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Poetry by Alan King



The Land of Innocence

For Jade Rose King and George Floyd

A YouTube clip shows a protest
ignited after police killed George Floyd—

torched SUVs, overturned cop cars,
armored officers retreating—

all of that sinks my wife
into a deeper postpartum,
having made it through
our personal crisis.

We watch the python of despair
coil itself around America, blowing out
glass storefronts and colliding angry bodies
as the tension constricts and crushes.

We're miles from the mayhem,
but a different kind of danger finds us
in the maternity ward—

a decreasing heartbeat, frenzied nurses
rushing my wife to the OR, surgeons scrambling
to save our daughter.

Watching the news, I'm reminded of slogans
on chaos as necessity: "Real discoveries come
from chaos," "Chaos is beautiful
and full of fertility."

But when it's a violent pattern
of reactions, what's the real discovery,
where's the beauty in things shattered and tagged
if the same pattern of injustice
ripples our lives?

Maybe "chaos" isn't the right word.
Let's try, instead, "challenge."

And since it means refuting the truth
or its validity, isn't a protest a public dispute
of someone else's truth

like the one about the fear of dark bodies,
how it justifies them being mangled
or discredited in news cycles?

Wouldn't the beauty then
be new laws that get us closer
to becoming the people
the Constitution claims it protects?

Let me begin again.

When my wife told me several months ago
she was pregnant, we knew the challenge
of this birth could take her life

just as the challenge in the hospital
threatened our daughter's.

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And isn't it an act of faith to go blindfolded
into the future and be delighted
by the light there?

Now, we're lit by a dancing star named Jade,
short for Jadesola (Jah-de-sho-lah), which in Yoruba
means "come into wealth."

She's Jade like the green stone
said to emit wisdom and clarity.

I'm feeding her while watching
the YouTube video.

Someone onscreen yells,
"We're better than this,"
and she squeals—mouth dripping
with her mother's milk, smiling
while dreaming her baby dreams—
that land of innocence, where it all starts
before we lose our way back
rationalizing our destruction.



Into the Light

You're a floor below me, healing
in your room. Both of us sore
from the divine puppetry of science—
God pulling the surgeon's strings,
sliding the kidney from inside me,
routing it to its new body in Connecticut.

And wasn't He present in the hands' deft dance
and how hope lit the operating room like a stage?
Your new kidney ready for its debut inside you,
having traveled in a freight of prayers, 17 hours
from Minneapolis to DC.

Didn't our road here
seem even longer—
not being a direct match,
the hiccup in lab results,
us hurling our names
into an exchange pool
deep with uncertainty?

And here we are—in our beds,
an elevator ride from each other, this moment

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like the 90-degree day beyond our windows,
the cloudless sky, shadows receding
in the sunlight.

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Art Information

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Alan King is a husband, father, videographer, and communications professional living in Bowie, Maryland. He's the author of *Drift* (Aquarius Press/Willow Books, 2012) and *Point Blank: Poems* (Silver Birch Press, 2016). Of the latter, US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo said, these "poems are not pop and flash, rather more like a slow dance with someone you're going to love forever." King is a Cave Canem graduate fellow and a graduate of the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast MFA.

For more information, see his blogs and vlogs on [Alan W. King's website](#) [8] or follow him on Twitter at [@aking020881](#) [9].

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