

HOW DADDY USED TO FROWN WHEN I WAS SIX,
WITH OUR GARDEN FULL OF MY TREASURED PETS.

SUCH PLAY WAS PUERILE AND MAWKISH, SAID HE,
AND DOUBTLESS WOULD LEAD TO ONLY REGRETS.

"THERE'S NO PROFIT IN THIS SPORT," HE'D PRONOUNCE,
"AND SUCH BEASTS ARE MEANT TO LIVE IN THE WILD."
THEY DISTRACT FROM THE GRIT AND HONING.



...HIS MOST
DARLING AND
EXCEPTIONAL
CHILD.

WHEN MAMA HAD DIED, I SAW DADDY SHED,
A SINGLE, PRECIOUS AND REVERENT TEAR.

AND HER NAME, HE NEVER MENTIONED AGAIN,
FOR DEEP IN HIS HEART, SHE LIVED WITHOUT PEER.



LIKE SINBAD OF OLD,
DADDY'S WORK LED HIM,
TO BOTH VENTURE AND
EXPLORE FAR AND WIDE.



WHICH LEFT ME
ALONE WITH
NANNY IN CHARGE,
WITH A DARK AND
EMPTY LONGING
INSIDE.



I HAD FITS OF MANIA, FITS OF DESPAIR,
I BROODED AND I BRISTLED AND I RAGED.



BUT UNDER NANNY'S STERN THUMB, IT WAS AS IF
I WAS HOBBLING, AND BRIDLED, AND CAGED.



NANNY LOVED HER PETTY
ADMONISHMENTS,
AND ENFORCING THEM, SHE
SPARED NOT THE SWITCH.



I PINED FOR DADDY'S RETURN, AND I DREAMT
HIS TRAVELS HAD MADE US JUST FILTHY RICH.



HE'D FLY HOME AND SWEEP
ME INTO HIS ARMS,
THEN WE'D FIRE, AND SHAME,
AND PUNISH THAT WITCH.

BUT WHEN DADDY NEXT CAME,
EVERYTHING CHANGED.
HE WORE A UNIFORM,
SHINY AND BLACK.

TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY OF
BIRTH, SO HE CLAIMED,
WHOSE FORCES WERE RIPE
TO SEIZE THE ATTACK.




THIS WAR WOULD CLARIFY
JUSTICE, HE SAID,
WHICH HAD NOTHING TO DO
WITH CREED OR RACE.



"MY DEAR,
YOU MUST LEARN,
WHERE NATURE'S
CONCERNED..."



"ONLY THE STRONG
EVER END
IN FIRST PLACE!"



I CHEWED DADDY'S WORDS AND
SWALLOWED THEM WHOLE...



FOR SOMETHING QUITE STRANGE
HAD BLOSSOMED IN ME.

AND SOON, LINGERING EYES,
EAGER AND RAW,
FOUND EVERY REASON TO PROD,
PRY AND PLEAD.