

Giant Stand

Tom Kelly

My father wished to be a giant.
His mother said “no”.
In fact, she wished he wouldn’t grow at all.
He already bore the likeness of his father,
a man she despised,
so she pushed him down.
Yet something pushed to the ground has a way of taking root.
And so my father set out to suit himself.
He would be a giant.
Genius, invention, nobility, wealth—
these are the means given to mortals
but these were not in my father’s genes
and so he took his right by force,
honed his aggression,
and became Goliath.

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But who was I? Surely not David. I was Goliath's son,
locked in our apartment where no smooth stones could be found.
Did I have God on my side? Perhaps I did.
But I didn't believe it. I was conflicted:
oppressed by the man I should love,
cursed by the man appointed to do so,
who said it was he who had God on his side.
Did I slay him? Nay. Not that I could have. Not that I would have.
Though sometimes I wanted to.
In the end, I didn't have to.
The drink did it for me.

I watched as this proud, terrible giant
sank into the ground.
Perhaps now I could be David, now that I could dance.
But did I dance unto God?
No. I didn't have joy,
even though I danced on his grave,
for I was still a boy,
forbidden to grow
just like him.

I tried to forget, to move on, to not replicate the harm.
I left the cemetery and swore never to return
but would find myself, more often than not,
back on that same muddy patch,
the mound still protruding,
the bones not deep enough down.

I could exhume the body, grind the bones.
I tried, in my mind, but still I had to walk over them,
piercing thorns in my feet.
Worse yet, I now breathed them in.
They were grit in my teeth.
Perhaps if I burned them to ash.
I tried. But that only rendered
Prometheus' punishment:

chained by my memories, bound to a rock of unforgivingness.
He was gone; cirrhosis ate up his liver.
But now it grew in me.
Each day I would use my talons to claw it out.
Each night it would grow back.

So instead, I became a paleontologist.
I dug up the bones.
But rather than crushing them, I began to clean them.
I spent many an hour on dusty knee.
Once cleaned, they looked different.
And so I set about to label them.
Forgiveness. Mercy. Resilience. Peace.
I labeled them not by what they had been but by what they could be.
And once I had them all laid out,
it was then I saw the error
for the shoulder bone was no higher than the ankle bone.
So I took up my courage
and began to build
bone upon bone.
But I was still alone.
So I climbed up
and sat on my father's shoulders
and from there, at last, I saw others.