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Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning

Alice Walker

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I was a boy then, running
(unbeknownst to Pa)
errands for Miss Jackie
and Stack-o'-Diamonds' Eula Mae.
... Their perfumes,
rouged Egyptian faces.
Their pianolas jazziing.

O Creole babies,
Dixie odalisques,
speeding through cutglass
dark to see the macho angel
trick you’d never
turn, his bluesteel prowess
in the ring.

Hardshell believers
amen’d the wreck
as God A’mighty’s
will. I’d thought
such gaiety could not
die. Nor could our
elegant avenger.

_The Virgin Forest_
by Rousseau—
its psychedelic flowers
towering, its deathless
dark dream-figure
death the leopard
claws—I choose it
now as elegy
for Tiger Flowers.

“Good Night, Willie Lee, I’ll See You in the Morning” / Alice Walker

Looking down into my father’s
dead face
for the last time
my mother said without
 tears, without smiles
 without regrets
 but with civility
 “Good night, Willie Lee, I’ll see you
 in the morning.”
 And it was then I knew that the healing
 of all our wounds
 is forgiveness
 that permits a promise
 of our return
 at the end.

Leaving Eden / Ralph A. Dickey

Named and unnamed and renamed
 armed and unarmed and disarmed
 I have my covenant outside the womb
 in the solitary confinement of my cells

The cries of my bones
 like the cries of animals
 followed me out of my mother
 into exile

Butterfly Piece / Robert Hayden
 (for Robert Stilwell)

Brazilian butterflies, static and perfect as
 enamelwork by Fabergé. Jewel corpses fixed
 in glass. Black opal flower-skin banded
 neargold yellow; sea-agate striped berylgreen:

Colors so intense I imagine them heavy enough
 to have broken the live wings—as human
 colors in our inhuman world burden, break.

Occult prismatic blue of the morpho,
 the great prized morpho that living seems
 conjured up by magic hands. Wild beauty
 killed to prettify.