

The Nameless

Abigail Ellis

Keep your condolences
Slip them into that pocket of indifference
On jeans tailored to profiting belligerence

Keep your concern
Next to that stain of peaceful militance
Or reap what you've sewn
From the disdain you claim are pieces of innocence
Reap it, grimly,
If you must,
But dispose of that half-hearted sincerity,
Of your ashen, arctic remedy,
And do it properly.

Lay it to rest
In your graveyard of empathy
A cemetery cemented by the right to defend,
Fenced in by cruel clarity,
Lay it to rest, because
Lying is more comfortable in a coffin
Than it is in a press release.

Don't call it a war
Don't call it a conflict
Don't look for two sides of a bias
Don't try to name the nameless

There will never be a word that rolls off the tongue
Tasting like the metallic gore
Excavated from veins and arteries by unforgiving shrapnel,
Tasting like the clouds of smoke curled inside the lungs,
A shadow of the occupier
Tangling its way into the very breath

Of the occupied.

There will never be a collection of characters capable of mimicking the
Stench of death, of decay, of the
Emaciated bodies with vacant eyes and
Layers of matted rot
Blanketing what could have once been called skin.

There will never be an expression that can paint
The whites of lacerated, blood-shot eyes
That have known the face of death
Longer than they've known
The breath of life.

There will never be a turn of phrase that
Sounds like the final breath of a child
Suffocating under the rubble of her home,
Cadaverous and gaunt,
Scraping against the air like tiny fingernails
Against layers of cracked cement.

There will never be a consolation that
Grips the heart as forcefully as the immeasurable weight of
Bones buried beneath
Olive trees
Caught between
The river
And the sea.

Your sentiments are sediment,
Weathered by complacency,
Eroded by reality
Matter that doesn't matter
You fan the flames of morality
Because you need the smokescreen

Your apologies are unwarranted
When they're written with the same ink
That signed the death warrants
Of 42,334
At least.