

The Price of an Orange

I was raised on stories of the death camps,
Tales of my peoples' pain,
Hard lessons of the Holocaust
Never let it happen again
Two thousand years homeless
We dreamed of a promised land
Now we're knocking down homes and olive groves
On Rafah's bloody sand

The tanks prowl the Gaza border
And soldiers in their sniper towers
Shoot so casually, and take a life
As one might pluck a flower
I came here to bring some healing
Though those soldiers are my kin
What border can I stand on?
Nahed smiled and took me in

CHORUS: What does it mean to have a home?
What does it mean to be free?
Maybe just to give a guest
Sweet oranges grown
From your own tree
Such a small thing to die for, so ordinary

Once children played in the orange groves
Picnicked by the oceanside
Now through dusty streets and rubble heaps
They dodge and laugh and hide
At night, Nahed's kids do their homework
Watch cartoons and the TV news
While bullets thud into pockmarked walls
Outside, where the tanks cruise

(cont'd)

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After a long night of shell shots
Bullet holes in window glass
Nahed feeds eggs to her children
And sends them off to class
"These eggs are from my own chickens,"
Nahed says with quiet pride
When her walls fell to the bulldozers
I wonder if the chickens died?

(CHORUS)

I tried not to wake her the day I left
But she wouldn't let me leave unfed
She filled my pockets with oranges
She filled my hands with bread
I carried those oranges a long time
Finally ate them on a long night's ride
Back from one more desperate visit
To one more bloody bedside

They tasted sweet, those Rafah oranges
As an unsung melody
Sweet as welcome to a stranger
As a garden's memory
A woman stands and offers fruit
A gesture every gardener knows
From a ghost branch, from a ghost root
Home gone, and the border closed

CHORUS: What does it mean to have a home?
What does it mean to be free?
Maybe just to give a guest
Sweet oranges grown
From your own tree

What is the price of that orange?
How many lives for that tree?
Such a small thing to die for
So ordinary