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Poems

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Poems

Abstract
Family history, Rites, The bell

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FAMILY HISTORY

Satin in Mother's room,
mirrors, alabaster boxes,
Black Sea shells, water singing,
I went around the bed chanting:
Do you hear the sea inside me?
Stopped at the new cot
oyster head, crayfish tail,
as in the zoology books,
I picked it up and swallowed it,
horrified,
yet the thing had no taste.

When I found myself I was weeping,
beating the ground with my fists,
the wet nurses were there,
all in grey, and his face
with the dark handsome eyes
slipped away from my reach.

RITES

They moved towards the killing
in an underwater dusk
the sunken garden full of shadows.
I went unwillingly
kept looking at the ground
their sandled feet on the wet stones
the palm leaves they were holding
in their hands to mark the chanting.

The silence struck
as they approached the chamber.
Past the white portals, only
the body petrified in ash
lay in the light,
arrested in the moment of
the fall, beyond release.

On the stone benches I waited
with the others. Were there
palm leaves, or horses’ manes
that glinted in the dark?
The black fox watched me from
her lap, lithe, a sea serpent
with enamelled eyes.

THE BELL

Soundless
you ring
on the great waves
in afternoons
full of cicadas.

Your breath
dusts slightly
the polish of
their wooden vestments
waiting
so small
so self contained
before the altars.