

A Home By Nour Osama El Borno

- from the book *'Remember Us: Stories of Struggles, Hopes and Dreams.*
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This is Nour's 100th poem which she has dedicated to her great-grandparents, who were forced to leave their houses and give up their lands.

It's what a lot of people look for
It's what my mother has always told me about
It's what my grandfather made me try to understand
Until today I didn't know what any of them meant.
We have been moving from one place to another
We have lived in so many countries
Everywhere we go we establish a home
Or so I thought.
Under her pillow
Under my grandmother's
There was this key
So rusty
So worthless
It's her luck charm
That's the best I could come up with.
She always told me some bedtime stories
Some stories about her house
"It's not a house darling, for the millionth time,"
Her voice echoed
While writing the poem
"It was home. My only home."
I have had a lot of homes
A lot of places
Places I called
"My place"

I had a lot of memories
In each a memory that lived on
I don't remember which my first was
I do remember my last
What's left of it
At least.

I was sixteen when all of that happened
I was sixteen when my grandmother died
And I saw her in my sleep arguing with me
Whether it's a house or a home
I am here drowned in the memories I could have had
And lost

"Grandma what's that under your pillow?"
"Want me to throw it away?"
"Is my coffin ready already?"
What? No".

When my coffin is ready to cross me over,
Then you can throw your great-grandmother's home key
When my grand-daughter mentioned the throwing
Was when I understood what home is all about.
The home that was stolen
The home that had memories raped
The home that no longer had the aroma of early morning's
coffee
The home that was no longer the house of my
grandfathers
The home that no longer had my father's toys

The home that no longer had my father's first walk
Father's first "dada"
It became the house
Of generations of thieves
And killers
And memory-erasers
The place where my great-grandparents lived
When they lived there, there was
A home
But today, it's just a house
It's just concrete
And the key I keep under my pillow
The key that my grandmother kept under her pillow
The key that my daughter will keep under her pillow
And so will her daughter
Is the key to home
The home
The only place
We could ever call
Home.