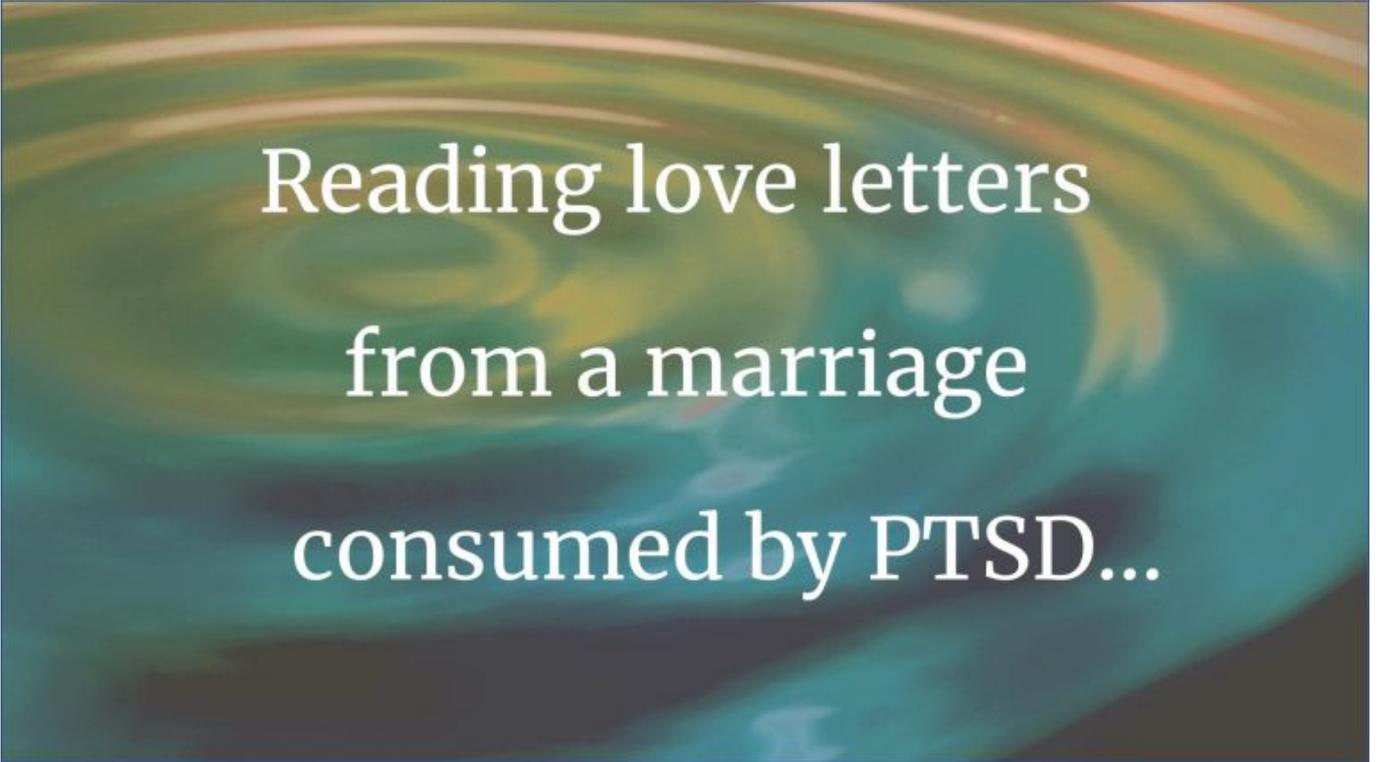


# Fourteen Months

Category: Poems

written by Pris Campbell | February 12, 2021



Reading love letters  
from a marriage  
consumed by PTSD...

from your ship in Vietnam.  
Love letters.  
Six pages in one of them  
on the thin Navy stationary,  
listing the ways you loved me.

Two months into your tour break  
home with me at Pearl Harbor  
you were suddenly a tiger, pacing.

I cramped your space.  
You stayed with me  
only because you promised.  
Our apartment became webbed  
with your anger.

Butterflies flew from my chest,  
fluttering out of your reach  
into the fragrant Hawaii air.

Back on the ship, letters  
arrived in thick bundles, claiming  
you would make those days up-

but you were the same when  
that tour was over.

Neither of us knew then that PTSD  
could knock a man off-kilter  
even on a relatively safe ship in the DMZ.

I finally had to leave the angry indifference.

You're dead two years and a half now,  
both of us remarried,  
but I still grieve you.  
How I loved you.

Poems spill out  
like the turning tide  
you rode on then and ride  
again now, touching me  
occasionally within our shared  
Vietnam of the soul.