Madras Insomnia

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Struck head-on by the wind's blow, 
two trees hum like tuning forks. 
The sky’s colander drains off 
water from the stars while a parrot 
sharpens its voice. A lone peacock 
sputters in the dark.

I can’t sleep under the fan’s blades. 
Saffron geckos cling upsidedown, 
chirping and chirping for gnats. 
Mosquitos unzip themselves from the wall. 
Even the bee-eaters’ slender tongues 
untie their knots.

Outside, a banyan tree sinks its hooks 
into an acre of dust. In the blue hills 
langurs leaf, through green crops, 
and water buffalo sink into mud. 
Spirals of light cling to night’s ribs. 
White ants spill out of bark.

I wish for the sleep of clear rivers, 
for the midnight dreams of saints, 
I wait to enter another realm where 
one flame dances eternally on one toe: 
where the bride of heaven sings a single note, 
and the king cobra’s hood cups the world.