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PATRICIA HOOPER

The Seabee

In June when Mother drove us to the lake
my father stayed behind, but Friday mornings
he flew up in his Seabee, circling over
the cottage till we ran outside and waved.
He tipped one sunlit, silver wing, then landed
and taxied to the dock. Even before
he stepped down from the cockpit, neighbor children
came running to greet him: clearly, this was fame.

At night, when the woods and lake grew dark, I slept
on the screened-in porch where I could watch the Seabee
rocking and the moon stroking its wings.
One morning waves rolled in—the beach was gone—
and when my brother and I ran out to swim,
racing to reach the plane, a buoyant spill
of iridescent fuel slipped past our arms;

and then too high a wave, and I was swept
under the dock where water struck the boards,
and sand from the bottom roiled so thick I knew
that only the power that sent me plunging under
could pull me back. For a long moment while
I caught my breath, unnerved, I didn't panic,
but watched from churning water how the sun
shone through the slats as if the day went on

without me, as before. And then I saw
how it would be: the cots and chairs put back
in storage, car doors closing, and the Seabee
waiting, its silver undersides, the first
familiar, sputtering, finally deafening sound
of its propeller, gaining, and its wake
above me, as it steadied, lifting off.