

THE MINOTAUR.

The mahogany table-top you smashed
Had been the broad plank top
Of my mother's heirloom sideboard-
Mapped with the scars of my whole life.

That came under the hammer.
That high stool you swung that day
Demented by my being
Twenty minutes late for baby-minding.

'Marvellous!' I shouted, 'Go on,
Smash it into kindling.
That's the stuff you're keeping out of your poems!'
And later, considered and calmer,

'Get that shoulder under your stanzas
And we'll be away.' Deep in the cave of your ear
The goblin snapped his fingers.
So what had I given him?

The bloody end of the skein
That unravelled your marriage,
Left your children echoing
Like tunnels in a labyrinth.

Left your mother a dead-end,
Brought you to the horned, bellowing
Grave of your risen father
And your own corpse in it.

The Minotaur by Ted Hughes from the collection *Birthday Letters*
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