

The Last of the Line of Refugee Descendants
By Ashraf Fayadh, translated by Jonathan Wright

You give the world indigestion, and some other problems.
Don't force the ground to vomit,
And stay close to it, very close.
A fracture that can't be set.
A fraction that can't be resolved
Or added to the other numbers.
Because you give rise to a certain confusion in global statistics.

Being a refugee means standing at the end of the queue
To get a fraction of a country.
Standing is something your grandfather did, without knowing the reason.
And the fraction is you.
The country: a card you put in your wallet with your money.
Money: pieces of paper with pictures of leaders.
Pictures: they stand in for you until you go back.
Going back: a mythical creature that appears in your grandfather's stories.
Here endeth the first lesson.
The lesson is conveyed to you so that you can learn the second lesson, which is “what do you signify?”

On the Day of Judgment, they stand naked,
And you swim in the spillage from the cracked sewage pipes.
Barefoot – that's healthy for the feet
But unhealthy for the ground.

For your sake we will set up rostrums and hold conferences,
And the newspapers will write about you in the appropriate manner.
A new formula has been developed to eliminate recalcitrant dirt,
And at only half the price.
Hurry to buy up half the amount,
Because the water shortage is very acute.

Serious negotiations
Are underway to provide ashes for free so that you won't choke,
Without affecting the right of trees to live on Earth.
Learn how to avoid using up all your ash allowance in one go.

They taught you how to lift your head up
So that you can't see the dirt on the ground.
They taught you that your mother is the Earth.
And your father?
You're looking for him to confirm your lineage.
They taught you that your tears are an extravagant waste of water.
And water ... as you know!

Tomorrow,
It'll be a good idea to get rid of you,
Because the Earth would look better without you.

Children are like sparrows,
But they don't build nests in dead trees.
And the U.N. agency isn't responsible for planting trees.

Use yourself as a bargaining card,
As a piece of paper with a poem on it, a piece of toilet paper,
A piece of paper for your mother to light the stove
And bake some loaves.

The weather forecast:
The sun is lying in bed because it has a temperature.

The bones, clothed in flesh and then with skin.
The skin gets dirty and gives off a horrible smell.
The skin burns and is affected by supernatural factors.
Take yourself as an example.

Don't give up hope.
Take heart from the exile from which you are fleeing!
This is intensive training for life in Hell
And in your harsh conditions.
My god, is Hell somewhere on Earth?

The prophets have gone into retirement
So don't expect any prophet to be sent your way for your sake.
For your sake, the observers submit daily reports
And are paid high salaries.
How important money is
For the sake of a decent life!

Abu Said's falafel are exposed to contamination
And the dispensary is announcing that the inoculation campaign is ending
So don't worry about your children being contaminated
As long as the dispensary is there.

Live coverage of the proceedings of the beauty contest.
That girl looks good in her bikini,
And that one has rather a large bottom.
Breaking news: Sudden Rise in the Number of Deaths
From Smoking.
The sun is still a source of light
And the stars are peeping in at you, because your roof needs
Repairing.

An argument at the taxi depot:
“We don't have enough passengers to leave yet.”
“But my wife is in labour.”
“This is her tenth pregnancy. Hasn't she learnt anything? There are reports warning of random population growth. Random – that's the word I've been looking for for ages. We're living in a random world. We're multiplying and our children stand naked. Sources of inspiration for film-

makers, or for discussion around the table at the G8. We are small people but they can't live without us. For our sake some buildings have fallen down and some railway stations have been blown up. Iron is liable to rust. For our sake there are plenty of picture messages. We are actors who don't get paid. Our role is to stand as naked as when our mothers gave birth to us, as when the Earth gave birth to us, as the news bulletins gave birth to us, and the multi-page reports, and the villages that border on settlements, and the keys my grandfather carries. My poor grandfather, he didn't know that the locks had changed. My grandfather, may the doors that open with digital cards curse you and may the sewage water that runs past your grave curse you. May the sky curse you, and not rain. Never mind, your bones can't grow from under the soil, so the soil is the reason we don't grow again.

Granddad, I'll stand in for you on the Day of Judgment, because my private parts are no strangers to the camera.

Do they allow filming on the Day of Judgment?

Granddad, I stand naked every day without any Judgment, without anyone needing to blow any last trump, because I have been sent on in advance. I am Hell's experiment on the planet Earth.

The Hell that has been prepared for refugees.