



Now, Orphan

by Adianne M. Marcus

Still, standing over that marked plot, while the terrible war in whichever country you wish to name rages on and on, while children are left orphans through no design of their own, routed from their homes like sheep that have huddled too long, the shearing continues. You have no clothes that will fit what grief requires. Black is not a country of origin, only a destination.

The dead litter your life. Orphans of circumstance, diseases with pronounceable names, you tally the months: May, June, August, as names are recounted, the holocaust of death won't stop, it is marching up to your front door, knocking, only you won't answer that hollow sound.. Not yet. It isn't time, you announce in a voice steady as your hands. Then you look down, see these are the hands of your mother, the brown spots connecting you to her life, as if by drawing lines between them, you could read her name, which is no longer in the book of life.

Each morning the newspapers continue their body count. The faces of the dead begin to resemble all the people you have known. Their jackets are jackets you gave them, and the children have dresses you bought in some out of the way store that was having a close out sale. There is no letting up. No letting go. You think of what that poet said, after the first death there is no other. But he was wrong. There is.