

The People of the Crop

When the grasses are cut, let us sing. When the blades sweep down upon their stalks, let us chant. When our hands grow callused from a week's picking, let us shout. When the great trucks arrive, let us cry. When we sleep as our crop turns from hand to hand, let us smile. When we awake, when we turn our faces to the rising amber sun, when we raise the children and cook their mesh, let us shed our tears in silence.

Great men have come and weak men have gone. Before them, we have sowed, and after them, we will reap. They must come and go just as we must rise, just as we must tend to our crop. Without them, we would not live, but without us, they would not come nor would they go. We give them no salutation. They give us no heed. We, the people of the crop, know no better nor worse than those who move through. Many of the youths, still undecided of their station, will chant foul curses. The chants are without direction, without a target. We forgive them, for they have yet to see the amber sun, they have yet to decide its worth.

Amongst the youth, among those who pillaged and those who gluttonized, among the many larvae awaiting berth, resided a boy. A boy unlike and similar to the others, he had been the first to see through the blinds of childhood. Impatient, he looked through the cloth and stared into the eyes of the sun. In his indiscretion, he had looked when he should have hidden.

He escaped the still warm swaddling of his Mother, tumbling valiantly into the crop fields, sprinting into the vast meadow. His eyes blinded by a sun unready for approach, he trampled over the crops, breaking stalks as he ran, his feet water, the ground an unsuspecting bank. He ran for eons, carving his name into a thousand years of static tribal burgeoning.

Eventually, the boy's legs failed him and he was forced to look into the sun eye's again. We, the people of the crop, have forbidden such transgressions. Not for the sake to conserve, but for the safety of our people, of those who come and go, and those of our youth. For when crudely approached, the kind amber sun rages and thirsts for blood, an insatiable force, a cruel father. When the boy ran and dared look through his blinds his light golden rays turned to the muddy red of a path of dead soil.

We, the people of the crop, did not save the boy. A man born too early to stay, too early to come, and too early to leave, was not a fault of those who abided their father's rules. Forty nights and forty days passed before the Sun was satisfied. A thousand grubs were consumed, a hundred parasites drank when the Sun moved onward. No crop was collected, and many died, but none braved the Red Sun, no one but the boy felt its heavy blows.

The boy had shrunk under the beatings of the sun, been crippled by the heat, and mangled by his loneliness. He had not yielded to the sun, not out of pride, for he had nothing to be proud of, nor out of love, for he had no one to love. He had not yielded to the sun for a simple reason, for he was a simple boy. He hated the color red and found the sun too dreadful to die too.

We, the people of the crop, went to him on the forty-first morning. We, the people of the crop, saw the remnants of what had once clung to our bosom. His mouth too dry to speak, his body too weak to move, we had carried him back to our greatest hut and laid him down to rest a final time. We, in the amassed times of chaos, had laid many down to die, but never here. Here was where the first of us had laid to die, here was where we, the people of the crop, and they who come and go were born.

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For the second time, We and They gathered to pay tribute to our greatest savior. The boy made no sound as we beat him, no word to be given as they burned him with their cruelest tools. Only when we, in our desperation, called upon the boy's mother and gave her the blade. He, at first, he did not notice the pair approach him. As his mothers' tears hit his shrunken face, he did not notice. Even as the blade began to carve into his hand, the boy did not stir.

But, to our delight, to their satisfaction, as the boy's last drops of blood, as boiled as it was, came to surface, he started to twist and howl. We tried his other hand and laughed with joy when he squirmed. So many of ours had suffered for his insolence, it was only fair, we assured ourselves. They, being wiser than us from their journeys, found the pattern and soon gathered their possessions.

Bundles of red cloth were produced. A red band relieved and handed over. Red beads were removed. They, in their wisdom, had bound the boy's eyes shut, not wanting to diminish their genius. When the cloth was removed the boy found himself alone in a room of scarlet.

No scream was heard and nobody was found when we opened their lavish tomb. We, the people of the crop, and they who come and go agreed on where the boy had gone. The amber sun that so kindly warmed everyone's backs confirmed it. The Sun, our eternal father, had eaten the heretic.

The day the boy was consumed was the birth of a third people, a rare occurrence, a rare happening, to be known as "the maddened." The maddened, on their chance production, were set at once into the fields, for upon their birth the Sun would always turn. After the days had passed and famine had set in, the sun would turn once more to its kindly state and we, the people of the crops, and they who come and go would search for the body of the maddened. Sometimes they did not last, the Sun tenderizing them himself. Other times, when they found the weakened and swelled husk alive, they would gather and lay them on their sacred spot, and bind them with red. None were left unconsumed.

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