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## After Oz; Orange Dusk

Charles Jensen

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*Charles Jensen*

## After Oz

I stand in the shack's doorway watching clouds gather.

    Toto's growl means nothing good will come of this.  
The wind's light hand brushes my cheek. I am made of weather.

The false night's sheer drapes cloak the house. Clouds get fatter.

    The sky glows deep green, sickly witch's skin.  
I stand in the shack's doorway watching clouds gather.

How I came to be back in Kansas doesn't matter—

    I want to be lifted again, held in the mouth of the wind.  
The wind's light hand brushes my cheek. I am made of weather.

The clouds spit tobacco rain upon the dirt, blackened splatter  
    turning our fields into small seas. I only have one wish:

I stand in the shack's doorway watching clouds gather

and beg them to churn. Swirl up, winds; pulse and lather  
    your funnel tongue along the ground. I will this house to lift  
in the wind's light hand, brushing my cheek. I am made of weather.

*Fly. Fly.* I call for the sky to fall. Give me another  
    chance—I want to go back—I want to go back—begin again,  
sucked from the shack's doorway and spun in clouds, gathered  
in wind. My hand brushes my cheek. I am made of weather.

Charles Jensen

## Orange Dusk

*Joseph Smith (1805-1844) founded the Latter-Day Saints movement in 1827 by announcing he had discovered a series of golden plates that he later transcribed into the Book of Mormon. He served as the religion's first Prophet until his assassination.*

Along the river: dusk, houses crackle and pop,  
their flames shimmering in water. Illinois burns now.

Children scream because their world is burning—  
what else is there for them to do?

Horsemen wearing hoods carry torches through our town,  
touch the writhing tips to anything that ignites—  
such as my neighbor, who runs into the street, his cries  
to be shot left unheeded. His garments pull fire  
to skin and keep it there, draping him in flickering cloth.  
His face—purpling, shiny with sweat and blood—  
becomes a stranger's. The horses' clomping grows quieter,  
a drumbeat marching toward the trees.

The fire talks and talks as it eats our homes,  
as it dizzies my friends, strangles them to the wood floors  
where their bodies become fuel.  
The sun's fading light makes fire in the sky.

Orange is everywhere, seething over beams and bodies,  
dripped from draperies, sizzling and searing  
like a galaxy of little suns, each one  
bursting open, consuming itself  
and all the small planets nearby.