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The Passing of Eden: Pomona, California

Catherine Davis

To Glen Epstein

There are foxes on this hill,
friend, and rattlesnakes. But deer
also wander dreamily
among the palms, persimmons,
and cypresses and appear
at Kellogg mansion to browse
on the lawn and even come
down at night when no one's near
to the dreamless beds below
where, filling the night air, bloom
roses on roses, all year
long, but which, for some time past,
thieves, or perhaps vandals, not
prizing the long stems—from mere
meanness was the common view—
have been ripping off. I read
today it's becoming clear
who the culprits are. But oh
the deer—I saw one close by
but fugitive, without peer
for remoteness—know nothing
of the passing of Eden
or the price of roses here.
Still, whenever I linger
absently in the garden
now, I wonder, will I hear
the whispers of hooves, as light
as sighs, among the roses?
What can we do when the deer,
half-visions all day, steal down
at night from the hill and eat
the roses and disappear?