

## [The Land of Innocence \[1\]](#)

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### Poetry by Alan King



### The Land of Innocence

*For Jade Rose King and George Floyd*

A YouTube clip shows a protest  
ignited after police killed George Floyd—

torched SUVs, overturned cop cars,  
armored officers retreating—

all of that sinks my wife  
into a deeper postpartum,  
having made it through  
our personal crisis.

We watch the python of despair  
coil itself around America, blowing out  
glass storefronts and colliding angry bodies  
as the tension constricts and crushes.

We're miles from the mayhem,  
but a different kind of danger finds us  
in the maternity ward—

a decreasing heartbeat, frenzied nurses  
rushing my wife to the OR, surgeons scrambling  
to save our daughter.

Watching the news, I'm reminded of slogans  
on chaos as necessity: "Real discoveries come  
from chaos," "Chaos is beautiful  
and full of fertility."

But when it's a violent pattern  
of reactions, what's the real discovery,  
where's the beauty in things shattered and tagged  
if the same pattern of injustice  
ripples our lives?

Maybe "chaos" isn't the right word.  
Let's try, instead, "challenge."

And since it means refuting the truth  
or its validity, isn't a protest a public dispute  
of someone else's truth

like the one about the fear of dark bodies,  
how it justifies them being mangled  
or discredited in news cycles?

Wouldn't the beauty then  
be new laws that get us closer  
to becoming the people  
the Constitution claims it protects?

Let me begin again.

When my wife told me several months ago  
she was pregnant, we knew the challenge  
of this birth could take her life

just as the challenge in the hospital  
threatened our daughter's.

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And isn't it an act of faith to go blindfolded  
into the future and be delighted  
by the light there?

Now, we're lit by a dancing star named Jade,  
short for Jadesola (Jah-de-sho-lah), which in Yoruba  
means "come into wealth."

She's Jade like the green stone  
said to emit wisdom and clarity.

I'm feeding her while watching  
the YouTube video.

Someone onscreen yells,  
"We're better than this,"  
and she squeals—mouth dripping  
with her mother's milk, smiling  
while dreaming her baby dreams—  
that land of innocence, where it all starts  
before we lose our way back  
rationalizing our destruction.





## Into the Light

You're a floor below me, healing  
in your room. Both of us sore  
from the divine puppetry of science—  
God pulling the surgeon's strings,  
sliding the kidney from inside me,  
routing it to its new body in Connecticut.

And wasn't He present in the hands' deft dance  
and how hope lit the operating room like a stage?  
Your new kidney ready for its debut inside you,  
having traveled in a freight of prayers, 17 hours  
from Minneapolis to DC.

Didn't our road here  
seem even longer—  
not being a direct match,  
the hiccup in lab results,  
us hurling our names  
into an exchange pool  
deep with uncertainty?

And here we are—in our beds,  
an elevator ride from each other, this moment

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like the 90-degree day beyond our windows,  
the cloudless sky, shadows receding  
in the sunlight.

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### Art Information

- “[Truth Versus Propaganda](#) [6]” and “[The Spectacle](#) [7]” © Darrell Black; used by permission.



Alan King is a husband, father, videographer, and communications professional living in Bowie, Maryland. He's the author of *Drift* (Aquarius Press/Willow Books, 2012) and *Point Blank: Poems* (Silver Birch Press, 2016). Of the latter, US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo said, these "poems are not pop and flash, rather more like a slow dance with someone you're going to love forever." King is a Cave Canem graduate fellow and a graduate of the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast MFA.

For more information, see his blogs and vlogs on [Alan W. King's website](#) [8] or follow him on Twitter at [@aking020881](#) [9].

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