

Round: Before the Start of the Long War

She knelt in the soil of Rafah, before
the armored bulldozer's advancing blade.
She wore fluorescent orange so even the gods
of the coming war could see her, young woman
holding a megaphone aloft in crossed sights
of the guard tank. The bulldozer driver
had orders—demolish the day's quota of homes
and thousand-year-old olive groves
that blocked the occupiers' rising wall.

She wore fluorescent orange, reflective stripes
brilliant as Joseph's coat as he knelt before
his brothers in a pit in the dirt of Dothan.
Raising the megaphone like a torch, she rose
with earth in the D9 bulldozer's advancing scoop
till she was eye-level with its cockpit.
There would be no accident in the guard tank's
gun sights, she was eye-to-eye with the D9 driver.

What did she say, lowering her megaphone
to him who had orders to knock down the village
doctor's home in the shadow of Gaza guard towers?
There would be no accident, but the driver
had his orders, dropped his eyes, dropped
the bulldozer's blade, her megaphone rolled away as
her foot caught in the toothed scoop, she slipped,
her shocked comrades in their own fluorescent vests
ran toward her screaming *No* as panic flashed

across her face, brilliant as tracer fire
bleeding each night in the Gaza sky.
Night in the D9 driver's eye, as thick
dirt pushed up by the advancing blade

poured over her, the 9-ton bulldozer rolled
over her. Stopped. Reversed. Rolled back.
Withdrew. Her comrades screaming threw themselves over
the broken form they dug from the packed earth's tracks.

Only darkness in her eyes rolled back, blood's
shocked petals spread over her face as if
to shield her from her own bloodsource as sobbing
praying friends cradled her body's ebb
and gods of the long war drew back on the village's
crumbling doorsteps. No light in the bulldozer
driver's eye, who'd witnessed everything from
his lofty cockpit: the orange-striped girl
tumbling from his sight-level like Joseph

into a pit in Gaza, her blood-brilliant
coat delivered unto her father, her mother
as the tank's and bulldozer's crushing treads
tracked back to the iron wall's perimeter
and drove off. No aid for the dying girl
as minutes before the ambulance arrived
grew to seem years across the iron wall where
she went on kneeling in the soil of Rafah.

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