



When the Only Light Is Fire

Saeed Jones

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In his debut chapbook of poetry, Saeed Jones walks on the periphery of the South, those places on the outskirts of town, in bars after midnight, and on dangerous backroads where most people keep their heads down or look the other way. Through Texas and Tennessee, Alabama and the riverbeds of the Mississippi, these poems wrap themselves in cloaks of masks and comfort; garments we learn are flammable if we stand too close to flames.

When the Only Light Is Fire Details

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Author : Saeed Jones

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From Reader Review When the Only Light Is Fire for online ebook

willowdog says

Powerful, lyric poetry that paints wonderfully brutal, sexual, racial, and steamy pictures, mostly set in rural areas and the South.

Rachel Simone says

Admittedly, I don't read a lot of poetry and often feel dumb while reading it. Saeed Jones' writing is visceral and vivid. I look forward to reading more from him!

secondwomn says

solid.

Jessica says

Very sensual, frequently ... sad(?), and sometimes horrifying -- thinking about his *Jasper* sequence, about the murder of James Boyd, Jr. It gave me chills.

I'm only an occasional reader of poetry and sometimes unsure how the cadence should go, so was happy to find a few clips of the author reading his work online. Here's *The Blue Dress in Mother's Closet*.

Kathleen says

Saeed Jones' mythology is of ruined small towns and their biblical ghosts, the humming bush and men at the edge of it, and a beautiful boy dancing through grief and lust in a dress of smoke. The lyricism and sex of these poems and their hot song, will prick your page turning fingers bloody.

Red Haircrow says

I'd first come across the collection in search of a purchase to better understand a press, and the description really stood out for me. Although I was born in Germany and live in Berlin now, many of my formulative years were spend in the southern U.S. in the states of Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and Louisana, and these are some of the places the poet grew up.

"Saeed Jones walks on the periphery of the South, those places on the outskirts of town, in bars after midnight, and on dangerous backroads where most people keep their heads down or look the other way...." How well I understood that description and recall many such places, such dangers!

I wanted to read the author's impressions of those places and compare them to my own, my collection CORE is forthcoming. Sometimes they were agonizingly similar based on being from a minority population and with a sexuality publicly reviled yet privately practiced so that abuse can be common of those who are not allowed to have voices.

Visceral, vivid, yet often using a minimum of words, this was difficult collection of poetry for me to read, as often the images created through the poet's words triggered my own memories of darkness, abuse, aloneness and pain. I found it to be outstanding, courageous and to be admired for the ability to share personal emotions and experiences.

Originally posted on review/interview website: <http://flyingwithredhaircrow.wordpress...>

Claire Legrand says

Saeed Jones's pristine, visceral, sensual poetry is unlike anything I've ever read. Full of secret hillocks and forbidden fields, the fire of a moment's embrace, the exhilaration and frustration of hiding and searching, the sweat and rage and savage beauty of Southern nights, WHEN THE ONLY LIGHT IS FIRE is exquisite, impeccably crafted, with an urgency, an unstoppable, fuming rhythm, that sweeps you up and doesn't let go. Race through it once, breathless, as I did, and then return for a slower go, a peeling and savoring, a slow burn.

Like the beautiful boy these poems describe, the dancing, "terrible" boy, you will be afraid of being burned by the ferocious longing pulsing through these poems -- the longing for love, lust, identity, justice, joy. And, like the boy, you too will be unable to look away from the flames.

Joshua Gage says

This is a very deep and profound chapbook of poetry. Jones taps into the erotic as well as the political in this collection, exploring sexuality, race, southern politics, and more in these dense, lyrical poems. A very excellent collection.

Andrea Blancas says

Haunting. I'm still spinning. The opening line of "Meridian" reads: "Cinders drift in/from a fire we can't see." That fire leaves us burning for more. That fire is Saeed Jones.

Lee says

I read the entire thing through on my lunch hour, accidentally. It was just that urgent and visceral, goes directly into the vein without having to filter through the brain. I'll have to read through again for a more cerebral impression.

Absolutely should be at the top of any list of must-read contemporary southern poets. The "Jasper" poems,

my god...

A says

There are moments here when poetry is everything. The Jasper series is fantastic. Prelude to a Bruise with its repetition is both sexy and haunting.

David says

"Hunger is who we are / under a black lacquered moon," asserts Saeed Jones at the beginning of the very last entry in this pitch-perfect collection of darkly radiant poems. And, indeed, it is the transmutation of the past into the hungers that run through it, like rivers or hunters, by the mis-eclipsed light of a moon turned to night, that we can see unites the divergent identities plotted out in these poems - whether they be outlaw, intimate, world-making; or empty, enslaved and just plain evil - in the wolf's bane of their becoming, which will not leave them or others be. These are poems of serious social and sexual and political intensity but made better, more brilliant, by being combined with a burning ambiguity that turns back on itself and a noctographic aesthetic honesty that brings fire into focus as the *only* light these questions of libido and lethality can truly be seen by. In the charismatic burn that Jones provocatively unleashes, in equal parts, upon scenes of ardent sexuality ("king of my beheaded kingdom"), upon look-ins at the lopped love of kin ("Never an easy / dream"), upon treacherous reckonings with racist atrocity ("but I accept these men, / their sense of direction...") and upon dark inner nights of self-loathing ("he needs to tell me the story again"), the relations between needlessness and necessity, between the raw exertion of power over bodies and the desire to be free, gone or to self-erase, are carved out in "the language of sharp turns", a language the poems do not fully entrust themselves to, but, in their own sharp turn upon it, will place under the scanner of their lyrical distance, to softly probe for its limits and wants, in search of new connections. More than anything, Jones seems compelled to find through these missives something urgent and more honest than yet another reason to live: that is, he is after a reason to require, a grounds to demand a new horizon for actions, a basis to be "a backseat driver" and refuse the direction things seem always to be going, especially for blacks and queers. "Get up. Find your legs, / leave," Jones bids. The consequence of following his own advice, while looking backward passionately, is a debut that feels years ahead of itself, electric, sensual nerve at its keenest, a night pyre of thoughts at their finest.

Robert Vaughan says

A fantastic, sensual, dark emergence from this first book, and emerging talented poet. Brilliant use of captivating language and stirring imagery. I recommend this book!

T.S. says

Full of emotion and vivid storytelling, this is by far one of my favorite collections of poetry. I experienced everything from lust with Kudzu to painful grief with Jasper, 1998, I, II, and III. In fact, I tried to read these three poems to my partner and became too choked up to do so. The second actually brought me to tears. I'm not easily drawn to showing emotional responses in life, and for these poems to do this is a strong testament

to their strength.

Luke Gorham says

Essentially a rough draft of Prelude to Bruise.
