

Poems by Yahya Ashour

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A Gray Man from A Gray Land

I go to the sea by myself,
a gray man from a gray land.
No jasmine in my pocket
to gift it to the beach.

I go for the cinema of the sky,
for a delayed prayer,
for a childhood still lost.

I go looking for those who go to the sea by themselves...

But there, I freeze on my chair,
I don't dare to walk side by side
with all of these waves.

There, I freeze on my chair,
nothing else a gray man like me can do
in front of all this blue.

With Them, The Sea Wakes Up

I sit on the beach,
I watch the one who sells sweet potato
and the one who sells cotton candy and sugar-coated apples,

the one who sells lemonade and the one who sells peanuts,
the one who sells sea toys and his colorful cart,
I watch the horses and camels, and the children riding them,
I wait for them to pass by me
for a photo, at least.

These people are the owners of the sea,
the beach is their market,
with them, the sea wakes up
and after them, the sea goes to sleep.

As the sun sets,
whenever I bring a sea shell close to my ear,
I hear their tears wrestling the waves!

We Have A Lot to Talk About

What brought you to the beach
is what brought me too,
O ship of the desert.

I'm like you,
I can't believe what they say they see curved.
I'm like you,
but - pity me -
I have no hooves.

Lay beside me, camel,
we have a lot to talk about.
I, too, don't care about the waves,
white lines are all I see!

Lay beside me...

The Sun and I Get Tired

It's hard work to go to the sea
looking for shadows,
it's hard work to leave it
escaping the sunset.

O sea,
every day, the sun and I get tired,
yet your waves never get tired.

I Won't Enter the Scene

I come to you from the noise and chaos:
your air
is the only sound I want to hear,

your waves
is the only shape I want to see.

But I won't swim in you,
or even fly over you.
I'll stay at the beach
for I fear all sorrow and all joy.
The sun is enough for me.

O sea,
your waves are within me,
incomprehensible, yet unforgettable.

Suddenly I Remember My Despair

Dear sky, where have you been
while our homes were being bombed?
Dear sea, where have you been
while our bodies were being charred?

All It Takes Is Few Tears

I always wished if the sky would embrace me,
if the sea would wipe my tears,

but whenever the clouds rain, I burn,
and the more the waves move, the more I burn.

At the wrong time,
all it takes is few tears
to Ignite everything.

Tears leave me behind,
burning while I'm falling,
burning while I'm drowning.

Uncovered Boats

I'm nothing more than a tent on the beach,
and people who are sailing the sea
are uncovered boats.

I paddle through my dark self
away from time,
I'm not looking for a berth
and I don't even care about a life preserver.

I'm just a dead fish.

Realize the Scale of the Catastrophe

Usually, you find kids at the beach
bathing in water and sand.

Everyone forgets that our beach is not for things like this.

Alone, I remember the salt of wars,
and realize the scale of the catastrophe.

Every time, I find myself looking for the children of Bakr family,
I couldn't find them running in the city streets.

On beaches of Gaza,
they are still running inside that photo!

We'll Leave the Sea Alone

Only when I'm at the beach,
I remember the clouds in the sky.

Some of them got there before me,
some of them arrived with me,
and all of us, after a while
will leave the sea
alone
glorifying its own memory.

This Prison

Every time I think I'd never be able
to leave this prison,
a bigger warden shows up
and puts me in a new prison
that's narrower!

Enjoy the Rain

How did I not notice before
that I should enjoy the rain
falling on me
and falling around me
instead of thinking how to collect as much of it as possible
in one bowl
for me only?

All Doors

A pure moment of faith tells me
that my dreams that were born near the window
will, someday, open up
all doors for me!

To Eat Watermelon

Don't wave at me from the beach with your hands
calling me to eat watermelon.

I am a wave,
at the beach, I am no longer what I am.

From a cloud,
I will, one day, accompany the sun
as it descends the ladder of the sky
to sleep in the sea.

I'm Not**I**

I'm not just a late nightmare
that easily drowns in a glass of water.

II

I'm not one of the villains in this world.
I am the most beautiful shred,
or, at worst, the most merciful of scissors.

III

I'm but a nice guard
for wild memories.

A Party**I**

I screamed:
everyone, get away from me!
Then, as worried as a funeral, I whispered:
no, please, get closer...

II

I begged you:
don't light these cigarettes in your soul!
Only for once, let me be
your cigarette...

III

I sang to you
the song that we drew together,
and when your turn to sing came,
you coldly stood over my heart
and sang it to all...

The Curse

A long time passed before I could convince myself
that you are not what I should be looking for.
But what I didn't understand
is why all this time had to pass
for you to be convinced
that I am what you should be looking for!

Half of the World

When I realized that I was standing in front of a mirror,
I cried, as if I was half of the world,
and as if this moment caught the attention
of the other half.

One Person

Believe me...
One person would have been enough
to push me to the edge

Why did everyone want to get involved?!

A Universe of Being

My father who is the sun
wants me to be a cloud.

My mother who is the moon
wants me to be a star.

But I want to be a sparrow
- or in the worst case -
a fish.

The Best Way to Gift Roses

My father never gave my mother a bouquet of roses,
he used to give her a rose seedling.

Documenting Pain

O pain, how do I write you
when your cries don't belong to any language?
How do I take a clear picture of you
when you don't stop moving?

Let Them

Let them play ball
without the missiles being the final whistle
to the end of their life
or even the end of their game!

I No Longer Know How to Move

I no longer have a single speck of light left.
How, then, do you still follow me?
I no longer know how to move,
and all I ask of you
is to drag me behind you.

My train froze at the end of the tunnel
from all of the light I was struck by...

The First Thing I Realize

Trying to get up from sleep
when you don't have a single dream to make true
is like thinking about taking you own life
but not daring to do it.

Every time I wake up,
you have no idea how I much I hate
that the first thing I realize
is that I woke up!

Parallelism

Your sorrow has shredded the sky.
It, too, didn't rain!

I've Known This for A Long Time

You are a window,
they are clouds.

But sometimes you want
to have all windows wide open for you,
while you remain a cloud far away from them.

What Makes Me Remember

She spends her day opening doors,
I spend it closing them.

She spends the night turning off the lights,
I spend it turning them back on.

She spends her time moving from one room to another,
I spend it caving in my own room.

I think he might come back; she is trying to say.
I think death might come back; I'm trying to say.
But pain, alone,
is what keeps coming back.

With his memories, but without him:
my mother is left with no legs,
and I'm left with no arms;
searching loss.

How do I tell her
that what makes her forget the most
is what makes me remember the most?!

Get Out of Bed

In the morning,
I'm the only living thing in my room,
no light reached any of us.

The door is farther than the sky,
wide open as if it was a window.
My bones are heavy stones,
nobody thought of throwing them into the lake
of life.
To my right, lots of tasks are laying down,
they never heard about suicide before.
To my left is a wall
that has never moved to another place yet,
I don't know what's behind it:
fog or dew.
Anxiety no longer saves me from all of this.
The streets are imprisoned inside the city,
the rooms are imprisoned inside the house,
and all the sorrows are imprisoned inside my head.
I have nowhere to run away to but sleep,
so, today, too,
I won't get out of bed.

Translated from the Arabic by the author