

Prophets

*"I've lived to bury my desires,
And see my dreams corrode with rust;
Now all that's left are fruitless fires
That burn my empty heart to dust."
—Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin*

*"Human kind
Cannot bear very much reality."
—T. S. Eliot*

Pillows of sand float across the ground.
Crimson and sodden and swollen,
like dirty clouds they burst, and
a deluge of flesh stumbles from slumber to slaughter.

Coughed forth and gasping for air,
they run and cower and shiver.
Panicked like rats in a flood,
fleeing our song of freedom.

Fleeing our melody of metal,
the ascending crescendo
beneath a sky full of pyres,
deep resonances felt more than heard.

Explosions like lightning:
break and butcher,
shatter and smash,
eviscerate and entomb,
lights looming large above the storm.

We leave them awestruck.
Awed at the carnage,
Awed by how many simple, humble homes
our concerto devours for safety's sake.

Bombs like thunder:
blare and blast,
scream and squawk,

deafen and debauch,
playing low notes for atonement.

We leave them shocked.
Shocked at how many simple, humble families
we wholly rip apart.
Shocked by civilian casualties,
and how we wash our hands.

Bombs leave craters in dirt
like bullets through walls.
Like an airliner descending,
and bursting through clouds.

Lovers stumble a sweet lonely samba under our melody of metal.
Families lose babies amongst the bedlam, and
each cries frightened and scared and alone;
and alone each must fearlessly face this foreign world.

Our storm sings sad and loud:
a blaring staccato machine gun sound.
A song of severance, for many a soul,
from their simple, humble homes.

Certainly, these Pilots are brave,
but they never hear the morbid song they play.
Certainly, these Pilots are noble,
but they'll never see their family dance a terminal waltz.

She's alone, desperately seeking the sun's sterling shine.
Are you shocked, we never see her?
Never hear her cries to her savior...
A desperate a cappella –
for salvation;
for sunshine.

Her breath comes ragged and sharp and salty,
beneath that cloying chorus of silt and sand.
Her simple, humble home
battered and blasted
below our song's swelling serenade.

Hidden from the sun's simple shine
We never see her.
Never hear her cries to her savior...
A heartbroken dirge –
for her family;
for her child.

I've never seen her choking;
gagging on rubble and dust and dirt.
I've never seen her dragging her battered baby,
through exploding gouts of earth.

She cries to her savior...
A sullen, somber cadenza.
Remembering sunnier days.
Life before our symphony of slaughter.
She hums a lonesome lullaby
waiting for an angel to carry her home.

We never see this.
We're embedded, sightless, and dead-ended.
New at five, or new at ten –
it may be new, but
will it ever be true again?

It's shocking we never see her...
From dust to dust, and
from ashes to ashes.
Spending blood for blood, and
spending life unto death.

We think ourselves wise, yet
we are willful,
and wasteful,
and searching for profits.

—Michael Beatty