

They Disappeared in the Night

They disappeared in the night as the white ash of the fire went cold. They disappeared with the tales the almond tree had overheard. Only the stray mountain goat and the restless stones that wandered with our people for years knew their story.

You must understand they left us the way a leper leaves you living in the weak house of your skin. It was late in the life of spring how could this happen?

We searched for signs; a feather from a striped bird, or the fruit of the peach tree wearing the skin of the elders. Who would lead us now? The voice of reason was dead and still dying as we argued into the next day.

Then the old woman spoke: A nightingale is only a nightingale when it confesses its brightest colours are hidden in its throat and a dog becomes the animal we know when it pulls love out of the cruel master's hand.

And as the mangled tree straightened a branch our tongues curled and no one spoke. And the silence fell, and it fell like a man falling off a cliff without having one moment to shout out his name, only the silence filling his body, then the gorge, then the lives of all who knew him. This was the traveling silence, the twin of sorrow that knocks on every door and never tires.

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