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I Once Lived in a House

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If they had told me before
how many times a man
can die,
I might have found a horse
in order to flee.
First, we all died;
they took our fathers
they took our honor and dignity
they took our sanity, and
they made us into fools
because we believed.
I died when I buried my first
And then, I died when people did not acknowledge me
I died—again—when I buried my third;
I died, afterwards, when they did not believe me;
I would die each time, until I buried my
thirty-third.
Now, I want only to live
long enough
to bury my last.
I once lived in a house
under a sloped roof.
I used to herd goats and sheep in the morning,
I ran after my older brothers
begging them to show me their schools,
I used to ruffle my father's feathers,
begging him to teach me how to repair trucks.
The roof on our house had not had even five winter snows
When our neighbor came knocking on the door, to say that our house was no longer ours.
I was still too young
to realize that a man with a gun
cannot bluff.
Hungry goats and sheep,
Unfinished schools,

A truck in disrepair,
My mother’s knitted handicrafts, and dinners…
unfinished, uneaten:
all of them stolen by a soulless man
claiming the right to our trapped dreams
and things that were all new to him.
After that, we knew
we would have nothing of our own
except for glances, intertwined fingers, and
shelters in breasts which held
a quivering heart fearing petrification
in the face of hopes, dreams, and prayers.
Soon afterwards, father lost his hair,
mother forgot how to knit, and
the oldest brother—the one who went to faculty—
decided to stand up against evil.
Mother begged him: Do not leave, dear son, for
you might kill someone.
“I won’t take a gun, mother
I am leaving to heal wounds,
I am going to carry water.”
Father looked into his eyes,
bit into his lip, and turned his tear filled eyes towards the dark.
My brother closed the door, and mother
started, in whispers, to count the rest of us.
Suddenly, as if the whole mountain collapsed,
as if someone had blackened the Sun,
they took, in front of our eyes, our father, and
the rest of my brothers.
And ever since then,
July,
Summers,
Tuesdays
are not the same.
My mother could recognize the neighbors
they invaded her with their hateful looks.
In a stranger’s world, at the window,
mother was continuously whispering
and calling for the names:
giving them to the wind,
weeping and gradually fading.
And so she still does, even after an entire generation has come to an end.
They want to repair my house,
and yet, they wonder why my mother and I need a big house,
but I have no words to explain to a stranger
how that house raised seven people,
stout and fearless,
who had big dreams, able to fit into four rooms.

And now, I am afraid of my own people.
Will I cope with it, or will I die
'cause Goodness is our Curse,
I won't be able to
keep the doors latched when the neighbor
comes again, knocking.
And after all the struggle,
I have to stay strong
and give the news to my mother, and tell her
that the only thing they are bringing to her now,
out of all of our five murdered family members,
are two bones.

Translated by Maja Pašović

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