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The Jimi Hendrix Experience

ENTER a man with six fingers on each hand
and an electric lady,
her blood bright as the moon's.

Their son: fretting in a closet,
turning the psychedelic noise
of his drunken parents upside down.

1 brother and 2 sisters were born damaged,
blind and silent, so it is only him
—and another brother somewhere—

spellbound in the clamour of this hotel room.

ENTER the Sunburst Fender Stratocaster,
made for his father, with his plentiful digits.
The boy is lost in its violence.

Watch him: night after night, licking his woman,
his teeth, like pieces of noise,
raining onto the stage.

Back at the hotel there is red wine
and pills, white as amnesia.
EXIT the boy, into billowing silence,

only the fluorescent lights still brash.

Casino Royale

The sky let loose—not a good omen—when the hare went to visit the polar bears. The bears greeted him, blocking the doorway, their fur bristling, black noses dry and porous like ice. They stank of dead fish and urine. They turned their colossal backs to him, and the hare followed them into the room, shaking his sturdy ears and skittering rain. There was paisley carpet: brown with green eddies. The electric heater was on: a jittery orange glow. As usual there was a game going. At the table, draped with a crocheted cloth, was a horse, her back slumped with the ages, her eyes yellowed. Next to her was a moose with a scrap of fur missing from his snout. His antlers were brittle but intact. The drinking was being done from rank mugs. The ale was poured liberally.

The hare took a seat, picked with his teeth at a knotted mat of fur on his hind leg, and then was dealt in. He sifted through the picture cards in his paws. Table talk was forbidden. In any case the hare was thoroughly preoccupied. He felt a familiar hunger for his own droppings—and something else, he only now began to realise, like a secret longing for his own death.

Flick-snap. He was struck by a jester wielding a witchdoctor's stick. The hare looked at the polar bear and at the stack on the doiled table. The bear's eyes were impossibly still and dark. The hare drank and wiped the froth from his mouth. He eyed the hunched paw of the bear as it turned the final card. Flick-snap. A black weapon shaped, it seemed to the hare, just like a scythe. He had lost everything.

The hare turned to the horse, who had closed her eyes. ‘So, how about it?’ he said to her, urgently, quietly. The mare opened her lashed lids and turned her eyes upon him. She looked at him, he thought, with wist. Just then the neighbourhood dogs came careening into the room, wet as the day, carrying on at the world as if something had to be done about it. The game, the hare knew, was over.



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