

“Packed Bags”

by Morrison West

*For all those who aided both friend and foe:
May the dignity you lent humanity never be forgotten.*

Others are lamenting,
 Another dear friend lost.
But you are packing
 Your bag,
 Yet again.

Others are mourning,
 This war’s horrible cost.
But you are packing
 That same bag,
 Once again.

Because the bullets will just keep flying,
 Brave Soldiers and Marines will keep dying,
As duty compels you to just keep trying,
 To save yet another failing life.

And now, it is not a surprise,
 To find the same bag, in disguise,
Wherever you lay your head and close your eyes,
 As you deal with the endless strife:

That you felt, whenever they called your name.
 That you still hear each night, beyond the candle’s flame.
The word struck terror, but when said, you always came:
 Soldier, the title of “Medic” may never become your friend,
 But thank you, for keeping your bag packed until the very end.

Morrison West originally hails from the Appalachian region of the United States but spent more than two decades in the U.S. Army as an Infantry and Special Forces soldier routinely deploying to both austere locations and combat zones. He holds a Bachelors in Science and Masters in Law and he has lived in places ranging from Germany to Key West, but he now resides in South Carolina while continuing to travel regularly. He has written poetry since being exposed to poets ranging from William Shakespeare to Edna St. Vincent Millay when he was in the fifth grade, thanks to his local public library. He prefers to write in his own variations of traditional poetic forms, often using rhyme and meter in an attempt to create memorable rhythms with the words because he believes that the overall function of this form increases the impact. When he is not reading and writing he spends time outdoors in an array of activities from climbing and hiking to fishing and hunting. He published the first fiction novel in a four-book series, *The Artificials*, in 2023 and he hopes to publish the next book in the series in 2024. He has written four volumes of poetry and is working on the fifth, but “Packed bags” is his first published poem and it is from a collection entitled *War Words and Other Poems*. He has two adult children and has been known to associate with dogs of all breeds and even, on occasion, a cat or two.