

THE DEFEATED

by William A. Cook

We stand before you, specters of those lost in the winds of war,
We, the forlorn refugees forced from our ancestral homes,
We, the lost children bereft of mothers and fathers,
We, the old and infirm suffering through our last days,
We, the young warriors lured by glory to our deaths,
We stand before you, mirrored images of centuries past,
Stark depictions of what has been and what will be
Unless you pay heed to what lust for power
And what insatiable greed can breed as it roars across
The earth like a raging fire incinerating all in its path!

We call upon you as we, in ages past, called upon our gods
To free us from the scourge of war, to no avail.
What gods can we call on today? What gods will destroy
What they create? What fears can they allay?
Whose voice will they hear and whose betray?
Or must we create our own, a god for us alone,
One whose temperament we can understand,
Whose will is driven like the wind
Forcing all before it,
Merciless in its power,
Vindictive in its judgment,
Absolute in its punishment,
Almighty as we would be Almighty
Had we not the shackles that hobble our puny beings?

What fates, then, force us to listen to these men
Who intrigue in a silent room
The impending doom of those they do not know,
The innocent, who live in lands across the globe
Where the sun and time and human folly
Bury in the sweeping sands
The magnificence of their memoried past?
Who are we to those who scheme and plot
Their path to power, who manipulate
The affairs of men and decide who will live
And who will die?
What moments do they spend in silent meditation
On those who will suffer from their deliberation?

What mother's child will never see the sun
Lift its shimmering light above the sand?

What child, lying quietly asleep one night,
 Wakes to the screeching wail of a missile's flight
And feels for fingers forever gone,
A life dead before it has begun,
 An innocent victim of those deliberations.

So we come before you in supplication
 That you give heed to our humiliation;
Only those who see beyond their need,
 Who feel for those without a voice,
 Who care for those lacking hope,
 Who cry for those in deprivation,
Can bring before the leaders of the land,
 The need for mercy and compassion.
And so we pray to you our countrymen.

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