

**From *The Refugees* by Stephen Kaliski**

NURSE

Despite the dread,  
life doesn't stop.  
It just relocates.

*The NURSE turns the blender on high for 15 seconds, and then stops.*

Further to that point:  
This is not my first stop,  
nor do I suspect it will be my last.  
I know when it's time to go.  
I always do.  
Your mythology teaches you that  
the arc of the moral universe is long,  
but when you've lived a life like mine,  
simply recognizing that it's an arc at all,  
as opposed to a swelling blood stain  
on a scrap of napkin,  
is insight enough.  
I don't care in which direction it bends.  
Toward justice? So what.  
The only certainty of the arc  
is that it takes me further away  
from home.

*She shakes the blender and then runs it another 5 seconds.*

In this privileged palace,  
they don't understand a word I say.  
At first it bothered me,  
for I had important messages to deliver,  
and no one to hear them.  
I rattled with the scream of a heart  
that knows how easy it is  
to fix the world,  
if only other people  
would listen.

Now I prefer the barrier.  
I can pass the hours in fantasy,  
imagining myself as a child,  
a warrior,  
an oracle,  
a goddess,

and they say that when the Nurse talks to herself,  
it's because it is her culture to do so,  
it is her way.

*She pulses the blender a few times.*

*I understand them perfectly.*  
It might surprise them to learn that  
beneath my dexterity with green smoothies  
lies a shocking truth:  
I'm educated.  
I listen and I know.

I know what is happening to the world,  
and saw the crisis coming all along.  
Call me prophetic if you'd like,  
but my forecasts have limits.  
I greet you now where my vision ends.

*She pours the smoothie into a cup and gives it to ELECTRA.*

I will set the stage for you.  
Here we are in Argos.  
The time is not too far from now.  
The main characters are Orestes and Electra,  
who are the children,  
and Clytemnestra,  
the mother and the queen.  
All of these names surely shimmer with recognition within you  
and scratch a memory of curses and consequences.  
Ignore these fragments as best you can  
and meet these characters anew.

They confront the same planet you will soon confront,  
are partly confronting already.  
But they are luckier than most.  
A chaotic reorganization of atmospheric currents,  
leaving much of the world in tatters,  
has brought kind winds and plentiful rains to Argos.  
The air is cool and misty.  
Crops are bountiful.  
Even during planetary rupture,  
there are arbitrary winners.

This stroke of luck, however,  
has an equal and opposite force.

Abundance attracts scarcity,  
and Argos attracts the field.  
Displaced people, unused to displacement,  
flock to the walls of this tiny land  
hoping against hope  
for entry,  
for some kind of salvation.  
Whether their farms are mired in drought,  
or their houses are submerged in ocean,  
or their forests are choked by fire,  
they all need an Argos now  
to fill an impossible void.

Three separate masses of refugees,  
quarantined in a single camp—  
a bespoke purgatory with crumbs of the past—  
currently plead for asylum.  
The Athenians, the Minoans, and the Thracians.  
Clytemnestra wants to keep them out.  
The children want to let them in.  
With the threat of radical newness  
tremoring into a fever pitch,  
Orestes and Electra have proposed a motion  
to open the city's borders to the refugees  
at little risk to native Argives.  
They await Clytemnestra's decision  
with the gnawing urgency  
of moral certitude.

*The NURSE takes the smoothie cup from ELECTRA and begins to push  
her cart off. She stops.*

I doubt any of this will solve the Big Picture.  
But as a small experiment,  
as a test tube for hope,  
I think it is worth watching.  
Personally,  
I have hope in the children.  
If we cannot believe in our children,  
what else is there?

*The NURSE exits.*