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Bones of Their Ancestors

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Bard college

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Bones of Their Ancestors

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2024

Dedication

I dedicate this to Keto, for being the fire that lights my way and inspires me in life and stories;
and to children everywhere around the world, who are the essence that must be protected.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my mother for letting me soar; my father for keeping me grounded; my older sister for shaping the person I am today; to my baby sister for shaping the person I am going to be tomorrow; to each of my grandparents for providing me with endless love in their little ways; to my aunt for helping me find my way in this world; to my uncle for always watching over me; to my teachers and professors for shaping me intellectually; to Keto, for teaching me to appreciate the depths, the beauty and complexity of the world; and finally, I want to thank my friends for giving me hope for the future.

Rain drops dripping, background of little children' sleep;
Travel through clouds, through a fiery sky, to cobble caste
That dances with the stars at night–

Tuck yourselves in especially tight
Feel the warmth of the world around you.
The safety of your night, the sweetness of your song
Gives breath and chorus to this dream.

For those who see the world for what it can be
Fools who illuminate the world with kindness and curiosity
In exchange for your sleep tonight–
I shall sing you the song of an orphan tear.

The beginning–the end.
Through battle Through death,
Life begone–life began;

0.

From the days of men's ambition
The ground
Is laden with sacrifices of the past.
far and wide
Life's roads are intertwined
Sun rise
Shade and fade
Followed by dusk
Where daredevils wake.
Visibly or hiddenly
Through venomous currents
Twisted rays, on flowering dreams
Not yet seen
They
Step
Tread
Squash.

To Ussomah
The royal palace
Heavenly winds carrying snow
Bring back winter old;
Inside the cracked gray stones
Stitched together by motives
By waned dreams.
The heart
races, fates and cracks.
As the house of Diahro
Trembles.
Either from

The cold outside
Or through remembrance
Of all the steps
That disappeared from within its halls.

Inside the castle
Voices travel
Routes well traveled and explored.
In the corner a roaring fire
Twitches nervously
As a servant scatters
To pick the remnants
Of a broken vase.
He leans down and notices
Feet sticking out from behind the curtain.

Afraid
The beating of his heart
Will give him away
The little prince does not move.
Eyes closed
Echoes distant
Dead to living
He breathes
Past the corpses
Of brothers and uncles
He breathes.

In his hand, he holds a little star
Full of gold, full of fame
Full of life
And life
And life.

Bringing it closer
To his chest
The boy clutches with all
His might.

It burns.
He tightens the grip.

Through tears
The fledgling
Declares
'This... this...
This is mine.

1.

Dendi Diahro woke to sounds of Destiny–

Dazed and half asleep
delicate not to rattle, not to reveal
His unfolding frailty–
He drapes himself in layers of satin
Prepares to step outside
Leaving the warmth, the lavishness
Of his carriage to his concubines.

The blow of mountain air
Startles the king
Fully crumbling his slumber–
with gentle caress, he rubs his eyes
Open now
To the torture and mutilation;
A victim not creaking
Even with its heart being clawed out–
A fierce shiver goes through Diahro's heart
As he feels the toll of the journey on him.

The travel had not been kind
Indeed, been quite unkind to Dendi Diahro.
Since he'd left Viemieda
Whenever apprehension creeped up
He stared at scenery
The marvel of the Bronyair.
Standing where he now stood
Everywhere
He had stood for the last year
All that was visible
Was an endless stream of giants

Clad in rugged armor.
Daring challengers to come and–
As was the case for all
Except Dendi Diahro–
To become forgotten
Fodder for digestion.

Gentle child, ferocious parent
Cobble monster of the Bronyair
Defender of Mariotah
Since you sprouted from the sea
Vanquisher of countless
Valiant sons of Viemieda.
Not my father
Nor his father
Managed to cross your passings–
See past your violent peaks
Yet I, Dendi Diahro
Have blazed past them all
Past your guardianship
Past their withered bones
Into history, excellence,
Into life beyond the trifle–
Through your heart
My road is paved
Through mortality to perpetuity.

As though on que
An explosion
The sound of his cunning, his greatness
Filled the air.
Unlike those before him
Fools who sacrificed

Viemiedian lives for glory-
Dendi Diahro did not dare
To cross the Bronyair
He dared far more.
He did not intend to freeze
Clasped and stuck in the hand of the giant
Dendi Diahro intended to slay the beast
By digging through its frozen heart.

2.

The boom- black powder- warms the stars at night.

In the mines, work does not stop for days

In the mines, men grind their souls to dust.

For them to pass through

For Diahro's dream to come true-

The men thrust tirelessly.

Mounds of flesh-

Cart

Dump-

Pluck at the giant's heart.

No time- no air- for them to breathe

Cramped together.

Pistons, engine and a rotating drill

Occupies most of the space.

To evade the debris men crawl on top of each other.

The pace of the machine is relentless-

Boom-black powder- softens the earth-

The workers turn, turn, turn the pistons

The machine-a cannibal from bedlam-

Unloads, the earth quakes, the mountain pains

As sharp teeth sink deep and rip out fresh flesh.

Each giant conquered

Leads the men and Diahro

Closer to Mariotah.

As the magic of the Bronyair grows weaker

The men cement their choices

Their destiny.

Guided by Dreams, riches and fame.

All shall be dust, but dust also has a soul.

A mountain's fate is to stand eternal

For wild beasts in the forest

The truth is balance

But for humans

The path is paved through twists and turns.

Men become afflicted by greed

Men die for goodness

Men pervert themselves

Men fall in love

Men desire revenge

The order of the world

Fails within the hearts of Men–

Leaving itself wide open

For attack.

Blinded by ambition

Unable to see the void inside

Darkness swirls and becomes all consuming–

The invaders path through the mines

Leads them to the heart of the unknown

As the boom-black powder– is extinguished by the fiery sky.

3.

From heart to lung
Drenched in sweat
Men breathe deep–
The immeasurable beauty of rest.

Hollow air
Makes way for chatter
With mead and meal in hand
Men light a bonfire
Around which
They squeeze and squeeze and squeeze.

Merry and all together
They're saying:
'What better way
To put the day to rest
Then for the singer of tales to take us away.'

Pale frozen eyes
Which hold stories beyond words;
Long fingers, sickly nails
Which reach true depths and scratch the soul;
He limps, his body flickers
Disappears and Reappears in the storm.

As he reaches the stage
Men are silent;
Inside the warring flame
The restless ember
Has ceased dancing
Its attention
Its light is solely focused on him

As he begins to sing.

'Stars and moon and holy flame
Bless us with grace today.
Drowsy bodies
Down the cul-de-sac
Ache with worry
Yet rest easy
Having know more
Than waste and decay when it is time.
Bones keep their shape
Once they rejoin the earth
So, while our bones
Are upright
Rejoice tonight–
Rejoice together.

This space on which we're waking
Is blessed
By ancient spirits who hold their sleep.
Each step of our journey
Brings to life
Sights unseen
Magic unfelt for generations.
With each step
That moves the earth
A heart beats
Whispering to me my songs

From far below
I've heard tales of the ground
Rising from fiery cracks;
Humming winds come to me in dreams

Showing me visions of the sea's anger;
Fallen stars whisper
About the loneliness of the endless desert-
The Auremaiss.

The fateful protectors
Of Mariotah about whom I sing,
You might all dismiss as folly
But they are here
They've been here
Since the days of torment
When Mariotah was being torn at from all sides.

From North came Viemieda
Proud armies and pretty banners in hand;
From South came Lokhum
Their ambition of conquest close to chest;
From East and West
Pirate groups targeted the shores
Taking the little people had left.

Land
Flesh
Used
Abused
Men perished
Women taken
Children raised
Under lies of empire
Poets
Painters
Sculptors
Philosophers

Musicians
Scientists
The brave
Executed.

Then came a girl
Named Aylah
Who could imagine
Life cascading freely:
Children smiling at the sun
Glowing like sunflowers in its warmth
Playing without corpses dragging down their souls.

Aylah's bravery and cunning
Had no equal.
One fated night
She slipped away
On her father's stead, Garruh
The chestnut zephyr
Who traveled as far and as fast as the wind.
Her vision, her imagined world—
Change— became her duty.
She could not eat
Could not rest,
So she rode everywhere
Where Roads could take them
Where they couldn't.
To varied cities of Mariotah:
From proud Horahar high in the north
To tropical Sokal in the south
From bleeding Gundhill in the west
To the hidden haven of Niyah in the east.

Following the winds
They revealed their sorrow and heart
And that passion
Which Aylah prized most of all—
The great flame of life;
Sparks of which
Secretly spurs inside us all.
Through their travels
Through her preaching
They reached the depths of many souls
Yet, not one heart answered their call.
For what could they do?
Defenseless and weaponless
Against the great armies.
The rider and the stallion
Carried hope
But for the citizens of Mariotah
That taste
Was far too strong.
For them
Aylah's words seemed cruelty
Instead of kindness.

After years of travel, the two
Were still all alone.
Exhausted
Distraught
Hopeless
Aylah and Garruh
Wandered into a dark forest
Where their knees
Their spirits gave out, and they fell to the ground.

For twenty days
For twenty-one nights they cried.

Through their tears, their slumber
Brought no dreams;
All that they touched
All that they ate
All they saw was darkness.
They resigned
Themselves to loss.

But
when the sun rose
On the twenty-first day
Alongside dawn
From the depths of the forests
Soft melodic echoes broke.

A serene Harmony
Looping upwards through the light
Towards the sky
Waking the heroes from deep sleep.
Slowly in unison
They rose
Music filling their dazed minds
Enticing them past darkness
Through vines, through thorns
Following the sound into the unknown.

Past hills and creeks came an opening
Where the entire landscape
Of Mariotah could be seen.
Glorious nature, alongside desolation
Desperation, death.

There, where
The first golden beams
Were disappearing the night
The source of singing
Revealed itself.
Dressed in a flowing dress of sun
Appeared a lady
An angel of light, whose voice
Whose body
Seemed to be illuminating the world.

Its song overflowing
With sorrow and disappointment
Revealed deep wounds from the past
Which would never heal
Completely, from the aching pain within;
Yet, still
The music traveled upwards
Towards the sun.
Never wavering, never breaking.

Then the light, the sound
Changed direction.
Beams from the sky
Wrapped around them
In a warm embrace
Wiping the endless tears from their faces
As harmony swirled around them
Whispering
Secrets of the world in their ears.

Awake from the deep slumber
Aylah and Garruh

Opened their eyes

They were all alone

Again.

Yet, never again.

For the heat of that moment

The given wisdom

Stayed with them till the end.

4.

During the height of darkness
King Varthum of Viemieda
Sat airily
In the center of the war room.
His leather shoe
Hung in the air
While the other, lightly
Tapped the ground.
All around him
His generals
With their iron boots
Heavily step-stumbled around the room:
Moving backwards
To the sides
Resting a moment
The pounding with rage
To make their arguments
More convincing.

While old men argued
Amongst one another
About how best to wage war
On either side of the battlefield
A battle of nerves and whims
Was already raging
Inside the minds of soldiers.
To fill the ever expanding
Void
They ate and drank
As much as they could
Surrounded by
The unfolding darkness above them

The unraveling mystery held by the morrow.

The moon's grace
For them that night
Shined brighter than day.
Fantasies controlled their minds
Twisted fate: heavenly murder
Or shameful death.
The rise of the sun
Brought with it
The flight of limbs
Through the eternal sky
Yet what they imagined
Was not the same
As what would be;
For the rider of flaming chaos
Was coming
Rushing against the fate of men.

Crumbs of sun against the sky.
Two armies
Thousands strong
Prepare to dance
For death
For life.

The heavy marching of the soldiers
Stirred the course ground
On which they walked
From its sleep.
Feeling the familiar vibration
An army treading on it
A great pit

Opened inside the belly of the earth
Anguish filled its mighty spirit–
In anticipation of the river of blood
That would come
Flowing down its throat.
All across the vast fields
Soldiers stepped into position.
The restless neighing of their horses
Rang violently through the air.

On a hill
Overlooking the battlefield
Garruh pricked his ears.
With Aylah next to him
Golden hair
Woven around her body.

A horn blew the battle's beginning
Men
Charged vigorously.
The earth
Felt every movement to the smallest breath.
Shaking under the weight
Of a thousand lives
A thousand dreams treading upon it.
Each step
Each second
Brought the clash
Their vibrations disappearing closer.
One-by-one.
Swords
Spears drawn
Close enough

To distinguish the swirls
The curves
On faces in front of them
The soldiers suddenly
Froze where they stood;
As a a mighty
Defining cry
crashing down
From the sky
Rocked their bodies.

The cry, the song of light
An almighty blare that set the sky ablaze
Rich and deep and delicate.
The source of which
Was the pain
Bottled inside Aylah's heart.
In her song she wove
Every hurt she encountered
Every child orphaned
Every village scorched.
Hope
That had been stolen from her people
Aylah now gathered together in her soul.

The soldiers faced east
Towards the source
But all they saw was alabaster
Inside the blazing sun.
Brightness shifting, twitching
A mirage
Recreating scenes from their past
Reflecting the faces of the helpless

The crimes committed
Against citizens of Mariotah.

With shame
Soldiers looked at one another
Thinking
That all had the same visions.
Men faced their comrades
Men faced their enemies
Their eyes softened
Instead of hate
Instead of murderous intent
Mirrors stood in front of them.

Knees trembled
Weapons fell to the floor
Aylah's song continued to grow
In potency and richness.
The winds
Caught the harmony
Started carrying the tune along.
Then the birds and tulips
Soon every beast
Who walked or crawled
Picked up the song
Until Mariotah entire, was teeming with the melody.
From Horahar to Niyah
Hearts were swayed
As
For the first time in generations
Tears fell freely
From the citizens of Mariotah
Their hearts beating in unison.

But no one
Was more enamored
More intoxicated by the euphony
Then the anxious earth on which the soldiers stood.
The music calmed the pain
That had been afflicting it for so long;
Men dies and dies and dies
Bones come to lay within in
And when the bones pile up at once
Or its the gentle little feet
That had walked upon it that disappear
Sorrow builds and builds and builds.

Amongst the soldiers in particular
Was most caught in the whirlpool
The swirling of the song.
He faced his action:
The men, the women, the children
The fire, the blood
His body quivered
In the brightness of the sun
He felt overpowered
Small
Blinded
He looked away
Closed his eyes:
A soldier
Follows orders
A soldier
Follows instinct
The world is not black or white

The world is not life or death.

He faced the light of the blazing sun
With disdain
He gathered his anger
His honor
Amassed it all
Into a single arrow, which he
With celestial precision
Fired into the light.

The melody erupted
Into a single content groan
As the Alabaster sunshine
The Spell and song
Which held the peace broke.
Dazed
Men
Shook awake
Weapons laying flat on the ground
As the race to attack began.

Weight of bodies stung the floor.
Blood dripping
Claret pools
Growing thick and sticky.
Sharp and deafening noise
Shattered memories of the harmony.
The earth swayed
As the taste of iron filled its soul;
The earth shuddered
As Men lost their balance

Tumbled below.
The earth would take no more
It shook
Feeling the shiver
Horses abandoned their riders
Started dashing across the field.
Then the earth quaked
Opened its mouth wide
To form a chasm
To the very depths of the world.
The land tilted inwards
Sucking everything around it
Men clawed and clinged
Using each other as stepping stones
But the rumble was panoptic, the grounds anger too strong
Soon
There was no trace of the soldiers
Except blood traced dirt.

Still
The rumble
The tremble continued
As the world continued to shake
Stirred by Aylah's song
Other spirits began to awake;
Spirits of the ocean
Started raging
Promising that no invader
Would ever again reach Mariotah's shores;
Spirits of sand
Spread to form a desert
Which no man
Would dare tread on

Lest he burn from within;
Spirits of earth
Whose slumber ran deepest
Heard the call of their brother
For the first time
Since rising from the sea
They awoke and stood
Higher than the clouds
Higher than the sky
Promising that no invader
Would ever conquer it.

5.

Everynight the singer sang a song

Everynight the little ember danced along.

With each tale

With each worry

The spark burned brighter

The spirit grew stronger

Began to understand the rhythm

With which men's hearts beat.

6. .

'Thus spirits rose
The gates of Mariotah closed.
For centuries no foreigner entered the land
Until a slave boy
Escaped from Lokhum
And found himself
Stranded in the Auremaiss.
The boy came to be known as Ahbel Lakh
The sorcerer king
Who from the shadows appeared
To end the reign and supremacy
Of Viemiedan ships in Lokhum shores-
Setting our fleets on fire and setting his people free.

Born a bastard
He was abandoned
Raised a captive
With deep taste and understanding
For the wind blowing wildly
Outside his cage.
Grown strong, grown tired
By the taste of stale bread and weak tea
With nowhere to run or hide
He broke away from his cell.

Slaves in Lokhum
Were branded For life.
If a runaway
Was to be found
They would soon meet the noose.
So the boy, still clad in slave clothes
Wandered far and wide

Barely scraping food and water to survive.
To escape the fate
Given to him
By parents he never knew
He traveled North
Where no one ever dared go–
Into the unforgiving desert
The Auremaiss;
Where water turned to steam
Where blood boiled and disappeared.

Knowing that there were still
Plenty of blank pages
To be filled in the tale of his life–
The boy burned his clothes
Naked entered
The endless wave of sand.

The Auremaiss
Takes no captives
Sets all men free
From the shackles
That keep them attached
To this realm.
Skin turning crimson
Blood boiling scarlet
Heart fading under the blaze
Famished, Exhausted
Ahbel Lakh collapsed in the desert.

That should have been the end
Another life
Lost in the pursuit of freedom

And had he perished
Perhaps we not be here today;
And Viemieda might have still reigned
Supreme on the dark shores of Lokhum
But that's not the story
That was written on the page.

A small leap was all
That separated Ahbel Lakh from death
A tiny leap to escape;
But the boy decided to live.
Unconscious, barely breathing
The boy clung to life
Enduring the desert
Until above the child
An unseen sight
In the Auremaiss
A single gray cloud
appeared;
Bearing a gift
More precious than gold—
Rain.

Cold drops stirred the boy
Snatching him from the claws of demise
But scarcely
Had he been revived
When the cloud and the rain
Started to move away.
He quickly composed himself, rose
And started chasing after it.

The cloud never stopped moving

Nor did the boy stop following
Feeding on rain drops to survive
For countless days and nights.
Eventually
The end of the desert
Was in sight
Ahbel Lakh
Had done the impossible.
There the cloud dissipated
Leaving the boy
For the first time in his life
Alone and free.
Past the desert
In the wild jungles of Mariotah
Roaming and exploring
Enjoying
The tropical sustenance of the land
The boy grew into manhood
Into a new ambition:
To return to Lokhum
And liberate the slaves.

The rain
Which saved his life
Remained a mystery–
A sign of his divine destiny
Which would allow him once again
To survive the Auremaiss, with the full
Might of the sun glaring down on him.
Yet right before
He was to embark on his journey
A strong wind
Restless and thunderous

Came from the desert
Knocking him back.
A storm, a hurricane of sand
Swirled over his head, twitching and shifting its form
Until it changed
First into a gray cloud
Then into a shrill, elderly man
With a flowing white beard
That touched the ground.

Initially, the elder
Seeing the boy recklessly charging into the Desert
Was furious
Thunder rolled from his tongue and around his body
Generating a storm;
Looking at Ahbel Lakh, defenseless on the ground in front of him
The anger subsided slightly
'In case you were wondering, I was the one who saved you, though
Perhaps, I shouldn't have
If you are to throw it all away, before saying a simple thank you.
Think before you move.
Although, I only saved you because of your resilience
your determination
I hear the beat of your heart, beating as proudly now
As it did back then
Yet you are not the same. Those eyes, focused
Before so narrowly
Now see far and deep and wide.
You have grown
From boy to man– yet still blind to the value of your life.
My name is Yuoroissis–
The wind that carries change, the storm inside the heart
Child of spirits

Brother to wilderness and stars, but for you, I am
The mighty lord of magic.'

As Yuorissis' earlier foul mood was lifted
He was dancing
Changing form from men to storm
And then he was singing
'Listen boy, to what I'm saying
And Soon you will cease all that praying
And pour yourself onto the world.
But not yet.
You have been blessed
With a strong heart
But to achieve your potential, you must stay
Learn from the world surrounding
Until its secrets are yours
But always remember
To make the right choice.'
With these last words he disappeared into the wind
Leaving Ahbel Lakh alone again.

Eight years afterwards
He stayed, traveling around Mariotah.
Exploring and searching
That which Yuorissis had promised him.
Through his journeys he discovered
The ancient spirits deep in sleep
From their dreams
He studied their secrets;
From the highest peaks of the Bronyair
To the deepest wilderness of the forests
He listened and learned.

7.

Eavesdroppers of my life
Up, up high
To heavenly skies
Loneliest companions of mine.

My flesh is yours
Your flesh is mine;
Same of sorrow
Same of sin.
A joker amongst thieves
Merchants and destroyers of dreams.

Children inherit follies from their parents–
Hurt and lust and betrayal.
Up till now I'm grateful
To have been spared
Shadows of the past
Even more I'm grateful
That silk and women and wine
Were never great interests of mine.

My love is precious
My love is worthless
My love Is here
My love is gone.

Stars be blessed for sharing
For not withholding
Which the heart marked in its depths.
Out the cradle, I walked the path of loneliness
Until I discovered
That name, which can never be un-uttered.

Ever since I took my first steps
Mariotah became my lover
It's my destiny.
I read and read the stories
Every legend, every rumor I could find.
I twisted
I burned with lust
For something I could not have.

As becomes longing, my longing was unkind
Each step
Each new discovery
Brought me closer and closer
Yet further and further.

The painted picture
Had no color
Had no taste
Only an empty name that I could mutter.
Angry. Alone. Full of desire.
I decided to journey here
To test my worth
To see my soul
Reflected through the Bronyair.

Against moaning winds
I started my ascent
In wild blizzards, in terrible storms
With deadly drops and deadlier climbs
I made my way up frozen hills
To conquer the first peak
Only to find an army of its brethren waiting.

I continued my journey
But soon enough
I could move no more
As the Bronyair took its toll
My limbs grew numb
My soul grew powerless—I collapsed in the snow.

Better die alone
Then live alone.
But once my turn came
Mariotah said neither.
A spirit of heaven
I never saw
But who has stayed with me since
Carried me
From a distance
No man could return from.
Having felt that
Having felt her
How could I ever be alone
How could I ever not be.

Friends, amongst you
I am the worst sinner
Much worse than
A mere killer.
On that day
I was deemed worthy
To feel a touch firmer than the hardest metal.
Hear a song more beautiful
More foreign than the wonders of one soul to another.
For a chance
To experience that touch again

I've turned to treason—
Betrayed the only kindness I've known.

Our journey nears completion
And I cannot regret my choice;
I have enjoyed my task of entertainment
I ask you now
To carefully listen to my words
For they are the last one I shall sing:
Coming here was sacrilege—
A desolated row
Of greed and mind;
Prepare, make space
Inside yourselves
For what is to come;
It's never too late
To let loose a tear
For the path you have chosen.

8.

Outside the mighty mountain walls
Which protect proud Horahar
In valley of soft rock and grass
Is a crescent opening-
Where the water falls
Where the sun comes to lay
Between two peaks at night;
There lies a small village
From where shepherds and their sheep
Roam the vast wilderness
Graze, grow and mate.
Those who stay behind in the village
Live merrily
Despite the harshness of Mountain life.
With goat's milk they make:
Hard cheeses
Butter, Potions for health
Soaps, lotions, candles;
Built with fallen mountain pieces
They built the huts in which they live
Giant windows
Facing west
Act as entries
For a magnificent sunsets unlike any other:
Warmer than flames of love
Brighter than sparks of hope;

At dusk
The last rays of sun
Make their way inside the huts
Spend the night alongside the villagers
Protecting them from what may come.

During the day
Men and women
Spend their time laboring-
On this or that-
They divide work equally
The most laborious of which
Are the children-
A Rowdy and ferocious assortment of mountain spawn:
Short in height, shorter in temper
The eldest amongst them is Toshō
Who constantly tries
To assert her dominance;
She often clashes with soft-hearted Baimoh
Who doesn't care much much for conflict
But cannot help resembling a mountain when he walks;
Valkhnar
Looking starved and dazed
Chases shadows down misty roads
Searching for his love
One who
Disappeared long ago-
Velodia;
Unique and selfsame
Brothers in blood and mischief
Green eyed Harmak with a mane of bright red
Black eyed Hakmar with flowing gold locks
Blue eyed Reinam with twisted curls of hazel;
Uri is harsh in words and rash in action
Though the kindest in secret
She is happiest, when she is mounted
Wandering far through forests and hills
Exploring gifts of life on her stead;
Reckless Kalaman

Is the leader of the children
Through mud and rain and sometimes pain
He spurs them on their adventures;
Wise Leah is his opposite
As she tries to keep her heads above the ground
Yet often turns out that she's the one
Who has sunk the deepest;
Kumidan
Free of hair and fear
Is the one who always runs the farthest
Laughs the loudest
Always gets lost, but finds her way;
Then come the nestlings–
Gentle Alsa
Eager Maiorah
Impish Gaano and tiny Guni
Follow Kumidan wherever she goes
Into the depths of the worlds
She creates for them.

After days of dark clouds and heavy rain
The first glimpses of light
Leads the children outside
To begin the day's adventure.
First they climb a hill
Overlooking the village:
Kalaman up ahead
Charges the trail rapidly
Kumidan, a bit behind
Tries to maintain the long
Strides of her older brother;
Then comes Maiorah
Frog-like

Jumping from rock to rock;
Struggling and staggering
Gaano and Guni
Follow close by;
And at the very back
With flowers overflowing from their hairs
Leah and Alsa travel calmly up the road.

Once everyone has reached the top
They kneel down
Look to the skies
And begin to pray
For the rain
Which comes and goes–
Keep their lands green
Their sheep growing
And most importantly
Provides them glorious
Mud to slide in.

When their prayers are complete
Kalaman again
Takes the lead;
Offering a different chant
A wild scream
Like that of a sheep
Who has its stomach cut wide open;
All the voices soon join
Their shouts echoing through the valley
Stealing their parent's attention
From the tranquility of the day.
Once all eyes are on them
Kalaman prepares

To dazzle the spectators
But Kumidan
Never waits
She takes a leap of the cliff
Swinging her hands wildly through the air
The others follow
They fall softly on the mud
Slipping down
Becoming one with the muck
Reaching incredible velocity
Rolling and colliding
Rogue rocks scratching at them
Swallowing dirt
Until the slide is complete.

They emerge drenched in mud
And before anyone
Can mention a bath, they run away;
Their next stop
Takes them to the forest for a competition:
Hunting.
The goal is to capture
The Most wondrous specimen
Of a fat bottomed beetle
A hairless spider
A gigantic ant
Or a prolonged legged cricket.
But the insect are
Just a distraction
Their main reason for the hunt
Is to snatch the tail
From the slick skinned gecko
That outruns the children every time.

Sometimes
Weeks and months go by
Without seeing the lizard
But then, one day, its bright blue scales
Unlike anything else in the forest
Comes out to tease this
Or that child
Then disappears
As suddenly as it appeared.

Crouching down at ant hills
Searching for spiders in trees
Crawling on all four for prey
Their concentration breaks
When from Elsa came
The cry of a hunter
Who had seen her prey.
Against the dark green leaves
Blue scales shimmer for a second
Before vanishing
Now, all the children are after it
Up above from the trees
From both sides
Some charging straight ahead;
Even as it fades from the sight of one
Soon it's found by someone else.
For the youngest members of the group
The hunt for the lizard
Has been continuous affair
For their entire conscious life
And today the day has come
The gecko is cornered.
Tip-toeing towards the target

The children lick their lips;
But, the slippines of their prey
Isn't the only thing on their mind;
Each advances, while looking to the side
All at once
They jump
Pushing and screaming
One ending up on top of another.
They look into their hands
To discover that the gecko
Has slipped out again.

Defeated
The group heads back to home
For the final celebration of the day to unfold.
While warm baths are being prepared
To wash the stench of adventure away
The children head to a site
Which they adore
Above any other inside the village:
Not the cliffs
They climb dangerously high
Nor the river
They invade even when it's freezing
But an old graveyard
On top of a hill.
As they arrive
The three brothers
Have already lit a bonfire
Around which they gather .
They sing and dance
Exchange stories from the day;
Some eat, some drink

While some conceal themselves
In the darkness
Only revealing themselves
Once they've been forgotten.

Down below, in the deep earth
The bones of past generations
On whom they now stand
Smile proudly
As the children's vibration
shakes the ground.

9.

Back in the mines
Dozens of men are clustered in a tiny encompassment
Their arms burning with the weight of the pickaxes
Which have become part of them.
Swing and thump
Clear the debris
Continue.
But now
Finally
The motion and action
Which has repetitive
Has lost all meaning
Fulfills its purpose:
A swing breaks the wall
And a grain of light
Enters the darkness.
Reborn, the laborers let the sunshine
Flow into the tunnel.
The wall is demolished.
Eyes, which had forgotten all
That was neither gray or white
In this world
Falter under the luscious ocean of dark green leaves.

Slowly, one-by-one, soldier
After soldiers slides down
From the hole into the wilderness.
Gentle spring air warms frozen lungs
Singing birds celebrate their triumph.
They fall to the ground and scream with joy
They Climb, hug and kiss the trees.

To clear space for the others to follow
Their celebration is cut short
soldiers move on
Marching through the forest
To await new orders from their king
And settle down for the night..
An endless stream of men
Pours into the forest
As the fauna takes notice.
A murder of crows
Greets the newcomers with their song
The soldiers are displeased
Answer by throwing stones
The crows scowl and fly south.
Foxes appear along the path of men
Watchful of their every move.
Before night falls
The camp is set and weapons
Made of steel, filled with gunpowder
Are distributed to all the men;
Including the workers in the mines
Including the singer of tales.

A vast fire is lit at night.
Freshly caught game–
Huge wild boars and fledgling deers–
Are roasted.
Everyone in the camp–
Except one–
Celebrates
The end of the arduous journey.
Tonight
They have no use for a singer

Tonight
They are all singers
Gay and hopeful
Now that the impossible is behind them.

Other man dreamed
None reached
But Dendi Diahro achieved.

The singer sat in front of the fire
Revolver in hand.
Seeing the pained expression
And the broken eyes in front of it
The fire in front of him
Too stood still.
Other men sat next the singer
Clutching his shoulder
Patting his back
But the singer couldn't hear
Couldn't feel a thing.

Only when
The racket died down
And all the men were silent;
Did he look up.
Instantly anger rose in the singer's eyes
As the flame roared passionately
Concealing complete
A short man
Whose fading auburn hair
Squished petite nose
And healthy gut
Were completely covered

By a richly dark blue cloak
With golden patterns embroidered on them.

Slowly
Anger and bitterness
Subsided in the singer's eyes
Making way
For regret and sorrow
The flame sank back into itself;
Dendi Diahro
Began his speech:
'Men, I do not mean
To disturb your festivities for long. Tonight
Should be celebrated, enjoyed
Reveled in, more than any other day.
A thousand sparks jumped from the flame
Tonight, our feast unravels at a peak
Countless souls wished they could dine at
Yet they couldn't-
None besides us, did manage to step on this ancient land.
Were we to perish
Exactly as we are
Exactly where we stand
The flame calm and graceful
The daring of our souls
Is already worth a thousand songs;
Yet, this is only the entry point of our journey
The beginning of our conquest over death.
Tomorrow and tomorrow
Our stories shall take us further.
Warriors
Though nothing would delight me
More than basking in our attainment

Resting well and enjoying our victory
It would be foolish to lose our momentum.
The flame started twitching rapidly
Haste is the essence of our success.
We must strike, before word spreads throughout Mariotah.
This is an ancient and powerful land
Full of mysteries–
In order to uncover the secrets it holds
We must seize control:
At dawn
You shall head towards Horahar
The city which guards Mariotah's greatest secrets
In the heart of its mountain walls
And bring it all back to me.
The flame roared
Remember, each step of our journey is guided by the light
Each step is done under the glory and for the glory
Of house Diahro;
Remember my words tomorrow,
Remember my words when you are men grown old
With your grandchildren's children by your side–
For eternal glory
All is justified.

10.

From the break of dawn
Sheep are agitated.
Instead of grazing
They bleat without end.
Their restlessness shakes the ground.
The dogs are no help
They too won't listen
Won't stop barking.

Anxiety persists through the day
Nothing the shepherds do, comforts the animals.
As sun begins to lower
Due to
Hours of idleness
The shepherds mind grows numb
They have failed to notice
A noticeable amount
Of their flock
Alongside a few dogs
Having disappeared;
That was
Until
A particularly clumsy sheep
Ended up falling
Rather loudly
Into a hole, while trying to sneak off.
Observing the herd traveling the horizon
The shepherds, hastily
Gathered the rest of the flock
and started running.

The herd led them to the village
Where the sheep were
Swarming the children
Who were not paying attention
Were preoccupied with the sky.
The shepherds had too
been preoccupied
Had had
No time
To look up and see a dozen flock each
Of Canaries and ducks

Hawks, orioles, robins
Geese and Swans
Flying–fleeing– overhead.

Realizing the omen
The villagers
Still stood
Frozen.
From the hill's yonder
Uri
Came into view
Riding desperately, shouting ferociously, inaudibly.
Waving her hands, backwards and forwards
Motioning with her head;
The message
Was clear
Though what exactly was coming
Was not.

The people of Mariotah had not
Known conflict since
The old days of Aylah and Garruh
When spirits rose against the foreign armies
And promised to protect Mariotah forever;

Life in the mountains demands perseverance
Yet, the struggle against nature
Can not compare
As a wolf born in the wilderness
Is but a mouse
Compared to the beast in men.
With a dulled gut for survival
And eyes enchanted by fear

The villagers waited.
By the time Uri arrived,
Barely speaking through heavy breathing
Her words were no longer needed;
As soldiers of Viemieda
Stretched far along the horizon.

Villagers rushed–
To get away
Most of all
To Protect the children.
Food
Clothes
Sack and run.
Yet, before
The children were mounted
Sent on their way
The soldiers announced their arrival from the sky
With a precise barrage of arrows
Which like a storm began
The killing and wounding
Of the villagers and their steeds.

The tale
That follows
Is as painful
As is necessary.
Outnumbering the villagers ten to one
Soldiers
Began killing everyone.
Men and women of the village
Armed with shovels and axes
Tried to Fight back

But most fell Instantly
As the blast of hot metal
Pushed their souls past their earthly bodies.

Uri, now horseless
Gathered the young: Kumidan, Gaano, Guni
Alsa, Maiorah, Kalaman and Leah.
While the rest of the village
Protect the children with their bodies and their lives.
Created a barrier
Which they would hold
While dying
Even when dead.
The sheep appeared to become
The greatest strength of the barrier-
Creating confusion and chaos
While keeping the raiders
Away from the villagers.
At the front of the chain
Stood Tosho and Baimoh;
She swore and swung
With all the strength inside
And even as
Bullets pierced her body
And her blood
Sank deep into the ground
Held up by Baimoh, she stood
Her gentle giant and rival clutching her dying body
Not letting go-
Even as shot
After shot, came towards him.
He stood with an ax in one hand
The dying Tosho in the other.

He swung viciously
At all who passed the sheep
And for a while, the chain held
Until the endless wave
Overran him and Baimoh fell
With Tosho by his side.

A group of soldiers
Who had broken through the wave of sheep and villagers
Ran after the children–
But then the three brothers
Hakmar, Harmak and Reinam
Revealed themselves.
Having climbed up
The same hill
From where the children had been sliding
Days before.
From there, they rolled boulders
Threw mud and heavy rocks at the invaders–
Allowing the children to escape;

Uri, With Leah and Kaliman
Led the children
Towards the graveyard, towards the forest.
The soldiers
Not relenting
Not caring
That they were chasing children
Followed closely.
Reaching the hill, where their ancestors
Had laid peacefully at rest for generations
The children were surrounded.
Kaliman took a step forwards

Did not flinch
As he looked
The soldier in front of him
In the eyes
'If you desires demand blood
There is plenty enough
Flowing inside me
To quench your thirst.
I am yours
To deal with as you wish
But let the rest be, let them live'
The blank face staring back
Broke into a smile–
A smile convinced
Of knowing
The answers to all the questions
In the world
"We're soldiers, boy
We do as we're told'
He raised his weapon
And a shot
Rang resoundingly through the air
As the soldier groaned and collapsed.

Behind the fallen body, stood a man
Tall as a pine tree
Thin as an iris
Anger visible as a flame around him
In a flash, he grabbed another soldier
Pushed the revolver towards his forehead
And said
'A man who threatens children isn't deserving of living.
As a traitor, my life is yours

Take it when you please
But do not touch the children.
War leads to delusions
Makes men forget that there are lines
Which when crossed
Could Lead to the complete destruction of life.
The cruel fate of a soldier
Is sin
But sinners especially
Should keep their honor;
One crime doesn't justify another
Kill them, and you shall kill yourselves.'

Silence ensued
Men and children stood paralyzed
But that silence was broken
By footsteps behind the soldiers
As a man appeared
With pulsating veins on his bald head
And a large swirling mustache covering his face--
'Your singing has always been captivating
Makes my heart melt with each note.
Tell me
How honorable does it feel
To kill a comrade from behind?
As commanded by Dendi Diahro.
These children
Inside whom, the blood of beasts runs rampant
Shall join us.
But It's such a shame that I can't refuse you.
Allowing the barbarians, to exist beyond our control
Is what led to Viemieda's downfall
On these shores long ago.

The mistake shall not be repeated
Through their survival, we shall acquire
The secret powers of this land
With them, we shall cross the Auremaiss
And end all who stand in our way.'
Then 'The Cannibal'
Diahro's right hand man
Fired two shots
The men and his hostage fell to the ground.

He faced Kaliman
'Good, boy
Give yourself up honorably.
Answer me this:
To protect them
Will you stay loyal
Will you do as I command
Will you give your life for mine?'
Kaliman
Faced the man in front of him
Faced the destructed shadow of his village
Faced Kumidan standing behind him
He Nodded
The Cannibal smiled.
'You lie, boy.'

Kaliman's flesh
His blood
Flowed into the ground
Into the arms of his ancestors.
The soldiers prepared
To take a step towards the rest
When from Kumidan

Came a deafening shout.
All around her, The world shook
Her cry grew in strength
Until the ground cracked
The crack spread throughout the village
Swallowing houses, corpses, soldiers
Then from the crevasse
Giant hands rose through the air
The soldier, paralyzed and dumbfounded
Stood and watched
As a giant of rock and dirt
Stand tall
And pounced.

11.

The crows flew high

South

Bearing knowledge

That the king of Viemieda

Had done the impossible

And crossed the Bronyair.

Gliding over the forests and mountains

Of Mariotah

They gathered new information

From creatures fleeing, from the north.

The crows learned

About the march towards Horahar

About Diahro's desire to unravel

A secret.

As the crows flew past the scorching sun

Of the Auremaiss;

They flew

Into the territory of Lokhum

To the royal palace In Delainalah.

Where the crows

Relaid the message to their master-

The sorcerer king, Ahbel Lakh.

12.

Following the foxes
Uri led the children through the forest;
Gaano and Guni, pushing
A cart, with a strange creature inside.
With everything they had know
Now gone
The children barely spoke.

The stone giant which had risen from the ground
Had wreaked havoc and saved their lives
Started to fall apart and collapse
Once the enemy had been defeated.
Inside the rubble of its body
Something stirred and shook and stood
A body nearly human.

Uri and Leah
Helped it up from the rubble.
Pieces of it would fall off
At random.
It itself seemed to not know
How and why
It's body made of dirt and mud
Could move
Would not fall apart.
When it stood
It's feet would buckle under the weight
Like a calf
It Struggled to move its stony arms
Yet still it managed
To lean towards Uri
And with its hand hand

slowly
Approach Uri's face
And gently touch her cheek-
Its hand pulsing and warm
While eyes of deep amber
Looked devotedly into hers.

The children had been
Unable to part with their home
So they had stayed
Where it all happened.
But Uri
The eldest
Knew they had to leave.
Through the remnants
Of the few house which remained
She scavenged
Gathered food and clothes
Even found a cart
For the strange creature.

Kumidan had still not woken
Would twitch and scream violently in her sleep;
As they prepared to enter the forest.
Uri carried her on her back
But before
They took their first steps
Into the wild wilderness
Little silhouettes appeared and surrounded them.
They waited anxiously
For the enemy to show
But when the silhouette
Finally revealed themselves

It was a group of
Great-tailed foxes.

They circled the children
And started whispering
A soft melody into their ears.
None of them had allowed themselves
To shed a tear, but through this language they couldn't understand
Which a meaning they were too young to comprehend
The children cried for the first time
For all the life stolen from the world. .
Then the foxes came close
Hugged and licked them
Start healing their wounds.
And thus they stayed for the night
Until dawn, when the foxes
Moved into the forest
And the children followed.

13.

Before setting off for Horahar
The army of Viemieda
Set up camp
Around the edges of the city.
Gone was the cheeriness which had guided them
As they entered Mariotah.
They sat in silence
Eating provisions gathered from villages
They had raided.

All the men
Around the camp
Whispered about the disappearance
Of one of the regiments;
From which
Only three soldiers had survived—
Including the general
'The Cannibal'
Who spent all his time
Locked in chambers with Diahro.

The events of what transpired
Were shrouded in mystery.
None of the surviving soldiers
Could fully recount
The events of that night—
Could only mumble, paint a partial picture.
But their limited description
Of the land rising and swallowing the world
Birthed a newfound fear
Inside the souls of the soldiers.
Before

Everyone had been sure
Of their conviction
Many now, remembered
The prophecy of the singer.

While for Diahro a new excitement
A new validation for his goals
Had been laid.
Orders were given–
The people of Mariotah
especially the children, were not to be underestimated.
Diahro concluded
That the demonic blood of spirits
The secrets of this land
Ran thickest amongst the children;
Harnessing that power and controlling them
Would lead to the acquisition of his desired power.

The bonfire, around which
The soldiers whispered had grown
Especially large and restless at that time–
It swung
Towards all parts of the camp
Sent sparks to each corner
Listening to each rumor
And every whisper
That swirled around the camp.

The only man
Who knew the entire fate of that night
Had seen Kumidan's rage raise the earth
Was the killer–
The Cannibal–

Who had survived
Through the sheer conviction
Of a man assured
Of his own self importance.

While the soldiers awaited orders
The flame burned passionately–
Even without firewood
Being fed to you
Or even when
Water was poured on top if it
The fire did not cease.

Even after the soldiers
Departed towards Horahar
And their existence had become
A distant memory
The fire shone like a beacon–
Waiting for the singer to come and find it.

Under heavy rain
And the strongest winds
It waited.

It waited
Until the winds that opposed it
Started
Bringing to the flame visions;
The truth behind what had happened
On that night:
The soldiers invading the village
The villagers dying for the children
Kalimna's sacrifice

The singer's attempt to save them
The trigger pushed by the cannibal
The child dying
Finally, the ground rising
And the village being swallowed.

Seeing this, the flame burned
With an aching
Unknown to it before.
For the first time
It felt love, the pain of loss
The cruelty of men
The desire for revenge.

Under a storm of emotions
It kept burning
Until finally, the storm blew over it completely
And the flame extinguished.

...

...

...

Then, Digging through the ashes
A little ember poked its head out -
And all alone, it faced the world.

14.

Mariotah had no one ruler
Instead
Representatives
From different settlements
All gathered in the great city of Horahar
Where all
Equally, voiced and argued
For the well-being
Of everyone in Mariotah.
Thus Horahar
Was the heart
The mind of the nation—
And though conflict was scarce and rare
The man-at-arms of Mariotah
Were trained and situated in Horahar.

News of impending visitors
Had come to Horahar
Well before
Viemieda reached the city lines.
The citizens had
Had time
To prepare themselves
For the defense of the city
Their greatest strength
Was their topology.
The mountains
which the city was built into
Were also its walls
The twist and turns of which
The people knew
Down to the smallest cavity.

Traps were set
Fighters stationed
Entry points prepared.
And then
They waited
For the army of Viemieda to come.

When the time came
The attackers spared no expense:
Mortars, cannons
Balistas and trebuchets
Countless archers
Alongside cavalry
And foot-soldiers where need be.
A siege
was laid on the city
Weapons fired zealously
Trying to break the morale.
Soon enough
Most of the outer part of the city
Had been destroyed
Yet, still
When Viemieda
Engaged in combat
And would try to take
The city through force
Resistance fighters would
Repel the invaders easily.
They would lure them
Into narrow points–
Where numbers were almost meaningless
There they would

Be dispatched one by one.

But by the the time a month had passed
The entire city was in ruin
The people
Who were still breathing
Were moved into a stronghold inside the mountain.
Food too was getting scarce
And the fighting numbers dwindled daily.

While
Even if
A defender of Horahar
Took ten soldiers with him
Before he perished
The forces Of Viemieda
Never seemed to grow smaller;
The faceless soldiers who fell
Were replaced by another
in an instant.
So, as Horahar's numbers grew
Smaller
Their spirit began to collapse
No matter how well
They knew the land
The casualties on their side
Seemed impossible to ignore.

Their ultimate downfall though
Was that they could not leave city walls
And could only await their fate,

Sensing weakness

Diahro ordered a massive attack–
The soldiers
Formed an ocean
And wave after wave
Attacked the walls.
Horahar fought back
With swords and shields
With fire and earth
Corpses of Viemiedan soldiers
Lined up along the walls
But this was simply used
As a stepping stone
For the others to breach the walls
And finally overrun Horahar.

Diahro entered the fallen city
In the stronghold, he raised for himself a throne;
Taking his seat
He ordered that each citizen of Horahar
Be chained and brought to him.
The remains of Horahar
Were bound together
And then forever divided.

The children were taken into the dungeons
While all others were given a statement:
Obey Diahro's every command and see your children alive.

15.

On the brink of the Auremaiss
Thousands gathered

In front of them
Stood the mystery of their childhood
The desert with which
Their mother's threatened them
Whenever they misbehaved.

Ahbel Lakh
Prepared for his return
To the land
where he spent nineteen long years
Grew from a boy to a man.

From Mariotah
He returned to Lokhum
An unknown-
A runaway
Branded with death;
Yet, he rose above his fate
Gathered followers
Won countless battles
Became the greatest friend of pain
And freed the slaves
Who now
Walked equally amongst his men.

He had been able to do this
Through the teachings
Of the silent spirits
Who lingered in every corner

Of Mariotah–
Diahro acquiring that power
Could mean the end of Lokhum

A fraction of the spirit's power
Within him
Had been enough to become Emperor
To free Lokhum shores
From the Viemiedan ships.
Were that magic be reversed
The days of Lokhum would be numbered.

Moving the army
Across the Auremaiss
Far surpassed any magic
He had done before.
Yet, to prevent Viemieda
Acquiring this power
Ahbel Lakh was prepared
To sacrifice himself
To lead his army to death.

‘Once the journey
Begins
Many moons
We shall ride
Fall behind
And the desert shall claim your life.’
He told his men
Then began preparing his magic
Meditating on the world around him;

In his fingers he collected

The soft humidity of the wind
In his chest he gathered
The scorching heat of the sun
In his heart he observed
The subtle turning of the world
For days he focused
His entire being on this energy;
Until eventually
His body turned weightless
His form became limitless
He grew and grew and grew
Wide and thick as a mountain
He gravitated towards the sky
Then, for the third time
Rain fell over the Auremaiss.

16.

The children found a
New home
Within the fox's den.
As though
They had never known
Anything other
They became forest dwellers
A natural part of the woods.

Maiorah and Alsa
Became like mothers
To all the lost babes they could find—
Running around with
Fawns and pups and hoglets
Who they fed and bathed
And carried around tightly in their arms.
Among those they adopted, were Gaano
And Guni,
Who had forsaken
All traces of their humanity
Walking and running on all fours
Never saying a word
Instead growling, howling and biting.

Kumidan also barey
If ever
Spoke to anyone besides
Her earth spirit, from whom
She had become inseparable
Neither ever leaving
The other's side.
Kumidan would tell it tales

About flying sheep and giant lizards;
About the moon's visits to her from the sky.
Alongside her
The spirit learned to walk
Even talk a bit
It learned how to grow and shrink
And became able to change
Its form
Kumidan taught it how to play
And imagine the existence
Of something that isn't there;
In turn the golem became her protector
Softening the dirt she slept on
Easing the pain in her heart.

All of them lived
As though they had forgotten
That life had been different before—
The ashes of their village had become a dream
From which they'd woken and quickly forgotten.
Yet, when actually closing their eyes to sleep
The past would come and visit
Waking them screaming
The night bringing visions of murder

Only Leah and Uri
Seemed to remember the past;
They were too old
To close their eyes on their fallen home.
The two of them—
Leah especially—
Took care of the children
Watching them through the days

Scavenging food, bathing
Sometimes fighting off wild animals.
While Uri cared deeply
About the well being of the children
She could not stay and wait
While Viemiedan forces
Trampled over her land
She would often wander away
Sneaking out of the forest on foot
Searching for news
Or sometimes
Simply crying
While looking at the desolated landscape.

17.

All alone

The little ember

Poked its head out and faced the world.

But to to take the first steps

Into this endless fabrication

Without anyone to push it along

Paralyzed the little ember.

It looked to the sky

At the moon

Then the sun

Looked down at the grass below

Moving gently in the wind;

It had known

Had seen this all before

As something that was

The same way it just was

But it was all a refraction

It was it

That was that

It was that

That was it.

And so, while

The little ember firmly stood its ground

And did not go to see the world

The world came to it;

The crawling ants

The diving hawks

Fall of leaves

Blooming of flowers

Stars flying through the air.
It was so captivated
By all the turnings of the world
That is soon became lost
And could no longer tell
Where it was, what it was
Or even who it was.
Each time
It opened its eyes, found itself
Somewhere different.
Once it
Awoke to a void
From where the world
Was the size of a grape;

The next time
It woke up, to find itself opened its eyes
Burning inside a glass
Looking at an endless flow of people
Dressed in bright greens, blues and yellows
Walk harrowingly narrow streets.
Sitting next to it, sat a man
With a long gray beard and sunken eyes
Holding out a hat–
Only the ember was looking
At the man, as he hugged his legs
At that moment
The ember felt for the first time
Pain of another
It reached towards the man
Only touching glass
As tears rolled down his eyes.
It fell asleep next to elder

The two keeping each other company
Through the lonely night;
But then the ember was awoken by the sound
Of the man in pain
Opening its eyes it saw, a group
Dizzy and wobbly on their feet, laughing
Surrounding, kicking and pushing the man–
One of them
Went towards the flame
Picked up its glass, looked at the man
And threw it at him;
The ember disappeared.

The next scene
was in a cave
In the arms
Of a bare chested
Hairy man
Running desperately.
His other hand
Led a woman
Dressed in rolling indigo robes
From behind them
Came a dozen screams
The two continued to dash, to scurry, to scuttle
Until they reached an impasse
The walls of the cave blocking their way
They faced the wall
Faced one another
Smiled–
Let the fire go out.

Finally

The little ember
Entered a dark room
Where a hundred eyes
Were all staring at it longingly.
Malnourished of light and love
A little candle and stale bread
Was all hundreds of children
Locked together in a dungeon
Had from the outside world.
The little ember stayed with them
Observing their dry eyes
Which could no longer shed tear
Their lives
Over which they had no control
As everyday
Another one among them
Would be brought outside
Never to return.

The little ember began to whisper
To them at night
About sights it had seen on its travels
It sang to them about the old man
Surviving the cold winters
Shrouded in a gray blanket;
Told them about the lover
And the mystery of their fate;
Describing the world
Stories about the stars, the moon, the sky
With such intimate delicacy
The children felt
As though they were outside.
But most often

With most passion
It shared with them
The singer's tales
Stories of Aylah and Garruh
Their mis and adventures
The sad times, where they felt distraught
Times when they felt grateful for the sun;
Everynight
When the children fell asleep
To give guide them peacefully
Through their dreams
The ember would sing its favorite song
About Aylah and Garruh's
Final battle, and the liberation of Mariotah.

18.

Once Horahar was defeated
And the main defense of Mariotah gone
The rest of the land was left free
For Viemieda to raid and conquer.
In those settlements
As in Horahar
They captured children
Ordered everyone else
To devote themselves to Viemieda;
The capable, were made to fight
While others became laborers
Growing crops, breaking ore
Building weapons for their conquerors.

When the army of Lokhum
Crossed the Auremaiss and arrived on Mariotah's land
They were greeted as heroes, liberators.

Forces of Viemieda
Rode south
To once again meet in battle
The forces of Lokhum.
The armies clashed
Each side suffered heavily.

The technological advantage
of Viemieda's weapons
Was canceled out by Ahbel Lakh
Who by himself
Destroyed countless mortars and cannons
Alone attacking enemy camps
Swinging the tide in Lokhum's direction.

The army returning South
Started demanding
Food, drink and shelter from their hosts
Which they obliged.
But the demands of the army
Increased each day
No matter what they were given
They wanted more
Soon enough they stopped asking;
They took over homes
Took most of the sustenance–
And as their numbers grew smaller
Men of Mariotah were made to join them.

A human body is not built
To withstand the toil of spiritual energy
With each battle, Ahbel Lakh
Grew slightly weaker.
Thus on a day
When from the crows
He learned that Dendi Diahro
Was coming to the field
Ahbel Lakh hurried to face his opposite
And leave the battle the victor of the war.

On that day
Alongside Diahro
A silver cage was brought to battle.
Before the two armies squared off
The cage was opened
To reveal a tiny body
Every inch of which

Was covered in layers of cloth.

Slowly

The layers were removed
To reveal a boy with sunken eyes
And frail bones, weak enough
For the wind to take him away.

The boy looked dazed
Barely registering where he was.

Seeing Diahro

Ahbel Lakh gave the word and his army charged
He too awaited his moment
An Opportunity to pounce–
Yet, while Lokhum soldiers were coming
Running at them with full force
The forces of Viemieda stood still.
The only movement was by Diahro
Who went up to the boy, gave him a nudge
And went to stand behind his men.

Staring blankly

The boy didn't seem to mind
The thousand riders about to clash with him–
Only once
The horse's hooves
Started making the ground vibrate
And the boy's heart shake
Did he seem to wake;
Seconds away from squashing him
The boy screamed a scream of death
Instantly summoning

A bolt of thunder

To claim the lives of men.

19.

While Mariotah
Was torn at by wolves
The children lived a blissful life with the foxes.
Unaware of the tides outside their sanctum.
Though the signs of war–
Smog and smoke
The smell of blood–
Were undeniable
None of them
Seemed to notice

.

Only Uri
Who had began to have visions–
Of children
Ghastly sickly
Skeletally starved
Huddled together under candle light;
And of other children
No longer of this realm
But hanging over deep abysses
Held from plummeting by a thin string
Around which
A dark cloud hovered
Waiting to plunge the children into darkness.

To Uri
The abyss consuming her soul
With resentment and sorrow
Was the inaction
With which she lived.
She told the others about her visions
And her intention to head for Horahar.

Hearing this
The children started screaming.
Gaano and Guni
Grabbed her ankles
Promising to
Never let her go;
Maiorah
Jumped on her back
Squeezing at her ;
Alsa began
Obstreperously crying
Shaking the entire forest
With her tears;
Even Leah
The calmest and oldest
Begged her to stay-
Only Kumidan sat quietly
Watched the scene unfold.

With dawn
She left the forest-
Uri had walk and ridden
Down these roads
Countless times throughout her life.
She knew them far better
Than the invaders
She knew that she could walk
The path unseen
Yet a constant feeling of being watched
Accompanied her.

Concealing herself

She waited for the enemy
To appear.
She heard footsteps coming towards her.
She drew a dagger
Leaped
Was mid-swing
When she realized it was Kumidan
Who she found stood in front of her.

The children's screams
Would have paled in comparison
To those deployed by Uri
Had she not needed to stay quiet.
Still
She shook Kumidan
Demanding that she leave—
Yet, Kumidan would not budge
Her earthly guardian alongside her.
After Uri finished speaking
And sat down Frustrated
Kumidan replied
'I hear children screaming in my dreams
The fire calls to me, asking to be set free.'

The earth spirit changed form
Making itself into a stallion
Who never felt freer then when she was riding
Hadn't ridden a horse since leaving home—
Relented
And the three set off towards Horahar.

When they moved, the earth moved with them
Twitching, shifting becoming part of them
They glided over hills and mountains.
The landscape Bronyair whizzing past them.
that it only took them a day
To arrive at the great walls of Horahar.

There all three of them felt
The slightly beating hearts of the children
Calling for them.
The spirit entered the earth
Creating a pathway
Past the walls of Horahar
Following the sound of heartbeats
Straight to the stronghold
Through the darkness
They traveled blindly
Until they began to hear
Whispers just in front of them.
That final wall
Parted wide
As the Two girls
And a strange creature made of dirt
Entered the children's cell.
At first
They all shrieked with fear
Started backing off
But the little ember
Who had grown into a full fledged flame
Walked towards the three.
It stopped and looked
Into the amber eyes of the earth
Lightly touched Uri's and Kumidan's cheeks

And without saying a word
Entered the tunnel.

The fear in the children disappeared
They followed
Down the long winding tunnel
Past the darkness
Outside into the fresh air.

20.

The two spirits
Became known thereafter
As the second coming;
Aylah- who burned her enemies
Gave the warmth of life to friends;
Garruh- who could do anything to
Protect the ones he loved.

Aylah and Garruh
Rode out
Again and again.
Against Viemieda
Against Lokhum
Rescuing children from the grasps of the empires.

Both armies fought desperately against them
Trying to seize the children.
For Dendi Diahro
The children were the ultimate weapon
Who he would use to conquer all;
For Ahbel Lakh
They were the ultimate danger
And he sought to dispose of them
Lest they fall into Diahro's hands.

All over the land
The children and the spirits were chased
But as time went on
The spirit's magic grew stronger
Strong enough to oppose the empires.

To make sure

That neither Diahro
Nor Ahbel Lakh
Could sink their claws into the children
Aylah and Garruh combined their powers

In the very middle of Mariotah
Garruh entered the earth
And became a new mountain
Smaller than the peaks of the Bronyair
But still
A fully fledged mountain
With its own lakes and rivers
Cliffs and falls.
And at the very top
Rose a cobble castle–
Fit enough for a king.
Then
To protect their new home
Aylah turned herself
Into a wall of fire
And surrounded the castle
Burning anyone who went near it.

They moved the children there
And the exploration of the castle
Became their greatest joy.
Inside its countless room
New toys and instruments–
Alongside anything else
The children asked for–
Would appear.
When they woke in the morning
Their beds would be

Surrounded by colorful flowers
Which would grow overnight.
Fauna from the outside
Would often come to the refuge
Offered by the castle
Especially the foxes
Who from the start
Had been the children's
Main protectors.

Around the mountainside
The children would spend their days
Creating worlds of endless possibilities;
On Celebratory nights
Of which there were plenty
The children would gather
In the moon hall—
So called, because it was roofless
And there
With the moonshine
Illuminating the night
The children would gather
To play their instruments
To dance all night long.

Many years passed in bliss
With the children completely forgetting
The life they led before the castle.
Yet as grew older
Looking down on the desolate landscape
Of their motherland
The children became disillusioned with their lives;

They remembered their parents
Whom before they had forgotten completely.
They remembered their lives before the war
Imagined the suffering of their parents;
Slowly they began to leave.

Uri was amongst the first.
Leah stayed longer
Watchful
As ever
For the others
But she too
Could no longer stay idle
While the world ended around her.
Soon enough, the castle was abandoned
The grown children
Had all departed;
All except for one: Kumidan.

She wandered through
The empty rooms and halls
Remembering the music and the dancing
Which now seemed a dream.
She spent most of her time
Halfway down the mountain
Watching the war unfold below.

Garruh could feel
Kumidan's heart and thoughts
Better than anything else.
He looked at Kumidan
Looking down at the world;
Garruh's felt

The beating Of her heart
And suddenly
With all his love for Kumidan
His gratitude for all the children
The earth began to shook
The castle
The entire mountain
Stood up.

He picked up Kumidan
Settled her on the ground
As the mountain
Headed for the battlefield.

Though small
Compared to the mountains
Of the Bronyair
For Garruh
The soldiers of Viemieda and Lokhum
were less than ants.
From each side
Cannonballs, mortars and arrows flew
While cavalry and men charged–
Garruh swatted it away.

He had ran amok
For a day
Destroying substantial parts
Of the invaders
Though their attacks
Had began to take toil;
Parts of Garruh's body
Had Begun to peel

And he had grown smaller.

Looking at the destruction of their armies
Diahro and Lakh grew mortified;
Everything they had
Devoted the long years of their life to
Would come to naught
Unless the beast was destroyed.

The two armies
Came to greet Garruh in combat.
Dendi Diahro
Made the first move
Sending an entire battalion of soldiers
Equipped with explosives
Which went off
As Garruh squashed them—
Sending him unconscious
To the ground.
Sensing the moment to strike
Both emperors
Rushed towards the fallen giant.

Diahro with explosives in hand;
Ahbel Lakh
Turning with his remaining life force
Into the gray cloud.
As Garruh laid unconscious
Diahro reached him
Placing the explosives
Next to him
But before he could run
From the sky

Ahbel Lakh
Who became a bolt of thunder
Came crashing down
On the spirit and his nemesis
All around them
The world shook
An explosion unlike any other
Set the sky on fire–
Leaving no trace of
The King
The emperor
The spirit.

21.

Once Aylah
Learned of
Garruh's fate
She swore revenge
On all of Viemieda
On all of Lokhum;
She would make sure
That no one
Would ever dare
To set foot
In Mariotah again.
Powered by rage
Powered by hate
Her rage awakening
Every dormant spirit
In Mariotah.
Gathering more power
From them
Aylah dispersed herself
All over the continent
From the deepest south
In Lokhum
To the highest north
In viemieda.
Overflowing
With power
She settled on the skin
Of every
Man
Woman
And child
In Lokhum

In Viemieda
Setting
Their flesh
Their organs
On fire.
Their screams
Reached
Over the ocean
Over the land
So that even
In Mariotah
The sound
Of their agony
Filled the air.
Aylah could feel
Their skin melting
Struggling for air
Aylah relented
For a moment
Letting them breathe
To make the pain
Last longer;

Before she
Could resume.
Shattered sobs
Stopped Aylah
Shattered sobs
And
Despairing implorement
From Kumidan:
'Aylah
I know your pain

Your pain is mine.
I know your revenge
Your revenge is mine.
But to harm one person
Is to harm the world.
The world is full of evil
Evil plenty
That needs no help.
Garruh is with us
Today and tomorrow.
As long as we live
His heart beats within us.
I've lost my parents, my brother
I've lost my home, my closest friend.
Don't let me lose the world
The hope for tomorrow
That the sun will rise
And it will shine differently.
Don't take away the possibility
That humanity can improve.
To kill, means that others will kill
That pain will be put on others
Unless we forgive
Put our differences
Aside
The world will burn.'

With Kumidan's words
Aylah felt the pain
Of the world on her
Let loose of the grasp
She had
on Viemieda and Lokhum.

Feeling

That she had failed.

That nothing more was left

For her in this world.

Aylah used

The power of the spirits

To once again

Disperse throughout the world

But this time

Instead of burning

She entered

Into the hearts of everyone;

Providing the fire

That spurs love and kindness.