

## **The Bed of Water** by Ali Khalifa

Translated by Wijdan Alsayegh & Tom Zimmerman

Wash me with hail . .  
And drop my name forcibly  
From a drooping branch  
Which was from the most faithful tree  
Play my tune kindly and transparently  
There might be a power in the topography of tribulation  
That could bear my love as an echo  
In the twitching of the strings  
Watch a destiny that might happen in a mind  
Oh injustice grew and continued  
And he called the savage dark of the night to your eyes  
And he wished that the bed of water could let you stay in it  
Between death and life  
Without healing . . even without a loaded gun or baptism.

\*\*\*

Wash me with hail  
And plumb what might happen now  
On the other shore to tear the body  
And ask who is confused  
    In illusions incendiary and despotic  
And ask your eyes about secrets  
    Which well up in your tears  
And shield your eyelids from extreme heat  
How many days you were the star of time  
    And you were the passion of love in my heart . .  
    Talismanic prayer and invocation of sadness  
I had all that lightning and thunder have  
    And the gathering clouds which are rain-filled clouds  
    And the pain in the heart from back-and-forth squabbling.

\*\*\*

I haven't found in the abysmal darkness of the pit any glimmer of light  
While you were there  
A captive of the torn remains of victims wailing  
And gathering their fragments  
How can the world be merciful to a woman who has lost her children  
Who is calling from the riverbank  
To shipwrecked corpses and weeping  
And, from the ocean all the way to the gulf\*, men  
And soldiers, and statues of guards?!

\*\*\*

Wash me with hail . .  
Or the foam of the sea  
Oh I wish my soul could sleep  
A sleep of despair who doesn't want his people to wash his corpse or enshroud it  
Or I wish, madman that I am, to wake  
From the hibernation of naiveté . .  
Oh I wish my heart were calling  
    With the scent of the perfume which you know  
        Wafting through the countries' folk anthems  
Oh I wish my heart were calling  
With the scent of the perfume which you know  
    With the flowers and the edges of endings that were passed by  
The knight one day with the horse's neighing and patience

\*\*\*

Wash me with hail . .  
Or with the fire water one day . .  
    And let me drink the drink of the damned\*\* . .  
        There is no good news to wish in the cradle  
It is not just one concern in the chest . . Get up  
A thousand aggressive concerns that press on the chest became countries . .  
And countries . . And countries. . Not only one country.

\*The Arabic phrase that the poet uses translates into English as "from water to water."

\*\*The Quranic word that the poet uses in the original is *al-ghislin*, which commentators have described variously as blood and fluid, or pus, or foul liquids, from those in Hell.

## سَرِيرُ الْمَاءِ (\*)

للشاعر علي عبدالله خليفة

اغسليني بالبرْد ..  
واشطبي اسمي قسراً  
من على غصن تدلى  
كان من أوفى الشجر  
واعزفي لحنى شفيفاً حانياً  
علَّ عَزماء في تضاريس المحن  
يحتمل وجدي صدئ  
في ارتعاشات الوتر  
راقبي قدر الذي يُمكن في البال  
أيا جوراً تنامى واستمر  
ودعا الليل لعينيك ظلاماً سادراً  
وتمننى لسرير الماء أن تبقي به  
ما بين موتٍ وحياة  
دونما بُرءٍ .. ولا حتى عتادٍ أو عمَد.

\* \* \*

اغسليني بالبرْد  
واسْبُري غُورَ ما قد يحدث الآن  
على الضِّفَّة الأخرى لتمزيقِ البدن  
واسْألي ذاك الذي قد حار  
في وهم تلظى واستبَدَّ  
واسْألي عينيك عن أسرار  
ما جال من الدَّمع بها  
واسْعِفي جَفَنَيْكَ من حُرِّ الصَّهْد

كَمْ عَلَى الْأَيَّامِ كُنْتَ نَجْمَةَ الدَّهْرِ  
وَكُنْتَ فِي فَوَادِي شَغَفِ الْحُبِّ ..  
تَعَاوَيْدَ صَلَاةٍ وَابْتِهَالَاتِ شَجْنٍ  
كَانَ بِي كُلُّ الَّذِي فِي الْبَرْقِ وَالرَّعْدِ  
وَمَا فِي اخْتِدَامِ الْغَيْمِ مِمَّا يُنْبِئُ الْغَيْمِ  
وَمَا فِي وَجَعِ فِي الْقَلْبِ مَنْ أَخَذَ وَرَدَّ.  
\* \* \*

لَمْ أَجِدْ فِي غَيْهَبِ الْجُبِّ بَصِيصاً مَنْ قَبَسَ  
بَيْنَمَا أَنْتِ هُنَاكَ  
رَهْنَ أَشْلَاءِ الضَّحَايَا تَنْدُبِينَ  
وَتَلَمِّينَ النَّثَارَ  
كَيْفَ لِلدُّنْيَا بَأْنَ تَرْحَمَ ثَكْلِي  
مَنْ عَلَى الشَّطِّ تَنَادِي  
جُثَّتِ الْغُرُقَى ، وَتَبْكِي  
وَمَنْ الْمَاءِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ رَجَالٌ ،  
وَجُنُودٌ ، وَتَمَائِلُ حَرَسٍ ؟!  
\* \* \*

اغْسِيلِينِي بِالْبَرْدِ ..  
أَوْ بَرَّغُو مِنْ زَبْدٍ  
يَا عَسَى رُوحِي تَنَامُ  
نَوْمَةَ الْقَانِطِ لَا يَرْجُو مِنَ الْأَهْلِ غَسُولاً أَوْ كَفَنَ  
أَوْ عَسَانِي وَأَنَا الْمَجْنُونُ أَصْحُو  
مَنْ سُبَاتِ الْغَافِلِينَ ..

يا عسى قلبي يُنادي  
بشذا العطر الذي تدرين  
وانداحت به عبّر البلادين أهزيج الوطن  
يا عسى قلبي يُنادي  
بشذا العطر الذي تدرين  
وبالورد وأطراف النهايات التي مرّ بها  
ذلك الفارس يوماً بصهيل وجلد .  
\* \* \*

اغسليني بالبرد . .  
أو بماء النار يوماً . .  
ودعيني أشرب الغسلين . .  
ما في المهد من بشرى لرجوى  
ليس همّاً واحداً بالصدر . . قومي  
ألف همّ جائر صار على الصدر بلاداً . .  
وبلاداً .. وبلاداً .. لا بلد .

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(\*) من المجموعة الشعرية الجديدة " تهويدة لنجمة البحر " .