

# Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine

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## Poems

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When the mortars fell  
By Joe Merritt

I wished to lay down  
in the dirt and catch them with my tongue  
Stare up at grey blue skies and sink  
into the ground that never seems to still  
wind stirring sand into clouds of earth  
Find a tree that offers more shade than cover  
Its leaves are never red

Kalishnekov  
By Joe Merritt

Today I was fired  
20 times before  
Mortar shells responded

Falling from the sky  
My fat, drunken cousins  
Landing at my tripod's feet

Force fed belts of lead  
I can not spit out death  
Fast enough

I am old now  
Born from the Warsaw pact  
Raised in alleyways and ambush

When chunks of human flesh  
And shrapnel clogged my throat  
They sent for a gunsmith

they will not take me from  
the front lines.

I can hold no allegiances  
Or ideals in a war  
that makes me invaluable

No matter how many times  
They abandon me  
Someone new will find me

## Generations of Neverland

By Joe Merritt

What happens when your children grow into the lost boys  
When the adventures have grown dark  
And villains are not the only ones losing limbs?  
When you hit the age  
where talking of mermaids and fairies  
gets your shoe strings taken away--

*That's not the way the world works*

Flying around the same old cove  
Fighting the same wars has left you with questions  
When you stood over Mr. Smee as he bled out  
and prayed for his family  
Maybe Neverland is just as fucked up  
and brutal as the places you ran  
There to escape  
Regardless a part of you will always love it  
But it will move on without you, Peter  
Long after you fold that green uniform for the last time