

New Poem by LA Enck: “Phantom Limb”



SITE OF AMPUTATION / image by Amalie Flynn

Phantom Limb

I never knew the cold barrel of a gun;
I carried a weapon and
chanted the incantation that my weapon was my life.
Warmed in midday rays piercing
baked earth at 33 degrees 34 minutes 44 seconds
latitude north,
even hours in the shade would not
disabuse my weapon of the notion
that it was an extension of me
and thus alive.

Monstrance barrel and compensator,
nazar front sight post assembly.
It inhaled brass and linkage, coughed lead and burning zinc,
hot cordite exhalation and hydrogen cyanide bolks;
I am become Breath,
Destroyer of whorls,
see the lives unravel.

Body warm as we shared a sleep sack,
friction warm beneath a gentle bristle brush and oils and rag,
spoken warm in terms reserved for women—
—she’s high maintenance;
—she’s one badass bitch;
—she’s pampered before I even think to open chow,
and if she fell,
I followed her.

Never more than an arm's distance away,
never left on the deck,
never forgotten,
never neglected.

Rather than creating life, strange then,
that this only female part of me,
birthed man's destruction,
carried man's war,
created man's vengeful death.

This phantom female limb for
which I still reach and whose absence
still tingles at
the site of amputation.