

JEFFREY ALFIER

Tripoli, 1985

In our AWACS, we followed an air route west
over the Mediterranean, a seam on a chart

that was nothing but a ghost-border to the Libyan
Mig that hunted us. It drifted through our onboard

radar scopes, a distant blip, a loitering electric
shadow. We'd be nothing but tidewrack if its two

tons of afterburning thrust made a game of us.
But it kept distance, orbiting in an airborne cage—

a leash held by its ground controllers, burning
fuel away to throttle homeward at last.

Dropping altitude, it faded off our scopes,
like fluorescent smoke, re-crossed its own

shoreline, familiar breakwaters, waking
mosques, the soft groan of tethered boats.

Jeffrey Alfier's recent books include *Fugue for a Desert Mountain* and *Anthem for Pacific Avenue*. He served several assignments with the Air Force, most recently as a combat plans officer, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. He is founder and co-editor of Blue Horse Press and *San Pedro River Review*.