

ANUSHKA SEN

TWO SUMMER MOODS

I. SUNSET, MIDWEST

sunlight, aslant. aslant in broad swathes,
sunlight silks the trees, the fields, and seeps in through the window.

through the window it seeps in whole, spreads over sill,
couch and cushions onto carpet, unbroken.

the table takes on a saffron tinge.

at home, where the sun is supreme, the light never slopes like this,
long and lazy, soft strands pooling into swathes.
there, it is overhead or it is everywhere, it is infinite
blistering beams and each one strikes distinct
and suddenly it is slivers and streaks around a pink disk
in the darkening sky.

silently, I turn words over: *sunset. summer. afternoon. evening.*
they hover, little shadows in the spreading sunlight.

II. KAALBOISHAKHI (NOR'WESTER)

the way the world is going,
summer storms may someday sink
to antique status.

each april day will bear
the same dull glare.
birdsong will bristle
with restless trebles.

tired of seeking thunder in each
far-off rumble, we will return
to memories of nor'westers past,
confusing that enchanted amber sky
with twilit childhood,
the silverstruck, wind-churned rain
with mercurial youth.

STEALTH SPARROWS

One evening I found
twigs and leaves on the bathroom floor.
Little tree-traces
lying on tan tiles.
Mysterious.
The window was shut all day, I was sure,
and the day had been shorn of breezes.

“Pakhi basha korchhe,”
said my mother when I told her.
“What nest would need leaves like these?”
I wasn’t persuaded,
but it didn’t much matter.
My curiosity faded.

Later that night,
some new detail wormed its way
into my unsuspecting sight,
and I looked up and drew a breath.
My mother was right.

Against the ventilator pressed a nest.
I couldn’t tell how big it was,
but it was big enough not to fit
into the space in which it rested.
Twigs, packed tight, poked through blades,
peered over the rim.
Boisterous bits of branches
curling over metal
sprung at funny angles on a whim.

Standing there, I felt a little thrill,
not altogether of a happy kind.
Many showers had been livened
by fluty trills and flutters,

but this was different—
a small explosion of the wild
into my tiled world.
(So much for the bottled berries
on my windowsill.)

I love nature, perhaps a shade
more than the next person,
but some things call up deeper anxieties.
And though as a child I'd cried
for Godzilla, what terrified
me most about *Jumanji* was the house
sprouting trees.