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## Habite (My Darling)

Tim Neller

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# HABITE (MY DARLING)

*Tim Neller*

“Why do the nations so furiously rage together?  
And why do the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth rise up, and the  
rulers take counsel against the Lord,  
and against His Anointed.”

(October, 1985: massive car bomb in southern suburb of Beirut,  
directed at spiritual leader of Hezbollah, Sheik Fadlallah.)

## I

In the name of Allah  
She  
And twenty like her  
But none so fair as she  
Seduced into a marketplace  
On a street called Ainahl Rue Maynee  
Lured by the texture of smooth white silks,  
Purple velvets, cotton khakis, denims, woolens  
And delicate lace  
Summoned by the hollow clanging of brass  
And tin cups and pans  
By migrant voices, trumpeting their wares  
Enticed by the crystal jars of creamy white Lahbnee  
By the lemony scent of zahtar sprinkled on toasted wafers  
By the amber oil oozing from the pores of fattened oak barrels  
Gorged with ebony olives  
By the serpentine rosary beads that hang  
From a rack and glitter and sway  
And glitter and sway to the echos of a Muslim wail  
From a distant tower



## II

Down the street of Aihnal Rue Maynee  
Danced the Lebanese princess  
She twirled  
Waves of laughter followed waves of elegant jet black hair  
That settled itself on smooth brown shoulders  
“Yah Roohee, my spirit, wait here—I’ll be right back,”  
She promised  
“Najat, wait, I—” slender bronze arms embraced me  
Warm full lips engaged me.  
“Don’t worry, Yah Albee, I’ll be right back.”  
Lightly laughing, deeply loving, she released me  
Looking at me with those eyes.  
  
“If eyes are the windows to the soul, then I just looked into heaven”  
  
And she was gone.

## III

Honking horns blared their way through the swarm of scents  
odors, and elbows  
Slithering down the street called Aihnal Rue Maynee  
All but one  
A loaded Mercedes, a crippled derelict  
Silent  
But not forgotten  
For the eyes of the Unseen were watching  
Waiting  
Praying for the second it would uncoil and strike  
Strike in this uncommon place for common people  
Allah spoke  
The snake struck  
Releasing a radiance that poured itself  
Upon the unannointed, the unforgiven, the unsuspecting  
Blasting them into non-existence

Martyrs among mortars  
Tarnished by the black powder  
Blown from the bowels of a constipated car  
Whose effusive greeting smothered  
The laughing prattle of little children  
With rotten breath that withered the life from them  
With pillows of angry, belching smoke  
And tongues of jealous flames  
A maelstrom of burnt flesh peppered  
With splintered glass and twisted bits of shiny metal  
A calliope of shrieking, moaning, sobbing souls  
Whose God had forsaken them  
In the name of Allah

I nestled in my trembling arms  
A lifeless princess bathed in crimson  
Borne unto a new kingdom  
Heralded by my screams  
Louder and louder and louder  
As if turning up the volume  
Could breathe life back into a broken body  
Yah Roohee "my spirit"  
Yah Albee "my heart"  
Yah Hayetee "my life"  
Tender words swallowed by greedy Death  
Lost  
Forever  
In the murmur of a thousand incantations  
The barely living rose in the haze  
Weaving their arms toward heaven  
Like fields of rusty grass  
While the Unseen had seen  
And kneeled in supplication  
To their god  
As they sung and swayed, and sung and swayed  
All  
In the name of Allah



O Lebanon my Lebanon  
Have you forsaken me?  
From you she came  
To you she has returned  
I have communed with her  
On your snow-drenched mountaintops  
And felt her soft white breast close to mine  
Her perfume lingers in the verdant fragrance of your cedars  
Her hazel eyes shout out to me  
From the warmth of your soft cinnamon soil  
Her haunting voice cascades into an endless sea  
Her flesh is the food of your people  
Your red blood pulsed in her veins  
Now her quiet heart sleeps in your holy womb  
Anticipating rebirth  
In the name of Allah