



**lamentation  
for  
a  
new  
diaspora**

**by brant rosen**

## chapter 1

our city lies ravaged  
the glory we once knew  
was always an illusion  
a hollow shell  
masquerading as greatness  
but now the truth is so very plain  
for all the world to see

late into the night we weep  
mourning for a past that  
never really was  
we are beyond consolation  
there is no comforting  
those who grieve  
over falsehood

we have no more friends  
no more enemies  
only this desolation this chaos  
from which we can no longer  
look away

we've been in exile all along  
comfortable in our illusions  
of homeland security  
even as we wandered blindly  
into dark and narrow places

now the oceans are rising  
flooding our highways and roads  
there is no safe passage  
in truth there never was  
we can only sigh in helplessness  
turn around and walk into  
a world we do not know

such a hollow feeling in our hearts  
when there's no one left to blame

no more battles to be won  
no enemies to fight no  
terrorists to eradicate  
once and for all

all we valued were delusions  
our strength nothing but dread  
our might our weakness  
our victories celebrations of vanity  
that shielded us from the awful truth  
of our powerlessness

how easily did we  
point the finger of blame  
to avoid our culpability  
in our own destruction  
this ruin that has finally  
blown back upon us

how deep the shame that  
comes with this terrible knowledge  
how can we not have known  
what others must have known  
seen what others must clearly have seen  
what must they think now  
that we have sunk so low

we assumed a future of plenty  
presumed our prosperity was  
our entitlement but this plenitude  
was never ours to claim  
now it is all gone and our children  
face a future of scarcity and want

we beg on street corners  
like the poor and wretched souls  
we once walked past without a thought  
we are no longer proud  
we've been laid low  
by a wound that sears deep

into our souls

may you never know the trembling  
that goes deep into your bones  
to the core of all you once thought  
was true and enduring and unshakable  
may you never turn a corner  
only to plunge down  
with no safety net to break your fall

we never felt the  
hangman's noose slowly  
tightening around our throats  
we learned how to live  
even as our breath  
was ebbing away

all our champions have  
betrayed and abandoned us  
the real heroes have  
been disappeared  
there is no one left  
to save us now

for all this and more do we weep  
for that which never was  
and that which might have been  
for our complacency and complicity  
our willful blindness  
our readiness to look away  
from that which must be faced

we wander lost down streets  
we no longer recognize  
stumbling endlessly  
with the futile hope  
that somewhere in this emptiness  
we might still discover  
a new way forward

is it possible that the way  
was before us all along  
how easy it was to turn  
down this path that  
has led us to our destruction  
to a pain that will never end

my family my friends  
my teachers all are gone  
those of us who supported  
one another in faith and love  
now must fend for themselves  
there is nowhere left  
for us to turn

and so we cry into this empty waste  
pretending there is somehow  
a source of strength  
who hearkens to the pain of those  
who have nowhere left to go

oh move us from this place  
of wretched misery  
the devastation we have wrought  
this guilt that is spreading through us  
like a plague

but our prayers of penitence  
ring hollow  
we sing listless hymns devoid of spirit  
that fly into the heavens  
and drift away without  
even making a sound

yet it is all we can do  
to send forth our pleas  
though we are beyond rescue  
we still find comfort  
in the pain of what  
might have been

## chapter 2

we are beyond humiliation  
beyond shame  
cast down from  
our high and mighty place  
we have become that  
which we once despised

the ones we incarcerated without pity  
the civilians we bombed indiscriminately  
now we truly know what it means  
to be dishonored and discarded

our so-called glorious past  
is now burned beyond recognition  
the way of life that we assumed  
would last forever was  
destroyed in an instant

now we see that our own  
might was our downfall  
the weapons of war we wielded  
at home and abroad  
did not keep us safe  
they have all been  
turned against us

how could we ever have imagined  
that our gleaming towers  
would one day crumble to the ground  
our military bases overrun,  
land we prized as our very own  
consumed by unrelenting heat  
and scorched into lifelessness

all that we once considered sacred  
was sheer profanity  
we created holidays and festivals  
to celebrate our cruelty

we venerated leaders  
who should have been tried  
for their crimes

we never dared imagine  
a power greater than our own  
but now we know what it means  
to be violated and expelled  
cast helpless into a pitiless world

we built ever higher  
ever stronger walls  
we built massive checkpoints and lined up  
human beings like cattle in cages  
we put cameras on every street corner  
and surveilled every inch of the city  
like an omnipotent god.

the politicians and generals and CEOs  
who fed off bodies lives and souls  
are nowhere to be found  
they will never be held accountable  
they have vanished like thieves  
in the night

those who warned us of this day  
must take no pleasure in its arrival  
there is no right there is no left  
only a single mass of mourners  
whispering broken hymns of lament  
grieving what was lost  
and what might have been

we never knew the sorrow  
of the dispossessed until  
now never truly heard the cries  
of orphans and refugees  
now we know what it means  
to be plundered devoured  
and discarded

whole families have been  
bombed into nothingness  
children cry out for parents  
who will never answer their calls  
their voices echo endlessly  
through the empty streets  
where there is no one left to hear

we ask one another  
with bewilderment  
has the world ever known  
such cruel violations  
yet in truth we ourselves  
have inflicted such cruelties  
on others over and over  
and over again

our belief in progress  
was always just a façade  
a curtain we willingly drew  
to hide the truth of our delusions  
wishful thinking that somehow  
we were creating a more just  
and peaceful world

those who we scorned and  
abandoned now bitterly  
welcome us to the  
world of the dispossessed  
they shake their heads sadly  
there is no joy no victory  
in our downfall

the enemies we created  
through our own fearful actions  
have become all too real  
the reality we created  
to extend our power  
and dominion has finally  
overtaken us all

didn't we know deep down  
that this horrible day  
would somehow come  
in our own lifetime  
how could we live with  
such willful ignorance how  
could we believe our actions  
would never could never  
blow back upon us

we are new to this helplessness  
we do not know to whom  
we should cry out  
we do not know how to ask for help  
we do not even know if there  
is anyone left outside the city  
to hear our pleas

and yet we call  
pouring out our hearts like water  
our voices indistinguishable from  
the cries of the families and children  
whose welfare we once spurned

we commit unspeakable crimes  
just to survive we trample our own kin  
we scramble for food and shelter  
with utter desperation  
every vestige of human connection  
has vanished in the ruins  
of this place that once  
was our home

we have become the ones  
we once called the homeless  
the invisible masses who sleep on  
park benches and encampments  
we have become the ones  
we once called civilian casualties  
the nameless bodies who

lie rotting in vacant lots and  
the rubble of bombed out homes

we who lived merciless lives  
now seek pity in a world  
void of compassion  
there is no mercy to be found  
everyone I once loved is gone  
even in the land of the living  
there are no survivors

### **chapter 3**

i close my eyes but find no rest  
my soul is a black site  
a world uncharted on any map  
evening falls morning breaks  
but all I know is darkness

i know there is nothing left outside  
inside these blank walls  
my own private darkness  
is only safety I know

in this new sanctuary  
prayers echo off the walls  
cut off from a god who cannot hear  
who cannot not save  
who does not exist

i hear footsteps growing  
nearer and nearer  
every moment feels like my last  
i would welcome my death  
perhaps I am dead already

i dwell in a forgotten place  
where life itself is irrelevant  
and the future is meaningless

my existence means nothing  
to anyone not even myself

how could anyone have ever  
lived in a world such as this  
how long will i last  
in a kingdom where brutality  
is all I will ever know

i hear bitter laughter outside my door  
i howl back at the absurdity  
at pain that could not  
possibly grow worse  
yet increases every moment

i have been ground down into dust  
whatever i might have been  
has been lost forever  
my own humanity  
is an alien presence to me now

when I dare to hope  
i am broken all the more  
hope is nothing but a fatal trap  
kindness and mercy are  
mere delusions i must  
choke deep down

i used to arise each new morning  
renewed with grace and purpose  
so self-satisfied with my lot  
never realizing these blessings  
would come at an unbearable cost

now there is nothing for me  
but to wait and place  
my fate in the hands  
of a future i cannot know

when I was young  
i envisioned a life of  
security and entitlement  
i assured myself i had  
nothing but time  
but my happiness was  
bound to the misery of others  
my power bought at  
the expense of the powerless

i feigned concern  
for the dispossessed  
even as i was complicit  
in their dispossession  
i championed the cause  
of the oppressed  
yet benefitted daily  
from their oppression

how easy to demand  
equal rights for all in a world  
where rights are nothing more  
than commodities to be  
bought and sold  
where freedom of choice  
was nothing but a luxury  
enjoyed by those who had  
the freedom to choose

none of us were innocent  
nor free from wrongdoing  
and yet we inflicted our justice  
on all we deemed guilty

now we pour out our hearts  
to a silent judge on high  
but there is no justice to found  
our meaningless lives testify  
amidst emptiness and waste

our own cruelty pursues us  
our prayers disappear into  
the toxic clouds that shroud  
the sky day and night

we are disposable  
less than human  
despised and forgotten  
for no other reason  
than our existence itself

i see chaos on all sides  
death strikes with sickening randomness  
sobbing seizes me without warning  
though my body is utterly worn down  
i cannot stop shaking

only the strong walk the streets  
without fear  
there is nowhere left to hide  
snipers pick us off one by one  
bodies lie scattered like fallen  
leaves in the streets  
bombs explode in marketplaces  
there is no life to be lived  
when death can come  
at any moment

my own city is foreign to me  
i am utterly lost in  
a place i once called my home  
i want to call for help  
but keep my silence  
i dare not speak out  
when speech equals death

there is no one left to defend us  
i can only fend for myself  
there is nothing left now  
but to simply survive

old bonds have been shattered  
and friendships betrayed  
compassion is a weakness  
in this pitiless world

the powerful turn us  
against one another  
the strong turn on the weak  
the young on the old  
parents abandon their children  
without sorrow or grief  
i am too numb to fight  
there is nothing left in our lives  
but to fear

#### **Chapter 4**

our wealth has been plundered  
now nothing remains  
we can only scavenge for leftovers  
like dogs fighting for scraps  
on the street corner

there is no value left in a life  
no worth no meaning to be found  
in anything save what  
can be bought or sold

our humanity has been spent  
there is no end it seems  
to the depths we can sink  
to the cruelty we are ready  
to inflict upon one another

we are no longer able  
to hear the cries of our children  
who lie alone in empty homes  
picked off streets and  
sold to the highest bidder

those who once  
flaunted their wealth  
now pick through dumpsters  
searching in vain for the food  
they once wasted  
without a thought in the world

how easily were our lives  
subverted and social order overturned  
everything that once bound us  
together has been  
pillaged and spent

this nation we assumed  
would last forever  
the sacred institutions we  
thought were unshakeable  
have come crashing down  
to the ground

everything we upon which  
we depended for life  
has vanished overnight  
destroyed in an instant  
as a spark turns dry wood  
into kindling and ash

the earth rumbles and shifts  
beneath our feet  
we wander wounded  
waiting for the inevitable  
violence to erupt once again and  
the waters to rise even further

we have forsaken  
one another we have torn up  
our contract we have handed over  
our neighbors just as viciously as those  
who would eat their own young  
we let the powerful set the fires

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then sat back and watched them burn  
remaining safe in our homes  
until the winds blew back upon us

we let our leaders run wild  
we looked on as they ravaged  
our children's inheritance and exploited  
the earth's abundance  
we put our faith in a system  
that was rotten to the core  
we tried to reform institutions  
designed to eat us alive

how could we be so blind how  
could we pretend we were  
immune how could we live  
the illusion of normalcy  
with so much blood on our hands

for too long we lived  
off the backs of others  
we expelled families  
from their homes closed  
our borders and sent them back  
to die now we wander  
the earth without cease

the fortunate few live hidden  
inside gated communities  
as violence rages outside their door  
there is no shelter no sanctuary for us  
only walls that keep the powerful safe  
and the rest of us powerless

their homes are guarded  
by mercenaries for hire  
the powerful buy their security  
and sleep unperturbed  
as the city explodes  
all around them

but their walls will soon fall  
their comfortable homes overrun  
yes even their safety is but an illusion  
no one is immune to the storm  
that will one day consume us all

there is no security for any of us t  
he security state has collapsed  
we can only live every day  
knowing every breath we take  
may be our last

such cold comfort to learn  
that none of this was ever  
really ours to control  
at long last we've learned  
the true limits of our power

but we've learned our lesson too late  
there's nothing left to rebuild  
the chaos is closing in  
the waters are rising all around us  
very soon this broken city  
will be no more

## **Chapter 5**

if there is anyone left  
to read these words  
we beg of you  
take note of our plight

our city has fallen  
our homes destroyed  
those who have survived  
are dying off one by one  
there is no food no safe water to drink  
no electricity there is barely  
any wood left to burn

the storm waters are rising  
our coastline is crumbling  
the air sears our lungs  
with every breath we take

we dare not venture out  
people are killing each other  
for the smallest crust of bread  
plague is spreading  
but there is no longer  
any medicine to be found

the most vulnerable among us  
are being savaged before our eyes  
but we dare not raise a hand  
there is nothing we can do

we are numb to the violence  
that surrounds us  
parents are executed before their children  
elders abused and abandoned

we cannot remember  
what it means to feel anything  
nothing remains in our city  
but our fear and our shame

we are dead  
yet somehow live  
we stagger on blindly  
through a world  
we cannot bear to see

if there is anyone left  
in this new diaspora  
i beg of you do not come  
to our rescue for  
we are no more

and if you pray  
do not ask for return  
there is no way back

do not long for your days  
as they were before

just keep fighting  
for the world that  
somehow still might be