

Atlas with no sky

I envy you,
named for eternity,
your burden stitched in starfire
even toddlers point to with wonder.

But me?

I am christened from broken men
whose sole inheritance is this ghost
haunting my mirror's silver.

Others shoulder their loads
beneath shrunken skies:

a **roof** that settled gently on ready beams,
a **book** that snapped shut at "passable,"
a **sword** forever sheathed in a frame,

Their earth stays firm,
their eyes stay earthbound;
why strain for constellations

when their heavens fit in coat pockets?

But me?

I saw through roof-thatch lies,
read past the book's stamped THE END,
found in the sword's cold reflection
a sky worth bleeding for.

So I reached.

Now I brace collapsing walls with my jaw,
decipher fault lines like love letters,
dance on trembling ground
balancing infinity.

He knew his sentence:

sky or suffocation.

They found theirs

at eye-level,

no ladder required.

But me?

My damnation wears velvet gloves

I may climb but find no ledge,

may triumph but feel no joy.

Mistook millstones for wings,

thought I could soar

from this crumbling ledge.

Now I lurch

under a weight too vast

to be legendary,

too ordinary

to be witnessed,

on land that shudders

like it's vomiting up

every step I've ever taken.

And so I wait,

for the earth to not forget its quaking,

but for the tremors to settle

into a rhythm I can predict.

For the ground to exhale

its stored-up violence

just long enough
that I might plant my feet
and feel for once
not the threat of collapse,
but the memory of stability.

for the winds
the spiteful winds
to forget they meant to break me,
to instead curl beneath
these wings, they denied me.

For this weight to grow lighter
not because it's lifted,
but because my shoulders
have learned its shape
by heart.

Then
when my calm is still chaos
to any other soul
I'll press my thumb
to the trembling page
and in the space between

fault line and firmament,

I'll etch my name in an Atlas.