**The Distance of Funeral**

A silent film actor died a few days ago. The mourning service played a slide show of still images from his filmography at the wake. Balancing a beach ball, balancing a cane on his nose, that was his shtick. An open casket showed a body wearing 3-D glasses on a bloated face. A self-aware bit from his standup residence of trying to keep up with the times. He looked awful. Booze, rigor mortis, or a bad embalming expanded his skin like a pair of tap shoes clacking out of sync with the rest of the dancers. He’d yell at them for such mistakes when he took a stab at directing but found he only liked the power and not the product. His Brooklyn dialect could not translate to the talkie coupled with his hazy injections of coca extract. Street druggists had no idea he was a revolutionary transcending the mute slapstick and having popularized the Hollywood speedball. It chipped away at his cheekbones like wind to rock-face. Uncovering a witchy, crackled visage with caked-on collagen and contoured jellyfish fluid. Film students wandered in as part of an extra credit project.

Somewhere in Africa, a shaman died surrounded by his 13 concubines. No more than thirteen, he decreed, being superstitious. The spirit dancer also had six charcoal wives who waited outside looking for their next man, as was tradition. They loitered around the dirt roads like a staged police lineup put on hold by the production assistant as the top-billed star comes wobbling out her dressing room. A man in a government suit rushed in past the gathering crowd outside the hut. Joyously, he announced that the shaman’s son Chichongo had been elected as the nation’s first prime minister. The dying response was, Oh that’s wonderful! But, my boy, tell me, who is Chichongo? Outside as the breathing spirits rustled in the Bush to carry him for one final walk in wild grass shooting up between his toes, the youngest son kicked a soccer ball to himself. The feathery pages of his hut (his obituary) gathered with the stars when they set it on fire. Little Abayomi kicked the ball until the embers faded.

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