The King

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“Shalom!” “Salutations!” “Bienvenidos!” “Well met!” were the greetings lavished upon me by the many guests. I sat at a silver table scattered over with rounded stones glowing pale as moonlight. I was given food and drink, the memory of which I cannot now comprehend. But throughout it all were the people, merry and gay, full of life and laughter, joy and peace, hope and faith and love. My hours among them were sweet and seemed more full and more lasting than many, many spent in other tasks.

Evening had long since dawned and stars peeped through the underlit canopy above, as if envying our company, when I tore myself from my new friends, knowing my parents would worry, adult as I now am, what had become of me. Brighid understood. She motioned to a small, slight man who picked up a haunting lullaby tune. Soon the whole crowd sang in harmony.

Brighid led me up the luminary path on which I had arrived. Just beyond the bend of rock, the wood became again the familiar trees of my youth and I saw the embankment holding up the frontage road and houses inner-lit with electric lights.

“Will you be back?” I asked, wishing English had a plural “you,” as I longed to see them all again. “Will I see you again?”

She smiled and galaxies floated now in her eyes as reflections of the heavenly stars mingled with her own. “You will,” she said. “Though it may be many years, and it won’t be here.”

I nodded and looked up at the stars, oddly bright and close for the city.

“In time,” said her voice, though I looked and she was gone, “you may even join. But for now and forever, Shalom.”

I didn’t turn. Somehow I knew the wood behind me was not the wood I had exited. The stars remained close and my house, visible from the creek bed, looked cheerier and snugger than ever, all lit as it was. I saw family and friends moving as silhouettes in the windows. With joy and a peaceful determination, I made my way home to them.

Zeke Fetrow

The King

The warm trickle from the shower head usually comforts me.

A light stream
cressing my every shape.
Tonight is different.
The heavy drops,
like stones from a catapult,
beseige my fortress of deceit.
Lies sealed behind great wooden doors,
unveiled by the incessant battering of the water.
But you cannot wash away guilt.
Guilt is the undying king
in the castle of lies.
The shower head sprays
furiously stripping away walls and barriers
but the king is immortal.
The guilt will always remain.
I scrub angrily, shaving away my skin, and say to myself,
“Ther! What is a castle without walls?”
In a rage I tear at my body
ripping away the muscles,
“Alas! What are walls if they defend no kingdom?”

Finally pulling the very bones from my frame
I shout “What is a king without a castle to protect him?”
(I pause for a moment, staring blankly into the mist.)
The king stands alone and naked;
stripped of his fortress
while the shower head spills its last few drops.
His gates vanquished
and his walls crumbled.
He is a king who weeps,
overcome with guilt,
and stands there
showering in his tears.