

“Gulf War”

by Wanda Brown

at the beginning of the war
everything seems to be going well
for our side
the day before, 40% liked the war
now, 70% like it
it's exciting

it goes well for us
because of airplanes and weather

buildings our side wants to bomb
are easy to see
clear nights and the full moon give
a glow-in-the-dark quality to such places
they shine softly, casting faint
reflections on the ground around them

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in a little treasure box
I have a miniature plastic light bulb
off-white, with a slightly greenish cast
which glows in the dark
saved all these years because of
a lingering childhood fascination
with magic

holding it now in the palm of my hand
I turn off the light
imagine flying an airplane
between the full moon
and glowing ghosts of buildings beneath

on television in black and white
fuzzy, grainy
as television used to be
one glowing building appears repeatedly
angled, disembodied from its surroundings
out of context, it hangs in space
until the picture is lost
to static

again and again the moving picture repeats
fizzling out at the end
coming back
now at last, in slow motion
as a voice instructs
“watch the lower left corner of your screen”

I see a bomb
a comet really
with glowing tail
steer itself into the ghost building's door
no explosion, no boom
only static across the screen

so this is war?
this isn't bad
no wonder we are ahead
everything is on our side
clear nights
full moon
comet bombs steering themselves
right through front doors
of glow-in-the-dark buildings

patriotism is easy in this war