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The Piazza Gene Zeiger

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Gene Zeiger

THE PIAZZA

The ground below me has grown hard and meticulous, a field of angles, a patchwork of black and white, clearly delineated, but nothing pure about it, the dark full of lesser dark, the white riddled by the less than white. Standing here, I am Electra after she finally finished wailing over her brother, I am a mother having waved a last handkerchief to her last child.

My shadow, to my right, lowers my hopes, then raises them, lays them beside me with something of myself inside, small now, a girl. It's a matter of sun, desire, astronomy, a little wind, how my shoes fit, what I've had or not had for breakfast, dreamed in the wee hours as the sun begins to stagger to its feet.

The hand of God is gnarled, bony, and veined, like good marble. I used to believe that hand raised above me, giving directions—checkmate, take the pawn, pass. It was all in black and red, or black and white, the players embellished and implacable. There were directions in writing, rules. But so much time has passed since I first read them. I could be one of those headless ancient Greek statues, all stone and hard garment, but the cool air is so pleasing now, here under my arms and, Ah my skirt has just blown its silk against my knees.