

I Miss the Homs Shopping Malls

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The first time I learned what death was
I saw body bags lined up roughly in the hallway of a mall
There was nowhere else to put them
Soon enough, the bags ran out, and then it was just bodies
Bloodied and bruised and charred in weird ways
There wasn't enough press to cover every death
So survivors wandered down the line, looking for someone they recognized
A mother, a son, a brother
For some, their face would turn suddenly
And they'd throw themselves on a body, sobbing
Others just looked solemn and sat by their friends' remains

A week later, I went to an American funeral for the first time
I was eight and just starting to understand what it meant to die
I was scared because I didn't want to see a family friend's dad
Splayed and bloodied on the floor of our local shopping mall
And when we walked into an empty church, I was shocked
That all the windows were intact and only a shag carpet covered the floors
There was only one body, adorned with flowers and candles
In a large, ornate mahogany casket at the front of the hall

And at my first funeral, I learned that things aren't fair for people like me
And I wondered where I'd go when I died
With my people, blue and swollen, on a bloody linoleum floor
Or in an empty room, in an elaborate casket, alone