

SISYPHUS

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I am my mother's second son if you count the living.
Fourth, if you summon the dead. And the truth is,
I am nothing close to a good son. I refuse to wander in
this labyrinth of familial scars, to kneel dejected at
the threshold of my misfortunes. Neither do I partake
in their communion of grief, where my father's absence
is broken as bread. Mother's tears, wine. I laugh over
what others would sorrow and muddle their garments
with loam. And whose fault is it, schadenfreuder, that
I was conceived into the chaos of a shipwreck; into
a disarray of crushed rose petals and fractured vows?
Once, mid-sermon, I raced out of a chapel, because the
preacher's words were a hammer against my cardboard
heart. He kept praising the Father. And what father
have I to worship? All my life, I have cradled the hope
that I would someday wake to find him sitting legs
crossed in the sitting room, the way every father does.
Reading from a newspaper, the increasing death tolls
in my country. Instead, I am awakened by mother's
piercing cries in the aphotic cage of their room. Hope,
I tell you, is a lousy thing—how brief the duration of
its bliss. To shield her from memories of him, I wear
a mask to conceal my face. I am both the father and
the begotten son. I am what my mother has left. I am
what my father has left to torture her. Both sand and
sandstorm. Rain and floodwater. I am the godless hand
bending an exclamation into a question mark. If you
must know, I am not all muscle and tendon. Behind
this grinning face, a boy hungers for paternal warmth.
Call me son, and I swear, I'll crumble right here before
your feet. The colourful birds in me long to chirrup.
There are succulent parts of me I shield from the light.
In the darkness of my room, I muffle my cries in the
silkeness of a pillow. A wet patch growing into a temple
of ruins. I, too, am deserving of the lushness of this
world. To be unladen of this burden I have carried the
entirety of my life. I, Sisyphus with the boulder weight
of a father's name. Take this cup from me dear Lord,
I never for once lamented of thirst.