

NAJWA JUMA

SELECTED POEMS AND SHORT STORIES

TO ALL OF YOU
WHO ARE TRYING TO ESCAPE
FROM THE WINGS OF FEAR AND FLY WITHOUT
BOUNDARIES OR RESTRICTIONS

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YOU ARE ALIVE

You are alive,
Against the will of death that
Carried by the warplanes,
Pulled by the trigger,
And spat out of the iron clouds!
You are alive,
Under the rubble of your demolished home,
Over the rubble of your demolished home,
Among your scattered limbs,
And next to the cemetery wall!
You are alive
Despite the cries of the children,
Weeping of the bereaved,
Shivering voices of the elders,
And horror of birds and street cats!
You are alive,
Despite the bleeding wounds,
Missing limbs,
Dryness of the throats
And sadness of the roads!
You are alive,
Despite the roar of the drone,
Confused eyes, And deep wounds,
So, am I alive?

THE UNKNOWN ROAD

Away from destruction, drones and missiles,
Still, I could hear the warning whistles,
Still, I fear F16's losses and bereavement
When life died by aerial bombardment
Darkness covered the daylight insolently
Eyes of the world got blind completely
From beneath the rubble I had to see
A safe place to which I could flee,
So I walked the unknown road
I needed light to carry my load
But light is far at the end of the way
And the past stumbles my feet away
Shall I stop, return, or go on fast
Some hanging hope, all that last
To spread my wings and fly without boundary
To live the rest of life without the title, 'refugee'!



WINGS OF FEAR

Rusty bars stood stubbornly between me and the whole face of the sky. I could not see it clearly, but I heard a frightful roar. From behind the bars I could see terrified birds passing through the narrow space. They flew randomly, trying to cross the sky, but the burning clouds prevented them.

Suddenly the sky and earth swayed. The clouds became dragon; his mouth is a flame, his fists are violent, and his fingers clenched firmly. The earth tried to escape, and I did, but our ropes were in the clouds' hands. Fire poured out on the faces. The faces got pale with astonished features. They crawled towards their niches. They prayed long and so did I, so that the clouds would have pity on our intermittent breaths, but there was no mercy in the heart of the black clouds, nor rain.

The city was cracked, its windows escaped from the grip of the walls, and my windows remained guarded by bars. The houses became a hotbed of wind and fear. Throats were choked with screams. The sky of the city was surrounded by fire and turn a deaf ear to all our prayers.

The city gate was closed and there was no emergency exit for it, and there were no windows except mine. The faces seemed alike with burnt flesh pumping tears and blood.

The birds left the sky of the city, fear became our only bird. It spread its wings, roamed around the city, ran wild in its alleys, passed by the faces, leaving its yellowness on them one by one, fear became sky and earth, and the wings of the city were broken.

The city did not survive then, nor did I, but in my dream, I survive sometimes, the bars of my window break, the wings of my fear are broken, strong wings grow for me, and the sky opens its doors for me without fear or limits.



O LITTLE GIRL

O little girl
who will die somewhere soon,
you must postpone the probability to die
until at least you get mature,
so do not live in a house,
do not go to a school,
do not go to a hospital,
stay away from a motorcycles and cars.
Don't get close to a swing or institute of disabled.
Don't go to a market
and do not try to climb up to the second floor,
or down to the lower floor.
Do not walk on the right,
or left or in the middle of any street.
Beware of the seashore and children's gatherings.
Be careful not to walk by mosques or churches,
and do not walk by a wall,

or under a roof,
and even in a nursing home,
do not visit anyone there,
as the probability is the same:
do not be alone,
do not be in the middle of a crowd of people,
do not fly,
do not land,
do not sleep,
do not wake up,
do not dream,
do not cry,
do not laugh.
Perhaps if you did all of this,
your death might be postponed!

YOUR ARM THAT HOLDS ME

Hold me
The roar is in my ribs,
Hum me my song,
calm me down,
Your voice distracts my fear,
My only year is not enough,
It doesn't protect me from scorching,
Rockets tore the kids apart, warning
Their souls, walked around me.
Don't keep me away from your heart,
His blows reassure me.
Wrap your arm around me,
Tighten it, I don't want distance if our roof collapses,
Pray a lot for my father and my brothers,
Your whisper is heard by God.
Do you listen to the roar?
'The roar is a harbinger of an approaching bombing!'
saying, my father!

Do you see the white spectra?
They are our antiques,
They pray, smile
They did not warn before the missile as they claimed!
Hug me, break my ribs,
With your hands
before the fragments and stones of our house do.
See?
Down there?
They rush, carrying stretchers,
They dig the ground,
the rubble of our house,
the dust, and our bodies.
They undo your arm that holds me!



ON THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE

From his old notebooks, the little boy made a kite and coloured it in the colours of the Palestinian flag, black, green, and red, leaving the original paper colour to occupy the white space.

The little boy peeked at his mother, then crept up to the roof of the house. He breached the house arrest in a back room of their house that his mother thought was a safe haven for her children during the war.

The little boy launched the kite and loosened its string. His soul scrambled to fly while the kite soared to the top, ignoring the roar of the military drone. The bright colours of the kite. They provoked the drone because it only likes charred black colour

The little boy gave his kite more freedom to rise higher and higher. The kite seemed to touch the one that has been hovering in the sky for more than a month since the beginning of the war, distributing death and terror everywhere and creating a path for pain in every neighbourhood.

‘My mom doesn’t like to fly but I do!’ I feel my soul flying in space over my kite. My mother never experienced the pleasure of flying. I bet that if she did, she would be right next to me now loosening the rope for her kite! My mother hallucinates with the roar of the damned military drone and keeps watching its voice and height, but I am not afraid of anything. I will keep loosening the rope until my kite with its bright colours reaches that ugly drone that my mother fears.’ The little boy thought.

He loosened the rope again for his kite, and it got higher and higher. His enthusiasm increased, the military drone was irritated by the bright colours, it snarled, before uttering death from its belly.

He did not care and loosened the rope to the last extent, until the kite pulled his little palm.

The missile of the military drone tore his body. He fell from a space in which he flew for a moment settling on the roof of his house in pieces.

His small hand grasped the thread of the coloured kite while it kept flying high next to the iron drone.



I HAVE A NAME

You know people,
I used to have a house,
parents, siblings,
school, street,
friends and dreams!
All what remained now is loneliness,
horror, nightmares
and my name which I can't utter!

SOAR

With wings of hope,
the five children flew behind their mother,
racing against the sound of cannons and missiles.
Darkness makes her lose her way.
Her fear for her children opens magical paths before her.
She knows that death is not far away,
it comes from any direction and at any moment,
it appears from any alley or from behind any star,
it emerges from... Under her feet,
stiff with fear and exhaustion It could not escape.
Their house stood mocking the cannons and missiles that destroyed most
of the houses around it.
From the tanks that started approaching,
it hugs its memories for the last time,
and falls.
One o'clock in the morning was her last appointment with her home and
her memories.
Under the cover of darkness,
she started running towards safety,
carrying her youngest daughter in her arms,
and making several hands out of the edges of her dress for the rest of the
children to cling to.

The sound of cannons approaches, running after them, engulfing their
bodies with flames,
making them forget the cold of the night. It detains their panting breaths,
hinders their dreaming feet of life.
She speeds up,
the children fall,
they are unable to keep up with her,
she stops for a moment,
helps them get up,
motivates them to continue moving forward and double their speed,
reminding them that they are birds,
they must fly, the children get excited,
they rush at full speed.
The sound of a huge explosion deafens their ears,
and a huge glow blinds their eyes for a moment,
after which they return to seeing,
but they do not see their mother,
nor do they find the ends of her dress.
They soar.



IN THEIR SHADES

My professor does not read the checkpoints, he has never tried to stand on one of them, I was not able to attend his lecture, the drama, he will never teach us the tragedy of the checkpoints, and I will not be able to do so, there is a tragedy that cannot be said, it is only lived. I occupied myself with reading, the air left the vehicles, waited for them on the other side. My way to university is a swarm of pain, convoys, cars, buses, and pale faces. I lowered the glass of the window, spread my wings, flew, but I did not land on the tops of the eucalyptus, they disappeared. All the sights were waiting for the soldier's finger, they got off, approached the checkpoint hurrying the signal. The sun rose and the eyes were still staring at the signal, four hours passed, car horns finally were heard along with the screams of drivers, the panting of the passengers. The red wings of death covered us while tears were running down my face. I crossed the checkpoint, the corpses of the eucalyptus trees were on either side of the street! The eucalyptus frighten them, with the smell of the earth they have, the souls that once were in their shades, and my grandmother's hands gather their dry branches to make bread.



THE FUGITIVE MOON

The night pirates attacked the city
stole its stars packed them into caravans of ruins
while the world was sleeping
Sleeping with full eyelids
And left the city Sinking into darkness Bleeding, terrified
Only the moon stayed awake
Gathering the city kids
who could not sleep
to tell them the story of the fugitive star
Perhaps it would distract them from their terror and the noise.
The noise hit the heads
And rose to the sky
Thundered inside the head of the moon
The moon closed its ears
The noise penetrated his brain
Fluttering with its convolutions
It expelled its cells and resided in their place
Small eyes Filled with despair,
The darkness frightened them,
Waiting for the story to sleep
To escape death.

As if the noise around them escalated,
Only the moon could hear it,
A huge roar,
The moon screamed,
He wanted to complete the story,
Children must sleep
But he couldn't stand the noise
The moon decided to flee,
He escaped within the edges of the story,
He hold the collar of the fleeing star
And they disappeared together.
The darkness remained,
Wandering around the city,
And the noise continued.
While terrified spirits wander
In the waiting space

I AM HERE

I'm here
Yes here
Under the rubble of my house
No light is here
I can't see. Can you see me?
No oxygen here
But I still can breathe
I have no voice
Can you hear me?

INCOMPLETE STORY

Behind the curtain of the tent that her husband built on the ruins of their dream, which she waited for years and years to establish, and in which she lived only for a few months, she was hiding covered by a dirty prayer dress that she had been wearing for two weeks or more and busy patting with exhaustion on the back of her feverish little girl, but the little one does not sleep nor she loses her consciousness.

On a torn and dusty mattress, which she was able to pull out of the rubble, the rest of her children lie reliving the memories of the bombing, and with every loud sound that comes to them from any direction, they panic and cover their ears, and embrace each other after it fades away, as they used to do during the days of war. Then quickly return to tampering with the curtains of the tent to see the face of the sky that the missiles have long hidden from them.

On the ruins of the house, her husband staggers, followed by a man carrying a camera. He in vain tried to explain his tragedy in losing his home, which happened to be in an open area.

The house seemed dangerous for the pilot who was sitting in his cabin, choosing targets with alleged care and pressing gracefully on a small button, and thousands of kilograms of explosives, encased in shiny silver metal, quickly were released.

What falls on the target turns it into hell, and souls fly high, while the burnt body parts are scattered with the rubble of the target everywhere.

Her husband pulled some pieces of her children's clothes from under the rubble, and raised them in front of the camera, shouting: Does this threaten their security?

His voice trembled as he tried to stand firm in front of his house, which the missiles had turned into a pile of rubble, calling on the world to bear witness to what had befallen him, and pointing to his new home with his children; the tent!

She could not reach the camera nor send messages to the world, and no one heard her sighs of fear or tears of helplessness as she embraced her three children, and prayed that God would protect them and not see them in pieces. No one will know the story of her escape at night from her house, which was open to all cannon nozzles. She sought a refuge from the flames of missiles and the roar of aircrafts, but the missiles cut off her way and forced her to return to witness with her own eyes the destruction of her house with guided missiles that never missed the innocent target.

No one but her knows the number of days that passed while she was living patiently with her husband and children in a cramped room in his family's home. No one knows how many nights she slept starving hungry to save every penny to build her dream house!

No one knows and no one will ever know the truth of the matter, and the story will remain incomplete as long as she stays behind the torn curtains of the tent and does not tell the world the details of the story.

WE WANT A NORMAL DEATH

To come without fear
Or anticipation or dread
To be light without weight
To come silently
In its usual colour
With its expected pallor
And its ancient coldness
We don't want a loud death
Scattered with body parts
Oh death, please grant us
An ordinary death!

AND THE MERCIFUL FALLS

On a stage covering the outskirts of the city,
the lights were turned off,
and the show began:
A nation sheltering by war clouds,
and an audience is in terrible silence.
The sky of the city revels,
its inhabitants revile the blood,
the blossom of youth,
and fresh tender bodies.
But they are merciful in their cruelty!
They tickle the spectators,
sending a warning before killing,
and the audience cheers:
Oh, how moral they are!
A missile falls as a form of a warning,
and a drone,
which does not frighten the city's residents.
A merciful and specific missile,
which does not target the entire city.
It is chosen with great care,
giving the target a full sixty seconds to move gratefully.
The Merciful descends,
Cuts off limbs on its way, scatters pieces,
and the earth sinks.

Then soon after a huge,
merciless missile falls from a large,
warning-less plane,
killing everything and everyone in the place.
The city lights up.
Destruction, body parts, blood, and screams spread.
They quickly subside and the groaning remains.
Darkness prevails.
Loss and oppression increase.
The sky descends into its orgy.
The public sympathizes and appreciates
The mercy of the inhabitants of the sky.

TO HEAR YOU

In the morning I screamed at my husband who threw his pajamas on the floor, left the tube of toothpaste uncovered and poured coffee on the floor as he was about to leave quickly to work, but he didn't care.

On my way to work, I shouted in the face of the soldier who closed the checkpoint and did not care that we were late for our concerns and work. Everyone around me was afraid of the barrel of his gun and moved away while I remained steadfast and proud in my place. I was not care about his reaction, but for some reason he did not respond.

During the coffee break at work, while I was arguing with my colleagues about the right of women to participate in the local elections and their ability to administer the centers with intelligence and dedication, I felt the anger of the men and noticed their side talks and saw the frowning in the face of my colleague who was always jealous of my thoughts and told her she has the right to compete as well, but she ignored me and left!

In the afternoon, I reprimanded the policeman who pointed to me to advance and then pointed to opposite cars to come forward as well, and we were all stuck in the middle of the roundabout, but he did not notice and broke up the crowd with quick signs from his long hands!

In the evening, after I had finished all my house work and the work reports, fatigue taken all my toll, so I collapsed on the couch next to my husband, who was busy watching his favorite programme. I sat there maybe for an hour or even more, I did not count. I said many things but it seemed that he doesn't listen. Suddenly, my husband muted the TV, turned at me and in a stifled voice asked: Won't you give up this long silence and speak up so that we can all hear you?

SONGS OF LIFE

Here, there or everywhere
You find those going to death,
By land by sea, or air,
bombing, burning, or suffocating
There is no salvation but to return
to ask the grandparents chanting.
songs of farewell to burn For
Then we can freely break out
A song of eternity
On the hill of slaught,
Until the ones who were killed say loudly:
Here we returned, and this is the beginning of infinity.

(O, CHILD!)

O, child
who used to be
the best at hiding
In a game of hide and seek,
Where did you hide
your half body?
O, child!
Your father's heart is broken
Suffering from failure
to find Your hidden half.

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