

In December, 1998, we dropped more bombs on Iraq

by Matt Mason

This is between the two wars, so
it surprises you
when TV screens light up with this in the hotel breakfast room.
You are in Delhi, you were supposed to fly home
last night but
fog canceled everything.
So the airport will be jammed today.
And in that terminal,
your skin feels different on you,
as if suddenly bright on you,
you feel like you should hide it, men
and families wait to board
their Air India, Air Arabia, Royal
Jordanian, Emirates, Qatar Airways flights.
It is clear outside.
Mostly.
On board, you watch out the porthole
as, bit by bit, air thickens,
minute by hour, the pilot breaks in
now and then to say he is still waiting
for clearance and explains some things about this
and about that, but you
are looking out the window, your right thumb tapping
on your blue jeans. Every one breathes
out when the plane finally inches,
then rolls and rolls and rises into the dark.

Connections, of course, snarl, the airline has bought every room left in a Hong Kong hotel because none of you are leaving tonight and, well, there aren't enough rooms, so we are going to need some of you to share your room, okay?

You nod to the man
you've never met.
His skin, his language,
is foreign to you. You
assume your governments,
if they are speaking,
are not speaking kindly
in their translations. You
both
sleep like stones in a river.
He is gone before your alarm beeps.
You rise, dress,
keep on your way.

