

H . C . P A L M E R

Resurrection (A Fable)

So Billy uncorked it with his thumbs. It didn't make a pop. The champagne was dead. So it goes.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

In the after-silence, lit by a smoky cone of tactical light, the spent 5.56 caliber metal-cased bullet ascended from the dirt floor, angled for the stone wall, ricocheted, then accelerated for the shattered skull of a child fallen into her gush of blood. The bullet unraveled her dark hair, restructured a pencil-shaped column of blood, brain and fragments of bone, plunged it through her exit wound, sealed the tear on her forehead then spun into the muzzle of the Sergeant's M-4.

The girl returned to sleep. The Sergeant leaped backwards through a door as it crashed shut and locked, back-trailed to his basecamp, removed the bullet from his weapon and placed it in a metal canister. He didn't sleep. At last light he replaced the canister inside a wooden crate at ammo supply.

Six weeks earlier, two airmen returned the crate to a deuce-and-a-half truck and drove in reverse to an airbase where they ramped the container into a C-17 transport. Negative jet-thrust sucked the C-17 onto a runway and airborne to Dover Air Base, USA where Pentagon contractors carried the container onto a tractor-trailer and drove backwards to an ammo factory in the Midwest. A journeyman returned the

canister to a workbench. A specialist disassembled the cartridge. The brass was smelted to chemical elements.

About the time of the smelting, the American soldier back-tracked from a C-130 to a ready room in a hanger at Ft. Lewis, Washington where he warned his commanding officer he was fearful he would *Lose control and do something real bad* if he was deployed for a fifth tour in the Middle East—this time to a war in Afghanistan where, on that very day, the child and her mother were rejoicing because Americans drove away the Taliban and it was safe to go back to school.



H. C. PALMER is a retired Internist who was a battalion surgeon with the First Infantry Division during the Vietnam War. His poems have been nominated for two Pushcart Prizes and his poem “Five Notes From War” appeared in *Poetry Daily*. He lives in Lenexa, Kansas where he works with veterans and family members to help them identify and care for those of us with moral injury.