

# First Person Shooter

W. TODD KANEKO

You play a video game at night while your son sleeps  
upstairs, the one where America still smokes

after the bomb, skeletons littering every broken house  
like that clutter of Hot Wheels and dinosaurs now

strewn across the living room floor. As the game  
opens, you step into the future to search for your son,

your offspring of pixels and prerecorded dialogue  
taken from you during cryogenic slumber, now trapped

somewhere out there in the wasteland. You have fought  
so many bosses to defeat so many games, but tonight

you understand real urgency, a father's need to know  
his son is safe fuels your desire to fire rockets

at marauding robots and super-mutants. Tonight,  
there are real children trying to sleep in that dark

concentration camp down at the border. You know it  
from the news—stories of children behind fences

who wonder where their parents are, who wonder  
if they still search for them or if they are dead,

all their voices silent because no one is there to sing  
with them. Tonight, you wear your headphones askew,  
  
one ear tuned to the sounds of war in the game, one  
to the quietude of the house, listening for your son's voice  
  
in both places. It's everywhere, really—that little cry  
that says your name in the pitch of night, your name  
  
on radio news broadcasts about brand-new orphans,  
your name in the sounds of gunfire and in the hum  
  
of an elementary school hallway, your name spoken  
so clearly, so many mouths moving all at once.

