

Rae Desmond Jones

Six poems

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Photo of Rae Desmond Jones by John Tranter.

Black dog

The men whisper in the shadows
Of the great white house ablaze with lights.

Black dog lies near the door.

A woman dances alone around the yellow lamp
& her opaque skirt grazes her skin.

Black dog rests on his paw.

On the microphone the crooner unrolls
His sticky voice over the audience.

Black dog shivers, the chain rattles.

The servants flit along the tapestry walls,
Balancing silver trays loaded with apricots & coffee.

Black dog sniffs the air.

The wall screen re-runs our victory as
A million beaten men shuffle through the dust
To the cold mountains, watched by silent guards.

Black dog rattles his chain.

Out by the gates a woman calls & weeps
For her husband & her son.

Black dog rises.

A search light plays across the clouds as
A loaded rocket burns up toward the innocent stars.

Black dog howls to the cratered moon.

Writers have always been an endangered species

Consider the australopithy punk
Chipping screams onto a rock,
Or daubing a masterpiece
In coloured mud on a cave wall,
Until a tiger's growl
loosens his gut & the teeth clamp
Onto his skull,

The hired scribe in Mesopotamia
Pressing out his cuneiform potboiler
With reeds onto wet clay
While the big man's thug
Whets his knife on a stone outside
The open window,

James Joyce & Arthur Rimbaud,
Their shoes jammed against
Adjoining toilet doors,
Scribbling on shredded paper
While customers poked angry notes
Through the peep holes,

Hemingway punching out
Powder puff Joe Louis
Through a typewriter ribbon.

The most creative student
I ever knew was wiped from
The side of a train
Halfway through the 'U'

In SUX.

So watch out for the tiger
Or the steel pole
Beside the railway line

Dino at la candela pizza

Beneath the shredded paper strips grabbed between the teeth
 Of the groaning air conditioner the waitress in jeans slides three
 plates of steaming pasta
 Onto a table so smoothly the svelte lovers don't lift their eyes

Carillon voices chime off the walls & the recessed light
 Floods across the roman tiles as Vic trawls for pizza in the deep
 oven

&

Pounds the flat globe of dough with his fists then spins it on his
 fingers but pauses

When Dino stands in his tux at the door as impeccable as when
 he was
 alive

(in *Rio Bravo* Dino was the most elegant unwashed drunk
 Since Ray Milland in the *The Lost Weekend*)

'You want me to sing?' Dino's velvet whisper ripples
 Across the tables where a middle aged lady puts down her fork
 & a tall grey man frowns as a glass of red wine touches his lip.

Dino's effortless voice caresses the air with a hiss of counterfeit
 amore

& his incorruptible self-mockery dances in the gelato gleam

Ah old smoocher I hated you when I was young & my mother
 loved you

(but then along came Tom Jones) but now I know a little of
 hypocrisy —

Did you really kiss Kim Novak, your hand resting carelessly on
The twin mounds of her butt?

'I can stay for one song,' he murmurs 'then I gotta go.'
He turns & crosses Lackey street but the kids on their
skateboards
don't know him.

As he passes the dribbling fountain the drunk on the bench
opens one eye
& watches
Him wander out among the cars whispering inaudible as Angels
in the
darkness.

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dear steven,

I regret that I haven't seen you for 15 years
now it's too late & it's a long way from the backyard at
wellesley street where we had parties through the night
as the neighbours peeked through the gaps in the paling fence

you slumped in an old green armchair listening to blondie
I'm gonna be your number one. she looked so good for 40
you wished you could look that good when you got there

you should have looked better — rangy like a young gary
cooper,
the calm pain in your eyes & your quiet moody intelligence

chris phoned to say you died
& if I had a blondie record I'd put it on
the tide is high & I'm movin' on & the party stopped
the night your sister called to say your mum swallowed draino
then it burned its way through her & into you

but you didn't cry
the phone hung from the wall making no sound
& blondie stopped singing & the needle whispered
white noise into the air

the extra big mac

just before the vipertrain docked pneumatically at the saturn
doughnut terminal
the ugly martian behind me dumped his cyberfoam mug down
the goo tube.

all martians are hooligans

i've never been in a vipertrain without one sitting there
in his quivering red Y-fronts sucking on looni-juice
& masticating the vinyl seat linings.

"would you leave a snail trail like that on your spitball red
planet?"

i asked the green worm who was not pleased,
& plugged his one watery eye into my nose.

"what's it to you, blue earthling?" he eyeballed,
while taking the opportunity to acquire a little nourishment
in the rather exotic fashion favoured by bully jellies.

"It is every life form's right under the stellar accord
to deposit on every sucker signatory planet where it won't do
any harm —

so if you disagree, make my day!

"I will be delighted to liquify your soft tissue
& feed the bones into an otto bin for the plutonians to pick
their teeth on
in their typical vigorous fashion."

i attempted to hold his gaze although it was difficult in the
circumstances

& therefore with as much dignity as possible suggested to the
snotty one

that it was not worth a black hole court case in which
he would certainly be blobiterated

by a clever mercurian attorney who happened to be my brother

in law.
with a smug little pop the martian withdrew but
not before touching my tonsils
with a squirt of acidic eyeball & warned me that family
connections
wouldn't save me from being turned into a wisp of space fart
wandering along a bent rod of light forever while
contemplating the futility
of my attempt to stop progress

pig

when bobby chucked a moon
at the school dance he was there.

when we cruised in our old valiants
burning rubber he was there

magic on a motorbike.
no movie cop looked as cool.

the way the leather creaked
as he stared for a good 5 seconds
before asking us to get out.

the flat scarey voice
you were seen exceeding the speed
limit of sixty in a built up area
do you deny it?
Your license please.

the studied flick as the page
of his notebook turned.

we called him babyface
because of the smooth white flesh
& the gentle pink slab of his hand.

twenty years on he sits
on a bench outside the post office
& the sad rolls of his flesh
crisp in the sun.

i ask him why he left the force
& his wet blue eyes harden & dry

they took my bike & made me walk son
i'm a pig who likes to fly