

A THOUSAND STEPS

I could talk ladders

I could talk careers, and Jacob, and fire escapes

The newness that comes from painting

The ceiling. But

In los, climbing is not a metaphor

The thigh bone must hold

To the socket and swivel. The well-turned

Calf, an affirmation of youth, lies hidden

Beneath the black dresses of the old Greek

Women, who make their slow way home with bread

And oranges in plastic bags. The steady

Foot on the pebbles of the crumbling

Stair, the faith

That 1000 steps are not

Too many and that the bougainvilleas

That line the stone walls are enough

Magenta and green

To fuel the soul on its journey.

See the newcomers, the tourists,

Exploring their limits. At 30

They sprint up the inclines

Lean into the inevitable twists and curves,

Eager to feel their blood shout.

At 40 they secure their hats and worry

About the hungry sun. At 50

They pause, and continue, and rest
At a small café niched into the path, a mirage
With happy hour all day.
At 60 – well – they pass themselves
At 20, 30, 40. And they nod at the young climbers
Who do not see them. Who have no time
To imagine the veins swelling in their hands,
their thinning hair and wrinkles. No time
to imagine how at 60
your toenails twinkle because
you have found yourself.

At 70? Yes, at 70. Viewing the panorama
of the descent, I think about the red flower
in my chest that blooms
and sleeps. It is so beautiful
It is as delicate as an anemone.

For an hour I climbed
from the wide beach at Mylopotas to Chora
the blue and white old city on the hill, and
next year I will return. If only
to climb the steps.

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