

# 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.

## III / W-E-L-C-O-M-E

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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.*