

*Faulkner Fox*

---

**Fatherland**

I know what it takes for a son to hurl  
his father's just-wrapped Christmas present  
out on the Austrian snow. To rage impotently against  
someone you will never call tyrant, someone  
whose photo you paste like a sick anti-talisman  
on your computer to goad you on. To apologize  
again and again for your few moments  
of fearless accuracy.

What I don't know is why an empty man tries  
with all his breath to empty out his son.  
And why does a woman wrap herself  
like a snake around the man's emptiness,  
refusing her son's whispers about the uneven,  
the brutal, the soul-less?

You are looking for a mother who will recognize,  
who will fill, who will choose you over your father—  
I know this, and still I agree to buy decorations  
for your bare, bare Munich apartment. I go  
because I respect the attempt to un-empty.  
My shopping is fruitless; purples and neon greens,  
all the throw pillows and candles in the world,  
cannot resurrect what has been crushed.

In Hamburg, you take me to your father's work  
apartment. A single mattress on the floor, no food  
in the refrigerator except gift Champagne and two pats  
of butter—this is how a rich man lives in loathing.  
You tell me of his sixteen-hour work days, his wolfed-  
down pork lunches, his use of cut-up credit cards  
to stiffen the collars of his shirts. I want desperately  
for you to be different—you are trying—but  
the coldness of his apartment is overwhelming,  
the lack of color blinding.

I have already tried to take you away with me  
to my native land—to heat, to flamboyance,  
to Bourbon—but you are sparse and regulated  
wherever you go. I have never known you  
to be anything else.

And then I remember a story your mother told me.  
At ten, when your father sped off to work in his Mercedes,  
you put on flippers—all you could find in the rush—  
and flopped down the snowy hill after his car  
to say goodbye one more time.