

rae desmond jones

MY FATHER'S FIRST CHRISTMAS

my father's first christmas
was in the year the wright brothers
rose in their trembling kite
to burn gasoline scars across the sky
at kittyhawk

when he was nine the titanic
plunged into the cold sea as the radio
bleeped out save our souls
but god didn't put on his headset

god slept deep while my father
played cricket in a dusty backyard
& the world dug into the dirt
as the lamps died over europe & empires
burned away like verey lights

when he came back without legs
my father waved a paper flag
& watched the way men hide fear
behind noble words & decided that
there were lies that he could not speak

when the gut dropped out of wall street
my father walked to adelaide with a sandwich
& sat in a park & watched strangers
in old army coats play silent chess
& ignore the cold

when the japanese tapped at the door
my father stayed down in the mines where
he could not hear the screams above the indigestion
of the rumbling earth turning in a deep
discontented slumber

when men scabbled at rocks
on the lovely white moon my father saw
the blue globe turn slowly
with nothing to hold it

by the time he knocked away the gas mask
& threw the final thrusts of his failing heart
against the stainless steel deathbed
great jets were clotting the unclouded sky
& the diluted blue of my father's eyes
denied the passion of his thought

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