

# THE NEW TROPIC

November 15, 2023  
Honoring Veterans

*Poets have written about war since the time of the Greeks. Brooke N. King continues the tradition only to reinvent it by examining the trope of war through the eyes of a mother and wife who's also a soldier. Tales of battles abound, but few are told from the perspective of a female veteran who must renavigate the minefield of familial ties and domestic duties upon her return home, as King's work so powerfully does. (Caridad Moro-Gronlier)*

"*Echoes of War*" is a poem I wrote while at the Betsy Writer's Room that tackles the realities of being a female combat veteran with PTSD while trying to balance motherhood. All too often in our society, we see the male soldier voice dominate the conversation of combat and transitioning to civilian life, leaving out the other side of the discussion: what it is like to be a female struggling with motherhood, wifedom, and transitioning back to some sort of semblance of normal life after being in combat. This poem is the other side of the conversation, the struggles that go along with it, and the reality that sometimes soldiers never truly leave the battlefield behind. (Brooke King)

## Echoes of War

With unpredictable routes, I blow through the front door  
taking down dreams and affirmations of love with passive words  
that rip through aspirations of maternal bliss-  
debris of hot steel searing the wound shut with cold-shouldered ease.

What do you do when you can't hear the echoing reverberation  
of soft whispers asking for a goodnight kiss, hugs- just one more story?  
The ringing of war in your ears shakes the space between madness and motherhood  
Clanging the drums of battle,  
the blood of another soldier on your hands as they scream,  
Please make it stop-  
the backwash of rotors wafting fear into desperation for glory  
And that age-old lie-

In waking, they become bagged  
Tied up at the end with a note- leftovers.  
In the aftermath of the storm, a jolt of fractal twitches.  
The synaptic nerves misfire at the call of sacrifice  
while I lay them down to bed- no kisses tonight.

This is all that remains of home:  
Fervent aromas of burnt gods called men.  
The shaky remainder of life through rippled plastic  
while I stand at the kitchen island and toss back one beer, one shot-  
if only to suffocate  
the lull between the wars.

**Brooke N. King** served in the U.S. Army, deploying to Iraq in 2006 as a wheel vehicle mechanic, machine gunner, and recovery specialist. Her work has been published in *War, Literature, & Arts*, *Prairie Schooner*, and the *Atlantic*, as well as many other publications and literary accolades. Brooke's memoir, *War Flower: My Life After Iraq*, published by the University of Nebraska Press, has been heralded as a "harrowing and powerful book" by Publishers Weekly and "full of frank emotion and explicit intimacy" by the Military Times. Currently, she teaches nonfiction writing at Saint Leo University's MA Creative Writing Program and is a Federal Police Officer at MacDill Air Force Base.