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No Name For It Stephen Kuusisto

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The little scotophobia at the edge of the eyelid. It's music like Sibelius' "Swan of Tuonela"—a white bird gliding across the lake of the underworld—the tiny, bright speck of the eye submerged in a blackened pool where something electric stings like a jellyfish: the stored memory in DNA, a fear of the dark that hums like wind through a conch, air in the crack of a window. It's between blades of grass: the dew that keeps the crickets silent.

Itum, Egyptian god of the setting sun, worshipped at Heliopolis, city of sunlight, here's my offering: the magpies of Estonia, the blackest birds I know. And let me give you a human-headed wish, that you in turn will regard and fear the sunset which only you can see. May your sole companion be a desert god: cow-headed, thirsty as hell.

Mersegret, snake at Thebes, who guarded the desert tombs, to you I give a postage stamp of soil: my solemn geography of visual borders. And let's be ceremonious, let's go slowly into the thicket. The tongue is useless for talking. Let's feel everything with our skins.

Pluck the sistrum, swing incense, wave an ostrich feather. The fear of darkness is upon us. We need lustrations of water, offerings of meat, honey, oils, fruit, flowers. And here come delirious bees, fresh from their underworld hive, to graze at our stamens.

I want to open the canopic jars in which the Egyptians placed viscera, fit offering on the black shoreline of scotophobia.

I want to romp for joy with the jackal-headed gods. To hell with reverential shyness, Demeter with her eyes cast down, et cetera.

I want a hot, mathematical serenity, I want the blood of Mithraic sun worship where the priests looked at the sky too long and let out a solar bellow. Let's worship the ugly sun, the one we look at until we're mad. Let's slit the bull's throat.

The little scotophobia at the edge of the eyelid: a fear of the dark: devouring shade, a terrible, hungry fish. And the fish is the eye's true descendant. We must eat it before it eats us: cannibals first eat the eyes.

Eye of Tuonela, here is your swan, risen from the ice.