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*(three from)* Love in a Time of War

Now, she moves against him  
like salmon trying to swim upstream  
against the earth's spin. The whole night  
trembles, the oldest sobs caught

in their throats, a new skin of sweat.  
For him, his trek into the deep woods  
began days ago when the birds grew silent.  
They now pray a son hides inside her.

But tomorrow — tomorrow, only the men  
will dance ancestors alive, gazing up at Venus,  
born to slay the enemy in their sleep.

The high priest has blessed the weapons,  
& they cannot turn back. Not until  
a thousand hooves strike the dust red.

Two memories filled the cockpit.  
The pilot fingered the samurai swords  
beside him, as the plane banked & dove.  
Locked in a fire-spitting tailspin,  
headed toward the ship, he was one  
with the metal & speed, beyond oaths  
taken, nose-diving into the huddle  
of sailors below, into their thunder.

The day opened like a geisha's pearl fan.  
The yellow kimono of his first & last woman  
withered into a tangle of cherry blossoms  
& breathy silk. A sigh leapt out of his throat.  
Before he climbed up into the cockpit  
he left a shadow to guard her nights.

A marine writes the name of his sweetheart,  
carefully printing each letter  
as if to make the dead read  
the future's blank testaments.

He straddles the fantailed bomb  
& scribbles a note to Al-Qaeda:  
This is a fat prick for you sand niggers.  
This is a cauldron of falling stars.

Months tick down to a naked sigh.  
The marine reads again the Dear John  
to bring kisses to life on smudged paper.

Her skin is now a lost map. Each page  
is a bloody memory facing itself,  
seeping through a white dress.