The Sacrificial Goat

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It is said he moaned quietly, but did not fight when the knife pierced his breast. Doped by the villagers’ dancing, having watched his brother paraded on their shoulders, crowned with fresh flowers, he might have expected similar celebration. The village was like that: a group of them always preparing for some festival.

The women scrubbed pots until they shone, then prepared vats of chocolate and cinnamon. The men chopped wood, hammered scaffolding. Even the children, who loved to pat his neck or climb his back before he knocked them off, beheaded dozens of marigolds and strung them into garlands. Had he learned to distinguish the scratch of the sharpening-stone, the smell of oil—but not even the straw mats, laid end to end to hold the slaughtered, or the old women, lined up with their mugs, frightened him. Who
would give his life like this, calm, lamenting only the pain as it entered the body,

trust ing the hands that had tended to him even when they carried the blade? And then

he was only one of many, each in his turn patiently watching the blood pool at his feet.