

NIGHT PALACE

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JAMES WALLER

A selection of five poems from the collection

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River of Names

Words lay buried, deep in the silence. They are sculptures; invisible men and women of stone, faceless, limbless. They come to me as if in a dream. Words. Archaic lanes of stillness. Feathers of loss falling quietly to the ground. What ground is that? The homeless ground. Where the sculptures live, where the dream and language are buried. Fossicking the dawn. Fossicking the sun. Words detecting themselves, unveiling themselves - gods and goddesses - strange whispers unfurling, un-naming, reforging their masks in the quiet emptiness. It is barren. There is no pretense. No naming where there are no names. Words drift in the deep forgeries of the world. Blank states of being, they curl in the fires, where they burn, before they lift, before they rise to the Tongue of Being, to the defeated face of Meaning, to the beautiful river of names.

The Game

He comes with flowers. He comes alone. A shadow on the pavement. Born of sun and skin. He comes and the wind can feel it. A passage of space breathing. A wine-skin of time receiving and releasing an inarticulate flow. Hands. Soldered into pockets of bronze. Only the faces pass, smile, defeated. Does any one know? He comes with flowers and surrenders, once, then twice to the game.

Relinquish the Snow White Bones

Shadows lay in pieces, broken. Arms lift and carry the fragments, without hands. Tomorrow is lost. Centuries ago the reliquaries stood in silence, appeasing the dead. Torches lead the pilgrims to the bones of the living. Torches lead the pilgrims through the labyrinths of Tomorrow. They flared in the silence of the golden arms which held the broken shadows. There is a song inside the gold. But first, relinquish the snow white bones flowering in the House.

The Carpet of the Living is Strange. Do You Trust It?

The carpet of the living is strange. Do you trust it?

What I Found

Seeking solace I entered the palace and found a shining mirror. Portrait of the centuries. Confiscated amalgam, hieroglyph, telegram, from the ocean of the conquered, the slain.

Seeking solace I entered the palace and found dust drifting over frozen bodies. In place of prayers I found fragments of darkness, glinting softly in the evening air.