

# Forgotten

**Peter Slater**

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Even as an old man he would go  
wandering amongst  
the spiky light in olive groves  
every Autumn  
with a fading photograph in his pocket;  
the only sound now goats' bells and a  
peaceful snatching at rough grass.

They got to recognize him  
in the market cafes  
where he chewed all meals  
as though they were dry bread  
and his eye caught you  
and let go.

Once, a man with a keffiyeh,  
who determinedly knew about grief,  
took him to a graveyard  
of a more recent war.  
He, too, had lost a son  
and let him think it was  
to honest, sparking metal rather than the  
slow, self-inflicted seep of  
injected forgetting.

But when the old man said:  
'You don't understand,  
you don't understand at all,'  
he feared his might be a lesser sorrow  
and quickly pointed out how  
the Catholic graves had a candle  
and sometimes a photograph  
and the buses were always  
at eight minutes past the hour.  
His wife would be waiting.