



**lamentation
for
a
new
diaspora**

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Av 5777

chapter 1

our city lies ravaged
the glory we once knew
was always an illusion
is a hollow shell
masquerading as greatness
but now the truth is so very plain
for all the world to see

late into the night we weep
mourning for a past that
never really was
we are beyond consolation
there is no comforting
those who grieve
over falsehood

we have no more friends
no more enemies
only this desolation this chaos
from which we can no longer
look away

we've been in exile all along
comfortable in our illusions
of homeland security
even as we wandered blindly
into dark and narrow places

but now the roads are closed
there is no safe passage
in truth there never was
we can only sigh in helplessness
turn around and walk into
a wilderness we do not know

such a hollow world
when there's no one left to blame
no more battles to be won

no enemies to fight no
terrorists to eradicate
once and for all

all we valued were delusions
our strength nothing but dread
our might our weakness
our victories celebrations of vanity
that shielded us from the awful truth
of our powerlessness

how easily did we
point the finger of blame
to avoid our culpability
in our own destruction
this ruin that has finally
blown back upon us

how deep the shame that
comes with this terrible knowledge
how can we not have known
what others must have known
seen what others must clearly have seen
what must they think now
that we have sunk so low

we assumed a future of plenty
presumed our prosperity was
our entitlement but this plenitude
was never ours to claim
now it is all gone and our children
face a future of scarcity and want

we beg on street corners
like the poor and wretched souls
we once walked past without a thought
we are no longer proud
we've been laid low
by a wound that sears deep
into our souls

may you never know the trembling
that goes deep into your bones
to the core of all you once thought
was true and enduring and unshakable
may you never turn a corner
only to plunge down
with no safety net to break your fall

we never felt the
hangman's noose slowly
tightening around our throats
we learned how to live
even as our breath
was ebbing away

all our champions have
betrayed and abandoned us
the real heroes lie
in prisons and unmarked graves
there is no one left
to save us now

for all this and more do we weep
for that which never was
and that which might have been
for our complacency and complicity
our willful blindness
our readiness to look away
from that which must be faced

we wander lost down streets
we no longer recognize
stumbling endlessly
with the futile hope
that somewhere in this emptiness
we might still discover
a new way forward

is it possible that the way
was before us all along
how easy it was to turn
down this path that
has led us to our destruction
to a pain that will never end

my family my friends
my teachers all are gone
those of us who supported
one another in faith and love
now must fend for themselves
there is no one left
for us to turn

and so we cry into this empty waste
pretending there is somehow
a source of strength
who hearkens to the pain of those
who have nowhere left to go

oh move us from this place
of wretched misery
the devastation we have wrought
this guilt that is spreading through us
like a plague

but our prayers of penitence
ring hollow
we sing listless hymns devoid of spirit
that fly into the heavens
and drift away without
even making a sound

yet it is all we can do
to send forth our pleas
though we are beyond rescue
we still find comfort
in the pain of what
might have been

chapter 2

we are beyond humiliation
beyond shame
cast down from
our high and mighty place
we have become that
which we once despised

the ones we incarcerated without pity
the civilians we bombed indiscriminately
now we truly know what it means
to be dishonored and discarded

our so-called glorious past
is now burned beyond recognition
the way of life that we assumed
would last forever was
destroyed in an instant

now we see that our own
might was our downfall
the weapons of war we wielded
at home and abroad
did not keep us safe
they have all been
turned against us

how could we ever have imagined
that our gleaming towers
would one day crumble to the ground
our military bases overrun,
a land we prized as our very own
consumed by violence
that never ends

all that we once considered sacred
was sheer profanity
we created holidays and festivals
to celebrate our cruelty

we venerated leaders
who should have been tried
for their crimes

we never dared imagine
a power greater than our own
but now we know what it means
to be violated and expelled
cast helpless into a pitiless world

we built ever higher ever
stronger walls we built massive
checkpoints that lined up
human beings like cattle in cages
we put cameras on every street
and surveilled every corner
of the land

the politicians and generals and CEOs
who fed off bodies lives and souls
are nowhere to be found
they will never be held accountable
they have vanished like thieves
in the night

those who warned us of this day
must take no pleasure in its arrival
there is no right there is no left
only a single mass of mourners
whispering broken hymns of lament
grieving what was lost
and what might have been

we never knew the sorrow
of the dispossessed until now
never truly heard the cries
of orphans and refugees
now we know what it means
to be plundered devoured
and discarded

whole families have been
bombed into nothingness
children cry out for parents
who will never answer their calls
their voices echo endlessly
through the empty streets
where there is no one left to hear

we ask one another
with bewilderment
has the world ever known
such cruel violations
yet in truth we ourselves
have inflicted such cruelties
on others over and over
and over again

our belief in progress
was always just a façade
a curtain we willingly drew
to hide the truth of our delusions
our wishful thinking that somehow
we were creating a more just
and peaceful world

those who we scorned and
abandoned now bitterly
welcome us to the world
of world of the dispossessed
they shake their heads sadly
there is no joy no victory
in our downfall

the enemies we created
through our own fearful actions
have become all too real
the reality we created
to extend our power
and dominion has finally
overtaken us all

didn't we know deep down
that this horrible day
would somehow come
in our own lifetime
how could we live with
such willful ignorance how
could we believe our actions
would never could never
blow back upon us

we are new to this helplessness
we do not know to whom
we should cry out
we do not know how to ask for help
we do not even know if there
is anyone left outside the city
to hear our pleas

and yet we call
pouring out our hearts like water
our voices indistinguishable from
the cries of the families and children
whose welfare we once spurned

we commit unspeakable crimes
just to survive we trample our own kin
we scramble for food and shelter
with utter desperation
every vestige of human connection
has vanished in the ruins
of this place that once
was our home

we have become the ones
we once called the homeless
the invisible masses who
sleep on park benches and encampments
we have become the ones
we once called casualties
the nameless bodies who

lie in unmarked graves and
the rubble of bombed out homes

we who lived merciless lives
now seek pity in a world
void of compassion
there is no mercy to be found
everyone I once loved is gone
in the land of the living
there are no survivors

chapter 3

i close my eyes but find no rest
my soul is a black site
a world uncharted on any map
evening falls morning breaks
but all I know is darkness

i know there is nothing left outside
inside these blank walls
my own private darkness
is only safety I know

in this new sanctuary
prayers echo off the walls
cut off from a god who cannot hear
who cannot not save
who does not exist

i hear footsteps growing
nearer and nearer
every moment feels like my last
i would welcome my death
perhaps I am dead already

i dwell in a forgotten place
where life itself is irrelevant
and the future is meaningless

my existence means nothing
to anyone not even myself

how could anyone have ever
lived in a world such as this
how long will i last
in a kingdom where brutality
is all I will ever know

i hear bitter laughter
outside my door
i howl back at the absurdity
at pain that could not
possibly grow worse
yet increases every moment

i have been ground down into dust
whatever i might have been
has been lost forever
my own humanity
is an alien presence to me now

when I dare to hope
i am broken all the more
hope is nothing but a fatal trap
kindness and mercy are
mere delusions i must
choke deep down

i used to arise each new morning
renewed with grace and purpose
so self-satisfied with my lot
never realizing these blessings
would come at an unbearable cost

now there is nothing for me
but to wait and place
my fate in the hands
of a future i cannot know

when I was young
i envisioned a life of
security and entitlement
i assured myself i had
nothing but time
but my happiness was
bound to the misery of others
my power bought at
the expense of the powerless

i feigned concern
for the dispossessed
even as i was complicit
in their dispossession
i championed the cause
of the oppressed
yet benefitted daily
from their oppression

how easy to demand
equal rights for all in a world
where rights are nothing more
than commodities to be
bought and sold
where freedom of choice
was nothing but a luxury
enjoyed by those who had
the freedom to choose

none of us were innocent
nor free from wrongdoing
and yet we inflicted our justice
on all we deemed guilty

now we pour out our hearts
to a silent judge on high
but there is no justice to found
our meaningless lives testify
amidst emptiness and waste

our own cruelty pursues us
our prayers disappear into
the toxic clouds that shroud
the sky day and night

we are disposable
less than human
despised and forgotten
for no other reason
than our existence itself

i see chaos on all sides
death strikes with sickening randomness
sobbing seizes me without warning
though my body is utterly worn down
i cannot stop shaking

only the strong can walk the streets
without fear
there is nowhere left to hide
snipers pick us off one by one
our bodies lie scattered like fallen
leaves along the pavement
bombs explode in marketplaces
there is no life to be lived
when death can come
at any moment

my own city is foreign to me
i am utterly lost in
a place i once called my home
i want to call for help
but keep my silence
i dare not speak out
when speech equals death

there is no one left to defend us
i can only fend for myself
there is nothing left now
but to simply survive

old bonds have been shattered
forever and friendships betrayed
compassion is a weakness
in this pitiless world

the powerful turn us
against one another
the strong turn on the weak
the young on the old
parents abandon their children
without sorrow or grief
i am too numb to fight
there is nothing left in our lives
but to fear

Chapter 4

our wealth has been plundered
now nothing remains
we can only scavenge for leftovers
like dogs fighting for scraps
on the street corner

there is no value left in a life
no worth no meaning to be found
in anything save what
can be bought or sold

our humanity has been spent
there is no end it seems to
the depths we can sink
to the cruelty we are ready
to inflict upon one another

we are no longer able
to hear the cries of our children
who lie alone in empty homes
picked off streets and
sold to the highest bidder

those who once
flaunted their wealth
now pick through dumpsters
searching in vain for the food
they once wasted
without a thought in the world

how easily were our lives
subverted and social order overturned
everything that once bound us
together has been
pillaged and spent

this nation we assumed
would last forever
the sacred institutions we
thought were unshakeable
have come crashing down
to the ground

everything we upon which
we depended for life
has vanished overnight
destroyed in an instant
as a spark turns dry wood
into kindling and ash

the earth rumbles and shifts
beneath our feet
we wander wounded
waiting for the inevitable
violence to erupt once again
the waters to rise still further

we have forsaken
one another we have torn up
our contract we have handed over
our neighbors just as viciously as those
who would eat their own young
we let the powerful set the fires

then sat back and watched them burn
remaining safe in our homes
until the winds blew back upon us

we let our leaders run wild
we looked on as they ravaged
our children's inheritance and exploited
the earth's abundance
we put our faith in a system
that was rotten to the core
we tried to reform institutions
designed to eat us alive

how could we be so blind how
could we pretend we were
immune how could we live
the illusion of normalcy
with so much blood on our hands

for too long we lived
off the backs of others
we expelled families
from their homes closed
our borders and sent them back
to die now we wander
the earth without cease

the fortunate few live hidden
inside gated communities
as violence rages outside their door
there is no shelter no sanctuary for us
only walls that keep the powerful safe
and the rest of us powerless

their homes are guarded
by mercenaries for hire
the powerful buy their security
and sleep unperturbed
as the city explodes
all around them

but their walls will soon fall
their comfortable homes overrun
yes even their safety is but an illusion
no one is immune to the storm
that will one day consume us all

there is no more security for
the security state has collapsed
we can only live every day
knowing every breath we take
may be our last

such cold comfort to learn
that none of this was ever
really ours to control
at long last we've learned
the true limits of our power

but we've learned our lesson too late
there's nothing left to rebuild
the chaos is closing in
waters rise all around us
soon this broken city
will finally be no more

Chapter 5

if there is anyone left
to read these words
we beg of you
take note of our plight

our city has fallen
our homes destroyed
those who have survived
are dying off one by one
there is no food no safe water to drink
no electricity there is barely
any wood left to burn

the storm waters are rising
our coastline is crumbling
the air all around sears our lungs
with every breath we take

we dare not venture out
people are killing each other
for the smallest crust of bread
plague is spreading
but there is no longer
any medicine to be found

women and children
are raped in the streets
savaged before our eyes
but we dare not raise a hand
there is nothing we can do

we are numb to the violence
that surrounds us
fathers are executed before their children
elders abused and abandoned

we cannot remember
what it means to feel anything
nothing remains in our city
but our fear and our shame

we are dead
yet somehow live
we stagger on blindly
through a world
we cannot bear to see

if there is anyone left
in this new diaspora
i beg of you do not come
to our rescue for
we are no more

and if you pray
do not ask for return
for there is no way back

do not long for the days
as they were before

please go forth and fight
for the world

that might somehow yet be