

SUSAN TICHY

Stork

'May I live long enough to face my ruin'
I copied the words

Except, it looked like *rain*

Thirty-eight dead on the river boats
Three hundred elk on a snowy curve

Everything in abundance

Your nights on the river a radio
If I wake in the night a radio

A hill beyond the glass a glass of water

On the altar, medals for bravery unjust word
Raven feathers, bone of a sea turtle

Litter of fox pups playing on a paved road

It was two a.m. they were chasing moths
I don't remember why we were on that road

We were on that road

Awakened by
Artillery or

Its silence

Artillery or its silences
A taste of garlic metal taste of rain

On the Golan I lived in a shack on a hill or say
I slept on a cot in a locked compound

Eight miles from the tracer fire

On the river you slept between gun mounts
In the pools of shit and fear

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On the river you called
For blank for blank for peace and it never came

There were helicopters battering the air there
Were jets taking off and landing

Outside just now a Great-Horned Owl
Is measuring the silences between them

It's a drought year sound is malleable
It's a drought year wind

Has the patience of its kind
It smells of fire and the book says now

There is no higher desert
On sleepless nights I climb it

On sleepless nights life simplifies
To a round of terrible questions

Will I lie on my left side
Or will I lie on my right?

The helicopter lifting you but not you your body
Your body lifting toward me in a telescoping panic

At dawn we rode out cowboy style
To find the Golan's wild indifferent cows

They had swept for mines, but mines say
You must ride in line like an ant

I can count the cows, or a line of ants
That crawl up the coroner's arms

His headlights in the driveway
Your walking stick beside my bed

Your face illuminated by tracer fire
Jets pass overhead at the moment they say

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No jets pass overhead
This is my primary education

This is how I must learn to describe peace
A white stork down by the fish ponds

And a blond man in a bathing suit
With an Uzi propped on his hipbone

After an hour it wasn't that
Fox in the road it wasn't that

A bat flutters open stars
Small jet follows its own sound fear

Of its riding lights cut straight through the side of the hill

You stood in the yard with a black pony
I waited for you with an armored book

We shelved our books on the face of the mountain
Our books were stones and we built two cairns

One at the summit one at the lake
On the path between them the road to Baghdad

Crosses the Cai Rang Bridge
Crosses your body which body

Training jets pass over our house
So low the windows buzz

That armor-piercing said word said

If a child's arm flew toward you through a window
If you came back crazy came back taller

Came back wearing a white scar
I wrote down the middle of your face

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If you bent to tell me bent to lift
A drowned sailor out of the bath

At moment of waking don't look down
Knife-ridge ice-ledge don't look down

Rain-wet sailor nothing now
Vicarious it ends here

Sand-colored armor sand-slick rock

Fox barks fear in the night
A wren wakes up and chatters