

Stories in the Dirt

by Javed Hayat

I walk back home, alone and without the bus fare. Distancing myself from the shadows that float interminably against the drowsy sun. Where frightened boys often roam, going in circles against the long lines of epitaphs and gravestones. Puzzling over Nature's little bunkers withholding the ghosts of their fathers, over memories left hung on the spikes running deep underground, where altitudes fade from light to dark.

It's a quiet farewell, with a gentle drizzle against the air tight comfort of the neatly aligned houses. Wary mothers confined to their homes, putting kids to bed, with doors shut and windows bolted. Keeping out the homeless with water seeping off their clogged shoes.

I find shelter at the doorway of my home. Watching from safe distance the angry and the starved slogging against the sidewalks. A distant stir of wildlife beneath the undergrowth, painting scars on the mother earth like finger prints on a body. Like digging little stories in the dirt.

Inside. My Remington stares back, a steady gaze. Alphabets, hyphens, numbers beating down the ghosts, the whispers of an odd stray life on the pavements.

I empty half the bottle, and smudge the first three pages without really going anywhere. Sometime during the night a tapping sounds against the window pane. A little ghost head appears against the rising dusk.

It's a hallucination. An angst of memory blurred against the foggy lens. It has come to visit the child, the heirloom ramming down the keys. Repeating the tantrums of the past gifted through genetics. Knowing that no four acts are complete without it.

