

HEAVY METAL

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My body will forever hold the
memory of hot summer shrapnel,
and the smell of my own burning flesh.

I sometimes think I see steam seeping
out of my dresser drawer where I've stashed
a chunk of metal that the doctors,

and there were many,
prided from my screaming body.

The metal shares a drawer with socks
I use one at a time. Sometimes I take
the metal from the drawer and just hold it
in my hands, stare at it like a Rubik's Cube,
a puzzle to be twisted this way and that
with no obvious solution.

I don't even know why
I covet such an odd souvenir.
I suppose it's like finding
a piece of comet,
after it comes screeching
across the sky, exploding
in your backyard,
messing up everything,
making huge holes in the
manicured lawn.
It's like that I guess.

My parents display my medals,

and there are many,
above the fireplace.
A bronze this, and a silver that,
clusters and stars.
I'm a war hero.
My enlistment photo

was in the local paper.
The blue, pressed,
shiny-buttoned uniform photo.
The same photo my parents
have on the fireplace mantle,
how I used to look,
how they want to remember me,

while I sit in a dark plywood paneled basement,
drinking beers and smoking joints,

and there are many.

My mother cries at night, she doesn't know I
can hear her down here in the basement,
down here in my own private Hanoi Hilton.

My headphones smother my ears
lost in Led Zeppelin played full tilt,
volume up, screaming.
Whole Lotta Love.
"Got a Whole Lot of Love," baby.

Every night I wire my middle finger
to the trigger of my revolver,
wondering if tonight will be the night
I have the courage to end the pain.
I know it's going to happen eventually,
"Dazed and Confused," baby.
It's going to happen and Led Zeppelin
is going to be playing when I send a piece
of metal streaking across the sky
of my stargazed brain.

But, what song do I go out on?

There are so many.

I can't decide,
and that's the only thing keeping me alive.