

1975

Liebestod

Gwen Head

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Liebestod / Gwen Head

Suggested by a promotional film for the French Mirage III fighter

X marks the spot. The girl
spread-eagled on the beach, oiled and glistening
in her bikini, breasts
hard handfuls like grenades. Beside her blanket
a revolver and a transistor radio.

The pilot can't believe his luck, swoops low,
the surf tickling his wing tips,
and scoops up the sight again like a greedy pelican.

She sits up to watch him gone.
A fine haze of mica veils her sunburn.
Her hair stands out straight like a windsock.
She doesn't wave, but her sunglasses
dazzle and burn like phosphorus.

So at the top
of the steep loop back to her, he flips
his canopy away like a champagne glass,
ejects,
and hits the beach, legs pumping
as he hurdles strand after strand of barbed wire,
racing to reach her in time
to salute, take off his pants, and yell
"A votre service, ma'm'selle!"
as his jilted plane goes up like a bunch of roses.

The earth does in fact move for this conjunction.
A tide of mortars rolls in
and a hot heavy rain picks out their movements
like an expert knife thrower.
Far off, the alert missiles quiver
in their hardened silos, and the red telephones
croon to each other like bowerbirds. Over the black
waves, clouds of bombers dip and sway
damp-winged, the false eyes on their wings
blindly flirting.

Here at last
is love to set the world on fire.