

House

for HRS

He always lived there—
on plum-red escalations of morning
when magpies warbled from fence-posts
and heat ran like streamers through the living room;
during mild winters when rain clagged windows
and someone drew stick figures
of copulating buffalo on sweating glass.
He picked a bougainvillea spike from loping couch grass
and tickled his sister's feet with its point
as she rolled and squealed.
He circumnavigated his parents' bedroom
where arguments like smoke snuck under the heavy door.
They emerged shadowed by makeup,
buying Neapolitan ice cream at the local deli
where Mr Georgiades said 'Soon nobody will have to die'.
He couldn't believe that
because birds sometimes fell from the air
and his parents inhabited death like a promise of final satisfaction,
their loose bones and flesh seductive
with the knowledge of growing old.
The house was ransacked in his indolent games
by Roman soldiers who made its stones
as slippery as egg-whites, and was finally cut in half
on a day when smoke hovered over the suburb,
a hundred ghosts exiting walls
and sliding from floorboards that twisted and groaned.
It was lifted like a Leviathan in two exposed sections
with furniture taped to its ribs,
and trundled on a truck through dust
like clouds of unknowing.
He was pressed tight to those walls
or running for cover as his father walked with a belt
wrapped tightly around knuckles.

His sister leered from her corner bedroom
where the louvres were open and a boy was looking in,
saying 'You're in for it now'.
There was a smell of rising yeast
and his mother's high voice broke as if she'd been crying.
Crows cawed, settling
on exposed, unsteady ground.

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