

Book of Genesis

by A. Pseudonym

Nothing came of the dust. This was a grit unbothered by breath. Forms did not form, shapes were not shaped; it stirred, rose, and settled again. I stared and cursed the ground.

Some endless garden was this, green growing life aplenty strung down rows of fences built to stretch their fruit to the sky for the hands of my glory to pluck without stooping. But no glory would come, so what was it for. My disappointment split rivers apart, and the waters multiplied beyond all their intentions. Banks were spilled. The ground receded, the hills bowed under, all was lost to me.

From a high place I watched that world deepen. Dust made mud. Nothing died because nothing had lived. Nothing was punished because nothing had sinned. Nothing was made that was made. And here some spare cold inkling of the course of things undone arose around my feet.

Stirring, rising, settling again, from dust unto dust with what in between. With some redrinded fruit found dangling alone from a tree of old France. Prized by your hairy hand. With a soldier unfortunate crumbling in trenches there. You write in rain to your mother. With your poor life or rich one trading places and passing like galaxies in the night, and you remembering or forgetting. With you alphas and omegas without beginning without end, and without for now the rising wave. Almost to my perch. Almost to the elevation of regret.

I saw you into creation, but you did not return my gaze. What became of you after that? What ash to ash returned?

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Down the straightup valley walls, the erections of mountains deposited by god to guard or imprison the world, we tumbled surefooted toward the meadow floor whereon your father my mother lay asleep before dawn. We had hunted all night in the crags and high hillocks and brought nothing back but our bellies crying. Game in yonder parent's day grew scarce, while they themselves grew pale

and bitter and unfit to show us the earth. Now in our time there was nothing, not for us, not for their decomposing frames, which sapped what dessicated vines we scavanged from neighbors poorer than us, and left nothing over. Ruiners and takers, mother and father unworthy of those names. They bequeathed this fate upon themselves. So we told each other, flying down the mountainside. Hatchets in satchels on our backs. Blades left sharp and unslaked.

It was a curdled light that saw us coming, out of the trees on the foothills like shadow out of shadow into shadow. We moved grim and grimy with a goosestepping tread through the little marsh at the village edge. Tendril smoke from the chimney's one nostril spread out flat under the morning fog. Memory saw through the walls. A dark kitchen with potato peels left rotting on the table. One small window to the north, cobwebbed and crusted. Beneath it our parent's pile of mangle and straw. A thin burlap covering their hides. Choked snoring sounds from their wad of pillows. And their heads dreaming new expectations for their children, forgetful of their own failures.

We opened the door quietly and did not wake them for the blow. We made no speeches and did not try to justify things. Justification was their game, and we were done with it. I took our father's skull, and you took our mother's, and it was done. We left the hatchets embedded there, stanching the blood. Then we walked out and away.

Since then we have wandered and no one will take us in, and no one will kill us either, and we will not kill ourselves because we are cowards. Courage is the first thing our parents took from us, and taking their lives did not bring it back in some magic restitution. We have a custom between us of knocking on cottage doors in the new towns that grew up after their death, and practicing on who lives there whatever new expressions of pennance we have recently devised. They are never swayed and never deceived and they never allow us a room for the night. We move on, refining our countenances in hopes that someone somewhere will mistake them for our faces. In our fantasies these are the beautiful naïve who

accept us for who we are not. They serve us warm bread, adopt us, transfer to our names their inheritances, and die with us greiving at their bedsides.

We do not believe this will come true, ever. So our faces every day will call us killers.

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Long time gone since my murdering line began. Its ways are my ways times seven. On my property south of town I've developed some pretty renovations in the dealing of death. Would you like to see?

Here we have my guilty pleasure. An ant farm I bought at auction a few years ago. Fixed it up and repopulated it. But you'll notice the little addons and doohickies I hope. The main tunnel is free and clear, but any number of sidetracks and wallop, ant goes bye-bye to sweet effect. This one's got a blade that slices clean down the center from head through abdomen. Half-ant. This one sprays little droplets of bugkiller in the face. And here my favorite is the Hall of Fire. See, I have a milk jug positioned up at the top here. Whenever I want to play with some ant coming through the Hall, I wait for him to approach and then light a match under the jug. Balls of melting plastic drop just so and cremate him on the spot. Ha!

Ah, for something a bit more serious, take a look at this worthy prize. 16th century Iron Maiden. You'll notice the spikes on the inside of the door. Maiden goes in, door gets shut, spikes impale her. It's pretty slow and painful because the spikes are positioned so that nothing vital is pierced. It's a bleedout. When you've got someone inside this thing it's tempting to go over every once in a while and check on their progress, but that's a risk because opening the door pulls out the spikes, which lets out the blood, which speeds the whole process up faster than you might like. It's about savoring the knowledge, not greedily observing. Takes lots of discipline, as you might imagine.

Ok, but my latest and newest and most favorite. I've been working on this one night and day. All alone, no help, so it takes a while.

Careful! Don't fall in. Look down, but make sure you hold on to this handle here. Yes, a pit. The deepest pit in the world.

See, my plan is to make a sort of ultimate trap door. A pit that reaches into the very center of the earth. Oh, the glory of it! A testament to my power without rival. As you know, the center of the earth is molten lava. A bad death on its own. But the worst part for whatever hapless oaf who comes lumbering along and steps on my trap will be the fall. The center of the earth is *miles* away. Miles! It'll take hours for the guy to get to his doom, and the whole while he'll just be imagining what it'll feel like when he hits bottom.

I'm going to cover the hole with rushes and reeds. I'll build me a treestand nearby, and sit up there with some snacks and a video camera. Should be good times.

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On the lip of that pit I tottered and poised for one last moment holding back before the plunge. Then with a step like every step I've ever taken but completely different because of what lay underfoot which was nothing but air no solid ground just rushes and rushing inward to the burning center still far far away but coming up fast I *dropped*. Dropped into the pit, but then it becomes nothing but perspective, doesn't it. I am dropped in, or the earth is dropped around me, either way I will return to whence I was made, the very heart of the matter, to be no more myself. As if I never was.

