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The King's Oldest Son

I Restore Order

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, "This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Deut. 21:18-21

"Close your eyes or I'll close em for you," I say to the peasants alongside the road.

"Close your eyes," the crows perched on their shoulders echo. "I'll close em."

They're all bandits, every damn one of em, I can see *that* right there in their eyes, which are yellow. Yellow-eyed bandits with hairy pouches and long rat-like tails.

I wave my arm and my soldiers leap into action. Blood and guts by the side of the road. My men fall to the cutting off of foreskins.

"I'll call this place," I declare, looking about in a steely fashion as if daring anyone to defy my authority, "Blood-n-Guts, for here today many a brave man lost his life."

I Am Invited to Dinner

You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 14:21

"Dinner, sir."

“What?”

“Won’t you honor us by sitting at our table?”

Honor them! Honor the sheep they would slaughter. Honor is a rack of mutton bubbling with hot fat.

I Fuck a Duck

If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her; he may not put her away all his days.

Deut. 22:28

“I want that girl there as my wife.”

“But she’s only eight.”

“All right then! I won’t marry her, I’ll just fuck her. Here’s your fifty shekels.”

Eight! She’s thirteen if she’s a day. The fools are lying, trying to protect her from the predator. The king’s son! Give him whatever he wants. But try to talk him out of wanting the impossible.

My entourage and I move to a grassy hillock, where I brutally deflower the girl. She moans with pleasure, bites her lip. Her eyes squinched tight, a tear popping through one lid. So happy is this peasant girl to receive the prince’s seed. So obedient that she refrains from gushing over me, clinging to me. Not wanting to ruin *my* pleasure.

She is a duckling. Yellow feathers and yellow beak. When I’m done I tell my men to toss her back in the pond. As she swims about happily I think that she looks a bit like my brother’s sister Tamar.

Quack quack!

I Think About Foreskins Again

He whose testicles are crushed or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.

Deut. 23:1

Around the fire that night the men tell stories of my father. What a hero.

Everybody's favorite. At my age he'd already severed the foreskins of a thousand Philistines. They were dead when he did it, of course. He killed them, then hauled up their waistcloths and sliced off their foreskins. Kind of a strange way to prove your valor in battle, I always thought, cutting skin off of dead guys' dicks. Pinching the foreskin between thumb and forefinger and stretching it out just so, then *whack!* with your knife. My dad showed me how, once. Took me out onto the battlefield, made me watch while he yanked up all those waistcloths and chopped off foreskins. He might have done thirty or forty himself. His men were out there too, all of them hard at work with their knives and their thumbs and forefingers. "Gotta be careful, one little slip and you could slice a finger off." Those knives were *sharp*. No sawing back and forth. Just one clean swipe and the little squirmy piece of flesh was off, on its way into the special little foreskin pouch. Not much blood. I guess the new Jews had been dead for a few hours by then. The blood had settled already.

Coming off the battlefield Dad led us through town, where of course they'd killed every man, woman, child, and animal. God's orders. Wipe out the enemy, make more room for God's People. The town was already looted, so we moved through pretty fast, Dad stopping only two or three times to relieve some old dead guy or young boy of his foreskin; some of the men stopping to fuck some particularly sexy corpse they'd found. They got really annoyed when Dad broke it up before everybody'd had his turn, but what were they going to do? He was the king. He was the mighty David. God was with him. Go against him and you could find yourself struck dead by lightning, like Uzzah, who just steadied the Ark of the Covenant a little with his hand, or Uriah, whose wife Dad wanted to fuck.

I was young, then, seven or eight. Too young to fight. Too young to line up for a turn on the dead woman. And by the time I got to be old enough to do those things, there was no more fighting to do. Dad had already taken over everywhere. King of Judah, king of Israel. I was born in Hebron after his first flush of victories against Saul, who was king back then. But God liked Dad more than Saul so he took the kingdom away from Saul and gave it to Dad. That made me a prince. Someday I'll be king. Then I'll go into battle and hew down brave soldiers by the thousand and cut off their foreskins just so and then fuck a dead sexy woman on my way home for dinner.

I Eat Dinner

*And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten.
All clean winged things you may eat.*

Deut. 14:19-20

“Yes, yes, I’m coming.”

Tamar looks golden in the candlelight. The fleece on her arms like the fleece on a big ripe golden fig. I imagine biting that fig and letting the juice run down my chin. To my surprise just then a servant hands me a ripe fig. I bite it and let the juice run down my chin. Tamar watches me do it.

I Take a Stroll

A man shall not take his father’s wife, nor shall he uncover her who is his father’s.

Deut. 22:30

After dinner I take a stroll through the harem and reflect on the injustice that Dad has all these soft fleshy wives and concubines and I, his oldest son and heir apparent, have none. My father’s an old goat with hairy horns. He is practically 60. He has gray hairs on his balls but still fucks somebody every goddamned day. Some days two or three. I never get to fuck anybody. And I’ll be 20 next birthday. Some of my dad’s concubines are younger than me. He can’t fuck them all. Why can’t he bring me to the harem and throw his arms wide and say “Take your pick, boy,” or “The world’s your oyster, son, fuck away,” or “Some day all this will be yours,” or some grandiose shit like that?

Of course I’m exaggerating a little. I fuck the servant girls. And I grab me an occasional duckling by the side of the road. But I really fail to see how any of that counts next to having your own harem stocked with all the most beautiful women in Israel.

I See a Woman Buck Naked

There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.

Deut. 18:10-13

I tell my men to take me to the Witch of Endor. She makes them wait outside.

When we're alone she strips naked. This is pretty amazing to me. If I'd known this I would have come earlier. Of course she's a million years old or something, and has dog hairs sprouting out of her all over her body, and her cunt lips hang down like fingers, all yellow and tallowy, and I know I'd never want to stick my dick in *there*. But still.

Then she takes a deep draft of a magic potion, or gives me a cup of magic potion to drink, or something, and then she turns into Tamar, not really, but damn if it isn't a pretty fucking uncanny likeness, her tits small and nubby, the dog hairs gone, the pussy small and black and compact, and all over her body a fine sheen of sweat as if from the effort.

She goes all coy and coquettish.

"Do you want me?"

"I do! When can I have you?"

"Any time you want. Just take me!"

"I want the *real* Tamar."

"I am the real Tamar."

"As soon as I am done with you you'll turn back into a withered old hag with saggy tits and stretchy yellow cunt lips."

She shrugs casually.

"This is your one chance, Amnon, to have me. Take me now and clasp your sister to your bosom as often as you like. Refuse me and you'll never lick the sweat off the undersides of her tits."

Bleah! Lick the sweat! I almost throw up. She sees this and instantly turns into my father.

I Defend My Dignity

And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest the heart of his fellows melt as his heart." And when the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed at the head of the people.

Deut. 20:8-9

"Dad!" I cry.

"By the tits of Meshe, boy," he splutters, "what are you doing here? Trying to find out when I'll die and you'll be king?"

"No, Dad, I —"

“It’s girls, isn’t it. You aren’t getting laid enough. You want to fuck my concubines.”

“Dad, how did you —”

“You think I don’t know what’s going on in my own house? You think I don’t hear all about it every time you sneak in and jack off while the girls are taking a bath?”

I feel myself flush and hate myself for it.

“If you want me to treat you like a man you’d better start acting like one. Why, when I was your age I was out circumcising Philistines. I was a *general* by the time I turned 20.”

“I know, Dad. But you won’t let me join your army. You won’t even give me an entourage to march around the countryside with.”

“Oh, right, so you can stir up rebellion against me.”

“No, Dad, I swear, I’d never —”

“No, you’re right, you probably wouldn’t. Absalom, he’s the rebel, something tells me.”

“That’s right! He’s said things to me plenty of times!”

“You don’t need to rat out your brother, son. My spies have already told me every word he’s ever said to you. Or to anybody.”

“Then let me have an entourage, Dad! Please! Just ten men!”

“Ten men!”

“Five! It’s all I ask!”

“When I think of the damage you could do with five men. You’d have them kill anybody who looked cross-eyed at you. You’d use them to protect you against angry villagers while you fucked their virgin daughters. I know you, future king of Israel.”

The scorn in his voice as he says this makes my blood run cold, until I remember that this isn’t really my dad, it’s the Witch of Endor in some kind of trance, and I open my eyes and find myself at home in bed, my dick and balls sucked up tight into my scrotum, the door to my room banging.

I Argue With Absalom Again

If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods,” which neither you nor your fathers have known, some of the gods of the peoples that are round about you, whether near you or far off from

you, from the one end of the earth to the other, you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him; but you shall kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and never again do any such wickedness as this among you.

Deut. 13:6-11

I get tangled up for like the millionth time in a stupid argument with Absalom about Dad's past. He figures this whole business about God getting mad at Saul for not doing exactly what he told him to do is a crock of camel shit. We heard the story from our cousin Jehonadab. Jehonadab is ten years older than me, and kind of like Dad's right-hand man. If anybody knows this stuff, I figure, he does. I tell Absalom so.

"What," he snorts, "you think Jehonadab was there when God talked to Samuel? *If* God talked to Samuel."

"No, but he heard the story from his father Shimeah our uncle, our father's brother. Shimeah was there when Samuel anointed Dad, the youngest of Grandpa Jesse's eight sons. Shimeah had the story straight from Samuel. This is a known fact."

"A known fact. Grow up. Shimeah could have lied. Jehonadab could have made the whole thing up."

"Lied! Made the whole thing up! Absalom, Absalom! Jehonadab would never do that! He's an honorable man like his father before him!"

"You're such a simp. Jehonadab is a fox like his father before him, and his uncle our father. Jehonadab will do anything to keep Dad in power, and himself close to the source of that power."

"What could you possibly know about any of that? You're but a child, a baby."

"You're two years older and twice the baby I am. You believe whatever fairy tales Dad or anyone tells you. You think that God really gave Dad the kingdom because Saul let King Agag live."

"*And* kept out some sheep and cows, don't forget!"

"Right. A king and some sheep and cows. So for that God snatches the whole fucking kingdom away from Saul and hands it over to Dad."

"Why not? God is all-powerful. He can choose whoever he wants to be king."

“And it’s just coincidence that this story is the perfect justification of Dad’s revolt against Saul.”

“Dad didn’t revolt! Saul tried to kill him!”

“If I started a revolt, Dad would try to kill me too. And if I succeeded, you can bet I’d come up with a good story about Dad and God. Dad broke some commandment, committed adultery, ha ha, and God waxed wroth with him and decided to give the kingdom to me.”

“Why would he give it to you? You’re third in line, after me and then Kileab.”

“I didn’t say God would give me the kingdom for *real*, you dumb fuck. I said if I somehow managed to overthrow Dad, I’d *say* God gave me the kingdom because Dad nailed Bathsheba or whoever.”

“How can you talk about overthrowing Dad? This is treasonous talk! What if he hears about you talking this way?”

“I was speaking hypothetically, numbnuts. Don’t be so fucking literal all the time. People don’t always mean exactly what they say.”

“I do.”

“Yes, that’s true. And that’s why you’ll never be king.”

“Never be king! What are you saying!”

“Mark my words. Jehonadab will find a way to keep you off the throne.”

“You’re paranoid, Absalom. That’s your problem.”

“No, I *think*. *That’s* my problem. I pay attention, and figure things out. I think to myself, for instance: how plausible is it that God picks the youngest of eight shepherd boys to be Saul’s successor, and *then* Saul just happens to pick this same shepherd boy to play the harp for him?”

“What’s so strange about that?”

“A bunch of nobodies in Bethlehem. The eighth son becomes God’s anointed, which is a stretch to start with, but forget about that. Nobody knows that God’s chosen Dad, except Samuel, and Samuel ain’t saying, because he’s afraid Saul will pour honey all over him and stake him to an anthill. So then God sends Saul an evil spirit to make him crazy, because he’s pissed off at Saul and loves to torment people he’s pissed off at. Somebody says, ‘Get a harpist.’ Saul thinks, hey, good idea. There’s this obscure eighth son of a sheep farmer in an obscure town called Bethlehem that I’ve just happened to hear plays the harp real swell. Get *him* to come play for me whenever God starts fucking with my head. And this obscure harpist just happens to be his successor, already chosen by God. Dad’s a total unknown, a hick, a rube, but Saul knows all about him. Saul says ‘Get me that youngest son of Jesse fella, he’s the harpist for me.’”

“Surely if God wanted to make Dad king, he could put the idea in Saul’s head to hire him as harpist. Is that such an outlandish idea to you, that Almighty God can do whatever he wants?”

“It isn’t the *ability*, you peabrain. Of course God can do whatever he puts his mind to. It’s *appearances*. It’s how it looks. Actually it’s the trade-off between how it looks and how it works. Presumably God chooses Samuel to do all this anointing stuff, and say has Saul just sort of come up with the idea of having Dad play the harp for him, to make it *look* good, right? To make it look *natural*. It’s inefficient, but at least it looks like God ain’t micromanaging Israel. But Saul hiring Dad as harpist fucks the look of it up. It fucks with *plausibility*. You see what I’m saying here? Plausibility. It just ain’t plausible. I mean, if God isn’t worried at all about plausibility, why didn’t he just take Dad by the hand and march into Jerusalem, strike Saul dead, and say ‘See this kid here? He’s the new king’? Why all the rebellions, wars, murder attempts? We grew up in an armed camp because God decided to make Dad Saul’s harpist instead of just marching in or appearing in the clouds or something and declaring him king.”

“Harpist, then general,” I say pedantically. I can’t help myself.

“Yeah, there’s another masterstroke,” Absalom sneers. “How many harpists do you know of that become famous generals? The whole harpist part of it reeks to high heaven. Dad’s revolution is successful, gotta make it look like God’s will, lessee, how could we spin it so it looks good? I know: King David plays the harp! We’ll say King Saul brought him to court to play the harp! Uh huh. *There’s a brainstorm that shoulda died in committee.*”

There’s just no pleasing Absalom. He’s bitter about everything.

But then, his mom’s dad is king of Geshur. That’s why he’s got such an *attitude* about all this stuff, I bet.

I See What’s Mine

You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your cloak with which you cover yourself.

Deut. 22:12

Returning from Absalom’s mother’s compound I pass an open window and happen to see Tamar rising from her bath. As a servant wraps a cloth around her wet breasts, my sister looks up and catches my eye. She is a doorway, a portal. She is the gypsy standing in the doorway, painting her toenails yellow. She is the cunt of the sow that licks the gypsy’s toes. She is a dead animal with no mouth or anus. She

is mine. I burn with a wild yellow bat-like fire.

I Have a Vision

If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of what chances to him by night, then he shall go outside the camp, he shall not come within the camp; but when evening comes on, he shall bathe himself in water, and when the sun is down, he may come within the camp.

Deut. 23:10-11

I can't sleep that night. I toss and turn in my hot rusty bed. I think my leg is off and rotting on the floor. I can smell it like a bad fish. I kiss thirteen wild boars on the lips. Their whiskers are pieces of yellow straw.

Some time in the night I am visited by spirits of the dead. Samuel, Nabab, Saul, Absner, Ish-Bosheth, and all of the priests of Nob. They don't say a word. One by one they file up to my bed, lift my limp penis, and swat me hard, backhand, across the balls. Then they walk away, shaking their heads.

Then I fall asleep and dream that I am an ant.

I Remember a Little-Known Fact About My Father

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt upon the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

Deut. 24:1-4

Dad's first wife Michal, King Saul's daughter, never had kids, because Dad cursed her. That's what you get to do when God's with you, you curse people and

whatever you say happens. He cursed Michal because she bitched him out for dancing so that everybody could see his dick and balls. Dad never had much shame that way. Hey, he's a shepherd, a farm boy! But Michal's the daughter of a king and figured that her husband the king ought to act more dignified. So she nagged at him once time too many and Dad cursed her and she became barren.

Or something. Maybe he just never fucked her again and that's why she never had kids.

Anyway, that's how to handle women.

I mean, either way.

I Get Some Good Advice

When men fight with one another, and the wife of the one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of him who is beating him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the private parts, then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall have no pity.

Deut. 25:11-12

On my way to breakfast the next morning Jehonadab stops me, draws me aside. He looks worried. I mean he really looks concerned. His brows are beetled.

"My cousin, son of my father's brother the king, something is troubling you. Tell me, that I might help."

"No, no," I say, "it's nothing."

"My friend, we *are* friends, aren't we?"

"Of course."

"Won't you tell your friend what is stealing your peace of mind? Suppose it lay in my power to make the problem go away?"

"I didn't sleep well last night. I dreamed I was an ant."

"I feel for you, my brother. You don't mind if I call you brother, do you?"

"Not at all."

"I know that ant dreams can be vexing. They presage incontinence, did you know?"

I do not reply.

"But I sense that there is more troubling you than a bad dream of pissants. Tell me, my brother. Unburden your heart."

"I was visited in the night by the dead. Samuel, Saul, and many more men who walk with Abraham came to my bed and rapped me sharply upon the genitals."

"It is a vision from God."

“You think?”

“Of course. It is a warning that conceals a great encouragement, a goad to action.”

“Really? What action?”

“The vision means you must be prepared to take bold and decisive steps.”

“But I’m always prepared for that! I am the heir apparent!”

“Exactly. I know this about you. Something else I’ve noticed: you cast a longing eye at your sister Tamar.”

“Half-sister.”

“Precisely. Half-sister. It’s true, though, isn’t it?”

“What?”

“That you’re in love with Tamar?”

“Maybe.”

“And maybe would do just about anything to get a little piece of that action?”

“Maybe.”

“She’s a lovely girl.”

“She’s a yellow-banded dove.”

“She is all that, yes. And she torments you day and night, am I right? Because she is inaccessible.”

“Because she is a virgin!”

“Yes. If only she were a shameless slut like the serving girls, you could sneak up behind her and pull up her robe and bare her luscious round bottom and bend her over and slide your dick up into her slowly, and she would wiggle her tail with delight. But because she’s pure and innocent —”

“— I have no chance with her,” I finish sadly.

“I think I may have a plan,” he says.

I Put Jehonadab’s Plan Into Action, Boldly

There shall be no cult prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a cult prostitute of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog, into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.

Deut. 23:17-18

“First,” he says, “you pretend to fall ill.” *Check.*

“Then,” he says, “when your father comes to see you, you ask for your sister Tamar to come bake you a loaf of bread.” *Check.*

“Then,” he says, “when she comes you send the servants away and ask her to serve you the bread in bed.” *Check.*

He pauses. I wait. He gives me a significant look.

“What?”

“What do you mean, what?”

“Then what do I do?”

“Then you do whatever comes natural. You gotta ask me what to do then, maybe you’d better forget the whole thing.”

I nod. I know what to do. I do it. I take bold steps.

I Put Some Spunk Into Her

When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, to be happy with his wife whom he has taken.

Deut. 24:5

Tamar turns out to be a whiner. I’d taken her for a girl with some spirit. The only spunk she has is what I put in her.

“Don’t do this,” she snivels, and “What will I do with my disgrace,” and “How will you be able to look the other members of your family in the eye if you force yourself on me, your sister?”

And: “Why don’t you just talk to Dad? If you want to marry me, he won’t stand in your way.”

Marry her! By the time I get going it’s all I can do to fuck her. I have to close my eyes and pretend not to hear her whimpering. I picture her just coming out of the bath. That helps a lot.

When I’m done I throw her out. I’ve had just about all I can take of her pissing and moaning. She doesn’t go willingly. I have to have the servants push her out.

I Trudge On

When you go into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your vessel.

Deut. 23:24

My sister is a road washed away by hot yellow rains. She is hip-deep in mud. I never see her again. She goes into her mother's compound and doesn't come out. I scrape the mud off my long handsome legs and trudge on wearily, but not unexpectedly.

I Am the King's Oldest Son

No bastard shall enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord.

Deut. 23:2

Absalom is a stiff thorned animal with light brown eyes and a straight mouth. Not a word about my tryst with his sister. He doesn't know. Or else he doesn't care.

Maybe he's had her himself.

He is a large snake. His body ripples when he moves. His eyes follow me like a snake. I am the king's oldest son.

I Bite It

If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns which is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God will choose, and coming to the Levitical priests, and to the judge who is in office in those days, you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place which the Lord will choose; and you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you; according to the instructions which they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the verdict which they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. The man who acts presumptuously, by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die; so you shall purge the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and not act presumptuously again.

Deut. 17:8

Absalom waits two years. It is a long time for him to bide. When he does it it is in the presence of all the king's sons. He wants everybody to know the path he has chosen, I guess.

Well. He has his *men* do it. He has given them the order. They bite their lips as they step up to me, the king's oldest son. They are about to commit regicide, almost. Their knives are out. Their eyes are yellow with what they are about to do.

They're about to make me into a cunt. They're about to fuck me to death with their long knives. I try not to flinch as I wait to be pierced. I am meat. I am a woman's flesh. A woman cannot be king.