

Sitting on a Bench in Saranta Ekklesies, Thessaloniki

by

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The November sky grasps
the church's bragging gaze,
shrill and serene,
repressed chords throbbing for another mile.

Around me fragments of refugees
revealed through everlasting songs,
each note delicately executed
with a blow of the wind,
or that of a nose.

I tilt my head to the echo of the church's cry,
and notice dark figures forming
a choir of long-lost goodbyes
and expatriated grief.

They're homesick, forsaken
but this thrilling threnody cannot
bring back burnt beds,
neither the bodies occupying them.

Suddenly my nostrils are lured
by the usual flavours
that marinate each afternoon;
a late piglet's luscious meat,
the hot spheres roasting it,
fork fights around them,
followed by aching bellies,
and swirling wine.

A family tradition held for so long,
anaesthetized within the sorrowful folks,
only to be revived in the memory
of the ones left behind.

Enchanted by the trace of what isn't,
two pigeons search for yet another tiny bite,
then flap lethargically away
from the dying football cheers.

Poet's Note

This poem was composed while (huge surprise) sitting on a bench in Saranta Ekklesies, Thessaloniki, a rather uninspiring scenery, but the quiet of the neighbourhood at the afternoon hours was truly captivating. Gazing thoroughly at the scenery around us is a practice that could change our everyday life, as it welcomes new aspects of the location we visit and adds other layers of meaning apart from what looks Instagram-worthy. Sitting still and enjoying the echoes of your surroundings weaves a stronger connection with the history of the place and its inhabitants who carry it silently, even unconsciously. My only advice while reading and interpreting the poem is this: take a deep breath feel the locale's heartbeat, even visit the place if possible, and let yourself discover and connect with aspects beyond what's written.