the dead that lived...

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A WAR POEM

Along a sodden path
I met an evergreen
  Struck dead, sawed off in half;
The cut looked neat and clean,
  Unlike claw’s jagged wrath.

An adolescent pine,
Not many summers young,
  With springtime sprouts as sign
Of hopes with which it sprung,
  Still green in bright sunshine,
Its roots and mangled frame
Reached yet in cool fresh earth
  Towards some wished-for aim
To touch the sky and berth
  Tired birds after their game.

If only lightning
And not the human hand
  Inflicted this frightening
End, blank hurt’s coiling strand
  Would not be tightening.

the dead that lived

blood red, marriage bed
soldier’s head with thoughts unsaid.
collective might, seductive night
to do the right both black and white
 lie on the ground while all around
the mother’s cry — still others die.
with gun in hand, much more a man
to kill is right — the bullet’s might
accompanies war — what is it for?
why is it done? all wars unwon.

molded lead, the marriage bed
is lonely now for he is dead.
a bullet stole that light from him
the question that was black and white
 went with him that awful night.
a childish whim — a quart of gin
a royal flush, his lover’s touch
 passed through his mind when fates unkind
took life away — the sky was gray.
lieutenant’s bars — shine with the stars.
with rabble’s guns his deed was done
now questions asked reflect his past.

Fr. Leo Hetzler
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