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A White Guy Watches Alpha Ya Ya Diallo and His Bafing Riders Perform at the Local Arts Center

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That white guy – okay, to be perfectly honest, is me, spraddle-legged in a velvet balcony seat, watching Guinean Diallo perform for fifty, maybe a hundred or so suburban folks all nodding along to songs about love, and panic, and freedom.

At the break I consider a glass of wine, but run into Felipe, a colleague who teaches Spanish and Psych. He asks, do I know what the drum is called, the drum that’s been giving up six beats against Diallo’s four: a jembe, he says. Oh, with a d: djembe. A crossword word I’ve run into.

My daughter and I, says Felipe, like to jam. And he hooks the air with his fingers, conditioning “jam.” She plays her little drum and I play the big drum. And this is my friend, he says, of the man who’s walked up, he’s beheaded to Africa in two weeks.

In two weeks I’ll be there. He rolls his eyes when I mention the flight. I waste a day in Paris, then four and half hours to the Senegal coast.
The lights dim,
like a guy with a trick knee
that gives way a bit,
so Felipe and his friend
head back inside and I’m off
to the balcony where I sit and look down
at the djembe, waiting
for something to happen.

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Aloneliness

Kristina Noel Kroger

a green pane of glass, green, green, wine-bottle green
hugs me close—I’m getting drunk on the loneliness.
This sweet, sloshing, burning liquid

Stumbling bumbling in a neon night, hedonism at its finest
sweet pleasures like peaches on my tongue
flesh rises before me, but I am alone

smoky wind, red moon, winking city, laughing
the coyote with the green fire in its eyes
is the mystery in the dark alley

Ah, metropolis of sin,
I walk your shadowed avenues
giggling with my shadow