

J O H N K A Y

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*Nightmare*

On their way south a battalion of geese  
settle for the night outside in the field.

In the first light thousands rise and roar,  
a drove of nested helicopters lifting off

over the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta,  
slashing my hands into ribbons of flesh,

plunging through my sleep like sharp knives  
through the membrane of a peeled orange.

I tremble in the falling darkness as wings  
blacken the window into starless depression

—the beginning of forgetting how they  
pulled my body from the wreckage.

## *Wildcat Pilot Down*

Treading water, treading time.  
Blood tastes metallic—almost mechanical.

Gunmetal ships, like ten story buildings,  
rock and huddle, then fire desperately.

Zeros gouge the charcoal spattered sky,  
hurled drunkenly into the sea's skin.

I cling to my stubborn plans as the sun drops  
like a coin into the Wurlitzer of darkness,

oil slick wildfires lighting this perfect opera,  
then down to oblivion we go, calling one another.

Afterwards—beneath a blanket of warm sand,  
I hear girls laughing in the waves.



**JOHN KAY** lives and works in Heidelberg, Germany as an education counselor. He has an MFA from the University of Arizona, taught writing for the University of Maryland in its European Division for many years, and worked as a mental health therapist at Providence Medical Center in Portland, Oregon. His poems have appeared in many magazines, including *Kayak*, *the New York Quarterly*, *the Wormwood Review*, *the Clackamas Literary Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Texas Poetry Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Pearl*, *Jewish Currents* and many others. He has three chapbooks, the most recent, *Further Evidence of Someone*, from Eyelite Press.