Ego, Trouble

I married a man
whose name means “Trouble,”
so all this
was to be expected.

When people asked I told them,
“My husband has strayed.”
How else to explain
away 20 years, each day
unmoored in the market,
on my arm an unfilled basket,
the strap embossing me with the crisscross of rope?

I don’t want to hear about your sirens.
Let me tell you about sirens.
A table of sweets,
streets of open doors,
and boys
thrusting their honeyed hands through my window,
busting in
to eat your dinner.

Men are never full.
Sirens aim straight into the echoey hulls of their chests
and, oh, the pretty resonance.
My advice to wives is this: Weight the hull,
fill the cup. Left empty too long,
he will top them off with blood.
Look at Odysseus’s ocean now, a marrow soup
well salted.

I’ve been weaving your shroud.
You were not the only thing I was burying at my loom,
the shuttle cocked, the fiber snaked tight around my fingers.
I promised I would marry one of the honey-boys
when I was done,
but each night I unhooked my work,
tied the trailing thread to our bedroom door and slammed,
as if pulling a rotten tooth.
Then I walked the frigid halls,
unraveling,
unsure if you should be dead.
Here, I’ll sing you a different song:  
My parched throat, the remote skin,  
vibrated with your absence  
-- mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm --  
In your absence my tissues  
hummed  
-- mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm --  
hummed hard until the sound took on flesh, a bird  
perched in our olive tree.  
Louder  
-- mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm --  
until the whole sky moaned with birdsong,  
every long day and blameless night,  
all the cloud-whisked mornings,  
every star-punched sleep --  
until I resolved to kill it,  
to crush its neck with my knee.

I put the bird in a box, locked it down with magic,  
carved on it Penelope,  
then swallowed all the keys.  
The keys became a cage of bones around my heart,  
ribs of my own making, so that when you came back,  
you couldn’t find me  
waiting.

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