

Guadalcanal

(i)

Neat as an Olympic diver, the moustached kingfisher
splits the brackish water, feathers luminescent tracer.

Akira watches the bird resurface, a fingerling in
its beak, long & silver as a newly crafted knife.

On an overhanging branch, it is devoured
in a few quick actions like cocking a rifle.

It scrapes both sides of its bill on a stem; mimics
a soldier cleaning his bayonet on some canvas.

His splash is small too. Like *Mbarikuku*, he is
holed up in the mountains, forced ever upwards

by the Marines who swarm over the island &
Henderson airfield like an invasive species.

(ii)

The Corsairs make matchwood out of his gun pit.
He alone survives the bombardment. There is no

fire. The rainforest smothers any flame with its wet
blanket. Bones split; the trunks of downed canopy

giants that have collapsed under their dead weight.
Greasy sunlight patterns over him like camouflage.

Akira cannot hear the kingfisher's call. His
god rings a bronze Shinto bell in his head.

Purple berries rest by shell casings.
The bird's perch is a charred hand.

The enemy struggle to reach him.
Akira lets the leeches drink their fill.

(iii)

At two thousand feet above sea level
the zoologist stumbles over a mystery.

He estimates the hole is coffin deep,
& precisely tooled by human hands.

He digs up the tiny lamps of shells &
rubs them. The trench is a good bird

hide to look for this rare species. On
a stump overhanging a creek he spies

a single male preening his molten head.
Azure wings like a Pacific island advert.

The kingfisher has telescopic sight, but
the mist net surrounds it like gun smoke.

He thinks of DDT & thin eggshells as
it cries; *ko-ko-ko-kokokokokokoko-kiew*.

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