

GERARDO MENA

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## Phalanx

They say he ran.

He had a first name once. It is now buried with his honor. He is only a rank and a last name. Staff Sergeant Harris.

They say he ran when he saw the blast.

An action, an impulse. Seduced by lady fear, wearing her gown of tangibility, speaking materialisms into his ear, as she traced a finger down the slope of his neck and drew a line of succulent life down to his navel. He looked upon her, laying on the foreign earth, and draped himself over her. She whispered into his skin as he covered his *Death Before Dishonor* tattoo in Arab mud.

He stretched the night over his face and wept as a child that realizes that acts have consequences and punishments are real. Death is not a dream here. There are no monologues, only a violent instant where our limbs are torn from trunks and we fade as our bodies struggle to breathe. Our bodies struggle to blink. For those of us that remain unlucky, we must react. We must close the phalanx. There is still work to be done. There is still death to gift.

They say he ran when he saw the blast that killed Gary.

And to all those who see Staff Sergeant Harris sitting behind his little wooden desk, pretending to be a Marine, I beg you to ask him, “Do you remember Gary Johnston?” And when he smirks and replies, “Yes, I was there the night he died.” I want you to look him in his beady coward eyes and say “Alpha Company, Third Platoon says go fuck yourself. It should’ve been you.”

They say he ran.



**GERARDO MENA** is a decorated Iraqi Freedom veteran. He spent six years in Special Operations with the Reconnaissance Marines and was awarded a Navy Achievement Medal with a V for Valor for multiple acts of bravery. He has poems published or forthcoming from *Cream City Review*, *Raleigh Review*, *Louisiana Review*, and *Diagram*, among others. For more information go to [www.gerardomena.com](http://www.gerardomena.com).