

I Hope...

I lay in bed safe, warm, and worrying, in vociferant silence, my body somnolent, my mind alert.
The onset of morning paused:
The long night waiting, holding its breath for the shout of my Alexa and songs on breakfast radio.
I hope he comes home soon...

Bursts of heavy boots rushing, breathless yells and tearful pleas
Sirens sound and blue lights blaring, flashing, glaring
Suspects struggle to their knees.

The Kennet splashes dark, deep water,
Torches animate the cruel canal,
Wet hands raw with cold and rough with callouses,
Grasp one another to prevent a fall.

Shouts of pig and racial slander resound in his tinnitus filled ears,
Eggs, stones, and spit fly through the air
His mind is anxious but his conscience clear.

Taser clatters hard against handcuffs
The voice on the radio prattles and crackles on
The stab vest heavy, rubs and blisters,
A refuge from the sting of steel.

Splattered blood and vomit, a mix of human debris
he cleans his off shoes, he can't so easily brush off his unsettled feeling,
when tragedy steals the worst days of their lives.

Cell side talks and deep soul searching,
A shortage of mental health care beds
10-hour shifts change and lives handover
Life saver leaves as stranger leaves once more.

The clock ticks loudly and the cat is meowing.
Did I hear my brother's footstep on the stair?
I hope he's returned safe from his nightshift,
Though diminished, weighed down with renewed despair.

I Hope...
(through the eyes of a war-child)

I remember my sister's tiny hands
being ripped away from mine.
Hate marched in Nazi uniforms,
pushing her towards Death's line.

I remember the white flash when the A-bomb dropped
and the sheets of fire in the streets.
Flames engulfed flesh, twisted and gnarled,
lives incinerated by the ferocity of heat.

I remember the glint of their knife blades
as they forced Babo to the cold, blood-stained floor.
Mama was screaming as they stripped her clothes.
Srebrenica... 'cleansed'... in the name of war.

I remember the bodies... the broken bodies,
on the dark days in the Rwandan sun.
Neighbours did the devil's work with machetes.
Breathing... infected, *my* slow death will come.

I remember opening my mouth to avoid the shock of the blast wave
as we huddled close to the basement wall.
Outside in Kharkiv, birds flew, then silence...
Soaked with history, Baba's tears said it all.

I remember the stench of their sweat and their guns
as they dragged me from a lifeless embrace.
They hold me hostage now, but they cannot hold my prayers...
I hope I can survive this place.

I feel my pyjamas, damp and warm,
as my gravel-filled blood leaves my shell.
Their bombs for someone else's bullets... an old story.
I *hope* there's an end to this hell.

Despair **Hope**

There is no hope

So do not tell me that

There is a way out of my anger and hate

Because that is not true

I will always be in this hole of darkness

Afraid, desperate, and lonely

No longer can you say that

Better things are yet to come

Because they are not

Things will just get worse and worse until they are unbearable

Do not make me think for even one second that

There is light at the end of this tunnel

Because I know that

You are wrong.

(Now read it from the bottom to the top)

I hope

I hope the guns will silent be
As we rest where poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That stand as ghosts reminding me

In trenches deep where shadows lie
A symphony of whispers beneath the mud
Our hopes entrenched in fields of blood
Soldiers huddle beneath the troubled sky

But still we march enslaved by commands
Through blood and smoke we blindly plod
The same bleak path our comrades once trod
Orders unclear, guns in hands

The mud is thick, it sucks us down
Our spirits waver, our muscles ache
Each step feels like the last we take
In trench and wire we feel death's frown

Their final cries we can't forget
Our fallen brothers rest on the soil
Echoes of strife, hours of toil
Their empty eyes filled with regret

I hope when war is done and past
We'll dig our guns into the ground
The peace once lost will now be found
Beneath the soil where poppies last