

What Remains Standing

I was never meant to be a shield. I was a vessel, built to hold the golden breath of Beirut, more explicitly, the wheat that kept this city's heart beating. For fifty years, my skin was thick with the dust of grain, and my life was measured in the steady, rhythmic filling and emptying of my walls. Until one day, I was stripped of my purpose and my privacy.

If the walls could speak, they would tell you this.

A silo is meant to store life. It is a tall, cylindrical structure that shelters harvests from wind, humidity, and decay. Inside its thick walls, grain stays dry, safe, and ready to feed families. A silo's only purpose is to preserve food, stabilize supply, and to stand watch over the community it belongs to. That was my duty: to hold Lebanon's wheat, to protect it from time, to make sure no home in this city knew the bitterness of hunger. That was all I was meant to be.

In this country, everyone talks about "breaking the silos", but I know what it means when a silo breaks. And it isn't symbolic, only dust, fire, and a city enduring a wound it did not deserve. My collapse did not bring people closer; it only exposed my fractures and showed how separated everyone had been long before my walls split open. I am the reminder that some silos should never have been broken at all.

That afternoon, the air turned into a solid wall of iron and fire, a fist of heat swallowing everything in its path. And for a moment, I was the only thing between the apocalypse and the streets where people lived, loved, and slept. I felt the weight of all those lives press into my concrete as the blast slammed into me, asking me to keep standing when I had never been built for that kind of mercy. I did not understand what was happening. I only knew it hurt. But look at me now; my ribs are exposed to the salt air; my inner chambers, once dark and cold, are now flayed open for every passerby to see. I am a skeleton of a building, a giant standing in its own rubble, shivering in a Mediterranean breeze that used to be comforting.

They call me the city's savior. They say I sacrificed my walls for the sake of my civilians. They call me a hero, but I find no glory in this posture. I didn't choose to stand; I was simply too heavy to fall. I absorbed the fire so others wouldn't have to, and in doing so, I became a tomb for the grain I was meant to protect. That wheat I stored didn't go to the bakeries. It fermented in the sun, weeping down my sides like grey tears. I am resisting the gravity that wants to pull me into the sea, but it is a lonely resistance. I am held together by rusted rebar and the sheer stubbornness of a ruin that doesn't know how to die. I am exposed to the elements, to the cameras, to the country that argues over whether to tear me down or let me crumble. I am a crime scene that refuses to be cleaned up. I am the evidence that the world wants to look away from, yet I remain standing.

Still, my breaking did not end in 2020. In the years that followed, parts of me finally surrendered. Whole sections of my remaining towers leaned, trembled, and collapsed in slow, exhausted folds. Cars lined up along the port to watch me, people filming as if my falling were a spectacle rather than another wound reopening. Even in my collapse, I became something to be observed, not something to be mourned. Before the blast of August fourth, 2020, I was a secret. I was the silent giant of the harbor.

Now, I am a monument of a wound that won't close. I watch the ships come and go; they bring grains in bags now or bypass me entirely. The dead wheat rests in my fractures, and the ghosts of the men who worked my shadows are the only company I keep. I am the memory of a city that was whole, standing in the middle of a city that is broken. I am tired of being looked at. I am tired of being the backdrop for grief. I want to collapse into the Mediterranean and let the saltwater wash away from the smell of ammonium and burnt grains. But I stay. I stay because if I fall, there is nothing left between the sea and the ruins but an empty horizon.

I am the "Beirut Port Silos".

I am broken, I am empty, and I am still here.

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