

The Colour of His Feathers.

'Let there be one lord, one king.'

He thinks he is Caligula. He has power. He has a wreath of laurels in his hair.

Fighting comes naturally. There is a strength in ashen skin. To the tattered mind, might and bravery come easy. This is nothing to him. They are nothing to him. He thinks.

The smell of battle hangs in the air. There's a fog where his sister once stood, a dust in her footsteps. He works fast. He can't remember how it feels, now, to hold her in his arms, to wipe her tears.

He thinks he is a pit wolf, a fighting mutt, a gun dog. He jumps at the sound of bullets. He is on a leash.

Gunpowder sits beneath his nails. He smells it. He lost her. He let go of her hand. She let go of his.

The losing dog, with bloody paws, with glazed eyes, with matted fur. They bet all they had on him, and now he's gone lame.

He thinks he is Caligula. The leash grows tight against his throat. Laurels wither faster than roses. Those he kills for will slaughter him in the streets. They will call him mad. They will forget him.

He will never be his father. He is nothing, when you think about it. A blip, a dot, a dirty speck in his father's mirror.

She will forget him tomorrow, wipe her own tears, find someone else to hold. This is a game they're playing. It's tag, it's hide and seek, it's happy families. They haven't really changed. Except they laughed more back then.

Caligula outlawed laughter after the death of his sister. Caligula lived and died in the shadow of his father. Caligula was a liar.

He thinks the guns never stop. He gets high on the grey powder beneath his nails. They drag him to the battlefield by the hair on his head. A clump of dove feathers come away in their hands.

They don't know his father like he does. Blood goes brown when you let it lie. There is something wrong with him. He misses his little sister. He sees her in alabaster in his dreams.

Nobody knows him. No real person involved. He is theirs for the taking.

The shadows that follow him down the marble steps are brown.

He sees her face through the flame. He blows out the candles.