

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## John Amen: “No Longer July”

John Amen · Friday, October 29th, 2021

*John Amen, “No Longer July,” 2021 Jack Grapes Poetry Prize Winner selected by Judge Alexis Rhone Fancher*

I loved the rhythm of this poem, how it riffed on popular culture while delineating among other things, a failed relationship, crime, the angst and trauma of the ongoing pandemic, and brought the poem back again to its devastating conclusion. I could not get this terrific poem out of my head. Extraordinary work.

— Alexis Rhone Fancher

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## No Longer July

Sometimes it jumbles,  
 beats from a K-pop project,  
 Stefan’s poem about the coordinates of war,  
 Detective Ana Garcia’s voicemail  
 sparking in the airwaves. *I unscrewed the door from its hinges,*  
 she bored her flashlight into a curtained room  
 – Richard slumped in his chair,  
 a scarecrow with a red tunnel in his head.  
 Now I rescan the email from his ex,  
 insisting that she loved him  
 despite the way their short summer ended.  
 Regardless of who loved who or didn’t, it’s been a year  
 since I swore off arguing with the dead.  
 The things we carry: how it’s never enough  
 to stand shirtless in a field, singing the truth,  
 you need someone across the fence to applaud, to say yes,  
 you were there when the gun went off, though you weren’t.  
 Yeah, you reached for the barrel at the last moment,  
 though you were five hundred miles away,  
 rummaging through bills  
 or changing a light bulb  
 or trying to get to the bottom of why

your newspaper wasn't delivered.  
I wish I could tell her that if she weeps long enough, he'll return,  
floating above her king-sized bed at three in the morning,  
mouthing *all is forgiven baby*,  
but even he can't chase away that reek of sulfur,  
it's all yours, it hovers, thick as  
guilt or longing or resentment,  
until you don't need it anymore, you roar  
in the middle of the night it's gone.

*Photo credit: Chad Weeden*

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