

# New Poetry by Abena Ntoso: “Dear Melissa”



CARE STONES CRUNCHED / *image by  
Amalie Flynn*

## Dear Melissa

On the walk back from the d-fac  
in Kandahar I almost peed in my uniform  
pants a long way from home  
we were laughing uncontrollably like other  
things we could no longer control  
having birthed two children each and left  
them in someone else's competent care.

Incontinent overseas  
on a mother of a mission drilling  
cavities filling them with a matronly  
patriotic responsibility for health care  
stones crunched beneath our boots  
we stopped and bent over shifting  
weapons we carried on our hips like kids.

We almost cried in the dark after dinner  
absent from bedtimes reading  
The Giving Tree aloud, sent  
voice recordings stateside for storytime  
my son and daughter heard  
me reading, heard I love you  
no laughing though.

Remember how tough we had to be  
for babies to sit on our bladders for nine  
months only to leave them four years later  
promising to return once our tour of the war  
was over we were bent on becoming militant  
mothers chuckling again with our children  
thank you for finding life funny on the way back.