

InTensions

Document for U.S. Citizens Who Have Never Applied for a Visa and Have Just About Had It with These Aliens Who Go On and On about Some Letter; Deep English; and Autumn Leaves (3 Poems)

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It is not like going to the bank.

There are no hard candies in a basket made in China,

And no Kleenexes on the counter.

There is no refund if someone forgets to wish you a good day.

There are no chairs for the aged, no toys for two-year olds with

earache, no supervisor to speak to in case of the

Absurd.

There are no meal vouchers if it takes all day,

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No list of local hotels with a negotiated rate.

No one wants to know if you are a doctor.

Plastic is not magic. Seals are not signs.

Your cousin's wedding is not relevant.

And it is always your fault: not enough planning,

The wrong color passport, the misplaced stress

In a word.

Deep English

Walk through the edges,

circumvent center

(circle the square, so to speak)

Having parted ways with the crossroad,

take each path offered, and unite into

a thousand thousand fragments

Stutter in the tongues of men and angels.

Spit out the truth:

How the Honorific Title "Mad Woman" Was Won.

Destitute, discover the ancestral home, and
sit down to fast sumptuously at the
high table.

Comforted, stare into the mirror
that divisioned all these years,
the mirror that melts in the mouth.

Now, speak clearly.

Autumn Leaves

1. Preservation Hall

Who knew that, behind that flammable screen, the coals were
hurriedly swallowing roses.

Whole.

2. Parabola

Look on, you greedy nightmoths.

And learn what comes of flying /:

too close to the flame.

Consider the mounded ash:

so many wings

once wore their silks

so haughtily.

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pride first.

3. Memo : --/Today/-----

RE: The danger is not that the wild Fire can storm .-. | .-.-.- | .-

across highways like a

wall of ochred water {.-.-.-|-}, spewing the stinging brine of

smoke \\\|.*| .*

The danger is that, years later, beneath the sooty footprints of

retreating forests, we

Ember-roses—all too quiet—will remember it [-.-.-.5b3 4...]

like so many

Yesterdays.

Originally from Zimbabwe, Tsitsi Jaji teaches literature in the English and Africana departments at University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She is currently completing a scholarly book entitled *Africa in Stereo: Transnational Black Solidarity and the Musical Mediums of Modernity*.