

Lisa Zimmerman

In Praise of Warrior Dogs

First to leap from the rumbling Humvee,
first to approach a satchel left alone in sunlight,
first to turn the corner on a dusty street,
to leap forward into a clay house
with the door kicked in. First to climb
stone steps over a crumbling wall
into the smoking bunker. They're trained
to fall from the open mouth of a helicopter
strapped to the chest of their handler,
to hurtle through desert heat and air,
to feel the jerk of the parachute opening
sharp intake of breath from the soldier
when they hit the sand feet first and roll.
Always prepared to move out or pause
as the soldier unzips the harness, leans down
to cup that wolfy head and whisper
into the panting face words that keep him
going *good dog, what a good, good dog.*