

They thought the Great Spirit meant to  
punish  
Rashes itched, blisters buried, and fevers  
charred  
Embers glowed moon like visages  
around the hearth  
When the sun lifted off the horizon  
Skan inhaled the smoke and ashes

Mother cried for her children  
Blizzards of men brought winter early  
and  
Suffocated Mother with pure snow

Cotton fields  
Singing "Go Down Moses"  
Brothers and sisters kept under a drunk-  
en watch  
Muscles ached and back skin tore  
Revealing the sweet crimson due  
That soaks and stains our fruits of labor

1900's  
khonnie kounbandith

Prayers echoed throughout the  
mosque.  
Shoes piled alongside the entrance.  
Purified faces and feet  
Lie upon stitched prayer mats

Rubble of the towers spat clouds of  
fog.  
Dust remains imprinted on hijabs and  
taqiyahs.  
Foreign blood lie before common  
worshippers,  
Punishment unchanged by generation  
despite the fresh flesh upon their  
backs.

1500's  
alexandra cardona

## Land of the Free

1800's  
taylor cobb

"9066," gruffed navy uniforms  
As they dragged our neighbors  
Into crammed railcars  
Our generations wailed injustice -  
"I am American!"  
Yet the steel slammed out pleads  
Barred into our ancestral hermit state  
Convicted for the ignition of war

2000's  
connor brandenburg

1600's  
taylor cobb

The local priests gathered around a nude woman; townspeople followed suit. The woman stood upon a platform accompanied by a coffin baring a cross dug into the grain of its wood. A priest joined her on the platform; he spoke:

"You shall undergo a test of your validity. You claim the accusations of your practicing Witchcraft are unfounded. You shall be sealed in a coffin and buried alive in a pre-dug grave. Upon the burial, you shall be left for three days and your grave guarded by a priest. If you are to survive, you shall be burned at the stake for your crimes against the Lord; if you perish, however, your corpse will be blessed and your soul forgiven."

Shouts from an elderly widow echoed from the back of the crowd: cruel accusations and condemning slurs. The glisten of tears welled in the woman's eyes, she knew Death's cold grasp would engulf her soon. The priest took her hand in his and assisted her into the coffin. She stood for a moment, eyes down towards her feet, then she lie down. Two townsmen were called to nail the lid onto the coffin. The priest sprinkled holy water over the coffin and muttered a prayer, then asked the men to lift the coffin on a stretcher to prepare for burial. She was lowered to the mutter of collective prayer, but her soft sobs could still be heard within her coffin. Each priest tossed a handful of blessed soil onto the coffin and a groundskeeper completed the burial. A priest was placed to keep watch and the town dispersed. Now it was just the woman, the coffin, and God. Six feet under the surface, she prayed. Six feet under the surface she began to panic - her fingernails were stripped now and bleeding. Six feet under the surface her screams and pleas were muffled coughs to the priest above. Oxygen began to thin and with this her Breathing. One night had come and passed and the woman still lived. She passed the time with prayer; begging for forgiveness and mercy. The temperature was raw against her skin and her fingers began to purple. Shivers kept her awake and the creaking of stressed wood kept her conscious. Another night came and went and the temperature dropped further. The third day was now upon her and she still lives. Panic began again as the repeated shank of a spade could be heard. She still lived. Her coffin was lifted and the lid cracked open. The priest took her hand once more and led her to her fate. Now she was warm. Now she was free.

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