

Fintan L. Dooley

Tears and Wails: An Ode to the Survivor

—*night on the U.S. Army Fort Ord surgical ward,
1970*

Tears of my sleepless fellow, I do remember.

Every night hour our nurse salvaged the hole under his unclosable eye.

Adonis was 20, a farm kid, an Iowa football star, loyal,
in love with his high school queen. I was 25, a lonely philan-
derer.

Russian rocket passed his face. Vietnam kept his eyelid, cheek and bone.
Surgeons propped his eye with gauze and jammed sticks in my fist-broken
nose.

And I do remember who scorned me *the brawler*, our well formed

Nurse whispered,

Don't give up.

Wails let down her whispers. I saw her press his hand to her breasts.

Always believe in her love! Didn't she say,

I promise to wait for you?

Let me tell your cheerleader!

Sure, he said, I do remember. She did promise to wait for me...

[In July of 2003 a North Dakota National Guard named John Fettig was killed in a rocket attack on his Hummer in Iraq. His passenger, Brandon Erickson, survived. Brandon is a childhood friend of USAF Lt. Jocelyn McCauley Dooley. Brandon is out of Walter Reed Hospital and home again. His right arm is in Iraq.]

Fintan L. Dooley, a former North Dakota attorney, is now a sculptor and reading teacher in a Carter School of Excellence, an Afro-Centric Charter School in Milwaukee, WI. He has three children: a son, Nereus, who served in Gulf War I; daughter, Luella, will be commissioned a lieutenant in the National Guard in December 2003, and a younger daughter, Jocelyn a 2003 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. Fintan was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in 1972 after service as a paratrooper and Syrian-Arabic Linguist.