A Brief History of the War

_The war is always going badly._
—Catherynne M. Valente

The war came. Like the other girls, I made myself pretty for the war. I painted snakes and birds on my hands in the style of the war, I cut a black line across my eyes and called that warpaint. I walked the dog on the war’s red whip. I pledged allegiance to the war. I proudly parrotted the war’s slogans at pep rallies and assemblies. My parents were agents of the war and the war gave them purpose. My brother became one of the war’s diplomats, so I learned the mathematics of war and the politics of war and that my politics didn’t matter; only the war mattered, the ration cards eaten for fuel when the war took the food. The war had a beating heart, and it played a tambourine, _this, our amazing country, we fight for you._ The war kept time to the footfalls of soldiers. The war took their boots and their toes as trophies, and then took their coats, turned them to tatters. Ours is an old war. It has a beard and calls itself Uncle. It beckons, and we sit on its lap, ready to spill.