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Two Poems

Miles Krogfus

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DESERT VISTAS

En mon Afrique intérieure,
le soleil est moribund.
Béons à la Lune, la bouche en zéro.

*

That black line is Cancer's,
this snaky one, the Nile —
Blue and White. Here is desert:

Brush. Sun-scattered bone.
A Taureq salt caravan
glides along the fetch of dunes.
Dyed clothes have stained
their wearers indigo.

Jericho is over —
The land is returned to jerboa.
To the north, when stars blink
out, Tartars will descend
to Megiddo's plain, using
what burns for torches.

September's last morning:
the Star of Africa ascends
in his Messerschmitt.
Hot oil sprays his cockpit —
Bailing out, Marsielle is blown
back against the tail fin,
tumbled to earth.
"Death stuffs my mouth with dirt —
Is that an answer?"

In artificial light, Louis Leakey
glues together an ancestor.

Tamanrasset: the drought continues.
Raisha does it with tourists
for powdered milk. Putting down
the one-stringed instrument,
she twines with Claude, quickens
a scorpion that hides in bedclothes.

From her nights of toil,
Raisha has a trinket —
on her way to water as
day gathers, she squats beneath
a sere acacia — parted from
its sac, an aurora cries:
it has entered the dry spring.

“Mistress killed many lion.
Gone from the yard, she walks
with her dog named Dusk.”

AN INFANT'S NEW OCTOBER

The lamp is eclipsed
by her head

 a coronal
he reaches toward

his first rain
fall strikes the roof

 awakes him
inside his crib

he sees the door
open tree sun
light in branches

 out there

snapshots are taken
with the sky

 so chill
only his face
is exposed