

Jonestown

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The jungle has reclaimed the camp,
a bed of daisies growing now
where the pavilion was. The oil drum
stands rusting, its remembrance burnt away.
If you told them this had been the goal
forty years ahead, that they would all be gone
with all their children, but that there would
in the jungle be these disappearing parts
of what had been their lives,
a tractor, a cassava mill, a waist-high meadow,
would it have been worth it? I don't know,
but I'm not prepared to tell them no.
What would I say if you told me:
that's the end of all our doing everywhere?
All the beautiful words, the quiet crimes,
the religion, the building, and the song
we worked to learn each note of one by one.
How do nine hundred people die at once?
A mother fills a syringe with juice,
empties it into her baby's mouth,
and then her own, beneath the tent.
Many had to wait their turn for hours.
You and I, we wait for ours. Meanwhile
what are we doing? Clearing jungle,
and believing in a world no one sees.