Melancholy, a Clan

Written by:

Amir Bile

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O world of two faces—when you give light,

we dance in delight. When you cast shadows, we wrestle the night.

Ever we seek joy, yet you defy it.

Melancholy, a Clan

By the white-bleached shrines of the exiled,
the clan—Eden's aftermath—broke in despair,
the distance to the next pasture too far.
A weight settled in their chests,
a collective yearning to sink into the soil's embrace,
to be still until the quiet returned and the will could mend.

They dispersed beneath the trees in fragile constellations,
like migratory birds grounded.
Ibex on high paused to observe them,
some upon the ridges, others lower down,
drawn by the sorrow woven through their speech.

Obedient children took the few remaining herds
to browse upon the sparse and brittle grasses,
a tender offering to their parents' weary hearts.
And so they moved into the open light.

Under a solitary myrrh tree,

its foliage a living green,

a boy sat upon a great stone,

the sand below still holding the coolness of yesterday's rain.

Clad in a skirt,

his robe drawn over his head and shoulders,

he sheltered his bare chest from the sun's gaze.

He raised a five-holed *gobeys* to his lips.

Its voice, sharp yet of the earth,

carried the weight of ages,

a melody heavy with old grief,

conjuring images of men and camels

kneeling upon the bushy, parched land,

weeping for reasons unknown yet known to the heart,

before gathering themselves to stand once more.

Five black-headed sheep encircled him,
one a ewe suckling her young.
Farther off, a hundred others grazed.

His song was the only sound
that carried across the serene silence.
And there they stayed throughout the day,
listening from a distance to the boy's chant,
and to the earth's own song,
feeling their hearts slowly kindle
with the descent of the sun,
as the world softened into coolness about them.

Amir Bile,

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