



## *Wreck*

**Fady Joudah**

*Palestinian-American Poet, Physician, and Translator*

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Over treasure and land some texts will say it had  
Little to do with slavery or the newly

Discovered yellow planet  
Few men watched the glaciers recede

From shuttles they had built  
During the hemorrhage years

When they had gathered the genes  
Down from the ledges:

I'll be a fig or a sycamore tree  
Or without hands

By then doctors and poets  
Would have found a cure for prayer

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Fady Joudah, a Palestinian-American poet and physician, was the 2007 winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition for his collection of poems *The Earth in the Attic*, which was published by Yale University Press in April 2008. Joudah was born in Austin, Texas, in 1971 to Palestinian refugee parents, and grew up in Libya and Saudi Arabia. He returned to the United States to study to become a doctor, first attending the University of Georgia in Athens, and then the Medical College of Georgia, before completing his medical training at the University of Texas. Joudah currently practices as an ER physician in Houston, Texas. He has also volunteered abroad with the humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders. Joudah's poetry has been published in a variety of publications, including *Poetry* magazine, *Iowa Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Crab Orchard*. In 2006, he published *The Butterfly's Burden*, a collection of recent poems by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish translated from Arabic. He was a finalist for the 2008 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation for his translation of Mahmoud Darwish's *The Butterfly's Burden* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007). The translation won the Saif Ghobash-Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary translation from the Society of Authors in the United Kingdom.

Or have you shoved the door shut  
In the face of the dark?

Have your body and light the trap  
Of retribution doing unto you

What it does to others? You protest  
In the streets and newspapers

And I leave for a faraway land  
Where with pill and scalpel

And a distant reckoning  
If he should lick his lips

Or clench his fist I shall  
Find his second left toe

Infected puffy from a bump  
Lance it

Squeeze out the pus and offer

Him an antibiotic I can't refuse  
Therefore I am

•••

The first time I saw you it was hot I was fed up  
The second time your wife gave birth to a macerated boy

I had nothing to tell you  
About letting go of the dying

In the morning you were gone  
Had carried your father back to your house  
His cracked skull

I didn't know that was your wife  
When I raised my voice

To those who were praying  
From behind the wall to keep it down

I was trying to listen to your baby's heartbeat  
With a gadget a century old

•••

Anemic  
From so much loss giving birth

If you give blood in the desert you won't  
Get it back not your iron pills or magic hat

I put your thin  
Hemoglobin up to the light and called out

To the donors Donors  
If you want to know your blood type

And it's a match  
You must donate

Few came some indifferent to my condition  
Having not heard of it  
And willing anyhow

•••

And the world is south  
The night a bandit with gasoline

And I'm your dancing lizard mirth  
I put my one arm up

And bring my one foot down on a hot zinc top  
The nearest hospital was the dawn:

She didn't know her daughter on her back was  
The entry wound and she the exit

She ran a brothel so  
The officer said it was

Where the rebels came and went  
And ran into the government boys

Her girl's femur the size of the bullet

•••

A mother offers not necessarily  
**Sells her one-eyed son**

**For an education if you'll bring him back**  
 And stone dust for one  
 With congenital illness

**And little boy with malaria**  
**Same old gas**

Money mixed with blood  
 Transfusion the doctor's perfect record

Broken, nobility of taking  
 A life you

Who must walk to and from your house  
 The jeep's upkeep  
 The donkey-cart ambulance

• • •

The mind in the field  
 The brine in the field

Whether I  
 Is a diphthong codependent on

What isn't there to stay in the field

The good you act is equal  
 To the good you doubt

Most have lost many

You are either prosperous  
 Or veteran in the field

• • •

One boot left behind

One-boot-photo I wanted  
 For a book cover the boot

Military black the quad a clinic's

Special forces spun  
By his dangling heels from

The pick-up truck rushed  
To a central town altered combative

With two scalp lacerations and blood  
In his auditory canal:

I was a lover of loss, I tossed  
The boot in the capital of suffering