

Home from the Wizard Wars

1.

A warrior staggers home,
twitching from wizards' overspells
and bursts into the shrunken cottage.
Familiar faces cringe.
The warrior hurls the pewter welcome cup,
splashing scarlet wine against the limestone wall
then slams outside, jerking past crowded graves.
At the muttering river,
swans glide away in the twilight,
liquid eyes wary.

2.

A second tight-edged warrior
flings the wooden welcome cup,
denting the stucco wall.
Ale drizzles down cracked plaster.
This warrior explodes outside,
stumbling past empty pens.
In the twilight, swans glimmer,
black eyes vigilant,
soft throats mocking.
The warrior draws a notched sword.

3.

A ceramic welcome cup shatters
against the wall. Frothing mead
bleeds down the rough-hewn wood.
Punching outside, this third warrior lurches
toward the river. Bright-eyed swans float
the black water. The warrior wades
into the rushes; her sword drawn,
aching to stain snowflake feathers crimson.
A thunder of wings—fading ghosts
escape into twilight.

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