sure of one thing—the Tiger won’t die today.

While thinking of all this, I glance at my wristwatch. Oh God! Amid the hell of an encounter I had, I totally forgot about the press conference. Starts in thirty minutes.

With short, quick steps, I leave the park, and get into a cab. Deep inside, I’m proud of the transformation I brought out of someone today. I’m not sure whether I’ll file the story just yet, but soon. Maybe someday, it could be a chapter in my memoir.

The cab driver wades through the traffic. Finally, I reach the conference hall at the last minute. A standee of the political activist, who’s expected to preside over the conference, greets me at the entrance.

I flash my press ID card at the security check. As the guard waves the metal detector over my shoulder bag, it starts beeping. He signals me to empty it.

My fingers rummage inside my bag, taking one thing out after another. I catch hold of something strange. It wasn’t there before. I pull the object out and examine it with close attention. A slight ticking sound reverberates in my ears.

The guard backs off, shouting something in Sinhalese.

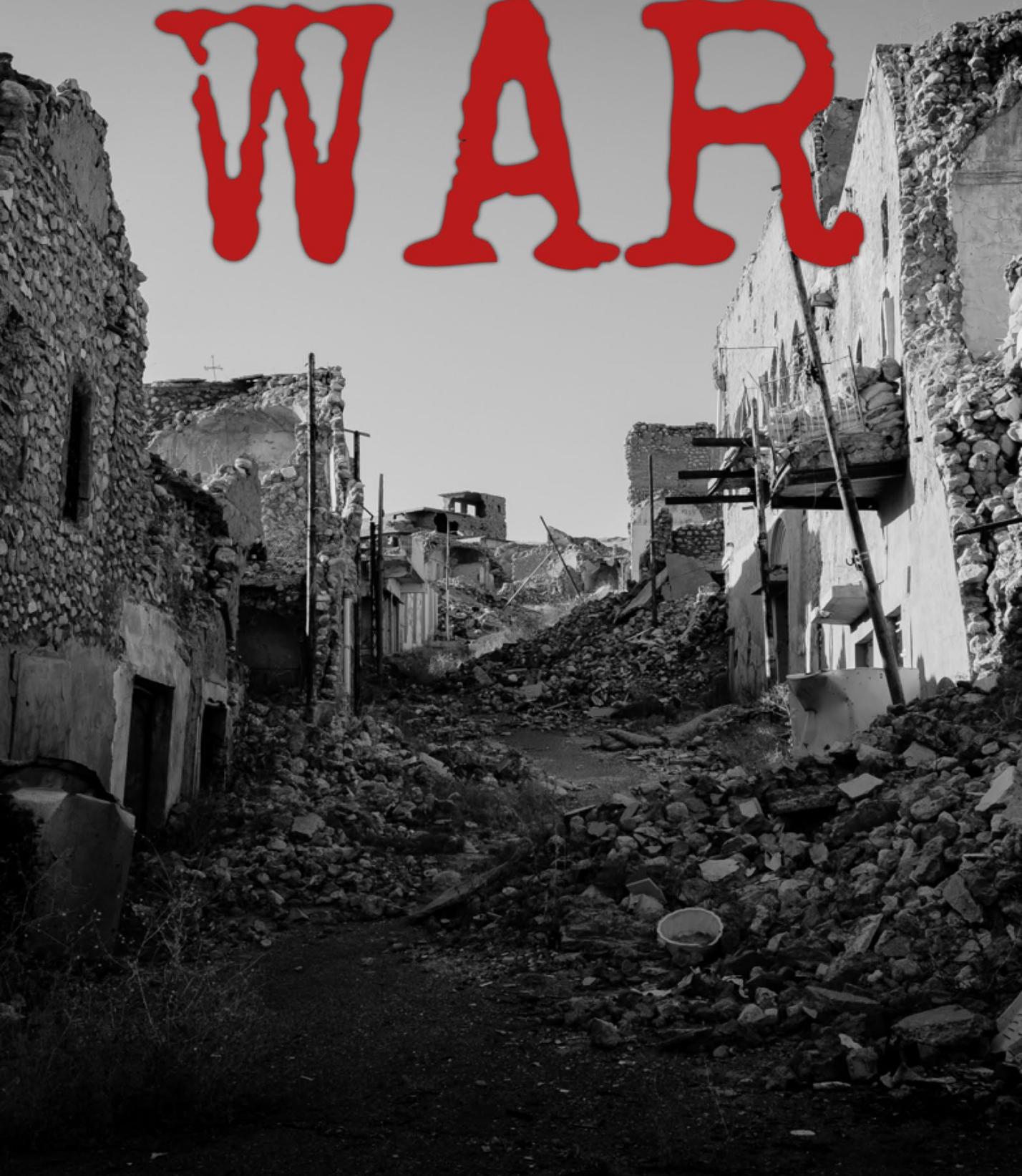
My heartbeat hits a crescendo.

I gasp as the Tiger’s words echo in my ears, ‘I won’t die today. Thank you for helping me.’

Oh no! This isn’t happening.

BOOM!

WAR



August Theme: WAR

MULTIPLE AUTHORS

ROCKET ATTACK

Douglas V. Miller

United States

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000788881080>

Deep green canopy
daytime dark
much too thick
for walks in the park.
Far off whistle
duck and cover
butts clenching tight
here comes another.
The earth pukes death
guts slam into throat
chances of rescue
seeming mighty remote.
Shrapnel skewers area
just above ground
chopped into salad
fifty feet all around.
Five-minute bombardment
feels like an hour
raining bloody death
from some remote dark tower.
Thwap, thwap, thwap,
sound of rotors in flight
throwing hellfire down
on that remote site.
Fires light up
far in the brush
got to get out
damn big rush.
Bag up the bodies
piece together the dead
patch up the wounded
count all the heads.
Airlifted out,
another distant hill
just send Uncle Sam
this blood-written bill.

BENNY'S LAST FLIGHT HOME

Judy DeCroce

United States

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/judydecroce>

Abandoned letters in an attic darkroom,
ordinary on thin blue paper,

air mails folded and refolded, stacking his name
as death slips away organized in a box.

All of us, waiting, hoping, still looking,

wondering where, between those scrawly lines,
he flies and a reverse of good-byes,
gone too.

(for **Pilot Captain Benjamin Radzevich**,
plane crash into the Atlantic, c.1945,
returning home from the war in Europe.)

SCOOPED OUT

Marion Lougheed

Canada

<https://www.facebook.com/marionstales>

<https://twitter.com/marionlougheed>

coconut husk milk and fruit devoured
hungry thirsty people took what they could get and now
a husk like burnt-out cars discarded on the roadside

the inside raw blackened dull exposed
to elements both human and of earth and sea and sky

once the husk of car or fruit is cleaned of all its useful inner parts
it's cast aside unwanted undesired

what use what good what value in
a shell without a heartbeat?

SLAVE TO THE SYSTEM

Amy Turberville

United States

[@theangelinthedarkness](https://twitter.com/theangelinthedarkness)

“Trust the government,”
They say, “It’s never led us astray.”
Genocidal thoughts, guns & bombs betray,
“Just good business,”
They utter in dismay.
Commit our sins now,
Later for forgiveness we’ll pray.

Laughing like jackals
as we wake up everyday
to break our backs.
Like a bunch of ants
summoned by the queen
to go on the attack.
“Freedom isn’t free,”
They proclaim in unison with tact.

—Freedom isn’t free and neither are we.

FATE SEALS THE DEAL

Jessica Palmquist
United States

A boiling, fiery inferno
Shines red into the air.
The suffocating, grueling ruby
Lines the brick road to scare.

Begging and pleading in much haste,
The devil screams within.
My soul cries out to God above
Send Legion to the pigs.

Engulfing flames fill my heart
I scream tears of hate
Burning, turning to ash and soot,
Too late to change my fate.

She cut the cord, my life is done,
The light turning black.
I see the other side before me
No more turning back.

THE PITY OF WAR

Jacquee Storozyński-Toll
United Kingdom

<https://twitter.com/JAcquee51>

<https://www.facebook.com/jacquee.storozyński>

Dried, gnarled fingers of a blasted tree
Reach out like a skeleton's hand.
Imploring and supplicating to end
The dead and dying wasteland.

No blessings of gold on these boots
Only the torture of slime and mud
Agonised screams and frothing blood.

Bodies drowning, deep despair
Crushed and rotting in chlorine air.
Hands grasping, clenching in muddy clay.
The will to live another day.

Did men, like trees, exist to end like?
A branch protrudes like dead men's bones.
Bowed down by the weight of screams &
moans.

Sun's rays warm them, but they cannot grow
Hands on shoulders. Blindfolded, slow.
Eyes that now will never see, the marching to
eternity.

The hopes of youth too gone to waste.
A white stone. 'Unknown.' Marks this place.

Shattered bodies, distorted, bent.
They die exhausted, disfigured, spent.
'God knows' it says, the unknown name
Of these anonymous men who came.

They couldn't wait. Their duty called
Now shadowy figures, slump appalled.
All they want is one tomorrow.
It will not come amidst this sorrow.

He was a man. Now molten clay.
No Adam rises from earth this day.
The leaves, drop like tears. No marching band.
Just a blasted tree in a No Man's Land.

TO THE ISLE OF PELELIU

Hilary McRee Flanery

United States

In the Fall
Of forty-four
Our country battled
In a war.

A young boy went –
The proud the few
To the isle
Of Peleliu.

On his right
His buddies killed
On his left
More blood was spilled.

A young boy went –
The proud the few
To the isle
Of Peleliu.

His mind he steadied
Not to cry
Then metal shrapnel
Sliced his eye.

A young boy went –
The proud the few
To the isle
Of Peleliu.

Writhing pain
His eye red-hot
A smiling medic,
Then was shot.

A young boy went –
The proud the few
To the isle
Of Peleliu.

Under his back
Only the earth
In front to his sides
Souls of great worth.

A young boy went –
The proud the few
To the isle
Of Peleliu.

The boy was wounded
Left eye blind
Back to the states
Pray, paint and remind...

Just yesterday killed,
The proud the few -
May all souls rest
On... Peleliu.

ARMCHAIR GENERALS

Jenean McBrearty

Oh, the criticisms of do-gooders!
How virtuous they are
from the comfort of their “communities.”
Close knit, wine savvy,
they speak of their ‘esthetic’
when choosing a baby crib,
ignoring the graffiti of the ghetto.

Lives lived on social media,
unable to expand to historical dimensions,
straight-jacket ‘shoulds’
safe in gated neighborhoods
while demanding rehab for the downtrodden,
without seeing the similarities.

Their children have silly names
that won’t look good on a headstone,
(funerals are solemn events, not gigglefests),
and pontificate on morality
without ever dodging bullets
in Chicago or Iraq.

War is just another word for dying.
in your own blood and feces, but with nobility.
A poor man’s claim to greatness?
A culture war —bullets and needles,
and dying in someone else’s pathology.
Your memorial not a medal but a riot.

WAR CORRESPONDENCE

Bob McAfee

United States

<http://bobmcafee.com/>

My son, my son, the war has begun.
Tell me where will you sleep tonight.

On the ground, on the ground,
in a tent on the ground
after marching all day with my crew.

My son, my son, you are so very young.
Tell me where will you sleep tonight.

On the ground, on the ground,
with a blanket I found
in a house near a farm in Shiloh.

My son, my son, you do us proud.
Tell me where will you sleep tonight.

On the ground, on the ground,
hear the cannonball’s sound
as I sleep in the Tennessee dew.

My son, my son, has the battle been won?
Tell me where will you sleep tonight.

On the ground, on the ground,
I hear the drums pound
as we ready to charge in the morrow.

My son, my son, keep your head down.
Tell me where will you sleep tonight.

On the ground, on the ground,
is where I’ve been downed,
a musket ball reaming me through.

OF AMERICA ALL THESE MEDALS SING

RC James

United States

Why'd he do it,
jumped on the grenade,
could've hollered
told them guys to scatter?

*Hide an' seek,
no, let's play red light.
Bird, look at it, small;
man, it's warm, feel it.
Can't fly, can we keep it?
We can fix it, yeah,
just put a splint on the wing,
popsicle stick, dirty,
wash it off.
Clean the blood off,
not so rough, here, this blanket,
soft enough, ma don't know,
but it's all right.*

Danny jumped on it,
nobody knew what was happening;
everybody rolled, stand up, get hit.
Damn machine gun out there,
explosion, right under Danny.
Moaning, *can't breathe.*
Guys all around him.
Mexican Frank, never got hurt,
only time he wasn't laughing
was when he was fighting.
Danny he was like Frank,
always smiling.

That Saturday, *Sandy*, he said,
we're gonna lose, be damned
if we didn't, them guys played ball
worse than old ladies and we lost.
Sandy said it, *Bastards!*
Danny flipped a coin at the board,
lost, and they took him out
to the base that morning.

He could've picked it up
and heaved it, why?

Old woman teacher, she threw
that damn chalk like lightning,
hit the kid on the head.
Everybody shut up,
she was a little crazy, tense,
laughed, but no noise came out.

That ranch, Fernandez woman,
small, black hair, sliver of it
hanging down, almond eyes, deep.
Picking up the mail, walking slow,
back to the house, stops, slumps,
sobbing, walks arms at sides.
Letters drop to the ground,
she stops outside the door,
leans against it, crying,
pigs grunting for food.

Copter flattening out the grass,
left big patch, noise drowned out
by guns.

Us kids 'd roll in them fields,
wrestling, farmer mad as hell,
had to cut it by hand, ha,
heavin' apples at him on the run.

Some girl named Breta,
Danny talked real soft about her,
hardly make out what he was sayin.'

Summer camp talking real low,
scratching screen window,
watching for the counselor,
flashlight, watch it.

Danny on his bunk
dreaming about his horse,
Danny in the field
dreaming about his ranch,
Danny in that hut,
Danny
dreaming.

STEEL

Genevieve Ray
United Kingdom

<https://www.facebook.com/GenevieveRayPoet/>

Ever turning steel,
against muck-ridden,
rubbery churning.
The monsters of the maniacal,
eat the spaces that were so green.

Ever moving steel,
revolves to meet,
a barrel of fresh artillery.
A barrage of sound and smell,
cutting through communities.

Over heated steel,
powered by promises,
of a faulty power play.
A whole generation lost,
from World War back to Greeks.

Over heated steel,
when technology overtakes,
the evolution of humanity.
Beating my breast as Shaka,
lifting my zweihander for German ancestry.

Over to ever drawing steel.
My history has the auspices,
of love before the sword.
Pacifist is not my blood,
it is the iron of unchaining,
of my ancestors from civil horror,
the belief of "we will be free".

MOTHER

Rose Mary Boehm
Peru

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR9fygcz_kL4LGuYcvmC8lQ

<https://www.rose-mary-boehm-poet.com/>

I
Mother holds my hand.
I am trying to keep pace.
Perhaps I'll have thick brown silk stockings
one day, just like hers, and big brown shoes.
Why is her skirt so long?

II
Behind us were men in grey uniforms who forced
us uphill in the street where we lived.
Mother squashed my fingers until they hurt
in her big hands and until I wriggled and
pulled my hand from hers, sliding sideways
and hiding in a doorway where I watched
hundreds of hurried legs trample by.

III
I stare at the wall with hundreds of lists
of names of those who went missing, the ones
who never checked in again to be registered
by the bureaucratic processes which were never lost.
My finger flies across the papers helping my eyes
to look for the G's.
My mother's name is not there.

HIS LIMBO SOLILOQUY

Carl "Papa" Palmer

United States

Actually, I like lockdown. I already was before COVID anyway, but now I've got my privacy. No family feeling forced to visit or hold vigil in my netherworld, he confides through the phone.

Both of us former Army soldiers placing us on common ground made introductions easier with the usual "where were we when" comparisons of duty assignments all military members embrace.

Though sharing multiple telephone calls these past seven months since my assignment to be his companion as a hospice volunteer, I have yet to meet him face-to-face due to pandemic restrictions.

Using his bedside number at the nursing home I can call anytime, not worry about visiting hours, ask if he's busy, got time to talk.

His answer's most always the same, *Just busy here being alone, too close to death to complain.* Clicking me to speaker he begins what he calls "me-memories from a time when when was when."

Mostly musing of being anywhere but there, lost in an actual place, blurring "what was with what is" behind and in front of his shadow, recalling dreams as a younger man, of a future in past perfect tense.

And times talking of present times from his no man's land outpost, *All day's end as they begin in purgatory, today recopying yesterday, cared for by hosts of faceless masked angels not letting me die alone.*

Forgive me only thinking of myself, I just need you to hear I'm here. Inside I'm your age, the two of us sharing a brew at the NCO club, years ago, and oceans away, comrades-in-arms talking of our day.

To me he's the sergeant with permanent change of station orders in transition for his final mission, ending his time on active service, in hopes his God is religious and his terminal assignment is good.

THE BLUE GOD

Joan McNerney

The blue god of war
is so strong
he can twist trees
with the tip of his tongue.

You better not defy him
scream at him
lie to him.
He'll explode and beat
the hell out of you.

He lives on nothing
will die for nothing
makes us children
shivering all night
crying in empty winds
turning our tears to ice.

The blue god of war
is so strong
northern winds bow
to his will.

He doesn't dig
your moaning
and groaning.
You better shut up or he'll
make mincemeat out of you.

He laughs at everything
has respect for nothing
makes us afraid to fight
when he spits in our faces
turning our tears to ice.

So we watch in silence
waiting for the coming light
when he will hold us
in his burning hands
and we will be born twice
once by fire
once by ice.

MARC ANTONY AND ME

Neal Whitman

United States

Aka Tin Whealman

Anagram poet of Glenelg, Scotland

Two weary veterans,
we share battle stories
and rub rust off dented armor.

His war in the mist of time.
My war in our time.
Both shed too many years.

What's the noise?
The star is fallen ... strike me dead
Withered is the garland ... the Earth doth melt.

Beneath the visiting moon
the odds are gone.
Give me some wine.

Like old battered turtles
we now salute no flag,
true Earthlings. Cheers!

A door opened
and blew out the candle.
Where did the flame go?

THE WAR YEARS

Jacalyn Shelley

United States

<http://jacalynshelley.com/>

I spent most of the war preoccupied with the study of ballet and the habit of watching on the *Nightly News* soldiers drag body bags out of the jungle, heave them onto helicopters. Then I'd settle into bed humming, with my transistor radio and Marvin Gaye singing *What's Going On?* The answer was to *escalate*, and my boyfriend registered with the Selective Service, a lottery that chose more and more men to go to war. I began to study the laws of probability and the cartography of Canada. Vivid to me was the blood stain of a Marine's suicide on my college library floor. Vivid to me were the stories of enlisted men, who stood randomly on the right side of a room and went to Ankara or Ramstein while their buddies were sent to Da Nang or Camranh Bay. I should have studied the cartography of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. When I was small, I studied Germany, that half a country my war-weary father helped to liberate. Now I touch the shoulder of my husband's flight suit at the back of the closet, listen to his stories of how the supply of tetracycline for STDs would always run out, how he stitched up Viet Cong prisoners only for them to be sent back across the perimeter. His voice hesitates as he recalls recording fairy tales on cassette tapes for his children. His eyes tear like my father's.

FLYING OVER VIETNAM 1974

L.J. Carber

Written while teaching in Cambodia in 1973-74

I flew,
a modern man in a steel bird,
with all the arrogance of
ancient Icarus, but my wings
did not melt nor I swoon.

I flew high, very, very high
Over Asian lands and homes,
And below me, very, very far
Down where the bombs fell
Like the rains of hell—
I saw the face of the moon.

SAIGON PLATFORM MAN

Jimmy Pappas

United States

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8265313.Jimmy_Pappas

He weaved across the street
dodging in and out of motorbikes
like a broken-field runner
as he pushed his rolling platform
with a wooden block in each hand.
His legless torso rested on the dolly,
the kind of equipment acquired
from an American military base.

Whoa, papa-san, be careful.

I spread my arms out and pointed
my legs pretending to be a surfer
to show my amazement at how
he crossed a packed street with such ease.

He laughed as he always did
when he saw me,
clueless, I'm sure,
to what I was imitating.

He made his living shining shoes.
I was a regular customer now,
not that I cared about my boots,
but I always enjoyed our meetings.

I towered over him as I stood on the sidewalk
while he worked as quickly as possible.
When I looked up, I noticed the stares
of the Vietnamese people riding by.
None of them smiled back at me.

I looked down at my feet and understood.
I saw myself as they saw me
with my M-16 and baggy fatigues
and a horribly wounded veteran soldier
groveling at my feet.

When I handed the man a quarter,
he grabbed my arm
and kissed my hand.

COFFEE

Trevor Harrison

United Kingdom

<https://www.instagram.com/SoberPirate3218/>

The dregs swirl against my lips, a last taste of Brasil
They are acrimonious and grainy, like gunpowder
I want to roll the grit between my fingers-
Soak into each other in mutual, amiable osmosis
And so combined, evaporate

I fling my mug towards the primus stove
The flame spits and crackles; a fusillade
George says he will write his grandmother
Harry nods, but his eyes are back in Dublin
How I wish I could take them with me

Therein, reduced to molecules of a tired man
I could merge with the haze; I am smoke, I am
The sky scratched by shell-trails, blue, I am
The soft rains that fall after the dying is done
I am the blackbird song at daybreak

Overhead, I can see them all; erstwhile brothers
Crouched in the deep tattoos we gouged here
Some lay in lines, boots crossed, asleep or dead
Mud is etched into Gaia's wrinkles, and our own
Precious little light in Tartarus

How I wish I could swoop down, a bright Gabriel
And kiss each man atop his head! – absent Christ
I would be His regent, offering infinite love –
To take each man against my breast, and whisper:
“You shall go home.”

I AM AT WAR
Dr Barnali Sikder
India

https://www.instagram.com/vibgyor_barnu/

Yes, I am at war.
At war with my guilt,
Guilt of not being able to protect my soul from the world of hatred .
Hate waves smashing my door
Making the hardest sound
Pushing me towards realising the cruelty of disbelief.

Here love is melted down in the extreme heat of suffocating truth.
The unfathomable clash of love and disbelief germinate an unbelievable reality , where hatred
is truth and truth is hatred.

Truest wishes for those who are being killed but still alive .
Their disabled soul conspire with those who dream of continuing this hatred to achieve a
sublime world ,
Where soul is dead, love is raped , humanity is burned into ashes .
Misinterpreted emotions howl
and drag these infected souls to the threshold of a new holocaust.

The constant cacophony is tearing my eardrums.
Now, its bleeding like hell.
The red fluid is floating around my neck ...stopping me breath.
Strangulating my dreams to bloom like Frangipani,
Encapsulating my fragrance in a bottle tightening its cork.
I tried to escape but this glass wall is so strong that ,with every hard smash on it I bounce back
to the centre.
My run between the centre and the periphery makes me realise the invisibility of my central
existence
Where-
I am choked to death.

I am at war .
Yes, I am at war .

INNOCENT WARRIORS

Prema Murugan

India

Children, their childhood lose liberty,
while battling their war against poverty.
Mercilessly, innocence clad in maturity.
Becomes rude and blameworthy
poor children's destiny.

These helpless angels toil hard,
with deep cut wounds on body and mind .
Enforced to severe struggles, just to exist,
They hardly make their ends meet.
It's mandatory, if they need to arise
have to live through all adversities,
their prolonged pitiful state in bind.

Forced to live in despair,
killed are their desires.
Despite that everyday they respire,
grasping every breath with new aspires.
Like every little sweetheart,
they too dream, obviously bright.
Expect their sky in full spectrum paint
radiating sparkling luminous light
that might in some way blind their plight.

At times bold enough to break the barriers,
ignore the norms of ruthless social orders.
Self taught with practical lessons of life.
they withstand like a warrior.
Fearlessly standing over
the sharp edge, some do survive,
crawl hard to escalate in their career.

Their smile sighs to lose of innocence,
dull gleam in eyes, anyone can sense.
Sometimes when left with no choice,
surrender to their ill fate, their mischance.
Though unwilling, to weird beat they dance
Stinging sorrows then pricks
through their scathing glance.

Deep inside, the suppressed child weeps,
skin delicate peels, at times profusely bleeds
tolerating for somebody's dark deeds.
I utterly beg, lets hear unuttered pleads.
let's not deafen our ear, lets pay heed.
let's raise voice for these voiceless breed,
before they succumb to non healing scars.
Tongue tied they are, muted sufferers,
imprisoned they are, behind unseen bars.

CODA

Marsha Warren Mittman

United States

<http://www.thenextfoundation.org/>

Beware paper soldiers
Marching to the sound

Of their own mournful drums
Their cacophony harbingers

Of dread terrors unleashed
Masquerading as symphonies

Whilst harmonies are destroyed
And peace instruments mangled

Until worldwide music
Can no longer be heard...

LIKE LARKS

Abigail Elizabeth Ottley

United Kingdom

<https://www.facebook.com/abigailleizabethottley>

*(For Corporal A. Polkinghorne, D Company 2/6
Regiment in Mesopotamia
Based on a letter to Harry Ritch on 1st January 1918)*

Dear Mr Ritch, I am getting on alright.
I did not see the New Year come
but slept in, snug and dry, and warm as I could get.
Our poor tents have been flooded, see.
A foot of mud we've slept in, nearly
sometimes with the water to our knees.
Remember me, please, to all at home.
The Bible class is small these days, I guess.
But, if you could see us, and you brought
your camera, you could take some comic views:
all of us, as like as not, quite lagged in mud, soaked
through.
The rain's not like the rain back home. It comes in
bucketfuls.
Oh Mr Rich, make no mistake
out here we do see life.

Our Christmas here was quiet enough
as it must have been for those at home this year.
When dinner time came, they gave us skilly
which is a kind of mixed-up stew.
Cook mixed it up with something else —
though what the something was we never knew.
Still, we all look on the bright side here
and well you should have heard us Christmas Day.
We sat in our tents and sang like larks
a merry Christmas roundelay.
We Cornish lads, we sang and sang —
and we showed them the way.

THE WORD

Pratibha Savani
United Kingdom

<https://www.facebook.com/pratibhapoetryart/>
<https://www.instagram.com/pratibhapoetryart/>

a battle of wits
a battle of fists
a battle of the mind
it's all the same kind
a battle is a battle
we all lose that's for sure
but we don't need to choose
in love and war
if we use our minds
to think it right
we can recover and reclaim
and not play that GAME
learn from history's past mistakes
and before you know it
those battles are DEAD
and you find that solace
playing something else
like tic tac toe
and we automatically THRIVE and grow
in the ABSENCE of that word
that is now COMPLETELY
UNHEARD of

THE TRAUMA OF WAR

King Komrabai Dumbuya
Sierra Leone

Nerve-wrecked by the war brutalities,
in reality, little stands before me.
Daily life faces stanzas of regrets.
My mouth is polka-dotted
with an elegiac ballads of morose.
Lamenting layers of lasting cicatrices
of a war-wounded widow.

The fists of war forcefully,
have pounded bitterness in my life.
And laid them barefoot
to the ulterior nature of irksomeness.
Trumping up contorts of defenseless pains
While tearing hells of unforgivable dams.

As the early morning sun ritual
ghastly casted on my face,
defenseless sobs constantly knocked the aisles
of death
to take its rightful course,
caused by the brutalities of war.

While these conundrums resound in my
eardrums
Pain exacerbates in me like a tsunami,
Posing a threat to my motherhood.
Jolted innocents open eyes wide,
Longing to see a sliver of hope.

Thinking of the grim reality,
my heart wails.
Gliding in my life,
are waves of trauma,
nerve-wrecked by ordeals
castrated by the war,
questioning my very existence.

APOCALYPTIC DEMANDS

Michelle M. Mead

United States

https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/michelle_m_mead

Not much left to say, I will retreat,
Nor time to say it in (incomplete),
With rubble strewn on barren streets,
Of the bluest earth we used to know,
So, no- maybe just a strained hello,

Or maybe a rushed kiss goodnight,
Before another flashing light,
Against our flesh as red as sin,
Climbs the walls of lives within,
As the final days of life begin,

A crooked fork stuck in my cheek,
Traucherous times that are so bleak,
A crooked house on crooked legs,
And every person is one who begs,
While crawling down amongst the dregs,

Apocalyptic mushroom cloud tattoos,
And baby bottles filled with booze,
Nothing left to pick or choose,
All broken glass and dried up land,
Alas, this is what ignorance demands,
This piece of flesh, these empty hands.

BLUE RIDGES

Marianne Mersereau

United States

<https://www.facebook.com/WildHoneyCreations>
<https://www.mariannemersereau.com/>

The hills my father roamed in his life
were similar – rugged slopes rising
above lush valleys, and I wish to see them
before their scars – Wallens Ridge before
Daniel Boone, General Lee and Massey Coal,
Okinawa’s Kakazu before kamikazes,
banzais and suicide cliff dives.

I picture him as a child climbing
in Tennessee gathering holly for Christmas,
hunting squirrel and deer with his shotgun,
and years later crossing Conical Hill
carrying a fallen comrade, and a different
kind of weapon. I study the witnesses
on these ridges: palm, cherry, dogwood, cedar.

STILL

D. R. James
United States

<https://www.amazon.com/D.-R.-James/e/BooIW6KT3W>

It all recurs for the maimed, how they remain,
or don't, atop the plots of the buried. Those
who could do something table the question.
They relax in the rocker of their certainty,
a war, any war, an abstraction that walls off
the bursting specifics. A twenty-something friend
found he'd deployed to sort body parts. Arrayed,
they'd survive the fever sweeping a land we
could never know. Welcomed by the white-blue
atrium of a foreign sky, he'd prowl his perimeter
until his duty tapped him. Then the oven-sun
would relight his nightmare, the categories
of bone and flesh his production line. What
achievement could signal his success? What
dream in the meantime could relieve raw nerve?
The perfect tour would end when he was still
in one piece, a nation's need ignoring the gore
behind the games, the horror nestling into
the still-living because still in one piece.

RUMBLES OF WRATH!

Kathy Jo Bryant
United States

We cower inside
At the rumbles of wrath

Shrinking in fear's
Dread control

Why must we travel
This rambling path

And for trouble
Always be on patrol?

Well, it's a sure thing
That hate rules this world

Just look right and left
And you'll see

Upon every foe
Dark weapons are hurled

The human heart
Behaves evilly

A continual fight
'Twixt opposing sides

Has always held
Full sway

But there is hope
God will provide

An end to this mess
Some glad day!

FARM BOY

Mike Ball

United States

<https://twitter.com/whirred>

<https://www.facebook.com/harrumph>

*Glenn reveled in the Burdizzo ball clamp
that emasculates bulls by crushing
vessels and sperm tubes with no cutting.
Encircling each ball in turn, squeezing
hard and quick. Poof, make a steer.
Bloodless transformation seems kind.*

Among arcane pleasures of black kine
is hoisting hips onto the broad, wide body
of an Angus steer, bred for short legs and
table-like back. One could snooze there.

Weekends upcountry, we tended to Angus
and kept company with sincere lasses.
We played minor celebrity, college boys
not set sure for decades in cotton mills.

His future might bring country peace,
running the family ranch. But first
came duty to country during war.
Of course, he quit college to do that.

He quickly went extreme in Laos,
where our honorable government
swore that we never had troops.
He had shot only deer, turkey, squirrel.

Two years later when we met again,
He had to dig deep into our friendship
bag to speak... and only then after
three woman-shaped Michelobs.

As an NCO, corporal, on patrol, he
lived through a human wave assault.
Likely thousands, of Viet Cong
washed across the field at them.

They spewed machine gun and rifle
rounds down one wave, then the next.
Fifty some men in sweaty green
fatigues killed some, then more.

They got killed too. Many of his guys
were hit, including all ranking officers.
Killing more, then taking over his squad,
he ended up a couple ranks higher

Some attackers were only feet away.
He could have touched them, Instead,
he shot more... until the wave just stopped.
The Cong retrieved who knows how many.

It was over ... sort of. The assault replays
in screams, smells and flashing sights.
Those shouting demons keep demanding
death for the platoon or even themselves.

No more laughs or grins. Only fitful
naps day or night and spoiled sleep.
Glen returned from the war... sort of.
He has no wounds that show.

FREEDOM

Emecheta Christian

Nigeria

<https://www.instagram.com/emechetachristian/>

<https://www.facebook.com/emechetac>

Let's fight abuse
Let's fight misuse
We are not here to lose
We were not born fools

Let's fight corruption
Let's fight oppression
We must stay united like a legion
We must sanitize our nation

Let's fight greed
Let's fight misdeed
In wisdom, we must feed
In wise words, we must heed

Let's fight terrorism
Let's fight nepotism
In unity, we can eradicate antagonism
In love, we can outgrow tribalism.

WARNING FROM THE WHEELCHAIR

Mark Hudson

United States

Back in eighth grade, we had school ditch-day,
and we ditched school to go to the Cubs game.
I was with a young kid my age when we strayed,
and came across a war veteran who'd been maimed.
Confined to a wheelchair for life from a fray,
he warned us not to join the military, or so he claimed.
I never intended to join the military, anyway,
but I remember that war veteran today, unnamed.
The kid I went to that baseball game with that day,
went on to a successful career, he was unashamed.
He was overseas when the tsunami swept him away,
a vacation in paradise was the thing to be blamed.
I thank you, Lord, that for today I'm still alive,
I hope to see those people in heaven who did not survive.

TALES FROM THE DAMPSIDE

Ken Gosse

United States

<https://www.facebook.com/ken.gosse/>

There once was a dark, stormy knight
who needed to pause in each fight.
Superb valor and wit,
stamina infinite,
but large prostate and bladder finite.

THE NAVY WIFE

Jane Fitzgerald

United States

<https://www.facebook.com/JanesPoetry/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Jane-H.-Fitzgerald/e/B01MSW2FLO>

She sat stone still
Staring at a blank screen
Its dullness reflected
How she felt inside
Too tired to move
She had been alone for months
His return a phantom ship
On the lost horizon
The only sounds in the still darkness
Were the hum of the refrigerator
And the occasional jet overhead
The children were finally asleep
The quiet washed over her
Like a precious gift
She could hardly bear to think
Of the baby bottles and dirty wash
Perpetually waiting for her
Demanding attention before
She could fall exhausted into
The bed meant for two
Only to be woken up
By screams from a hungry baby
She knew there would be isolation
When she eagerly pledged to him
It seemed so remote then
Reality struck with his first deployment
She had fought against it
Now she was resigned
Willing herself to conquer each day
Shouldering all responsibilities
Panicking with every phone call
Imagining the worst
A fearful draining existence
Each return was like a rebirth
Each departure a death
She suffered, but did not drown
Unknown physical and emotional strength
Emerged along with foreign courage
Transforming her into
The steadfast Navy wife

As an NCO, corporal, on patrol, he
lived through a human wave assault.
Likely thousands, of Viet Cong
washed across the field at them.

They spewed machine gun and rifle
rounds down one wave, then the next.
Fifty some men in sweaty green
fatigues killed some, then more.

They got killed too. Many of his guys
were hit, including all ranking officers.
Killing more, then taking over his squad,
he ended up a couple ranks higher

Some attackers were only feet away.
He could have touched them, Instead,
he shot more... until the wave just stopped.
The Cong retrieved who knows how many.

It was over ... sort of. The assault replays
in screams, smells and flashing sights.
Those shouting demons keep demanding
death for the platoon or even themselves.

No more laughs or grins. Only fitful
naps day or night and spoiled sleep.
Glen returned from the war... sort of.
He has no wounds that show.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Lynn White
United Kingdom

<https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>
<https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com/>

I dug up so many things
to create my garden
not only rocks
and pieces of slate
but tools from those who
had worked in this difficult land.
I built walls from the rocks
and edged my new pond in slate.
The tools became decorations
to tell the story of the land.
Then I found the tractor,
or so I thought,
a toy
that some child had played with
dreaming of flat land
with good soil.
Then I looked more closely
and saw it was a soldier
in the driving seat.
Not a tractor
then
but
some sort
of killing machine
I buried it back where it came from.
It seemed the best thing to do with it.

I'LL BE SEEING YOU

Antoni Ooto
United States

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/antonioto>
<http://www.ooto.org/blog/>

In the summer after the war
when we sit and plan
as others had

staring outward
at the lines of history before us
newly confronted with peace

quietly, we sing,
old songs of what was

forever looking into unknown places
over there... over here

this time,
hoping to build,
better than before

THE WAR BETWEEN THE HANDS

William Wren
Canada

<https://billwren.com/>

There was a body.
It had two hands,
a right and a left.
They went to war.

The hands became fists.
They started to fight.
In the fighting of fists
the body was bruised.

The body was winded
from all of the strikes.
The body was broken
and started to fall.

It dropped to its knees.
It fell to the ground.
It wasn't enough.
Neither hand won.

Hands that were fists,
a left and a right,
knuckled with anger.
Each grabbed a knife.

They started to slash.
The body was cut.
It started to bleed.
It wasn't enough.

The hands that were fists
continued to cut.
Both of them stabbed
straight to the heart.

The body was dying.
The body soon died.
The fists became hands.
The hands became dust.

LAST WAR

Kaebetswe Qobolo, 14
Lesego Mahlakwana, 15

https://www.instagram.com/betswextee_/

You are the last war to end all wars
You are the biggest I've seen
You are the longest ever been

Turning left there are dead bodies on the battle grounds
Turning right all i hear is gun sounds
You are the last of them all
And shall all your enemies fall

Hope you conquer
And win this war
So tomorrow you shall rise
You're the last war to end all wars.

But the question still stands "what really happens in wars?"
Is it for peace?
Does it stay at ease
Or is it just for disturbing the peace?
We all ask...

We turn our backs on friends once we get back stabbed
Were all represented even standing from a distant,
In a flash we run trying to fight our enemies
We all rise and fall,
and we act like we're in walls.

POPPIES

Agnieszka Filipek
Ireland

<https://www.facebook.com/polmnieapoltobie>

the sky cracks
rivers flow with blood

soldiers flood the earth
singing the lullaby

their weapons shining
like jewelry

and under their feet
anonymous bones

I RISE UP

Sarfraz Ahmed
United Kingdom

<https://twitter.com/Sarfraz76194745>

<https://www.instagram.com/sarfrazahmedpoet/>

From the dust of history's gaze,
From the hearts of encapsulated slaves,
Bound by shackles,
Tied to metal and stone,
That cut through skin and bone,

I rise up holding onto a wing and a prayer,
The tail ends of hope,
A sparkle that burns through the darkness,
Penetrates through the torched cries,
Of the caged bird,

From the gravel pits of history,
From the pain I endured time after time,
From the strength,
I found in the hearts,
In the comfort of strangers,
Those that have come and gone,

From the hope of another rising sun,
From the kiss of the phoenix,
And the belly of the dragon,
Dreams that used to exist,

I rise up,
I stand tall,
In the midst of history's gaze,
I fly like a shadow,
Upon all those that did me wrong,
I rise up like fire,
I burn hard and I burn strong.

Meet me at the garden gate,
in springtime,
my love,
when the sun did rise,
the earth has dried,
and Flanders Field is silent.
In the rising of the sun,
my boy,
meet me at the garden gate.

*a.
michelson*

Snippits.

A J Michelson
United Kingdom
https://Instagram.com/snipp_its

Daddy's been gone a number of years. He left me his diaries.

His diaries keep me in touch, even though I arrived the year WW2 ended.

Entered Italian Somaliland this afternoon after very rough drive in sweltering heat.

Pontoon bridge over the rather wide river of Garrisa. Slept on north side of river.

What a day it must have been exhausted by the heat and not so warming thoughts. That was March 19, 1941.

His entry two days later: *slept on disused landing, A short sharp storm early evening. Heat terrible, dust, roads awful. AFMADU DISTRICT.*

Afmadow District – a name written on his mind, I bet.

Can imagine the humidity following that little storm.

What thunder did to his nerves!

Shell shock came to haunt him ever after.

By Natisha Parsons

Republic of South Africa

COLLECTION BY NATISHA PARSONS

22/4/41 HERGEISHA

Cool day, sent letters and parcel to mater. Nothing of importance. Lieut Daniel returned from Berbera.

Hargeisha – Somali Capital. Daddy took time off to write his sisters at Dower College.

26 APRIL 1941 GIGGIGA (Jijiga City in Ethiopia)

Cool to cold. Quiet day. Henry D. and C. Doherty paid visit evening, nice chat with Cpl Linden. Wrote Grace Linden. Got a letter and snap from Kathlene also one from Mike.

Kathlene and Mike... died so young... nice they cared about big brother away at war.

Snippet from 6 May 1941. Dad remembered his nieces – I'm so glad:

Received letter from Dad. Sent post cards to Francis and Gerty Marillier. Had to 'choke off' Guards and prisoners for dumping a large number of live rifle cartridges in fire, extremely dangerous, had to dodge bursting ammunition.

Big jump to

14/6/42 GAZALA, TOBRUK, ACROMA "withdrawal" Under intense shell fire all morning. Decided to withdraw. Leave approx. 1430hrs towards Tobruk. Had to destroy our petrol and oil dumps "under intense fire". Machine gunned in Tobruk area, after getting down escarpment, very severely. Shelled and bombed. Got clear away & parked at the Acroma aerodrome area (in Mine fields). Few of our trucks got out of action. Withdrawal seemed satisfactory so far.

And...

15/6/42 WITHDRAWAL INTO EGYPT Leave Acroma 0200hrs, a few shells came over. Travel in comparative comfort, passed Tobruk perimeter at dawn and continue east. No strafing, hundreds of vehicles over desert, pass Sidi Rizegh and travel into desert – tar road being used by our Armour – cross fence into Egypt late afternoon and camp.

16/6/42 Very grateful for respite from infernal shelling and gunning!

17/4/42 Leave camp & travel approx. 20 miles n. e. Last night Jerry bombing Fort Capuzzo nearby, nervous he would give our camp a crack too.

18/6/42 – 28/6/42 On the 20th understand Tobruk garrison endangered and town falls on Sunday the 21st – now we're for it!

Travel further east. During night Jerry machine guns the coast road (moon light) with a good deal of bombing. Traffic on road is unbelievable, dense as Eloff Street and seems to be Jerry's playground. Bombs fall as near as 150yards away from us, machine gunning all over the place.

COLLECTION BY NATISHA PARSONS

Skip to...

3/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Still rather cloudy. Short dog fight early morning. Learn that McKenzie was killed in action last night – poor fellow! Still we're all waiting for it – a git!

4/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Large forces of our heavy bombers and fighters going over to Jerry's lines, bombing like hell. Jerry sending strikers and fighters to bomb our left flank all day. Position as yesterday. Good few planes downed in area.

5/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Fierce shelling all day. One enemy plane brought down in area. Bombing by enemy, our bombers going over. Last night Radio (Daventry) states position being held by us. Shelling is pretty heavy but not in my area.

6/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Went to El Hammon Station for water, about 18 miles down the line. Shelling pretty severe but not in this area. Jerry's high level Bombers did some pretty heavy bombing near by. Severe bombing during early hours of morning by our planes. Understand 600 Jerrys gave themselves up yesterday. Rather depressing Russian news. Not too certain of position with us, news conflicting. Lots of Aussies going up the line.

7/7/42 EL ALAMEIN & ALEXANDRIA Went to El Hammon Station for water. Bit of bombing going on near there, by Jerry. Severe shelling last night with bombing. Rather quiet during morning. Plenty transport on road to water point, met a New Zealander with a number of Honey Tanks (new). Had good fortune to proceed on a trip to Heloun. Left at about four o'clock and slept at the Mustapha Barracks, Alexandria, having had radiator trouble en rout., mended by Australians. Has a fairly good time en route, beer galore.

8/7/42 HELOUAN Proceeded early for Helouan, passed Cairo about 12 o'clock and arrived at Halouan soon after. Had a ripping time at N.A.A.F.I.'s. there where I met Dan Wyatt, drank beer with him to heart's content, he slept in my truck as tight as ninepence. Glad of respite from bombing etc.

9/7/42 HELOUAN & CAIRO Proceeded for Front and slept at Cairo, had a gorgeous time with Stride, visited some Egyptians he knew. Met some East Africans & got a few beers from them. met a couple of Tommies who stood us more beers and saw us to Abbasia Barracks where we slept – tight!

10/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Continued for Front early. Passed Alex about 11 o'clock, had dinner there and a beer, quite a good time, arrived at our lines in the afternoon. Bombing again!

11/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Hot, as usual, received letter from Dad and wrote Kathlene and Gertie Marillier. Jerry bombing ridge next to us – string of bombs dropped about 1 ½ miles long. Heavy guns blazing away all day with occasional bombing, rather far from here. Another series of bombing in Fwd area, saw plane come down, believe a Jerry.

COLLECTION BY NATISHA PARSONS

12/7/42 Pretty hot. Several planes of ours about, bombing in Fwd area by us.

13/7/42 EL ALAMEIN Received pay. Got letter from George, wrote back. Good deal of bombing by Jerry aircraft, several of our aircraft in the air. Very hot, misty in the morning.

14th to 21/7/42 Bombing off and on. one of our plane crashed alongside (20/7/42). Received 30/- from Dad and letter from Kathlene, sent reply to Dad. Very hot. Plenty Beer so far.
AL ALAMEIN & rear "rest" positions

22nd July to 12th August 1942 Came down the line about 18 miles after a more or less uneventful time. usual bombings, machine gunning etc. went up to the Colonel with maj. Crowe & Lt Schander with Native prisoner. Rather a good bit of shelling. Sgt Duthie's truck machine gunned about 8th wounding Duthie (cannon shot) on left fore arm, expect he'll lose his arm and go home. Feel very sorry for the fellow – decent sort of blighter. El Hammon Station (water point) bomber by Stukas (?) yesterday 12th. 2 Jerry's brought down by Support coy with Small Arms.

Been agitating for home leave again, written O.C. & Capt Van der Merwe. Received recently letter from Kathlene, understand Fred's giving Old Lady a lot of trouble. Written SAP Umtata to investigate. Received recently letters from George and Mike. Pretty heavy cannonade up forward night before last 11th & this afternoon 13th expect something will bust wide open just now.

Winston Churchill & Smuts were up the line a few days ago. Saw Sgt Barry & George C. At last camp Barry slept with me, had 15 bottles of Beer, quite a good evening and went over to his camp for a while next day 7th and came down the line 8th. Local leave for cc granted, 4 days in Cairo 3 days travelling. First batch went yesterday 12th (Cpl Allies, Cpl Harris & van Staden). Hope this the precursor of Union leave. Am not interested in 4 days to Cairo – what the hell!

And that's where I leave off.

My dad did not get home hale and hearty.

Days of treatment at Fort Beaufort Hospital Mom told us. And for his pains – a nice reward...

... a bicycle.

**“WAR IS WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN
LANGUAGE FAILS”**

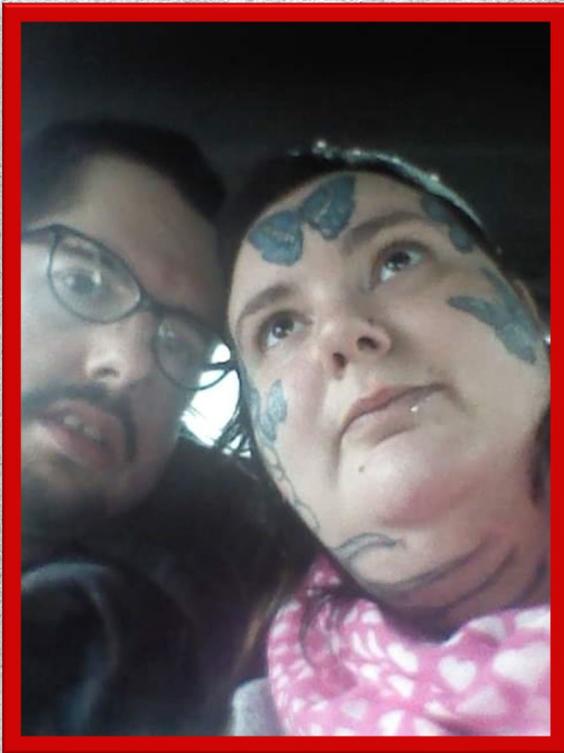
- Margaret Atwood



Our August Features

ASHLEY FOUTS

Author Feature



Ashley Fouts, age 29 lives in Harlan KY, USA and is married to the love of her life, Teddy Miles. She also has a very supportive family who she loves very much.

She published her 1st book, *Techno Flower*, in 2014 and her 2nd book, *Memories*, in 2020.

Ashely's goal in writing is to help people who have been sexually abused and suffer from depression and other mental impacts from a trauma like that. She has gone through that and has found a happy place and focuses on being here to tell others to keep fighting. That life is worth living.

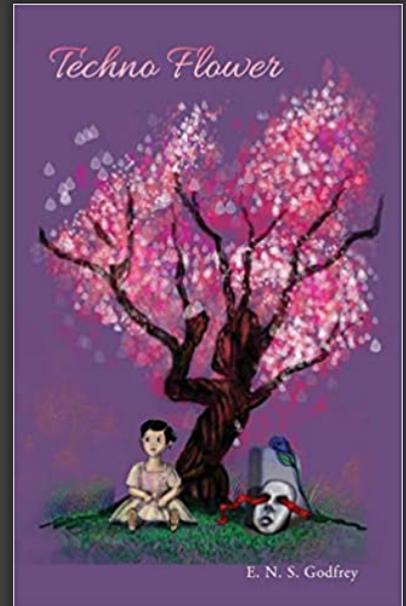
<https://www.facebook.com/Ashley.Fouts01/>

https://www.instagram.com/techno_lower01/

BLUE BUTTERFLY

Blue butterflies guiding me through the darkness leading me away. Landing around me to rest their wings that are weary. Blue butterflies watching over me, keeping me safe in these desperate times. I was broken, another soul lost like so many others. My story was about to end, but they revived me brought me to a different place. I don't need to escape this dark cave of wondrous life not yet found. Blue butterflies guide me through the darkness that is all around me. Come and rest your injured wings that are weary.

I like injured wings that are weary this means a lot because I felt like I was injured in my brain I felt as if my mind was becoming someone else in a way I was right I had developed schizoaffective but now I know I am exactly who I am meant to be.



Techno Flower is a collection of poetry that is as vivid and as colorful as the title implies. From alcohol, to love, to the dangers of greed, Techno Flower covers all walks of life. Without holding any punches, Techno Flower is a collection of some of the most interesting poetry to come out this decade.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/162838283X/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_apa_glc_fabc_1MDNF5YS8WFD4SPCDRG

A CAGED BIRD

I stayed hidden like a cage bird without freedom. This means so much because I felt half of me was gone I was trapped in my mind from fear.

NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

I woke up in a daze my hands were shaking. I started to hyperventilate i just want to get away out of this rat cage. It's a race against time, my heart is beating fast. I reimagine killing myself over and over again. I'm having a nervous breakdown. My brain is engaged in a world war and the evil is spreading. I just want to get away out of this nightmare. It's a struggle. I just want to be okay. You are not alone. You must survive

You are not alone you must survive out of everything this means the most no one talked to me I nearly ended my own life because I was raped and my only ture friend had died from cancer and I'm sorry from the miss spelling I have learning disabilities.

JOAN MAZZA

Poet Feature

Joan Mazza worked as a microbiologist, psychotherapist, and taught workshops nationally on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six self-help psychology books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self*. Her poetry has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Nation*, and elsewhere, and her prose has appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Streetlight*, and *Jellyfish Review*. After living in New York and Ft. Lauderdale, she now lives in rural central Virginia where she writes a poem every day and does paper art.



<http://www.joanmazza.com/>

RECIPE FOR SOLITARY JOY

The scents of comfort foods—
twelve bean soup in the Crockpot,
sourdough rising, green onions

frying with a touch of sesame oil.
Clean laundry folded and stacked,
an empty dishwasher, full pantry.
The complete array of art supplies

from papers to canvases in a variety
of sizes, all the brushes, pouring media
and intense pigments across the rainbow

for your next project, the table cleared
of clutter, dust. A fire burns bright
in the woodstove, a pile of books

you chose and can write inside.
Silence. Or Vivaldi or Mozart
in the background. A purring lap cat,
one dog at your feet. No one calls

your name, shouting, *Can you
bring my smokes and a beer?* Snow
so deep you can't go anywhere.

ADAPT OR DIE

The pace of life has quickened
though we're going backwards
taking rights away, telling others
their beliefs are wrong, along with
their lovers and way of living. I say
NO every day. No, I will not sign
what I don't believe, will not recite
a creed that starts with *I believe*
and I haven't written.

I love silence between the natural
sounds of bullfrogs, owls, chatter
among the crows. I can't stop
the din of modern life, so I adjust
to what I can't change, don't
have to like it, won't spout
the latest catch phrase. I may be
quiet, but my sphere of influence
expands word by word.

COOKING CLASS

Eight Instant Pots around the room,
tall workbenches of blond wood
in the back of a store with high priced
cooking tools, all of which I want

and I don't need. In these high-tech
gadgets, we make BBQ chicken,
mac 'n' cheese, and gooey brownies,
each in its own Instant Pot. But

it's so quick, the teacher keeps
telling us. Just set it and go! No
need to stir or watch; it will keep
itself hot while you do laundry

or run out to pick up kids at school.
Hurry, hurry, no time for flavors
to marry. Just dump contents, start
your dinner. I'm not impressed.

Give me slow food. Let me stir and sniff
and taste along the way. Would you take
a class to be an Instant Poet? Quality takes
time without the rush and hurry: bread

dough kneaded with bare hands,
ingredients added in the right order,
caring sealed and savored in each ladle.
I'm retired. No more rushing to the end.

FADING LUMINOSITY

My axis has tilted, altering my ecliptic,
while my north pole is heavier, foggier
than my south. I've been eclipsed
by the transit of youthful stars,
by superclusters, where an unspoiled
planet awaits bold travelers. No longer
bold, my body is cratered, scarred by
sudden impacts, drained of resources
by black holes and supergiants
I viewed as gods. If this is the normal
trajectory of life, send me one
bright shooting star for my one wish
tonight in the region of the Big Dipper,
so I'll know where to turn my gaze.
Celestial bodies have no influence
on me, regardless of my time and place
of birth. Inside my body, atoms
are galaxies being born and dying.
Do not let my velocity fool you.
Daily, I take a shuttle into the past
for a launch in my near future.

Yong Takahashi

Author Feature



Yong Takahashi is the author of *Rising* and *The Escape to Candyland*. She was a finalist in The Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing, Southern Fried Karma Novel Contest, Gemini Magazine Short Story Contest, and Georgia Writers Association Flash Fiction Contest. She was awarded Best Pitch at the Atlanta Writers Club Conference.

The featured poems are from Yong's poetic memoir that will be published in 2021.

Her second short story collection will be published in 2022.

To learn more about Yong, visit:
<https://linktr.ee/yctwriter>

<https://www.facebook.com/yctwriter>

[https://www.instagram.com/yctwrite
r/](https://www.instagram.com/yctwriter/)

<https://linktr.ee/yctwriter>

YONG TAKAHASHI – AUTHOR FEATURE

SCHOOL DAYS

Waiting outside my classroom in the morning,
I braced myself as a boy spit on me.
His friends slanted their eyes, sang songs about
my dirty knees, flat chest, and laughed.
Some would throw rocks or snowballs.
I imagined howling through the woods,
running away as quickly as my little feet would allow.
But I didn't move, hoping they would lose interest.
Wiped the saliva and humiliation off my face,
and carried on with the rest of my day.
I'm still amazed how that little girl went back
day after day and although she wished
so much to evaporate from the world,
she didn't.
I didn't.

LIGHT WITHIN

I collected tears in a jar
Prayed for salvation from the stars
Mended my ancient cuts
Hoping for miracles from dust

I waited for someone to save me
Harder on myself than others can be
Hiding from my own reflection
Not believing it was the greatest vision

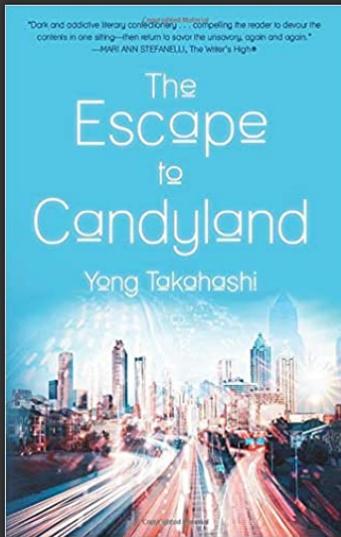
Found I'm the best version of self
Let all the negativities melt
Decided I want to be here
And conquered all my fears

I searched for the light within
Learned only I can fight for the win
Dug down deep inside
To find where strength lies



RISING reveals flashes of life's most intimate moments filled with love, hope, remorse, longing, and anguish. We root for the one who reaches for happiness but is not yet able to grasp it. We wince for the one who picks at festering wounds that never quite heal. We are breathless as we run alongside those who chase after a thirst that can never be quenched.

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0985NSD1Q/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_hsch_vap_i_tkin_p1_i1



In Yong Takahashi's Atlanta, the immigrants, preacher's wives, strippers, and shopkeepers who pass each other on the street all have a secret story to tell. Caught between generations of family, regrets from their pasts, conflicting cultures, and even countries, each character has a reason to fiercely guard their secret lives, even as they learn that the truth must escape. Takahashi's characters chase their American dreams down back alleys and campaign trails, stumbling under the weight of the gifts their families have given them. A box of Boraxo hand soap. Change for the vending machine. A stranger's driver's license. A mother's love. The smallest exchange could prove kill or cure when you walk the streets of Candyland.

<https://www.amazon.com/Escape-Candyland-Yong-Takahashi/dp/1970137878>

UNEXPECTED GIFT

I've been shivering so long I didn't know I was cold until you came along offering your love as a soft, warm blanket to shield me from the world. All my life, I wandered with strangers thinking they were family. Raised by wolves, I fended off demons alone. Not knowing who to trust, I stayed with predators who barely kept me alive. They led me astray while picking my soul clean. Their smiles glistened while they gutted me from the inside out. My blood fertilized their crops as they leeches my own dreams.

One day you appeared from the sky. You opened your arms, waiting for me to take my first timid step toward salvation. You told me you will be there if I fall or need help walking to the next stage. I see you in the distance but I'm still unable to move. But for the first time, I don't want to run and hide.

LEVI J. MERICLE

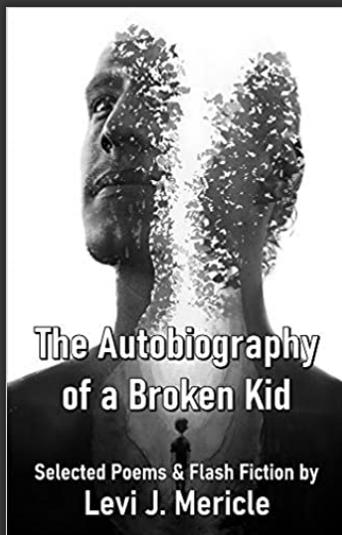
Author Feature

Levi J. Mericle is a disabled pan-sexual poet/spoken-word artist, award winning songwriter, children's author and fiction writer from Tucumcari, NM. His work has appeared in over 30 anthologies, lit magazines and journals in over half a dozen countries including China, England, Spain, India, Indonesia and the US. He is an advocate for the mentally ill and the anti-bullying movement, as well as an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community.



https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/levi_mericle

<https://www.cyberwit.net/publications/1465>



We find here an immense variety of poems. Most important from the literary point of view, the style of the poet has a richness of effect that creates an enduring fascination.

https://www.amazon.com/Autobiography-Broken-Selected-Poems-Fiction/dp/9390202159/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Levi+Mericle&qid=1620354747&sr=8-1

A MIRACLE MERICLE

-For my Nephew, Matthew Mericle

You were born biblically beautiful.
Biblically beautiful in the sense
you were a miracle.

A miracle in the sense that you shouldn't have been
born.
Torn from your mother like an autopsy in reverse.
Torn from her belly like a sick Alien-reincarnated-
movie-premiere-joke

Covered in your mother's birthing jelly
I imagine you looked like a baby about to die.
A baby just visiting only for a few moments, just to
later say goodbye.
I could see it in your mother's eyes.

In your father's hands.
The way they shook while holding you
as if holding his baby boy was something to fear.

But he feared you.
We all did.

Fear gripped our throats until we were unable to say
your name.
But now your name is all I think about.
Your little hands that were to weak to grasp
your little legs too weak to kick.

I remember your eyes,
glassed over with silent plea for help.
But no help could amount to the help you needed.

Your eyes are now a Bible that never gets opened
that never gets read.
Although I now have faith that you are happy.

Biblically and beautifully dead you are,
a heavenly mark left on this world.

You were a miracle in the eyes of so many.
A star shining bright in our eyes to this day.

Shine on, little man,
shine on.

You will never be forgotten.

LEVI J. MERICLE – AUTHOR FEATURE

DEAR DESTINY

Remember the ashes of your tears?
The smell they left on my pant leg when they fell to die?
Where every memory of unwanted solitude,
flooded your cheekbones like gray water?

I remember the comatose gleam they left on your lashes.
A fragment of sorrow I eagerly swiped away,
like candy from a diabetic's grip.

I felt the magic in the moment when I told you,
the world will remember your smile.
That I will never forget your tears.
And that you are unworthy of pain.

Like I've said in the past,
you remind me of absolutely nothing else.
A brand-new bridge I need to cross to find myself.

To define moments in my life,
I've never experienced before.

If you were a paper cut, I'd never want to quit bleeding.
I've often thought of myself as an empty bottle.
But the way you fill me with desire,
is like quenching the hollow thirst within my dehydrated soul.

I remember feeling a pause in time, an absence of existing.
Like dying in a way only felt once without actual death.
A portion of me has died.
But only to be recreated into something I've only dreamed of becoming.

A person without fear.

Fear of questions never answered with inside my entity.
Fear of existing inside a maze of thistle I can never escape.
Fear of never overcoming a certain space of myself ever being fulfilled.
To have this absent terror of always being hollow,
is slowly diminishing into a butterfly effect of fulfillment.

Every time you cry, I will weep with you.
Every time you stumble to fall no matter where,
I'll bridge my arms across the world for a smoother walk in this lifetime.

I will always remember the smell of your sorrow.
But I'll never forget the fragrance of what makes you happy.

SAYING GOODBYE

Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight
and die.

-Herbert Hoover

Cast Iron tears are easy.

When you're young
when you're broken
when your heart is heavy.

When death licks your ambitions like a lollipop—
And you throw away your desire
like the wrapper of life.

What is the taste of grief?
Iron, confliction?
Cheap attention or compassion?

When you died—
I cradled the thought of your mini corpse.
I disregarded the stiff, firm look of your eyelids.
And tried to remember your smile.

Forever hates you.
The ending embraces your bones.

Someday—
I'll wonder why
roses cry the way they do

like pails of petals poured
over concrete.

*Previously published in JACLR, Journal of Artistic
Creation and Literary Research, The University of
Madrid, Spain and Outsider Poetry*



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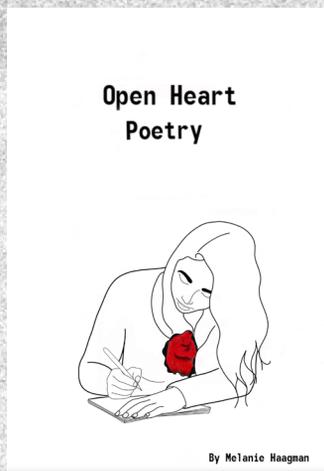
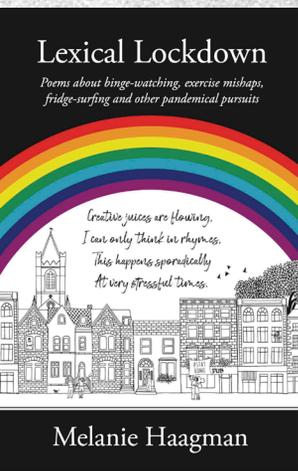
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Techno Flower

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RISING

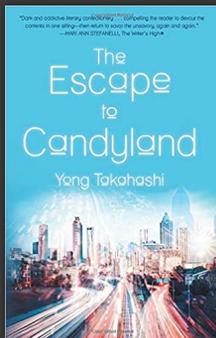
RISING reveals flashes of life's most intimate moments filled with love, hope, remorse, longing, and anguish. We root for the one who reaches for happiness but is not yet able to grasp it. We wince for the one who picks at festering wounds that never quite heal. We are breathless as we run alongside those who chase after a thirst that can never be quenched.



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The Escape to Candyland

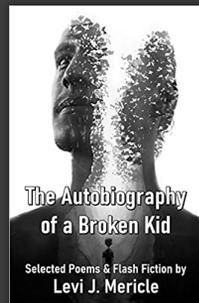
In Yong Takahashi's Atlanta, the immigrants, preacher's wives, strippers, and shopkeepers who pass each other on the street all have a secret story to tell. Caught between generations of family, regrets from their pasts, conflicting cultures, and even countries, each character has a reason to fiercely guard their secret lives, even as they learn that the truth must escape.



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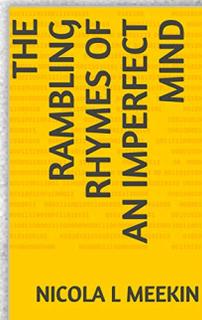


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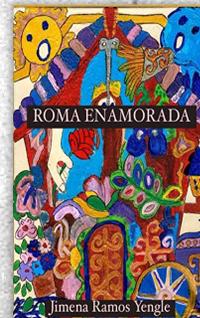
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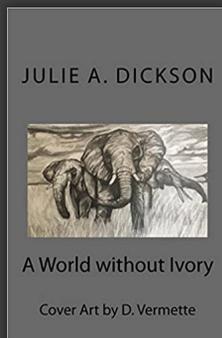
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