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So That I Laugh Whem I'm Dead

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1. The Mural from Vozuca

On the wall of an abandoned house in Vozu!a near Zavidovi!i a poem was discovered. Above the poem a message: Here it is still autumn and it is raining. I have decided, tomorrow I am leaving. And before I go, I am leaving you this poem, so write it down, if you want. If I had had paint, I would have preferred to paint it on this wall. And do not stay here if it is not yours! At night, the place creaks on its own. You cannot even close your eyes.

THEY ONLY PRETEND

Imagine!

When they have already killed us all,
 then we, thanks to the noble ones,
 received weapons.

Just so that we would have something for which to deserve
 trial for war crimes.

So be it!

While we were defending ourselves
 with bare brains
 scattered on the asphalt
 throwing ourselves on the hills
 with broken-off legs
 we were miserable worms.

Like that!

Swift is evolution, thanks to the just ones,
 From the worm to the hyena.

And those Srebrenica women

They only pretend that they are alive.

They grovel in the world, though killed

Yes sir!

You embroider your admission of guilt on pillowcases.

All of your folks were — thanks to the observers —

Found at the crime scene.

Oh, you, dead women,

You would testify with your murdered eyes!

For what?

We are all Balkan butchers.

We will — democracy be thanked — hand over the criminals.

To the Hague those in bags -the butchered big liars!

They only pretend that they are dead,

But they are alive as much as their women are.

So, what now?

You, who are to be thanked for peace in Bosnia

We beg — forgive us!

We are too poor to cast a medal of gold

With our cut-off fingers

Into a necklace we bead for you the bones of Srebrenica.

2. Testimony of Hague Witness No. 28

What was I thinking about those nights on the truck when they were taking people off in threes for execution? It must be that even for the executioner something may go wrong, and not every bullet is fatal, and so I thought, this is not the night of my execution. I did not pray to God because I remembered not a single word that would resemble prayer, and I thought, I never have loved. So is it possible to depart like this, without belonging to anybody? You have not become part of anybody's heart, so that they remember you. And, I thought, something will happen. Not that I hoped for their mercy so that they would let me go, and not that I would pretend to be dead and fall before the shot, but that nobody's bullet would want me without my wish, without a prayer, belonging to nobody. Innocent. And, I thought, I wish I didn't tremble so much.

3. Statement of Hague Witness No. 119

They said to take only the barest necessities. I was walking by my mother. I was thirteen. I carried books and notebooks. Perhaps there is a school where they are taking us, so I will continue seventh grade. They did not let me on the bus with the women, so mother held on to me, crying and pleading.

Then a soldier, a little older than I, hit mother on the hands with a rifle, so she let me go, my mother. She was still holding my bag in her hands, and I shouted: Take care of my things! Those are my school supplies! And don't be afraid! And so she went off somewhere, my mother. And with her my things. And my childhood.

Where they took us there was no school, but a large hole. And bulldozers. And soldiers with rifles, a little older than I. And a big one. He was not shooting at anyone. He just kept shouting, Fire!

4. A Visit of the Lady Minister of the Refugee Camp

- It is good... It is good.
- Are you lacking in anything?
- Nothing. God be thanked, we don't lack in anything anymore.
- Do you want to return?
- Where to?
- Well... to... where are you from?

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- From a dog's ass.
 - Hmm...granny, this grandpa of yours is a real joker.
 - He is.
 - And you, granny, do you want to return?
 - Where to?
 - Well... to... where are you from?
 - From a dog's arse.
 - Hmm... grandpa from an ass, and you from an arse? How is that? Aaaa... You two are real jokers!
 - We are, thank God.
 - Are you satisfied with the conditions of the camp?
 - We are, thank God.
 - How does your health serve you? Are you healthy?
 - We are, thank God.
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- Wife, pass me the pills for dying!
- What color are they, and in which plastic bag are they?
- Shake out the blue bag, and find the yellow pills, which are good for everything.
- Take first these for the heart, and these for the head, so that it is easier for you to die.
- That's okay. I am leaving those to you, in case your heart aches for me, or if you get a headache over my estate. I bestow upon you all eight of these bags of pills for living. But now find me those yellow ones which are for dying, and one of those which cause laughing.
- Don't, please, see how you are... You didn't even talk to that woman, and she is really nice.
- To herself. Now, give me my pill. Why do you need more, dear Hazim? You've already taken three today. So what. I want one more. So that when I die I am laughing. So that I laugh when I'm dead.

Translated by Sara Elaquad - © 2007 Sara Elaquad

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