

K A T E O ' N E I L L

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## Not a Story

For everything that lives is Holy.  
—William Blake

Acre-fields of sunflowers stand more than six feet tall,  
the round O's of their faces grimace, they turn their heads,  
offer their petaled, seeded bodies in hand-held bunches to  
those left bearing witness on the ash-covered earth.

Bodies sink suddenly from six miles—33,000 feet of falling—  
supersonic-schrapnel swirl—take your breath away gone—  
instantly freezing at -58°F—they didn't suffer—no time to worry—  
so say those who know these things.

One adult fell through the roof of a woman's house,  
landed naked on the floor next to her bed.  
She did not have words.

(Do bodies pivot clockwise when they fall North of the equator?)

The all-too-personal details amid the twisted wreckage:  
a small toy purple car,  
a set of car keys, wire-rimmed reading glasses,  
half-eaten Toblerone's bar,

empty Sensodyne toothpaste box,  
*The Lonely Planet Guide to Bali & Lombok*,  
an air sickness bag—marked *Beg mabuk udara* in Malaysian.

And then—the plastic-wrapped rows of corpses.  
The cockpit sawed in half for no obvious reason.  
The bargaining-chip black box—coveted decoder-ring of  
transience and the data-teller of much bad fortune.  
An engine rotor stabbed into the earth like a site sculpture,  
exposed like a charred chambered-nautilus.

(Yes, we had that type of weapon, but who can say that it was ours?  
If they hadn't resisted, none of this would have happened.)  
Malaysian officials, who traveled on the five-car refrigerated train to Kharkiv,  
said there were 282 bodies and 87 body parts aboard.

A Royal Dutch Airforce Hercules C-130 carry numbered coffins  
containing the remains of victims to Eindhoven Air Base.  
A lone bugler sounded the traditional military farewell "Last Post" to mark the arrival.  
There followed a moment of silence.

Aerial helicopter photographs broadcast the ceremony worldwide.  
(My God, who keeps forty elegant, identical hearses for just such an occasion?)

At least 200 international experts are in the Netherlands to help make the identifications.  
Many of the passengers may not have even known much about the conflict in Ukraine.  
Children who were onboard that flight had probably never even heard of it.

CNN suggests you click on the following on-line links to learn more:  
Victims      Alleged Intercepts      Obstructive militia      Key players  
Clashes intensify      Twists of fate      Blame game

Our pain is intense and relentless. We live in a hell beyond hell.\*  
Our babies are not here with us, we need to live with this act of horror,  
every day and every moment for the rest of our lives.  
No one deserves what we are going through.

Not even the people who shot our family out of the sky.  
No hate in the world is as strong as the love we have for each other.  
This is a revelation that gives us some comfort.  
We ask the media to respect the privacy of our family and friends—pain is not a story.

\* Quoted from Anthony Maslin and Marite Norris, parents of Evie, Mo, and Otis, (12, 10 and 8 years-old), killed when Malaysian Airlines flight MH 17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine on 17 July, 2014. Australian Associated Press.



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