

New Poetry by Ben Weakley: “In Some Distant Country” and “How Will You Answer”



STRAW-BLONDE HAIR / *image by Amalie Flynn*

In Some Distant Country

We have seen this before, in books

and on the screen, like dust plumes rising
in some distant country. Except,
some distant country is Michigan –
armed patriots (terrorists)
in the marble halls of a statehouse.
Long guns and body armor.
Stars and bars on the flags they carry
and nooses for the nervous traitors (lawmakers)
who can read the signs on the lawn outside –
TYRANTS GET THE ROPE.

Now they are here, inside
the United States Capitol Building,
these armed patriots (terrorists)
smearing their urine and their fecal matter
on the floor and the walls, roaming
the halls with zip ties and body armor,
looking for traitors (lawmakers)
to bind, to carry outside,
where the gallows wait.

Their work is not finished.
Tomorrow, these armed patriots (terrorists)
will return to their homes, victorious,
triumphant. They will return
to towns across the fifty states
where they work at hospitals and gas stations,
at schools and police stations. They will smile
when they greet us in the grocery store
while they do their shopping.

They will tell us to unite.
They will tell us to listen
and be calm, that time
will grant amnesty (without repentance).
They want us to forget, but
their work is not finished.

Who will tell us how to love
our neighbors now?

Who can show us how to rescue
our would-be executioners
from the gallows they built?

How Will You Answer

What is the word for *home*
after houses become bombs
as they did in Baqubah and Mosul?

One afternoon your wife
has you drill pilot holes
to hang a flat screen-tv on the brick wall.
The mortar dust and shards of clay
erupt from the spinning bit
like bone ejected from kneecap
and skull in the Baghdad torture rooms.

At night, you put your son into bed
and draw the blankets up
over his freckled shoulders.
You stroke his straw-blond hair
and wonder, what
is the word for *son*, now?

What can you call your son
now that you've seen another man's son
burning?

How will you answer
when your son calls you *father*
in the world you turned
into ash and bone?