dying trees

poems by nathaniel tarn
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A hole torn in the fabric of the world,
the web, the whole infernal weave
through which life-giving rain is falling
but mixing with the tears and with the blood.
The body-snatchers enter, the mega-corpse,
much in the news these days, enter and grind
bones, flesh and sinews down to dry tree bark,
mixing with tree bark, crawling with the demonic
beetles. They’ll tell it later: “no one expected this:
not one—patient, doctors, practitioners
of every stripe, no one except the one whose daily
work is close to prophecy, who feels it in his nerves
or in her muscles—where news travels up fast
and lodges in the eyes, all-seeing, all pervading vision
of disaster. And comes in like a mouse, wee small,
wee modest, so wee, wee practical, mouse with big ears
and popping eyes, looking this way and that and not
one tittle-tattle phased by your huge presence. Later
drowns in a bucket with a lizard: everything drowns

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round here getting to water. Not able to get out again.
Thus coming quietly, thus stealing in,
sitting thus quietly back of the house:
how do the tears well up, well down again,
what makes them well, the seeing eyes know not,
what routes the change parent-to-orphan,
orphan-to-parent? Stop. Then back again to tears?
Look out beyond the healthy trees preserved
in a close circle round the house for privacy,
look out the window over hills and dales
of this milagro country, see living green, see dying
brown—on each and every morning mourn the trees.
Fraudulent imbeciles who run the shows we live in
from top to bottom of their slimy theater, have now
decreed they will not solve the water. Matter of fact,
they will not solve what we are made of—the high
percentage water in all of us compounded. They will not
solve a single problem by the name of life we give
to human business. They will prefer
to dip their steel in blood, to let the semen drip
from off their steel into the blood and thus contaminate,
infuse with every cancer both body politic and body
not so politic, just private, single, individual—but
gives to other individuals their mien and color. Ghosts
walk the hills and dales between the dying trees.
“Remember now” they say, with stab at tragic countenance
(for when can privacy enter into collective?), “those days,
those days you took no notice of, counting them poor,
dispersing them among the memories you could not value
at their true worth, you could not recognize enough to feel:
who knows if these few days, these very days, were not
those ones we lived together here, the only paradise?”
9) Golden Globes of Hopefulness

"I'm gonna see you get that golden globe award"
—John Hartford

Operation successful. Sentinel node unreached
by the disease on its rampaging conquest—
although pathology to follow for certification. The golden globes,
those fertile golden globes of every size, shape, texture
available to size, shape, texture in global paradigm—
to which men's frail attention forever wanders—
but they are dangerous. They are the script
of tragedy. Small globes thrive in the larger ones,
containing each the crab, my legendary totem.
the which, in this disastrous, never-resting guilt,
I've used to kill more than the populations of the earth.
Mainly the dream-folk, broken, tongueless.
This is the last hurrab of the indigenous:
the time we take the land from them—for come what may
whether we're left or right in politics
we need the land and suffocate to seize it.
Land, gas: a time of spoils approaches. Criminal oilmen
and their puppet maniac can only daily croak Irak Irak.
There are good reasons for terminating this
Irak Irak. My father never shot his wad Irak Irak.
And now, the rain this morning. Brown trees,
the dying in their thousands—that were not born for death
immortal trees—continue drying. But rain shows up the green
push of the young, at tip of each live branch, standing in contrast,
sometimes in brilliant contrast right up against a brown—
and hope, kin to the overwhelmed relief in re the globes,
throws a man down to floor again, again, again—into the sleep
of justice. But this, this brown, is unsustainable:
they are too few to hold the goods; we are too many now
not to win goods: the center cannot hold, nor the periphery—
the iron globe that feeds this rotting world
must, dry and milkless, at the morning moon bay one more time
like the coyotes of our native land. The polity
has been an enterprise so criminal from its conception
it is a miracle a tree has ever grown there, single tree
oh never mind a forest. It is at war with the whole universe
wearing its garb of peace and its angelic wings,
mouthing its dithering self-satisfaction, wafting those wings
toward Irak Irak. Once it was Nam and Nam
and then the targets getting ever smaller
until the giant strike on Glorious Grenada. But now,
it grows again, inflates, swelling the iron globe
(we shall have empire on the entire world) except the globe
is black as sable, black as ink this time,
black as burnt human skin—
to the utmost degree. Hope, only source of poetry,
chickens its way out of this heaven into no other hell.