

**The Wrong Side of the Bridge\***  
**To my dad**

**By Tala Abu Rahmeh**

To you sitting in the camp,  
You dived head first into the fight  
And I crossed home  
Tip toeing around your blood

Beyond that dingy river,  
Flies grow thin and spread  
Less noise  
Or maybe we become infested with love

I would tell you that at home  
Sky opens up to contain  
Your breath alongside your spit  
But I'll push it under the rug for gentler times

Ramallah like every other city  
Doesn't house tents  
Here there are no temporaries  
Our feet are planted between olive trees

At the camp,  
Where children inherit an unfinished story  
The streets are too narrow  
To even hold your shadow

In Ramallah,  
Children walk to school  
On the wheel steps of April's tanks  
Telling stories of uncles in jails

In the classroom,  
Ancient Arabic poetry curls to flicker off  
Bullets from the neighboring night  
And the land that's theirs remains

The blackboard,  
Doesn't dignify the checkpoint  
There is so much to learn  
Beyond glorified murder

And you,  
Your face still scarred with loss  
Repeat the names till they grow heavy on your tongue  
Yaffa, Haifa, Akka, Falasteen

Abu Kbeer,  
Where your mother gave birth to oranges  
And your brother untangled the alphabets  
Was stripped and raped and now lies still

I,  
Don't think about it everyday  
Instead I stroll to the vegetable market  
And buy my own strawberries dressed in a foreign language

Ramallah,  
The city of chaos and bread  
Houses my mother and old winter clothes  
And protects me from worry

When I die, crushed with a missile or of old age  
My body parts will rest between fresh daffodils  
And all the kind things I would have done  
Will become prayers in an overcrowded funeral

When you die, stained with sadness  
You will not be buried in your grandparent's graveyard  
Their bodies were excluded from the history  
Wrapped by your faceless enemy

But I will remember you  
Because you are  
A piece  
Of me

\*Allenby Bridge is the bridge between Jordan and Palestine, a huge number of  
Palestinian refugees settled in Jordan after they were uprooted from their lands in 1948.