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Two Poems

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THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 31ST

The flickering light makes your eyes spark.
On the screen, Lady Wakasa serves
Genjuro tea in his exquisite cup.

Walking back to your place from the Tower,
we see a dove twitching in the wet gutter
that borders the park's chilled pastoral.

Your bare shoulders gleam above your black dress:
"Do you want some honey in your tea?"
"I should leave." "Stay until I fall asleep."

From behind the couch, you bend over me.
Your hair covers my eyes; I reach up blindly—
Fire has broken what the potter made.

*

"The men in *Ugetsu* were dumb, or confused."
"Wakasa's ghost trembled for renewal
as flesh—your skin and hair remind me of hers."

"I've heard enough of such trash from poets.
Palely loitering, they moan 'La Belle Dame
sans Merci' between Troubadouric tears."

"If the Temptress was created by men,
then she mouths all her lines simply by rote.
Poets invented woman's shrieks—and her revolt."

"Since romantic sorrow is man's making,
let him wear it like a filthy coat.
It's midnight, be still—listen to the New Year."

COMES THE HARVEST

Carrion birds patiently wait;
they play cards with old leaves.

A horse screams, runs away.
The black birds rise in a cloud,
settle on the shoulders
of their mother.
The outlaw with a silver earring
dances with the wind.

No one dares to cut him down—
his body melts like sugar.
Candied skull, grinning bone,
don't look at me:

You sang "laugh and be light
in this wind and the rain Angelika,
for on that morning
they will find us before we awaken.

The steaming hill at my back
takes the sun, puts it in a drawer.
Lie back in the damp weeds
that smell of straw, Angelika."

Tell the children playing
in the sun
to gather at the wagons;
it is harvest time—
Dark fruit is heavy on the bough.