

# New Poetry from Tanya Tuzeo: “My Brother, the Marine;” “My Brother’s Shoebox;” and “My Brother’s Grenade”



WAR HAS DONE / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## **my brother, the Marine**

the recruiters come weeks earlier than agreed—  
arrive in alloy, aluminum with authority,  
military vehicle blocks our driveway  
announcing to the neighborhood  
they’ve come for a boy here  
who will have to go—  
though he sits at the top step  
and cries

i follow them,  
strange convoy to Staten Island’s hotel  
where all the boys are corralled—  
farmed for war, becoming weapons  
of mass destruction  
when before they picked apples  
at family trips upstate

a hotel lobby—last stop before using lasers  
to blow off golden domes,  
silence muezzins in the crush  
of ancient wage and plaster—  
Hussein’s old siberian tiger left thirsty,  
watches other zoo animals

being eaten by the faithful—  
just like a video game

i clamp onto my brother  
beg him not to go, we could run away  
he didn't have to do this—  
recruiters quickly camouflage me,  
am dragged outside—my brother lost  
did not say goodbye  
or even look at me.

### **my brother's shoebox**

the room across the hall is inhabited again,  
home now from another tour  
like sightseeing from a grand canal  
where buildings are art  
and storied sculptures animate street corners—  
my brother returns a veteran.

i want to remember who this person is,  
or at least, find out what war has done.

he leaves with friends to drink—  
that is still the same,  
later tonight  
he might howl at our parent's window  
or jump on my bed until the sheets froth,  
uncaring and rabid.

but i don't wait for him to come home  
and begin searching the room  
that is his again.

it is simple to find  
where people hide things—  
a shoebox under his bed

that wasn't there all these years  
furrowed by sand  
and almost glowing.

i open to find drugstore prints,  
rolls of film casually dropped  
for a high school student to develop—  
silver halide crystals take the shape  
of shattered skulls  
goats strung and slit  
a school made of clay  
blasted in the kiln of munitions  
“KILL ZONE” painted across its foundation—  
each 4×6 emulsion a souvenir  
of these mad travels,  
kept to reminisce and admire.

### **my brother's grenade**

my brother's room in our family vacation home  
has embossed wallpaper, indigo or violet  
depending on the light that filters through the mountains—  
and his grenade in the closet.

i saw it looking for extra blankets,  
thought it was an animal resting in eiderdown  
kept by my mother in one of her tempers  
but it didn't move  
and so  
i picked it up.

inhumanity held beneath iron's screaming core—  
a pleasant weight,  
like the egg i threw across the street  
detonating onto the head of boy  
who said i kissed him but i didn't,  
is it like that for my brother?—

fisted mementos of thrill?

seasoned by cedar sachets,  
neatly quilted metal shimmered as i turned it  
forbidden gem, his holy relic—  
i placed it back in the closet and began making dinner,  
said nothing.

the slender pin preserves this household  
where our family gathers  
unknowing a bomb is kept here—  
my brother roasts a marshmallow  
until it catches fire, turns black,  
plunges into mouth.