

## Flightline

sometimes I worry i've been sucked  
into the dawn's early light

this world was made for guys I think  
I must have some guy in me somewhere  
not down there mother said Be Careful  
you'll be ruined down there. but I don't think  
I was ruined in that ft. sumter holiday inn

I wonder early evening the air  
is bluegray and I was standing  
on the flightline with all the other  
khaki antifaggots and they  
weren't staring at me for once or  
asking for my ID because you need a  
special card to get near the warmachine  
you might throw a pigeon into a  
precious engine by accident.  
well they're yours, citizen,  
except you need this special card to be  
up close and personal-like or some  
boffo ged'd superman will be kickin your  
ass to the ground and putting an M16 to  
your head even if you are a girl

probably especially if you are  
they always drive by in the truck a load  
of em to stare at the girl with hair in her eyes,  
but she doesn't want to take her sunglasses off  
she remembers her earplugs too because  
you're in the airforce now and they fine you  
if you don't take care she makes  
this mental check is everything screwed on?

sometimes I worry that the bombs

bursting caused my deafness

so i'm wondering what am i doing  
in a south carolina motel with a minor  
league ball player who explains his signifi-  
cance  
but when he says 'my trailer' I figure he's not  
quite the big time yet and i'm thinking  
if I don't screw him does this mean i'm cold?

enveloped in warm dusk we stood each alone -  
no one staring at any one, just a hundred  
crescents in a hundred heads paused  
to watch these beautiful gray birds unhinged  
from their moorings and the crew chief salutes  
as he gives the tires a last kick

it must be noisy outside these plugs -  
great orange plumes, but it seems peaceful  
as they roll down the runway and into the  
night.

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# WAR POEMS

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## DEBORAH KILGORE

### Life under the diamond power of death

What enormous moans in language live  
like the gorgeous time of whispering suns.  
On my watch, I smooth the willful winds,  
dress them in my elaborate tongue,  
beat a frantic breast while my ship  
plays out a fingering sea.



## long after the war

whatever happened to ?  
the question dangles like a sluggish star  
between intolerant elderly voices  
and the creeping lure of  
silent nightfall.

## war exercises

Burns Flat is dead since the base closed down.  
Nothing to do but café chili or an occasional  
Las Vegas trucker. The girls who are left  
double up  
or take turns, scratching a piece  
of the passing through man.  
Each girl dumbly deserves it, you think?  
Exhale, inhale the smell of old oil lingers from  
getaway tailpipes: What shall we do?  
What shall we do?

The dust kicked by tractors snares amber light,  
each facetface takes a turn at the sun -  
pushed by a drought that won't give.  
Spotted with silent derricks — autistic rocking -  
the vertiginous flatlands on forty west  
roll away, roll away like the sea.

Like the sea to the cities to the sea.

I'm the only civilian in town, in a town full of  
cowboys,  
motel full of airmen, a town where I'm kickass,  
a runway queen.  
A brandnew penny tumbling clean from my hand.  
To land like this, what luck, what appliance store  
not yet walmart luck.

Each passage along the corridor, I feel their heat.  
They gather; the afterglow of weapons still  
on them.

Then I walk by: bigger than life, bigger than  
bombs.

These boys brag, making dirtstars on fallow fields.  
We are far from your airwaves:  
you wouldn't know the scene I am stealing.  
I can't blame the locals for spying on me,  
eyeing me big city girl that I am. I am.  
I'll not stay to the side of this highway forever:  
but in a dry peacetime, it's my right to rain war  
regardless of whether war's already been done.

## Like Patriots

Brilliant poison. Your words had  
spears chucked high above their  
shoulders, barely grasped between  
their thumbs and pointed fingers.  
These are the rest of my days  
you see, naked like morning  
sand. Our conversation ran  
with broken seashells to the  
sea. We were weathered flapping  
canvas, drying on the wreck-  
age in measured, twining peals.  
Your shots rang like patriots.

I thought that words were mountains -  
you won that argument.  
they brittle and break, less than  
even the dust you came from.  
Your savages danced in space  
awhile then blinked. You were gone.

## The eclipse

Beyond the crush, the light bleeds  
in doorcracks and nightshades.  
The buzz and crackle suck juice  
and the eclipse takes a turn for the worse.

Some salontan god said  
I'd go blind; I believed him.  
A scud-seeker skipping a class —  
the dot on the cardboard box  
apes all the life in the world.

And it was one small step, that took me out of  
that bar  
and into this house where I hide from the sun.  
A dixie shuffle for mother. Or a heaping leap  
before you get what's coming - the good die  
young?

you'd think.

Here in the shack, the sun slants low behind  
aircraft hunkering down for the evening,  
each in a vicious rush. They might as well be  
cocooned in the trees. I am pitifully silent, a space  
between the weaves in silk. Elegantly well-fed  
and stocked with tricks for survival, locked in  
my shelter.  
Biding the long season of dust and dancing for  
rain.

DEBORAH KILGORE

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