

New Poetry from Aaron Graham

PIXELATED WOMAN, WEBCAM SHADE

Pixelated woman, even your shadow
I know as my lover.

It whispered.

Ash-white dry-erase lips
part with a foreign tongue.

A felt-tip that deletes
as it divines.

Voices like accord
rip frets, necks, and tones.

Lately, you're singing
disjointed love ditties
to abscond almighties.

I spend my night
in ichor rivulets & "I miss you"
trying to coax it back.

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on the board
at 20° incline
resting restraints
non conscious
(not unconscious)
unknowing
flesh and sinew
the body prepares
or-refuses to.
my body prepares

its tentacles to carve
a name, a meaning,
a translation for unknown—
all its forms will be
mine—inscribe—unseen—
in your being
beneath being—so
I could still give you
to your mother
and she would call
you by my name
whip you then transform
clusters of paper cardinals
into a fallout shelter
or whatever her soul
needed most.
on the board
at 20° incline
resting restraints
non conscious
(not unconscious)
an unknowing—
a drowning that
refuses to drown
you—brother prayer
to the fire prayer—
my fire prayer:
always to burn
and not burn out
on the board at 20° incline
a never-prayed-for whirlpool—
a prayer that never knew
the tempests stalking you—
my rhinoceros is your language—
ivory horns bubble from your throat.
on the board at 20° incline
the word-food will flow

I am your un-prayer—
your roiling, waking tempest—
that which drowns you
but never drowns you out.



ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

That year I was camouflaged—
with bruises of being proud—
sitting, legs crossed, peeling
OD green linoleum flooring.

A year sifting through dog tags—
dead yellow edges dangled—
like lead ghosts from bank office windows
and high school goal posts.

The enlistment was rough—
all half-sheet and nicotine stain—
the scars and wounds and tattoos
will run together in a half-century—

My body will be held up—
a battle standard
the stained Iraqi sand bleeds
every night—

I dream my daughter dances across it—
she grows tattered
like tree branch topographies
twist together with vague silhouettes.

Everywhere being is dancing.
Even the warring mausoleum
of my mind
is the one-sided scrap paper of God.

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These poems appear in Aaron Graham's poetry collection, [Blood Stripes](#), and are reprinted with permission of the author.