

elsewhere

scott alexander jones

Indian Summer's End: Book I



Black
Lawrence
Press

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*Into a thousand towns
my legs have carried me,
and countless homes—
What are all these?
A moon reflected in the water
A flower floating in the sky*

—Gizan Zenrai
(1802–1878)

That finger on your temple is the barrel
of my raygun—

That wretched dull resonance

breaching walls where windows once were, here
at the end of all things

tells us nothing

we haven't already been told

regarding nightjars—

That eyelid slit of light
beneath the bathroom door at the end of the hallway

yellow & yellowish & yellowing
as deciduous leaves

come winter

says one of us remains
awake at this androgynous hour

lighting candles meant to conjure azaleas.
Call it evening despite

our blue proximity to morning—

Blue as your tattered pea coat I always mistook for black—
Choose any definition

of blackout:

A scarlet pulsing of stoplights
or the scar in my abdomen from the failed

appendectomy of a cyclone

fence—

And if I am sleeping thru the lullabies of a summer
storm, you are screaming

an arsenal of auburn

cellos into hiding—

Your lipstick desperately flamingo.
Soundlessly agape as Civil War daguerreotypes.

We have arrived

at the scene of the film where the first bullets hail down—
All sound cuts out—

Your larynx

banished brailleward

by explosions in the sky.
Toward the more taciturn outskirts of

anywhere but here—

The nowheres

we/ll no longer witness together—
Scouring burnt lexicons in search of the perfect word for

murmurs of wind

caught in a vacant stairwell—

For the wayward shape things take—

The way we never settled

on a middle name

for the child they swore your stomach concealed

the times you wore that red summer

dress with leg warmers

seven consecutive autumns.

There are words

like: heartwood, petrichor

for lumber resistant to decay—

For the fragrance of rainfall on dry earth—

Their patents pending

as medicine for hummingbirds

to resemble a pageantry of elaborately feathered insects

rather than spies

transmitting the twitches of fractured lips

to the flapper girls dancing

the Charleston

just outside the veiled electricity of my peripheral vision.
There isn't a word for

the distant moan

of Bozeman locomotives—

Soft caterpillars of the vacant night—
And I refuse to evoke sousaphones trapped in Nerja Caverns—

The way my army of

mascara skeletons

will be more dead tomorrow than today—
How apoptosis

means: programmed cell death

means: the moment our eyes first adjust to florescence
something inside us

conspires against us.
Yet we don't exactly wilt like lettuce left

outside summer mausoleums—

Where sprinklers have been planted between caskets we call buried
so rapture, rush

hour traffic or massive plague
won't prevent the daily watering of the dead—

Revived

courtesy of percolation
as interpreted by the cerebral cortex:

Still squinting on bended knee in the cannabis garden—

Or nakedly losing at poker in a Soviet submarine—
Oceanward as the undertow

that took her away

as long as *her* means all
freckled girls who someday won't breathe

pollen or premonitions

of midsummer rain

on freshly paved blacktop—
Here, a helix of lawnmower blades

rusts dull in brushwood—

Crabgrass uproots one wayward gravestone three infants share
namelessly—

Lukewarmly

assuming room temperature
just shy of translating screams into speech—

Fruitless centenarians of this day in late July
equally unalive

as the Siamese twins