

Inheritance

They gave me a name like a chain,
Polished with pride, laced with shame.
Told me to smile, to kneel, to serve
To carry a legacy I didn't deserve.

"Be grateful," they said, as they took what was mine
My voice, my fire, my unscripted spine.
Their love was a ledger I never could clear,
A debt made of guilt, disguised as fear.

In halls built of silence, with walls made of lies,
I learned to perform while part of me dies.
Every laugh rehearsed, every word rechecked,
A child in armor, bent at the neck.

Society clapped from a comfortable seat,
While I danced for judgment, bruised at the feet.
"Obedient," "strong," "a model of grace"
As long as I wore the acceptable face.

But they never saw the cost I paid
The nights I bled where no one stayed.
The voice I drowned, the panic I hid,
The self I buried to be the good kid.

Still, somewhere inside, beneath the debris,
A quieter version remembers me.
Not the mask, not the mold, not the part I was cast
But the soul I smothered to make the lie last.

And maybe that whisper is how I begin
To loosen the noose they tied under my skin.
To breathe, though it trembles, to step though it aches
To unmake the cage no matter what breaks.

Because I am not what they need me to be.
I am not their shame or their legacy.
I am the storm they tried to drown
Still standing. Still rising.
Still mine.