**Beirut**

The sky is falling.

On Fourth of July she tells us

About when a piece of the sky broke off and

Fell

Into the home of her first grade classmate.

The sky took her classmate with it

when it returned to the above.

She clothespinned her mom’s dress

Stumbled across wall tops.

She was the fastest in her class, she says.

Everyone thought she was a boy.

“It used to be like Paris”, she says

But she never saw the Paris of Beirut.

Her dad came home from Saudi Arabia

There were no jobs in war

He brought them a tiny TV and a brand new radio

When he turned left at the intersection

They would get ice cream

He was gone for a year.

She lived at the top of a hill in a desert

And walked to school

Uphill both ways past

the cyclamen flowers through

The snow, bombs, and cedars.

A piece of the sky fell beside her.

It missed.

***Միասին***

[*miasin*] Armenian, meaning “together”

The first fog of death slinks through the village

death seeps into rivers, wilting and writhing

until painted with ribbons of ruby pomegranate wine

Bitterly blended with baptismal blood.

Sasoun is next.

We gather in traditional white dance clothes.

We link pinkies and surround the young drummer boy.

He sets the beat with small palms on soft calfskin

We begin our dance: the dance of the Armenians.

We hear the song of our ancestors.

We taste the *hamov hodov khorovadz* and *medzmama’s kufte*

Sweet and tangy spices bubbling on our tongues.

We feel the kiss of our mothers on freshly stubbled cheeks

And the anticipation of an overturned cup of *soorg*

a book in coffee grounds, waiting to be read.

We hear the melody of our language:

soft rolling *r’s* of gently sprawling mountains

harsh *kh* cuts in jagged stone of monasteries carved

from cliffs where G-d’s voice soars and sings.

It flows, sonorous in our ears,

propelling our dancing feet

welding together our pinkies.

Together in dance is the last place our hands will be.

The air ignites.

The bullets are screaming.

White is seeping red.

The first of us is falling.

Her neighbors are holding her up.

Her corpse is dancing.

Her death, defiant.

Calf skin has broken.

Small palms have fallen.

We have breathed the fog of death.

Gunshots have chosen a new rhythm.

In life, we have fallen.

In death, we have risen.

Together.  
  
Explanation (not part of the poem)

"Together" is the story of the village of Sasoun during the Armenian Genocide, who, when the inhabitants learned that the Turks were coming to kill them, all donned their traditional Armenian dance clothes and began the dance of their village.  It was too late for them to escape, but they would leave on their own terms, pinkies clasped as is traditional in Armenian dance, passing on together.

**Happiness is the softness**

Happiness is the softness

in suffering. Suffering falls on inhalations where flames soar

high as arched eyebrows of surprised Remus touching his own blood drawn by kin

ships broken. When his tears fall into yours to drop and sizzle on your burnt bulimic

bones and there is a moment of fresh, a breath between screams when reality

winks and time’s pendulum swings back from the past into the present and there is

a second of

silence.

Your lungs feel

cool and

new.

Softness expands

on exhalations.

To have felt graters grind against larynx until you speak

in blood and spools of flesh is to know a clean

breath. To blister beneath sun’s belligerence and feel the blade

at your now barren womb is to know the gentle embrace of sea encased

in desert’s grain. To experience the exponential emptiness of hope

evaporated is to know the bliss of opportunity. To embed

fingernails and teeth to peel away brown flesh

until crimson emerges is to know the power

of ancestral pride. To watch man become cancer’s

cavernous corpse is to know time

-’s trance. To watch bruises pool mahogany against

sweet cherry from flashes of flying fists is to know

the tranquility of unburned heart

-wood. To inhale is to lose

oneself in calamity’s chaotic character.

But there is always a Joyeux

Noel to your World War I.

There is always the relieved truth

of acceptance by your own.

There is always the mission

To bring wellness to your community.

Find peace in the exhale.

In honeyed caramel seas.

In hearts blossoming pomegranates.

In joined laughter’s sonorous ring.

Therein lies happiness.

**You’re Not**

*After Sylvia Plath*

Tiny teeth stamp love’s note on my flesh

Triangle toes of fresh smushed peas growing dreams

Bubbling giggles, almond eyes- cloudless.

Your mark on my belly: a smiling seam.

Michelangelo’s David’s curls

Of Brownian Motions: unruly, unkempt.

Small pinkies wrap fingers with softened whorls:

Budding Mountain’s most tender attempt.

Lady Liberty’s persistent skin,

Heart poured from indelible fiery sea

Sans patina: bronze, honey, cinnamon.

Your smile would be pain's canopy.

But you’re not real.

And you’re not mine.

**Past Trauma Stains Dreams**

Perhaps it was your fault.

That time that you found yourself

Sober yet hallucinating. It wasn’t real but it was

Dire because you swore that his long

Pointed fingernails would stay embedded,

Triumphant against the tender spread of

Seizing skin abreast your jugular vein as

Dark craterless crescent moons cunningly

Pluck your youth to haunt you forever.

Terrors that you knew weren’t real but

Screams escape as your body shrieks, hands

Directing the pillow that once helped

Prop your head so your heart could read

The delicate pages full of the blooming

Songs of life and now acts as barrier to his

Devilish touch, tearing rose hearts from once-

Powerful women like you, now tightly

Trembling as flesh fumbles and flees

Synchronous with his supple stained seed

Dripping on you. Drops sizzle on soft skin.

Permission was not given for your mind

To lose reality again, for the anorexic

Starved lines between reality and PTS

Disorder to boil until blood blends black, but

Pungent thoughts permeate perturbed patients,

Taint raucous reality with acrid dreams,

Smothered with suffocating nightmares in-

Distinguishable from belligerent truths,

Petulantly pouncing on sluggish sensibility

Taunting your life’s lost lucidity, tempting in

Sanity forever. Until the first and final quiet:

Death.