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Fable I

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DEAN N. SYRACOPOULOS

FABLE I

The Leader packed me solidly in moss, planting a flag in my skull. It was emblazoned with a bear that had once fluttered over an opium dealer's tent in Oran. What a picture of majesty I was! That afternoon, a Prince descended from his saddle and bent down to examine me. Taking one of my ears in hand, he commanded a lieutenant to divine the situation. Try as he could, the flunky failed so the Prince deposited a diamond by my lips. Soon, a shiek rode by and asked the meaning of this, a rag-picker replying it was all nonsense. His camel brayed and then fell dead at the sight of its puzzled master. The caravan departed, winding its sinuous course toward a sunset. No doubt, my next visitor would be a prophet, a yogi riding on his tiger.

I awoke the next morning. My flag was gone. My jaws had been nailed shut. Ants ate at my eyes. A police official took copious notes, pausing only to brush at the butterflies lighting on his tablet.

DEAN N. SYRACOPOULOS

LOKI

My concerns've always been hooligans.
jostling decent folk out on Sunday walks.
Not that I should forget grinning at my
own execution and the dignity lent to it
by the presence of the Pope.
Fondly, I'd peered up at His Holiness
while gnawing on his kneecap.
Such implacability in the face of reverse.
He barely noticed me, his frown an omen
of shyness and the forbidding lusts
of shoguns resplendent in stolen jade.
Good for him.
I bribed Lucifer to leave his son pregnant.
Complications aside, he couldn't even guess
the gender of the child.

These horns of mine are fuzzier than usual.
So I spend afternoons jousting with oaks
and an overriding greed for new subjects.
The sun blazes with such arrogance.
My eyes are pearls.
The smile did belong to Pan, copied from a
jar found north of the Zambezi, scant
inches from the Cradle of Man.
I giggle at the malice coursing through my two brains.

It is time to sharpen my wits on politicians.