

***DANIEL,  
DAMNED***



***TIM JONES-  
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**The two boys meet at the edge of the thick wood. *Damn*, the boy says, *Back at it again*. His friend's shoes stark white, unsuited for the forest's muck.**

**Damn, he says, not knowing they are damned. The thicket, the thickness beckons—*enter the night*.**

**Deep in the forest, I am baking. A  
boy's favorite snack.**

**What I am baking is more than  
snacks. I bake smells, what will  
waft on the wind.**

**For fragrance triggers urges. To  
know what knowledge lies buried  
between the leaves.**

**Damn, the boy says, and stares.  
Face to face, they are Hansel  
and Hansel. His friend a mirror  
showing everything he desires to  
become or touch.**

**Their names: Daniel, the one who is looked at; Josh, the one who looks. They bushwhack their path. Damn, Josh says, for the weeds have snared his ankles. Swallowed his grunts and heaves.**

**In fairy tales, boys pry candy from  
cottages, stuff their mouths.**

**In this forest, the candy covers  
boys. Approaching, they are  
candy-coated. Walking sweet.**

**I lie in bed, stretch my limbs,  
tasting candy on my tongue.**

**Through the forest, they trudge.  
Josh behind, watching Daniel's  
neck. Sweat beads his toasted  
skin.**

**A river snakes the trees. In an  
old story, the water turns boys to  
fawns. But Josh knows. Should he  
touch the stream, he'll dissolve  
completely.**



**In my cabin, I feel them coming. I  
hear their heat.**

**A nighthawk hawks, *auk auk*.  
Josh grabs Daniel's shoulder.  
Sinew beneath his palm... *Damn*.**

**He says, We are going in circles. In  
his chest cavity, a whirl.**

**It's cool, Daniel says, Chill.  
Daniel's chill. Daniel's face. Josh's  
chills. Daniel's hands.**

**The nighthawk alights, then flies.  
Daniel points: *That way!***

**I am sending my smells, a trail  
of savories. Saying, Follow my  
crumbs.**

**In a clearing, my cabin. I throw  
my door open before their knock.**

**In the threshold, boys shed wet  
coats. Candy in my foyer. Sugar on  
their breath.**

**On the far side of the forest, in the  
bottomless gasp between midnight  
and morning, comes a boy's first  
adult dinner party.**

**I wax. Rhapsodic, they glisten. I  
palm their glasses. Slosh red wine.**

*My dear boys, Would you like a  
snack?*

**In my kitchen, their feet on the  
loop rug. In the glow of my oven,  
fogged by wine. Josh touches  
Daniel's cheek. Daniel's hand on  
Josh's back. Bodies inch closer.**

**I beam. Approach.**

**Strike.**



**A push. A latch. Oven latching.**

**They howl.**

**The sound of boys burning is the  
sound of my adolescent need.**

**Had I ever voiced it out loud.**

**When the fire dies, I scatter ash.  
Stroke the slick white shoes left  
behind on my welcome mat. Say  
*Damn.***

**My seduction's motive—**

**Not candy, but kicks.**

**And glamour.**

**A shoe as blank as a boy. My foot  
a canvas, wrapped in canvas. To  
become potential.**

**I lace the shoes, step outside  
where the daybreak cracks and  
fires.**

**At the edge of the pond, my swan  
is waiting, wings spread. I mount,  
shoes first. White on white.**

**In the trees, my camera crews  
are poised to catch, upload my  
triumph.**



**Bedecked in youth's fashion, in  
beauty, I ride.**

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