

From *Negligent Discharge* by Dennis Humphrey ([djhumphrey@alaska.edu](mailto:djhumphrey@alaska.edu))

Male, late 20s-30s

“If I’d meant to touch the gun, I’d have done it very deliberately, but I was just reaching in the gunner’s window when my shoulder brushed the trigger. It’s just like that phone call. I never meant to start a fight with my wife, but when she didn’t even know me... the words just came out. Little Phoebe used to get between us when we fought., saying “I sorry—I sorry!” taking the blame on herself. The magic word, right? I screamed, “Medic! Medic!” The lieutenant’s blood dropped on the dusty ground in gobs the color of liver, the color of Phoebe’s prune baby food for when her tummy wasn’t right, the color that tells me anyone who says we dream in black and white is a fucking liar. The blood beaded up on the fine powder dust, like the desert didn’t know what to do with all that life. Then it sank in, slow, like the dust was drinking it, turning back into Euphrates River mud. It’s still there. Still there. I rocked and rocked him saying, “I sorry—I sorry.” I haven’t spoken to my wife since that. My sister says the house is empty. Even my ghost is gone. For now. For now.”