

New Poetry by J. Raymond Bennett: “Tourniquet” and “Different than Before”



7,902 Miles Away / image by
Amalie Flynn

Tourniquet

I learned how to tie a tourniquet
before I could drink a beer. Drunk
with the knowledge of stabbing
a straw into a throat while pimples stole
the evenness of my face. A sucking
chest wound requires plastic and a valve—
things I never learned in high school,
facts more real than arithmetic, one plus one.
Two minutes is the time it takes to bleed out
from arterial spray.

I run out of Mississippi's while
my imaginary friend dies.
Where is my imaginary grief
to balance out the loss?

My Sergeant scolds my failures, my failures
every time I quoted Robert Frost
in hallways like it mattered
that I could remember words that didn't smell
of metal and dirt, that didn't reek
of my own piss. My hands shake
as the count starts anew. I am eighteen
with a fake body pissing blood on a table.
Two minutes to expose the limb and
twist and twist and twist and twist.

A tourniquet is just a tight band.

Different Than Before

You told me about your abortion
by email- click send, fire and forget.

I am 7,902 miles away,
sitting next to people I suddenly hate.

Rising like a pastor about to begin prayer
A eulogy for the child I would never meet

I lift and pin a MSG against the wall
Screaming words that didn't make sense

We agreed we never wanted kids
But I was two months deep in the desert

7,902 miles away
I was already different than before.