

# 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