

War

Zachary M. Alley

War: Some Salvation

“Protect your country”

“Do your duty”

This will not deliver me from madness

Medals gleam for my fine work

Letters dripping with Crayola thank you’s

They are not enough

Metal rusts and paper withers

Love is eternal

War: Battle Lines

For the last five years I actually believed that

Sitting in a desert covered in camouflage I learned

Danger does not wear a beard

Or plant roadside bombs

Danger wears a sundress

And plants kisses on my cheek

I do not fear the enemy they have given me

I fear what my gut tells me

The paranoia and pessimism

That churns my intestines like taffy

Signs of your deceit

In your voice. In your eyes.

Cryptic hints strewn about on social media

My one gateway to home

Is now a crime scene of clues

I can smell the chalk tracing my broken silhouette

War: Flags Unfurled

The enemy is revealed

You and him

You I know all too well

Or so I thought

The other remains in darkness

But darkness has a face. A name. A connection.

With you

I know my enemy

You know him, too

But how?
You still bear my standard
But cross enemy lines at night
I have to know the truth
From your mouth, not intercepted enemy chatter
White noise
Black hearts
The evidence is damning
Yet, I offer you salvation
One chance to prove this is a terrible misunderstanding

War: Pilgrim's Path

Words form in my head to herd you like a lost lamb
I will guide you along the trail with two ends
She loves me. She loves me not.
I ask questions
You offer lies
I already know the answers
It is another knowledge I seek
Further along the trail we come to a fork in the road
To the left a lie. To the right the truth.
Left we go
Another crossroad, another lie
A blow struck with every turn
The fabrications are delivered with such ease
You will not feed me bitter helpings of honesty
Instead serving platters of sweet lies
I now know the truth
You are none the wiser
You are far from faithful
How I hate being right
We arrive at the end of the trail
She loves me not

War: Sheep Skin

Your deceit has sharpened my axe
I poise to bring it crashing down
To splatter your lies
Among the sand and dirt and tears
So we may observe them together
Instead I turn the axe on myself
A mercy blow

Emotions pour silently from the wound
Discarded and forgotten
I speak no ill will
You believe the veil is still snug over my eyes
You think I am a sheep
But I am a wolf
Your time will come
When my teeth are sharp I will sink them into you

War: Ship at Sea

My teeth remain dull
The juices of revenge taste rotten
I call off the hunt
I would rather have your empty love than couple with my hate
For I have too many months remaining far from home
Better false winds in my sail than a creeping calmness
To stay still is to go mad in this barren brown ocean
I would rather sail towards rocky shipwreck shores
Than remain lost at sea

The war is not over, but my part is played
Finally, I arrive home
One battle behind me
The worst looms ahead

War: Siren's Song

Our game of charades lasts for weeks
Waiting for your guilt to birth a confession
It seems you have aborted the ugly truth
The fuse is mine to light
I calmly tell you that I know what you did
You cry. Beg for forgiveness. Excuses toss and turn my humble boat.
I miss you. You are finally in front of me again.
Yet further from me than ever
You drowned long ago
Your Siren's song nearly drags me below
But I'm not fond of sailing anymore
So I'm heading for solid ground
To tether myself to something hard and true
Before braving the sea again