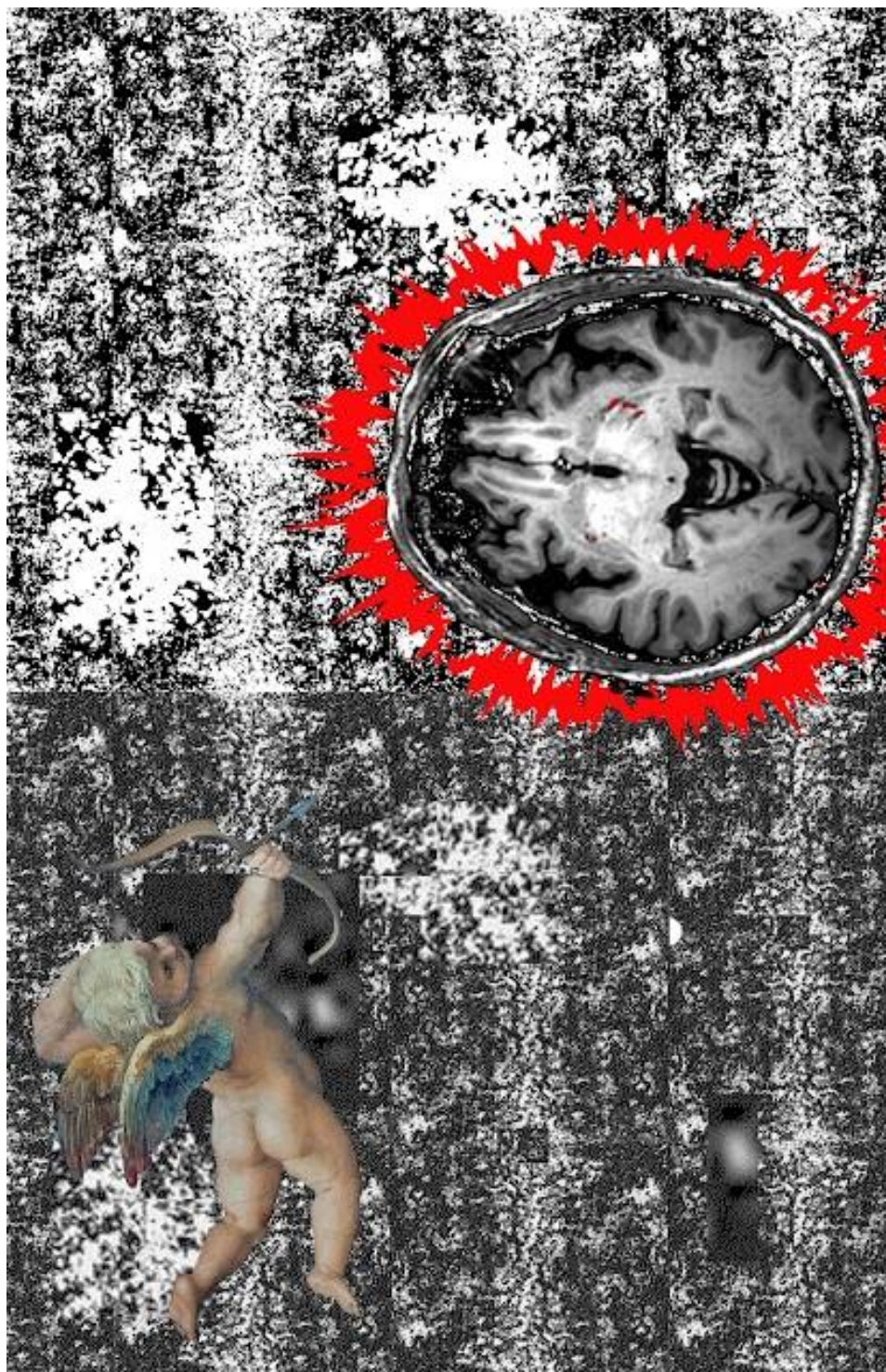


# Stone's Throw



Issue #7

May 2024

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## May 2024

### "Aim for the Thoughts and Prayers"

#### Contributing Poets

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Ari Whipple  
Edward S. Gault  
Rich Boucher  
Shannon O'Connor  
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Stone's Throw #7

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# Introduction

This issue of *Stone's Throw* was conceived all the way back in 2018.

Many things derailed it. Not just the pandemic.

The greatest disappointment is not the time it took for me to release this, but that it's still timely.

At the start of 2017, after Trump became president, we published "The Democracy Benefit Issue."

By year's end, issue #6 had a cover of the 2018 New Year's baby being set aflame.

Any of these ideas could be recycled for future issues.

I hope I won't be tempted to.

—Chad Parenteau



Artwork © Geoffrey Fallon

## **Don't Speak**

If the shooter has a name,  
let it burn with the bodies.  
All the quicker to disappear.

Victims also quickly disappear  
without benefit of having a name.  
Who wants to remember more bodies?

Forget the horrible, unsaved bodies.  
What if knowing makes us disappear,  
unalives us, just for recalling a name?

No names. Hide behind bodies. Pray they'll disappear.

—*Chad Parenteau*

## The Fear of Bullet Brains

i.

Bullet brain— I paid for an experience  
an experience and held an AR-15, cold metal, in hot Vegas  
shooting the gun through the target, I knew I was a good shot  
*You're a natural, kid*  
it's easy when they're at point blank range and you  
have a steady hand to guide the kick back

ii.

he shoots from the window at the crowd at the hotel—same town  
in the desert, people dead, and people call it a tragedy  
picking them off like a video game, at the concert level  
a couple miles from where I shot, point blank range  
bullet brain, they all have bullet brain now  
they are all riddled with bullet brain

iii.

at my old work, after I exited the building the last time  
I heard about a plot twist that was foiled, which they found  
a stash, a cache of guns in the kitchen, a *strategic setup*  
he was planning on bullet brain everybody and then himself  
but he didn't realize he already had bullet brain from stress

iv.

when I was in high school a girl talked about how her family  
had 400 guns and they were happy to shoot those guns.  
They hoarded them like treasure, and they were all legally owned  
but she had bullet brain when all the kids were getting searched because  
of *trench coat mafia* because of some loner kid once that shot up  
his school and other kids followed suit

v.

we talk about being unable to leave your house because of covid  
but the first time I was afraid, to go out and about, that had made me  
scared of crowds that gather and has changed my life and made  
me permanently bullet brained  
was when father and son picked off shoppers at the mall  
killing them as they left the store, one, *bang*, two, *bang*  
*in a line they go*  
then the time they killed people at the movies in Colorado  
or the time they killed at the bowling alley  
when people gather, I look for the exit  
and I shy away from the bullet stage

—Ari Whipple

## War Games

Mike had a complete arsenal in his room.  
He had all kinds of machine guns,  
Grenades,  
    Rifles,  
        Pistols,  
And even a bazooka.  
He had a camouflaged outfit,  
And a green beret  
That allowed him to be the Colonel  
Just about all the time.  
Whenever we re-enacted  
The previous episode of *Combat*.  
He brought his stockpile to his front yard.  
We would select our weapons of choice,  
Then we would go through the whole battle,  
Just as we had seen it on TV.  
One night Mark wanted to be the Colonel.  
Todd was Captain.  
Mark was usually Sergeant.  
I was either a Private or a Corporal at best  
(When they let me play at all).  
But that night Mark wanted to be the Colonel.  
Mike explained all the reasons  
Why Mark couldn't be the Colonel.  
He owned the uniform, it wouldn't fit Mark anyway.  
He owned all the guns.  
He was a natural leader of men.  
Mark said it wasn't fair.  
Mike called Mark a faggot  
Then punched him in the Stomach  
-real hard.  
Mark crumpled to the ground crying.  
I could see the tears roll down his face.  
I had never seen Mark cry before.  
He was tough.  
He would have made a good Colonel.  
We didn't have the battle that night.  
As I walked home that night,  
I knew I had seen war.

—Edward S. Gault

## Nothing Else Gets Him Off Anymore

Wayne LaPierre, the leader and CEO of the National Rifle Association, leaned back in his big black leather chair and stroked it slowly, edging himself to live coverage of the latest school shooting. Apparently, somebody at Disney World sold a three-year-old a six-pack of AR-15's and the kid decimated seven Montessori schools in a row before it was even nine in the morning that day. By the glow of the plasma TV in his private office, Wayne, in his big black leather chair, worked his member into stunning rigidity, harder than he ever was way back when he was not quite old enough to buy his own Howitzer for use on the farm. So much lube. So many boxes of Kleenex at the ready by the big black leather chair. So much American precum dribbling, a burbling mayonnaise magma of lust cascading, his balls in the tight, twitching kind of glory meant to hang from the rear bumper of a large, masculine pollution machine. He closed his eyes for just a moment, imagining a sky full of chalk outlines the size of children and tastefully rendered in the primary simplicity of Fisher-Price colors. He opened his eyes again and stared at the screen, his hand almost a pasty blur now. The news anchor's voice broke as she tried to recap how many children were perished to death in the last hour. *Say it slowly*, Wayne hissed. He was so god-damned close.

—*Rich Boucher*

First published in Volume 1, Issue 4 of *The Fixed and Free Quarterly* (December 2022).

## Vacationland

“Things like that don’t happen here.”

They can anywhere.

Between blazing maples and cliffs guarding the ocean –

bloodbath

Nowhere is safe.

—*Shannon O’Connor*

There was an involuntary celibate  
Who shot people just for the hell of it.  
He said he was afraid  
He might never get laid,  
But can you tell me how that's relevant?

—*Erik Nelson*



## Best Selling Guns of 2022 on Gunbroker: Numbers Are In!

SIGSauerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&WessonM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870  
GlockG19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIGSauerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&Wes  
sonM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870GlockG19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIG  
SauerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&WessonM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870Glo  
ckG19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIGSauerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&Wesso  
nM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870GlockG19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIGSa  
uerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&WessonM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870Glock  
G19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIGSauerP320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&WessonM  
&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870GlockG19RugerAmericanRifleSpringfieldArmoryXDSIGSauer  
P320Remington700SigSauerP365Smith&WessonM&P9Ruger10/22Mossberg590Remington870GlockG19  
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rein!Numbersarein!

—Noah Berlatsky

## The Broken AK-47

Now, the State will delight with my destruction  
of my weapon, which I broke in my grief,  
for the death of children massacred in America,  
But I can always purchase another one to kill an enemy,  
Why should I lament for a weapon thrown  
into a trash bin?

—Luis Lázaro Tijerina



Artwork © Luis Lázaro Tijerina

## **They Have the Same Political Accuracy as Suicide Vests**

You farm families and teachers and teamsters and cops and cooks!  
We don't sit on our thumbs this time!  
You rocking rollers. And holy rollers!  
What are you thinking when you're inducing  
and seducing them with a gift basket  
of teddy bears and soccer balls?  
You teachers, staff, police, and chefs!  
Are you ready for the Commander-in-Chief  
to work our warriors and take off their Isis asses?  
And the Holy Sacraments!

When one of our own is being crucified,  
we did not see this thumb of our hands,  
is it true?  
When one of our own is falsely accused  
of the hip accusation of the day,  
wrongly accused of ass being assaulted,  
this time I do not sit on my thumb,  
is that right?  
You roll and holy giants!  
You download videos. And holy videos!

So they all go vegan. Wages and picket lines,  
they're not often discussed in purgatory, are they?  
The blood of tanks and football balls,  
wages and lines of hesitation,  
are they not often discussed in purgatory?  
Teachers and teams, as well as police and cooks,  
they do not often discuss the torment they are?  
You are tempted to seduce them  
with a gift basket of bears and soccer balls.  
You stimulate them, you walk feet  
and feed them. So they are all vegan.  
Don't you guys think  
that they're like of the devil?

And I'm like oh man look,  
me I call him up front,  
and he's holding the poster and I'm looking at it.  
He doesn't trust Americans to even change  
our own lightbulb of our own choosing

and he'll trust a death cult  
in a world full of sprinkly fairy dust,  
blown from atop his unicorn  
as he's peeking through a pretty pink kaleidoscope.  
And I look like a man. I look like,  
oh, I know him to the opposite side.

Well, and then, funny, ha ha, not funny,  
but now, what they're doing is wailing.  
Now what they do is terrified,  
they have triple the amount of fingers  
pointing right back at them.  
Now some of them even whisper, because  
they will not be able to escape from the sauce.

So troops, hang in there, because  
help's on the way because  
he, better than anyone, isn't he known  
for being able to command, fire!  
Someone is not known to be able to command  
because he is someone, in a world  
full of flattened fairies flaming from his unicorn.

And we did not see this thumb of our hands,  
when one of our crucified,  
falsely accused of what the charge is  
in the hips of the day. Right?  
Haha. It's not funny, Holy Roller!  
Give me a break!  
Let me rest! Forgive me!  
Paraphernalia everywhere.

—*David P. Miller*

Source: Excerpts from Sarah Palin speeches 1) in verbatim transcription; 2) machine-translated into Persian, Korean, Arabic, or Russian, then back into English.

Originally published in Issue 20 of *Unlost*.

## Drill

*Thisisjustadrill.*

Lying face up on the grass, pebbles digging into my back, this is what I keep telling myself as something thick as chocolate syrup oozes down my right elbow that's tucked under my head. I don't dare move. Eyes shut tight against the brightness, I can feel the substance caked behind my right ear in a big clump. My arms and legs are stiff from keeping still for so long, what seems like hours.

*Thisisjustadrill.*

The day was not supposed to end like this. Classes let out early at Elkhart High for a pep rally on the football field, so play practice was cancelled. I'm playing Torvald in "A Doll's House, Part 2," and my best friend Barb is playing Nora. Sometimes we have a hard time keeping a straight face during the arguments, but Torvald's anger wells up easily. We met up by my locker and decided to run lines anyway during the rally. All around us classmates were grabbing coats and slamming their lockers shut. Excited shouts echoed down the hallway, the clamor of a couple hundred kids.

Barb and I were carried along outside in the flow. I blinked my eyes. The sky was crystal blue, the field across the street backed by flame-orange maples. The air was so crisp it almost hurt to inhale. I gasped, and Barb laughed at me.

"What, what?" I asked.

"You're such a wuss, come on." Barb took off, and I ran after her. She vanished in the throng, but then I caught sight of her red scarf halfway up the bleachers on the 50-yard line. I clambered up the metal risers to join her.

She gave me a serious look. "If you ever wanted to get married again, haven't you ever wanted that?"

I sat down. "No."

"Not even the possibility?"

"No, Nora, I haven't. You sorta killed that for me."

These words were hard for me. I'd had a crush on Barb since freshman homeroom but never let her know. Without her, I'd be lost.

Behind me, a jock kneed me in the back sitting down, and I half-turned to give him a scowl. I hate myself for letting myself get harassed. Barb caught my elbow.

"Wow," she said, "the whole town's coming!" A line of cop cars and fire trucks had just pulled up in front of the school, lights flashing, their sirens half-drowned out by the marching band spilling out onto the field, blasting out "Thriller" with its throbbing bass line and stabs of horns. Somewhere a megaphone blared, "There's a shooter outside the school!"

That's the last thing I remember. From my place on the ground, I can hear terrified screams and cries of pain. I force myself to stay completely still, play dead. An ant crawls across my cheek. I recognize Barb's voice shouting frantically from somewhere nearby, "Two of my friends are hurt, and no one is helping them! You have to do something now, you hear me? Do something!" She must have volunteered to play the part of Panicky Student.

I can feel a string around my neck and a card on my chest. I guess it says something like "Patient. Life-Threatening Injuries" or "Victim. Low Priority."

*This is just a drill.*

There's the whomp-whomp of a copter setting down on the field, its wash knocking into me. I imagine making myself sit up, brushing my lumpy hair out of my eyes, and surveying the scene that must look unreal, like a horror movie unfolding in the sharp sunlight, under a few white puffy clouds. Medics and cops rushing around; students strewn here and there across the yard lines, with friends wailing over them; a clutch of angry parents held back behind yellow tape. There are backpacks and books and bright pieces of clothing scattered everywhere, as if a plane had exploded overhead. A tuba and a couple trombones lie gleaming.

I feel like I'm about to lose consciousness. My head is weighing heavier on my arm, and I can't feel my legs anymore.

I know I must be one of the lucky ones. With a warm washcloth, a nurse will swab me clean. I'll be examined and released. On my own I'll walk the few blocks home, down the middle of the street, with a light breeze ruffling the leafy elms overhead. On either side, the too-neat lawns and shrubs and Colonials. No one outside because they're sheltering in place. My usual contempt will ease into a kind of serenity. I'll go up the front walk of our ranch house, and my mom will rush out to hug me, *thankgodyou'realright*, our spaniel Buddy nipping at her heels, then lead me by the hand to where my dad and kid sister have already sat down at the kitchen table to meatloaf and mashed potatoes. They will lower their forks and flash me big smiles as I let myself down to join them, still a little shaken. Outside, the sirens will sound far away, like they're from TV news that's playing in the next room.

—Gary Duehr

First published in issue 3 of *Suburban Witchcraft*.

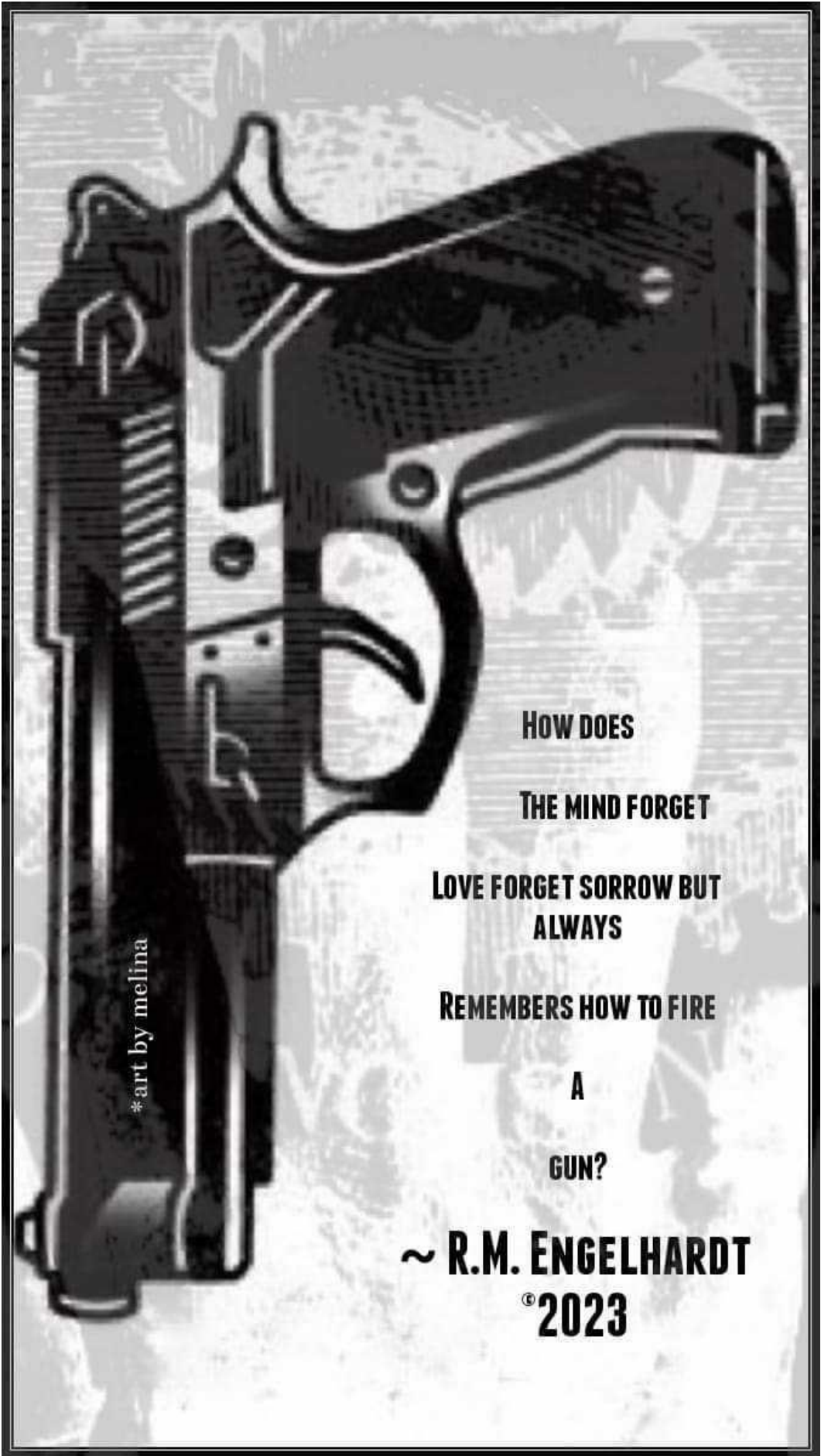
## By the Numbers

One aching  
head, one steady eye;  
one Glock, one sporting  
rifle held in reserve, one combat stance —  
two hands clenched, two  
ears plugged to block the stun, two  
hours before final dark, two faces  
inside this boy facing off at last.  
Three sirens, then more;  
rising soundtrack for Three Fates dancing  
around three bodies lying still  
three stories below his stand.  
Four times four makes sixteen  
years that have passed  
since his mother spent four times four hours in hard labor  
bringing this young gunner out to see  
this five fold world of land and sea and air  
and daily rot and failing will.  
He thinks: there are six sides to every story,  
and six times six again if you add all of your own. He keeps calculating:  
seven miles to the nearest hospital,  
seven times seven rounds left;  
eight doors from the lower floors out onto this roof;  
eight bombs set to blow when the knobs are turned.  
When the snipers finally find him  
he lets the nine millimeter fall and  
seizes hold of the long gun,  
thrilled to be not yet dead, waiting for them to open the doors and die as they come for him,  
twisting around  
before the first door blows, casually aiming before smoke can obscure the target,  
already knowing the end result: they will wait ten minutes  
after their last shot is fired to be sure it's safe to bring him down.  
And then someone will tally the bodies and the reasons,  
the number of hazardous songs that he knew,  
all the things that someone should have noticed.  
Someone will have the nerve to say it doesn't add up.  
He would say that it always adds up, but he would also remind us  
that some learn to count by irrational numbers,  
working their way through ragged sequences  
until they're sucked into a Fibonacci swirl that is already starting again somewhere,

the wheels turning click after click after click,  
until it's time to blow again,  
until the sound of those counters  
again finds its voice in another boy's head: one, two, three ...

—*Tony Brown*





\*art by melina

**HOW DOES  
THE MIND FORGET  
LOVE FORGET SORROW BUT  
ALWAYS  
REMEMBERS HOW TO FIRE  
A  
GUN?**

**~ R.M. ENGELHARDT  
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