

# NEVER AGAIN THE SAME

By JAMES TATE

Speaking of sunsets,  
last night's was shocking.  
I mean, sunsets aren't supposed to frighten you, are  
they?  
Well, this one was terrifying.  
People were screaming in the streets.  
Sure, it was beautiful, but far too beautiful.  
It wasn't natural.  
One climax followed another and then another  
until your knees went weak  
and you couldn't breathe.  
The colors were definitely not of this world,  
peaches dripping opium,  
pandemonium of tangerines,  
inferno of irises,  
Plutonian emeralds,  
all swirling and churning, swabbing,  
like it was playing with us,  
like we were nothing,  
as if our whole lives were a preparation for this,  
this for which nothing could have prepared us  
and for which we could not have been less prepared.  
The mockery of it all stung us bitterly.  
And when it was finally over  
we whimpered and cried and howled.  
And then the streetlights came on as always  
and we looked into one another's eyes--  
ancient caves with still pools  
and those little transparent fish  
who have never seen even one ray of light.  
And the calm that returned to us  
was not even our own.

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