



Dirge of the dispossessed

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In states defined by war, onslaught, tyranny and carnage,
where disemboweled/disoriented/disembodied/dispirited
children reach out their hands to us for what looks like hope, the kind only a
living parent can bring or pretend to have,
we hold our arms together, forming what looks like a refugee camp,
stitching bound-to-break-down wounds and irrigating lacerations with
expired salines.

We tell them not to cry because their tears may make their eyes swell out of
pain and dehydration — a perverse tango.
We sing them Bobby McFerrin's song,
'Don't worry, be happy!', while drowning in antidepressants, quickies and
mind-numbing stimulants ourselves.

We tell them to pray even though we know there's no way their algid
prayers can ascend through the barricade of rusty, barbed wires and clouds
of exploded bombs and misfired guns.
We try to appear and live normal so that they can experience what desert
travelers get in an oasis except that this oasis has no water in its aquifers
and wells.

We suture the earth's ruptured skin with threads pulled from burial shrouds
—each stitch a dirge humming in the key of collapse.
Their laughter curdles into ash before it escapes their throats, a musing
only the rubble understands, spoken in dialects of phosphorus, nitrogen
and bone.
We ration time between blasts and raids, teaching them subtraction: 7
seconds to mourn, 5 to dig, 3 to forget their own names and 1 to shout for
help.

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The moon, a severed limb, bleeds its light into craters where their toys
once spun—merry-go-rounds now shrapnel confessionals.
We draw alphabets in dust, watch them get erased by dawn and fleeting
footsteps and replaced with hieroglyphs of hunger.
Their bedtime stories are the static between radio pleas for ceasefire, our
voices tuning forks struck against iron rain.

We baptize them in puddles of generator oil, whisper 'holy, holy' as their
skin drinks the carcinogenic chrism.
We barter with the rats for crumbs of bread, trade wedding rings and
talisman for syringes of adrenaline to restart stilled hearts.
The sky, an anesthetist, drapes itself in sooty smoke—no surgeon comes
to mend the fistulas between night, drones and daylight.
We archive their fingerprints in clay of collapsed homes, fossils for a future
that digs but never discovers.

We play hopscotch over mass graves, chalk lines redrawn each dusk by
crows drunk on the iron scent of unclaimed blood.
The dawn is a sieve—it strains their faces from our hands, leaves only the
taste of rust and the geometry of absence.
We are slaves to the destiny and purpose we've chosen for ourselves.

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