

Societal Schizophrenia: The Delirium of Our Time

Eve's Delusion: Who Is Left to Beauty For?

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عندما ينقسم المجتمع.. لمن تتجملين هيفاء؟

If I ever forget, I shall never forget a day when ugliness was unveiled and wallowed in its glory. And modesty hid away, out of shame for our actions, and withdrew. A glaring white and a stark black divided the arena of perception between them; white climbed the pedestal of virtue, and black spread itself around vice.

This schism settled heavily upon our land, and the face of reason among us grew pale and wept. No disease is more agonizing than you, o delirium of the soul! Nothing is uglier than your effect upon us, and nothing is harder to bear.

This is one image from our reality, and that is its sister. They shared the space and contested the presence of time, so the beauty deepened the ugliness of its opposite and made it more painful. And the light tore the veil of the pitch-black night and scattered it. Thus, the virtuous deed rose high in its loftiness and ascended, while the foul one sank into the mire of disgrace and was effaced.

In his corner, he stood tall, his gaze fixed on the horizon, looking upon two brothers who had preceded him in the field of honor and glory. They are the two martyrs, and he is the nation's wounded. Ali was a fearless fighter on the battlefields. He stormed into the furnace of death, undeterred by a terrifying fate or lured by the promise of a great reward. His nation called out to him in pain, and he refused to respond with anything but being the sacrifice for its eye. The emptiness of the house, bereft of men who had perished, did not deter him, nor did the pleas of his grieving mother dissuade him from his destined path. He resolved to press forward, following in the footsteps of his two brothers. They had preceded him on the ascents of honor and martyrdom, and he followed in their path, his steps never straying. Ali was wounded,

and martyrdom eluded him this time, but lofty honor did not elude him, nor was he deprived of the dignity of nobility.

And in her corner, Haifa lay down, reproaching time for having carried her away swiftly... and so it passed. She wistfully longed for the bloom of youth to return to her countenance. She dreamed of the astonishment and desire she once encountered. A woman in her middle age, she refused to reconcile with time and let it enrich her. So, she sought surgery, hoping the surgeon's scalpel would restore what she once loved.

I was working on Ali's surgery in the first operating room. And in the second room, right next to us, was someone working on Haifa's dreams. Ali inhaled the fumes of the anesthetic, and Haifa received her share of it as well. Ali's portion of anesthetic sufficed; he surrendered consciousness and pain, and so did Haifa. Then a prolonged period passed, with both in a medically induced coma, necessary for the surgical procedure and its demands.

Ali and Haifa shared what remained in our storerooms of anesthetic gases and medicine. For this is a time in which anesthetics have become scarce and dwindling. A siege has been tightly imposed on the country for a long time, and want and scarcity in everything have become a bitter reality. There is no commerce and no merchants, and everyone is submerged in evident stagnation. Sustenance, as well as medicine, has been forbidden to us. We have entered a state of long-term medical emergency. Preserving what remains of anesthetic drugs has become a necessity, as well as a government mandate.

And yet, the beautiful one insisted on sharing the anesthetic with Ali. The wounded number in the thousands. The hospitals are overflowing with their ever-growing multitude, and Haifa refuses to heed anything but the calls of her own detached self. Everyone is preoccupied with survival or the dignity of existence, while the beauty is engrossed in her own struggle against time and its cruel effects on the skin of her face. She secured for herself an adorned bed and an operating table, while thousands in calamity remain waiting, their hopes deferred. She possessed the money and her own rationale, so she purchased for herself a false hope for a youth that will never return. She bought for herself, with her own private funds, an illusion, a time's blame, and the muttering of her foolishness.

This is the incident exactly as I have described it to you. I employed no imagination nor embellishment. Ali is a wounded son of the nation, of flesh and blood, known in lineage and residence to any of you who wish to verify. His pure blood, still damp, stains the soil of the homeland as it does the corridors leading to the operating room. And here is his elderly, resigned mother, still alive. She has never ceased to climb the ascending path to the village cemetery every morning. She seldom leaves the shrine of her two martyred sons. She plants basil around them, watering it with the tears of her eyes and the bleeding of her soul.

And Haifa, likewise, is a name belonging to a real woman of presence and radiance. The precious scent of her perfume, lingering in the place long after she has passed, bears witness to her passage. Time toyed with her cruelly, loosening her skin and etching lines. She found no peace with time's work, so she sought to conquer it, to erase its ill-omened act and its trace. She resorted to plastic surgery in a difficult time, when paths were narrow and grave danger surrounded her and us. And by her ill fortune, it happened that she contended with me for space, time, and anesthesia. My soul loathed her, and my pen filled with ire at her misdeed... so it overwhelmed me.

I do not fault you for your obsession with beauty or the affliction of eternal youth, Haifa! For you are as Eve was inherently created—with a primordial love for temptation. Nor do I fault you for a character flaw, or some shameful, unforgivable behavior. Likewise, I do not accuse you of deadened sentiment or coldness of feeling, for I saw you suffer pain for Ali's pain. You stole a glance at him twice. And you cast two tears upon the thresholds, and then you went on your way. You went on your way, obedient to an instinct, chasing a mirage that I never see being caught.

You wept for him when you saw in him a homeland crucified anew every day, a fate it has suffered for a decade or more. And perhaps you wept for him when you saw in him a husband who carried a rifle and departed to defend the dignity of this land. Or maybe you remembered a brother of yours who went to push back danger somewhere on the borders. And who knows? You yourself might be the widow of a martyr, or the sister of a martyr, or both. But you are certainly not a martyr's mother; for a grieving Eve never severs herself from the agony of a loss that consumed him... Or perhaps you have done it, Haifa?!

Rather, I blame the man who grew weary of argumentation and, in the end, preferred tranquility and peace of mind, so he submitted. He consented, willingly or unwillingly, but in the end, he paid a great sum of money, the fruit of his sweat. I blame the brother who saw, who agreed or disagreed, but from taking initiative, I see he refrained. I blame your grown son who witnessed the incident and shook his head in disapproval, but then swallowed the humiliation of silence. I blame the man who saw the glint of gold when he saw you, so he rejoiced. And he deceived, long and often, and with overwhelming joy, he listened to you.

I blame the man who desired the form and turned a blind eye to the substance. He wanted you eternally young, a perpetual inspiration to his instinct, never aging. He wanted Haifa in you, he wanted Sheema. He wanted you a seductress in the night's revelries, a dancer on the carpet of desire. He wanted you as the image, while I see he was preoccupied away from the meaning. He wanted you for a moment of lust, and for the rest of life, he neglected you. He wanted from your body a fleeting hunger, and the mother—the teacher of life—he foolishly and stupidly ignored.

I blame the man who sought to undermine another, so you became the target. He wanted to rob him of his wealth, his sweat, and especially his will, so you became the means. He wanted him as fuel for his war and oil for the lanterns of his glory, so he began with your heart. He wanted him as a soldier in his army and a servant in the gardens of his palace, so he lay in wait for your instinct. He knew his battle would never be victorious without you. For he could not reach Ali without you, believe me. He drew you to himself first, and when he possessed you, he reached Ali and his two brothers.

How could it be otherwise! For you are the mother, the sister, the daughter, and the companion; you are Adam's most cherished world. You are the dream, the love, and the repository of secrets. You are the treasury of culture and the abode of faith; you are the homeland. You are the womb and the embrace; you are the very origin of our existence as humans. You are the first teacher, the founder, and the builder; you are the warmth that wards off the frost of days and the calamities of time. For the great man has never been without a great woman, nor has Eve ever kept him from the sweetness of her vine; and such is the case of the base man, by analogy. In humility as in elevation, from you comes the purpose, and from us come the actions. Through

your righteousness, people become righteous as a result, and through your corruption, conditions become exceedingly worse.

All men have conspired against you, Haifa! So, you became the beautiful target... you became the victim. A white dove, yet you are far more astray. You detach yourself from a bitter reality unparalleled in its ugliness. You tread a treacherous path for no reason. You plunge yourself into a health risk I cannot find an explanation for, even if I tried. You share the scarce remnants of what cannot be replenished with those in dire need. You summon physical pain as if it were a decline. You seek beauty and charm, but alas, for whom do you adorn yourself, Haifa? Is there anyone left to behold? For the man you await on the battlefields has perished, and what remains for your harvest are but imitations.

Poor Eve! They made you the consequence while they were the action. They made you the image, while they were the brush and the colors. They made you the meaningless, and they were its makers. They dreamed of Troy as conquest and plunder, so you were the key. They wanted to conquer the gods, so you were the apple. They wanted it to be utter chaos and fire, so you were its fuel and air. They wanted it to be a paradise tailored to their madness, so you were in it the most lost, a white dove. Even I, when I attacked them, made you a rifle. So, they made you the bulwark, and they hid behind it, feigning piety.

Such is the way of angry words—their spray catches first the nearest of the near. Thus, the farthest of the far becomes the prey of weighty meanings and intents. Yet I admit, O Eve, that I and they are equal in the act of sin. A calamity is the work of our hands, a calamity—so foul it is, this immense tribulation. The mud has overwhelmed, and solace is denied to him who drinks from it. Is there any volunteer who will step forward? May the answer be a cure for this grave affliction.

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