

ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

# The Monsters in Big Brown Boots

---

A Novella

**Bayan Salaymeh**

**1/12/2013**

Advisors: Professors **Jana Fedtke and Jim Henry**

Department: **Asian Studies**

"The Monsters in Big Brown Boots" tells the story of Lelia and her family. After coming back from London, Lelia in Palestine is attacked by childhood memories during the second Intifada in Palestine. The different scenes in the story tell about these memories, Lelia and her family's experiences during that time, and how they managed to live through it.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the distinguished faculty members who advised on my senior thesis: Professor Jana Fedtke and Professor Jim Henry.

## Dedication

To Nadera Al-Ajlouni, my mother, without whose strong support and unconditional love going through the monstrous journey would not have been possible, and to Hisham salaymeh, my hardworking father, who was the first one to say "proud" of my education. To all humans who believe in Justice.

## The Monsters in Big Brown Boots

In Hebron, shopkeepers usually opened their shops late in the morning and closed early in the evening in winter. They went home to roast some seasonal chestnuts as they gathered with their families around different kinds of heaters. The best kind of chestnuts I had ever eaten was one my grandmother used to make on the brazier while the whole family gathered outside on the patio during cold nights. We did not do it often because winter nights were rainy and very cold; and when it snowed, we stayed indoors. Other times we stopped roasting and eating seasonal chestnuts, but our gatherings became the inevitable destiny.

I woke up one December morning, and the tips of my toes were chilly. As we learned the first time we entered the school, we had all kinds of different weather, I only felt one kind of December cold, in my city. They said we were located at the heart of the world, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, which I only saw on the old yellow-papered maps in the history and geography classes. The teacher would point to the map and say, “This is Palestine, the heart of the world.” Those were the only times I saw it.

I held on to my bed sheet trying to warm myself up, but all my trials were in vain. So I decided to get up. I prepared my usual hot Nescafe, poured it into my own mug. I quickly grabbed it to warm my frozen hands in this glacial weather. I opened the red curtains of my room and stood behind the window next to my desk where I spent the nights with papers having my own conversations. As soon as I finished sipping my Nescafe, I zipped up my gray winter jacket on my skinny body, painted my eyes with black to look like a model, and wore my red sophisticated shoes that I could barely walk in. Then I headed out for a walk. A walk then, after all these years, was not like, any other walks. When I looked up, I saw the sky looking the same;

but when I looked down; I saw the faces of people around me looking more tired and weary than they had ever been before.

I kept walking around the town, trying to remember something left of my childhood somewhere. Every spot seemed to remind me of an incident, an action, a memory or maybe nothing. I walked and walked, and when I reached the old city, I turned around, changing my direction. I did not want to go to the old part of the city because I was not a tourist. My grandparents lived there in the heart of the old city, very near the famous Al-Ibrahimi mosque, even before three quarters of it were turned into a temple. A Jewish temple. My grandparents' house was located in the middle of a Jewish settlement. My "one shot" grandfather and my strong grandmother had been living in a big and beautiful house that has been there for more than 150 years, stuck to the roots under this blended soil. The last time I saw it was the time when we stopped eating chestnuts.

I stood there in the middle of the town attacked by memories that had gone long ago. I felt as if a reckless storm had just invaded my heart. I looked for a place to sit. I sat then I stood, I looked right and left then I sat again. But the storm in my heart did not calm. I felt its ache. I headed back to my small apartment. In my apartment everything was neat and beautiful. The bed, the mug, the small radio and the red curtains were all in silence. They were all ready to sleep along with me. I looked at the curtains behind my bed and I saw their red getting darker each time I came closer to them. I touched them to heave them down to cover the winter sunlight coming through the window. But the smell of the curtains captured all my senses. My hands bizarrely and strongly caught the curtain and allowed it through my fingers slowly. I smelled it. This breathtaking smell lived inside me at that moment. My whole body smelled it. Even my heart saw it as an arresting woman and started dancing with it while I was standing silently with

my eyes shut feeling the beat. I swallowed the smell one sip after another until my heart asked me to stop. Until the smell loaded my heart with a thick layer of ice. Inside my heart, the beat was still alive.

I was wondering why my day was going against what I had planned. Today I decided I would write. I would not cry nor would I sleep at day time. I would write. I needed to gather my life on paper. I needed to write my story and I needed to write to fulfill my promise. Instead, I sat at the edge of my bed and cried uncontrollably. I needed to weep to dissolve what felt like a hard stone blocking my throat. My screams were not let out. Each time I wanted to screech, my voice disappeared into tears. Crying is a short-term remedy from all kinds of things. It gives a balance to my soul. Try it. Each time stupid thoughts flow into your head, kill them with tears. Make thousands of promises that they will not flow again, even though they will for eternity. But tears were not enough to cure my pique because they were soundless.

I woke up before the middle of the night. I washed my face and stood with my whole body shaking. My bones were so fragile. I felt like they had swallowed all my misery but then I felt them; they could not take it anymore. I held on with my hands to the basin, and wanted to throw up what I had not eaten. My eyes could see nothing but the blur of things. I blinked slowly trying to find my way back to bed. But things remained blurred until my body dropped, like a piece of heavy meat, on the floor. Until my body dropped like my “one shot” grandfather when he fell on the soil. I didn’t feel anything anymore. My eyes were closed but I was not asleep. How beautiful life is when you could stop feeling the heavy pain put on you without having to spend life sleeping. The only thing I could see through the window then with my body on the floor was the white snowflakes swaying in the sky, dancing together in vertical lines. How peaceful, I thought to myself. How happy they were flying in the open space until they rested in

peace on the ground, the frozen windows, the walking heads, the dirty roads, the street lights, on me.

\*\*\*

In 2000 I was very different from a usual 10 –year-old girl. At that time of my life I had a doll and so many friends to play with. I did not know how to play with my doll, but I knew how to play other games. At day time, I would spend hours playing. I would start running and hiding, then running again, then throwing, then running with heavy breathing, hands shivering, and then I would stop and turn and run again until I could not run anymore. I did not play this game with my friends because there was no safe place to play, but the green soldiers played it all day with us the way they played with my “one shot” grandfather.

They were big young men who wore camouflage uniforms with big heavy bags on their backs. Anyone could know how heavy the bags were when they saw them swaying back and forth while running around. Their green berets were almost covering their forehead down to their eyebrows. I was not sure if they could see me, but they could. They were always ready to check, kick, hit, invade, attack, shout, break in and arrest. They were always shooting but they were not that bad, after all they would always smile at you. Their big brown pair of boots was so big that they could accommodate two feet in each at once but the shoelace was tied enough not to let their feet out. Their shoes hampered their footsteps. I could feel their steps weighty and random. Sometimes they sounded like elephants running and other times they did not sound at all.

Once at night when each street dog took its place near the closest pile of garbage it found, the dogs all bent their back knees, laid down their front legs, and sat still all in their places, waiting for the cats to start their show. All the cats from the neighborhood came shouting and farting, teasing and threatening each other. The dogs sitting in their places were barking, giving

the sign for the cats to start. The cats created a round shape in the middle of the street and started making circle. They were roaring at each other until the fighting started. Like wild monsters, they attacked each other's bodies. Whenever a cat caught another cat between its jaws and hit it on the ground the dogs would bark in amusement. The 10 –year- old me was lying on a thick mat placed on the ground at the front of my parents' bed. My green olive eyes were wide open and my ears were awaiting a roar or a bark to giggle when a cat was hit and when a dog was surprised. I thought the show was amusing too. In the middle of the sound and silence I could hear then a march towards our small rented house. Oh no! I thought to myself, they were coming. They were heading to our house to perform their bloody show near me. Oh no, I thought, if they heard me when I giggled then they would want me with the dogs barking or with the cats fighting. I hid under my blanket, clinging to it. Their marching did not stop, and then it was sure they were coming. At that moment, I was closer to the ground than anyone else. Dead people who were buried under the earth were not as close as I was. Every time they stepped closer, my heartbeat went up. I was afraid they could hear it.

Here was the surprise: above my head there were no cats nor dogs but brown big boots. I was holding to with my eyes shut. "Please" I said, but the boots kicked me and hit me to the edge of my parents' bed. I opened my eyes in response to the back pain. There – in the middle of the small bedroom that has a colored television raised on small wooden shelves filled with some cooking, health, some women's rights books, one titled "Palestine in Modern Time" book, and video tapes, all in Arabic – spread fifteen armed soldiers. I was flabbergasted. It was three in the morning when their boots exploded on our metal house door that was made particularly to bear the never-ending shooting nights. And their giant voices were spewed through their lungs in the air to spot my parents' ears like the sound of a broken car engine before they knocked on the



door with their hammered hands, which felt so solid but were never as hard as the hands of my “one shot” grandfather. These soldiers knew how to communicate but in their own way. They tried to speak in Arabic so it would be a lot easier for us to cooperate, specifically to follow their orders. “You filthy Arab,” one soldier called my dad, “gather your family and get out of the house. We have orders to check the area for mukharebeen.” They meant vandals. They were always looking for vandals and they were ready to give anyone a “one shot” experience for the sake of it. It was the most common word they used to describe anyone who resisted their oppression even if they were just kids expressing horrifying nightmares of their existence.

My father, who was 40 years old at that time, turned his loose flaccid face to us, and said, “You heard his order, now move.” That was the first time I saw my father so submissive, not arguing, and accepting even unjust orders. Throughout his life he never did this to anyone, especially his wife. Usually his face looked taut in which it created special lines and curves whenever he talked, and that made his overall look an angry person all the time about everything. I think the scene of the fifteen armed soldiers then struck his face that his skin could not take it anymore. The three of us moved to the kitchen that we used as a living room and a kitchen during the day and as a bedroom for me and my brother at night. My father then wanted to put back the face we were more accustomed to see. Maybe he was aware of our surprise when his face became loose and when he suddenly turned to be submissive.

“Where is my cigarette pack?” he asked.

“Wherever you left it, as if it is the most important thing to look for now,” my mother replied.

He stood there. In his mouth he held a cigarette that he had been longing for the last hour. The cigarette contained dried leaves of tobacco that relieved my father and gave him a

sense of masculinity. It gave him a very special dose because it gave him his angry face again and he could never do anything without a cigarette in his mouth. After he was done with his first cigarette, he started to feel his masculinity again. Cigarettes were made for men, and if women were to smoke they were acting like men because tolerating cigarettes only men could do.

“Get up and eat something and put on some heavy clothes, they are here,” my father, woke my elder brother from his sleep.

“Who are they?” my teenage brother asked.

“Are you deaf!? Didn’t you hear all the fuss they made in the neighborhood? Now get ready before they call upon us to follow them,” my father replied with the affect of his masculinity.

“Aren't we already having a lot to deal with? Easy on the kid!” my mother interrupted while making an early coffee for her husband and herself.

One soldier came and saw us in the kitchen when his beautiful sound came out through a scream scolding us for still being inside the house. We were worried if they were going to arrest the man of the house and the future man, my brother. My mom already was holding hers and my father’s savings, their passports, national identity cards, documents that said this house belonged to a Palestinian owner and that we lived here, and some other stuff, all wrapped in a plastic bag put it inside her underwear, touching her private part.

“Mama, why are you hiding these there?”

“This is the safest place to hide these. Even if they asked me to take off my clothes, they will not ask me to take off my underwear,” my mother answered after she came near me and hugged me.

“But what would happen if they ever found out?” I asked.

“No one knows except them,” pointing to the Israeli jeep standing outside, “who know what will happen,” my mother's face became worried and uncertain when she answered.

I had a special connection with my mom. Not only was I the closest to her, but she also considered me the big one, not my brother who was 6 years older.

“I'm afraid history is repeating itself,” my mother mumbled to herself while we were still standing outside.

I did not know what she meant by it then, but later when I learnt the stories of many people having been forced to leave their houses in early mornings, I understood. We waited on the road, outside the rented house. Waiting was exciting and waiting outside was beautiful. I was excited to see what the soldiers would come out with from this small rented shop that was made into a house. Would they find the vandals that they said were hiding under my parents' bed, very close to me, I wondered? Standing there and waiting was beautiful because of the sky. The sky that night was beautiful as it never was. It was very far yet very near, very open yet very close, very big yet very small. The sky that night was only above us. I saw it, when I was squatting in the corner of the street. The stars spread only above our head, lightening the house and the road. The stars in different shapes and colors made the road so colorful, so lively. I was also feeling full of life and was blooming at my age though I was not in the perfect time or place but I felt so confident that the dogs and cats had just run away. Not completely, though, since they were hiding behind the garbage container, eavesdropping on what was happening.

While my parents were smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee with signs of worry and concern on their sleepless faces, the fifteen soldiers came out with disappointment to everyone. They were empty-handed. It seemed they had not found the vandals. I looked away, then I

looked back at them and I made sure they were actually not empty-handed. They had the rifles with their muzzles pointed at me. Their muzzles were just in front of me, exactly as they had been in front of my grandfather, so that I could look deep inside the barrel. I was looking for something; I did not know what it was. I wanted to reach something after the darkness in there but there was always more and more darkness. The deeper I looked inside the barrel the darker it got. My body was going through some sort of feeling that I did not understand at the time. Later I realized it was fear.

The soldiers were talking to my parents; my brother standing next to them; and I was in my corner standing and staring at the muzzles following them moving in all directions as the soldiers moved. Every time a soldier moved, the muzzle with my eyes fixated on it swayed until it centered between my eyes. Each time the muzzle was centered between my eyes, my toes and the tips of my fingers froze, and my saliva lubricated down my throat all by itself. My heart beat scared me. I thought it was the heat. The muzzle produced heat, the blood-boiling heat. I stopped being shiny and I stopped feeling alive. I was sweating and it smelled. The sky with its beautiful shining stars became smaller and smaller. The lights became dimmer and dimmer while my trembling legs became so light. I could not feel them anymore. I stopped hearing the soldiers' orders or what my mother asked me to do. All I could see was the muzzle and the sky, which was already as small as the muzzle, until my body fell down on the street. The muzzle disappeared and I could only see the stars spread above my head. But at that time, they were getting as far as they could, as small as they could and as dim as they could. So I closed my eyes. I became aware only of my heartbeat that still scared me. The beat went through every part of my body bit by bit, and my blood became intoxicated with it. I was no longer able to move to open my eyes.

But, I saw them putting my brother in the corner and asking my parents to strip, looking for vandals. First they asked my father to take off his clothes at once and to stand as naked as that night in the street with his hands stretched to the sides as the order said. Then my mother was asked first to take off her shirt, leaving her only with the bra and her pants on. Then they asked her to take off her pants.

“Stop this nonsense!” she shouted, “What do you want more? You turned the house into a complete mess, and you put us in the street with these two children. Stop it!”

She was given the choice to take off her pants or to choose as the soldier announced, “Your two children will be tortured in front of your eyes. Would you like to see that?”

My father from the back became furious. His masculinity was useless then and he felt it. My parents knew they could do nothing to stop them from hurting their children. She took off her pants and the orders kept going until she stood as naked as her husband.

“They found these!” I yelled.

The documents I meant went in their hands, as well as the savings and few pictures of the naked parents with their two children. They took them all and left after the soldier commanded, “Enough for today.”

When I woke up the next day my mother said I was dreaming. It was not all a dream. Actually I discovered there was no dream at all. Dreams no longer existed. They disappeared because they no longer had meaning. In fact I never had a dream, I thought to myself. So “how could it be that I was dreaming?” I asked my mother. She did not have the answer nor did she understand my question. In Palestine, we were not allowed to dream, without even knowing that we were not allowed to dream. We had to spend time learning history. We had to learn the history of the people who were not people. The people who had stoned hands and rippled

foreheads and cavernous eyes gathered in it the most unwanted misery of the world. They were the celebrities across the globe. Their documented painful stories and emotions spread in the eyes and minds of millions of people. For them, that fame was not enough but to the world it was more than what they deserved. They were the people who were asked to leave their houses in early mornings in 1948. Among them were blooming girls and boys and naked parents, just like me and my family out on the roads with dreams they shared with the blue sky and its shining stars. They left and their houses were replaced with tents in refugee camps. Their belonging was criticized and their isolation was banned so the only things they could carry with them were dreams. They were the dreamers. What I saw was real because these people have collected the world dreams, big or small, right or wrong, all on their shoulders to wherever their way forced them to go. In that case no dreams were left for my family, or for me.

The creation of the Jewish state in 1948 cost millions of human beings, not their lives (which would have been merciful) but their dreams. It made them reflect on a past and a history that was not theirs. They were the chosen people by God, and Palestinians were the chosen people by them to spend their lives bit by bit trying to fix a history not their own. Our ancestors, the Canaanites, the farmers of peace in olives and love in figs, the manufacturers of earthenware and most beautiful houses, taught us how to build a culture that was greater than just a state. That, with the most unfortunate luck in the world, was lost in vain when dreams were gone and people stopped dreaming.

\*\*\*

I was still young when I wanted to achieve many things in the world. At my age I was blooming, I was just in the wrong place and time. I wanted to do many things. One of them was to become a grownup. To see the world from the eyes of the caregiver. Not to know better,

caregivers knew nothing about blooming and glooming as much as I did. But to feel the world, the way they felt it. I wanted to feel what my mother felt when she was facing the world all grownup. I wanted to know how that feeling made her close to me. That special proximity between me and my mother was there but I wanted to feel it. Humans were made of feelings. Feelings of love and hate, care and selfishness, peace and anger, hope and despair, even hunger and surfeit. Everything had a feeling so I wanted to see the world with feelings. I did not mean with emotions, but with feelings because feelings could express what was in someone's heart and mind and that was enough to see the world as it is. The place where I lived lacked feelings. Feelings were neglected and emotions were taking over. They were the lead for anyone in making decisions and undoing justice.

Once when I was still blooming and glooming, wanting things and learning how to feel, I went to Ramallah with my proximate caregiver, my mother. We were going to visit my mother's elder sister. I was a child but when I used to see that glint in my mother's eyes every time she talked to me, I felt I was standing at the top of the world with maturity and understanding. That glint was preparing me to embrace the world when it would bring more and more of its misery. In the morning when she woke me up, she had already prepared the breakfast on the table. My mother always did everything in her life with love and passion and that was why her cooking was the best in the world. When she cooked she used some motivation mixed with a lot of inspiration with a bunch of love and some useful advices added. That was topped with some words of encouragement and moving forward. On the side, she prepared optimization rolled with comfort and relief that would console my heart, feelings, thoughts and mind. For all meals she used these ingredients in every possible way and shape to create something resembling her, the greatest of tastes. That day I accompanied the person who could feel me.

After we had our breakfast, we headed to the nearest bus station. It was morning time. The only thing I wanted to look at was the sky. It was colored blue. It was wide, big, and far away. But the people's appearance was worrying. Without dreams, their sleepless faces looked terrified. People were going in different directions, some to their offices, others to their small shops, and a lot were looking for jobs socializing with the people in the street narrating how many years they spent in universities and how they ended up selling underwear in women's shops while sipping some coffee. As soon as we got to the station, a middle-aged man, the driver, wearing jeans and a shirt was calling three times, "Ramallah, Ramallah, Ramallah."

We got into the van and the man, in a hurry, asked everyone in the van, "Do you want me to get you a cup of coffee, tea or anything before we safely start our journey?" Everyone shook their head in response.

"Just move already!" someone said from the back, "We have a long journey ahead."

When we traveled (something we rarely did), I always sat by the window. Windows helped me to learn how to feel the world more. They were the capturing lenses to all that was happening around me. I just needed to look through them carefully. Like the other times, I was sitting by the window and my mother seated herself, of course, next to me. We always sat next to each other with her hand on my shoulder or just holding my hands. We were best friends without the need of identifying it.

"I brought with me some candies for you, Lelia," she said with a smile on her face.

She opened her handbag and handed me one as she was going to hand me one every now and then. I took it from her hand, opened it and said,

"Mama, you first!"

"No kid! You are the first, always," she replied.



She said that and meant it. She always wanted me to be the first because she said she trusted me more than my big brother, Loay. Though he was older than me, I was the first. We were heading to my aunt's house which was located 10 minutes after we had to pass a monstrous area. Police dogs! I keep remembering. Police dogs! I keep seeing. Hot muzzles I keep feeling! Screaming noise I keep hearing! Naked! Naked parents everywhere! Boys! My brother's age, handicapped on walls they keep arresting! Monsters I keep facing! Monsters I keep enduring! Monsters I keep listening! "To the wall!", "Your hands up!", "Lift your shirt", "Show me, you filthy Arab, show me your naked body", "I am looking for vandals, excuse me!" The piece of candy was still on the top of my tongue and did not dissolve yet. I was leaning to the window, while my mother smoked her cigarette and read the newspaper; I imagined the monstrous area we were heading to.

The nearer we were getting to the monsters, the louder their voices got. Their police dogs became as big as their tanks, and their tanks became as small as their muzzles, their muzzles became as large as the circles drawn by the cats for the dogs in the streets in front of our small rented house. We have not reached it yet, but their giant voices have already pricked my ears. Their hammered hands have already gone through my body bit by bit looking for vandals. I started to melt in the process of becoming scared. I was always scared whenever I heard my heartbeat and then I was telling it to please stop beating. But my heart took that request as a challenge and each time I remembered feeling strong, I felt weaker, because then I felt how cold my hands became, how red my face was and how helpless I felt. I was sitting next to my strength source of strength, yet I was weak and terrified.

"Mama, I am scared." I mumbled.

She stopped reading the newspaper for a second after she had finished her cigarette and said, “Of what?!”

“The dogs. Will they come near me?”

“Don’t be, I am with you. They will not come near you just do not look at them. You are a big girl and big girls aren’t afraid of anything. Not of dogs!”

My mother, who was in her mid-thirties then, could not understand the relationship I had with dogs nor did she want me to feel weak. My upper limbs were pulled down. They were melting. I felt them transforming into liquid that was dripping on my feet. My finger tips were as cold as Ramallah in winter and my shoulders were as hot as Jericho, the city of the moon, in summer. The process of melting started in my shoulders down to my feet. I was happy I was melting because I wanted to go back to the small rented house. My hands were melting, my heart was beating but the candy became unable to dissolve because my saliva had disappeared. I could feel the blood running and rushing to my ears and brain every time I imagined a monster. I tried to concentrate on remembering a distraction from a monstrous situation.

“Look at these flowers at the top of the hill there!”

My mother pointed to the hill we were passing by. My head was heavy because of the amount of blood that was rushing into my brain so it was hard for me to pull it back after I leant it against the window. I turned a bit to reach where she pointed and saw windflowers everywhere. The sight was beautiful! I suddenly lifted my head up and opened the window and let the air into the van.

“Remember these flowers? You used to pick them up for me on the Mother’s Day.” My mother giggled. When I was five we had a small piece of land in the back of our rented house and there used to grow wildflowers, jasmine and other kinds during the spring season. I used to

pick some of them and gift them to my mother in the Mother's day. As I opened the window, more air entered the van. I could breathe and release some of the fear that was dissolving my limbs. For a second of time, I felt happy. I was again blooming at my age. The decorated red hills were looking like an ocean I wanted to dive into. I wanted to smell its flowers and play with them. I wanted the van to stop and my mother to let me gather windflowers for her again. We could have spent the whole day there and not gone to that place whose name I did not want to mention. But that hill was just a beautiful hill and was not an ocean and I was not going to dive anywhere because there was a wall blocking me from seeing it or letting me dive into it. I could not do this anymore because that wall stood there like a gigantic dead leviathan.

There was always something pulling me back to remain inside a bubble of fear. I knew I was learning how to feel but I never wanted to fear. When suddenly and from nowhere I saw that leviathan I stopped feeling gloomy and the image of the monstrous area came back to my mind. That scene of the wall was a reminder of the bigger fear that was hunting me afterward. I wished I hadn't seen the windflowers or remembered the time when I picked them for my mother. Because only then my fears grew more and more until there was a spider web of fear spreading inside me. I closed the window and remained silent. My dissolution has resumed its work and my limbs went back to dripping on my feet. That scary heartbeat happened again and I entered the status of shivering in my place with no notice of anyone including my mother. She was the nearest to me but I was the furthest, she was the strongest but I was the weakest, she saw trust in me but I lost it in her, I was scared but her face wasn't. She was everything and I was not.

The van had stopped and the passengers were getting ready to get down, to stand in line. Only then our journey had started. I held my mother's hand and we got down from the van. Monsters! Monsters and monsters were everywhere. They were armed soldiers from the back

and the front. They looked different from the soldiers who came to our small rented house. Those were bigger, more masculine, and their voices were attached to their lungs outside their bodies. Their boots were as big as tanks and their steps were reconstructing the roads. Their berets looked like half melons on their heads. Their faces! Their faces suited their appearance so well. They looked greenish and as flat as their boots. Their eyes were not in place or shape, they followed the steps of everyone from all angles. The whole scene they created could have been made into a movie that was called, "Green Soldiers on a Mission." Police dogs! Every monster had at least two dogs to accompany them in completing their mission.

My mother and I got in line, then kept moving forward as if we were going backward. We were walking on a moving bar that was never going to hit us there. To the spot. To the center of the monstrous area. To where we met the police dogs face to face for the first time since we have checked into the area. I saw the police dogs waiting for me to come near them. Terrifyingly, we were at the same height. There was no way to escape their looks. Of course, there were children the same height as I was but they were not as strong as I had to be. They were crying but I was moving forward in silence. I did not cling to my mother when the dogs were staring at me like the other children did. I stared back at them. I showed the dogs and my mother that I was strong that, I was in a position of responsibility and enduring the monstrous areas.

That was not it. There was no way I did not stare back at the dogs because turning my face away from them meant entering another status of fear if I had to face the monsters who were following everyone from every side. I could not cry like other kids did nor could I cling to my mother's shoulders who, like other mothers, cursed the soldiers while standing in line. I was not a kid. I was a responsible and a mature kid. I was trusted and accompanied by the closest person

to me, my mother, because I was strong and I “knew how to endure things.” I was not going to throw this entire status away and show everyone, especially my mother, how horrified I was.

Instead, I let my legs handle it. My steps were heavy as the bags on the soldiers’ backs. My legs could have barely made it to the spot. My fear then was situated at my lower limbs. It was pushing itself all the way down to my feet, to the earth, to under the earth where dead people were not as close as I was then to their graves. In the upper part, the candy in my mouth was in the process of turning into a stone. My throat blocked the way in front of its face to be swallowed and my mouth became dry and there was no saliva to be lubricated by itself. There was only a dry candy that got stuck and could not move anywhere inside. We were getting closer and my mouth was getting dryer, my legs were becoming heavier and the dead people in their graves were making space for my fears to be buried deep inside. At that stage I could see the monsters very clearly, they were excitedly waiting for me to reach them, and their accompanying dogs showed me their long big tongues in celebration of the fact that they were soon getting to know me. At that time, fear had to disappear into the graves of the dead people under the earth. It had two options, either to show it all, or to leave it all deep down. I was giving it only the second option.

It was our turn.

“Hand me the ID card of yours and your daughter!”

Their voices were not as different from the soldiers who had come to our small rented house that night. They were just louder and sharper. They would pierce my ears without hearing the voices. What I heard was nothing though I saw their lips moving but my ears did not.

“How dare you! There are no ID cards or documents with me. They are with you!”

My mother’s angry voice had just replied.

“If you want to pass and continue your journey, you need to go back and bring your ID.”

The tenacity of that soldier, who just replied to my mother, to the rifle he had in his hands at his front side was enticing. The rifle itself was complicated to handle, still he knew where to press and where to keep his fingers ready to use it at any given moment. That was a whole scene to look forward to. But I did not want that to happen, I was glad enough their voices were so loud that I was not able to hear them. I wanted the dogs to stop staring at me while I was watching the scene of the soldier with his hands on his rifle. In a fraction of a second, my mother grabbed my hand and pushed herself and me to cross the Qalandia checkpoint that allowed people from the South to enter Ramallah.

Suddenly, the dogs stopped staring at me but they jumped at me, at my mother. I thought they were accompanying the soldiers but they did everything no one could have imagined without the help of any monsters around. The only thing the soldiers had to do was to loosen the chains they tied the dogs with, and the dogs would have done the rest of the mission. They barked but I heard their barking because they were waiting for my coming. I could hear and see what they were doing, tearing my flesh with their big white and spread teeth. I could see the blood coming out from my legs when they attacked them, blue colored. I first thought it was not blood, I thought it was saliva coming out of the mouths of the monstrous companions. But when I stopped feeling anything, no fear, no dead people under the earth and no one above me or below me there was nothing within me just fear that had disappeared when my blue blood was spilling on the road.

I was freed when the dogs snapped on my body. The taste of my flesh between their giant jaws was why my fear spilled in front of my eyes. I have conquered my fears. I showed my mother that I was strong that I “knew how to endure things.” I knew how to remain still and not

to move while dogs attacked me. I “knew how to endure things” when I watched the closest person to me fighting to protect me to keep the dogs away from my body. She was bewailing her daughter, the strongest daughter, the daughter who endured her miseries and buried her fears. All the people who were waiting at the checkpoint gathered to be emotionally driven. They did not feel what my mother felt or how free I became. They were emotionally involved in the scene. I had a glance at many people crying and others calling the ambulance, teenage boys had already involved themselves in clashes with the soldiers, the monsters, throwing stones at them, their jeeps trying to push them and their dogs away. They wanted to take revenge for the poor small kid whose blue blood was spilling on the road. I, in a fraction of seconds, have turned that monstrous area into a battle field. Dogs, humans and people and monsters all killing and hugging, crying and praying, calling and texting, photographing and sending, shouting and screaming, wanting and leaving, some were saying slogans, “Long live Palestine! Long live Palestine!” Poor you! My mother, I thought. She was screeching for help for someone to stop her daughter’s bleeding. Poor you! My mother, I thought. I was not as strong as you thought. I was dissolving again but that was not me, it was my dead body.

\*\*\*

I did not say I was dead, but they thought I was when they were calling each other to get my dead body from the middle of that monstrous area. They did not know that I wanted to remain where I was seated freely on the road while my blue blood spilled. I wanted to enjoy the only moment I was free from my fears, but they would not let me. I wanted to see my blood colored with blue each time I looked at it. I wanted to make sure all my fears were going away and were not suppressed inside for years to come. But I have already mentioned that there was always something pulling me back to my fears and not wanting me to lose any attachment to it.

They have taken me from the freest place of all and put me in the hospital. In the middle of the night when I was surrounded by my parents and my brother I was feeling pain in my whole body. When I opened my eyes I felt it was all a dream. While in the dream I was freed from my fears. I opened my eyes in the hospital and my heartbeat was still loud and scared me. My injured legs and distorted face were in pain. At that stage with the feeling of that pain in my anaesthetized legs and whole body I had the urge to cry my heart out. I opened my eyes and saw them all around me. I frowned. I did not want to see anyone's face. I did not want anyone to surround me in that small space given privacy by a square framed white sheet.

“Get out!” I yelled.

I knew it was not them who created my pain. I knew it was the monsters that did it to me. The police dogs! But everyone was to be blamed for the pain I was feeling in my legs, heart and feelings. While in the dream I had to be strong in front of my fear planters, in the hospital, I needed to blame someone for my pain. Though I yelled I was not sure at whom. Silence had sealed their lips and bodies and no one moved nor opened their mouth with a single word. I felt I did not exist. For them I was a poor child, helplessly snapped by the monsters' dogs lying in the hospital bed, soundlessly. I could have said anything and they would have felt “Poor her!” but they would not have let me cry my pain out. They would not have allowed my fears out. I thought my fears have already gone with the blue blood coming out from my legs. I was wrong. I was trapped in it. Once someone was trapped in fear they would never be free from it for years to come. That feeling of fear and guilt and blame would have never let me live a normal life. Until I grew older my heartbeat still scared me and reminded me of how weak I was. Once someone was trapped in their fears, their steps were haunted and their thoughts were narrowed down to only



see dreadful images of things. My parents and brother stayed with me and did not leave until the hospital allowed me to. When we got back to our small rented house I had gone to sleep.

I opened my eyes facing a wooden ceiling. I was sleeping on a bed placed near the only window in a wooden small cottage. I sat up and reached out to open the window. A very cold breeze slapped my face and mitigated its boiled injuries. That first week of November had the best weather of all. The sky that day was not blue nor the remnant of the blood on my face. The sky was overcast. I smiled. It gave me that quiet feeling. Inside my head there were always millions of thoughts running and humming, but that day the weather made me think of absolutely nothing but to embrace the chilling breeze while listening to a jazz song for Fairouz, a female Lebanese singer, whose name was her voice. Fairouz, everyone who knows any Arabic, young or old, child or adult, must have listened to her in the morning, especially cold mornings, while watering the plants around the house, or sipping hot coffee with a cigarette in their mouth. She was, as she will ever be, the remedy for all kinds of illness. I was craving Fairouz at that moment. But there was no way I could get Fairouz here, I thought.

I got up and went to the bathroom to wash my deformed face. I did not want to look at myself in the mirror, standing above the basin. I wanted to keep the image I envisioned of my face, after being attacked by the monster's dogs, without any changes. I had already created an image and accepted it and did not want to go through that process again. The process of rejecting and deconstructing, then again forcing myself to accept what I have not done to myself. I was done feeling the ache of all that process. At that time, the 10-year-old me just wanted a cup of coffee and a light cigarette and wanted to sit under one of the olive trees I saw when I opened the window. I wanted to sit there while listening to Fairouz, and feel November's beautiful and playful breeze that actually made a rhythm while gently touching the little leaves of the olive

branches. Walking slowly around the small cottage, I realized I was at my family's farmland. I just did not have any clue of how I had come there. I also knew I was not alone because while I was inside that cottage I still heard thin voices of gossip and giggles somewhere around.

That confusion did not worry me at all because the beautiful weather and the playful breeze of that November made me forget everything I needed to be worried about. I was standing outside the cottage when I inhaled as much as I could of that breeze that was loaded with the olive fragrance. There was something about earth that made me, for once, feel part of it. When it had that weather I was very, very near an earth full of beauty. Between it and myself at that moment was a transparent thin line that I could not remove, still I was able to enjoy that one given moment of it. November was the month of picking olives in Palestine. If someone walked and saw people harvesting in an olive field dancing, singing, and picking olives around an olive tree, they must have been in Palestine, specifically, in one of those farmlands. As soon as I left that cottage I roamed around to find my naked parents, my brother and my grandmother gathering around an olive tree with a white sheet spread on the brown soil under their feet while making coffee, listening to Fairouz and discussing which tree they should start to pick.

"What are you all doing here?" I asked them.

I did not frown when I saw them like I did back at the hospital. I was still enjoying the moment. I was actually still in that mood of quiet and calm. They all seemed hopeful. At that moment I existed and they saw me. My family saw me, the trees, the breeze, the weather, the overclouded sky, November, I smelled the coffee and I ran towards the brazier and held the container of the coffee and took a deep breath to smell it. Before they even had the chance to reply I asked my brother to pour a cup of that coffee when I became captured in its tang and dark

brown texture. My grandmother, after seeing my distorted face for the first time after that incident, embraced me from the back and said;

“These soldiers! These people! These inhumane creatures have destroyed my little one.”

She was crying. I did not see her tears though because she was hugging me from the back but I felt them running down my shoulders. She also wanted me to be strong that was why she did not want me to see her tears running. Still, I was able to feel how bitter they were.

“I am fine. They did not destroy anything about me.”

I said that with no expressions on my face. I wanted to explain to her how that incident had rebuilt me instead. But how would she see that in that distorted face. I wanted to tell her about the experience of freeing myself from all my fears when the monsters let their dogs leap on me. But I could not because she would not understand and no one, among them, would. She did not show me her tears because she wanted me to be strong as if strong people do not cry. She did not know how badly I wanted to let my screams out. To let that inner sadness I had to escape. I wanted to turn my face and bury myself inside her and cry while clinging to her, uncontrollably. I wanted to narrate how terrified I was when I saw the dogs before I reached the checkpoint and how many times I prayed to be buried with my fears under my feet before I had to stand near them. I wanted to tell her how the person who was the closest to me in my journey could not save me from the dogs’ scratches that became engraved on my face. I wanted to tell her that I was not to be scared for the rest of my life because of a history I was not part of and because of a crime that I have never committed. All those thoughts were not going to be said to anyone, not to my grandmother or to the closest person to me. Those were to be neglected, to be buried, and to be lost as we had lost our dreams before.

That was the first day of November, the olive picking season. The day when I buried my screams inside and the day my tears were out in silence. I was still 10 years old but I was blooming at another age in another place. I turned my face and my hand reached for my mother's tears and wiped them away as a sign that I had seen them but that would not mean I became weaker. I would have mopped up anything that would make me look less strong in that monstrous area, in front of the monsters, the police dogs, my mother, my grandmother, my father, my brother. I was the model of being strong and I would always want to be just that.

“Sing!” I asked my grandmother. I tried to reach the nearest olive branches and I started picking black olives dropping them gently down on the white sheet spread under their feet while my brother was collecting them and putting them inside a big white plastic bag to take them later to the small place where they have a modern machine that compresses olives to put the best compressed olive oil in cans to use it throughout the year. They all were singing, “The olive of my land, the most beautiful everywhere.” I was recalling the words from within to come through my broken lungs, my dry throat and my crannied tongue to spray them on everything. Each time one word came out, the pain that was running through my legs to my lungs and throat was unbearable. That was when I felt like vomiting what I had not eaten. While my words were stuck, sinking deep inside and running out, my brother collected olives in silence. He did everything in silence, accepted or rejected anything in silence. The teenage brother, who was six years older than I, had gone through the process of being strong before. I was wondering at which stage I was compared to him when I would turn to become the other face of silence. Silence was not just a silence. When someone became silent no one could blame them for something they had never done. When my mother spoke to the soldiers I was falling and she was crying. If only I had not stared back at the dogs they would not have attacked me. I should have

always closed my eyes, ears and sealed my mouth. If only I had done that I would not have to swallow fear for the rest of my never ending life.

My scary heartbeat was getting louder while I was following the steps of my brother, whom I was going to be similar to in the near future, voiceless. I wondered when he became like this and what it was that made him become that silent. My mother, I thought, would not have the answer because if she did she would have told me already, since she was the closest to me. My father would not tell me either because he was always busy working on developing his masculinity by competing with his companions at work how many cigarettes he would smoke a day and how many plates he would break when there was an Israeli curfew and he could not buy a cigarette pack. Him, my brother, I would never dare to ask. I would have never been this mean and knocked the door on his fears to come out. Silence was the final stage where all kinds of fears became stuck deep inside where they first grew. They became rooted, part of him that would not allow him to speak anymore. I went to my grandmother. I stood close to her while she was singing for the olives she was picking. Probably she was the only one who would answer me about my brother's tragedy, I thought. I wanted to know to prepare myself for my turn.

“Teta, what happened to my brother? How come he is always silent and answers you with short answers. Don't you think he is annoying sometimes when he doesn't reply?”

Silence was also my grandmother's game. First, she would not reply to my question, she would continue singing and picking and picking and singing. I stopped her, faced her, irritated her and bugged her until she responded saying, “Stop! And pick some olives before it is lunch time.” She was trying to get away from answering me but I tried again until she seated herself next to me under one of the olive trees and she started narrating the story that shut up my brother and caused him to breathe in silence.

Some years and years ago before I was born, my grandfather died. I only heard how much he loved his farm and took care of the olive trees until they became so strong. His main job was farming, in his free time he would water the trees and if he had some leisure time he would clean around the trees and when he wanted to picnic he would sit under one particular olive tree, smoke some cigarettes and drink black tea with mint. His life was his land. He loved his job and he loved his land. That beautiful connection between him and the land would not have happened if he did not work for it day and night all the years of his life. It became part of who he was. Until one day, people stopped dreaming, and dreams started fleeing out of the land. Everything has stopped, but fears were everywhere and he was a Palestinian, and was there anything in the world worse than being a Palestinian and loving your own land? I discovered there was.

I sat there under the olive tree next to my grandmother, my heartbeat grew louder and louder until I thought she heard it. I pushed it back, and all the shivering vibes that were running across my body, I was placing them in one corner down there in my toes so they would not be exposed to my strong grandmother. Sitting on my fears was the worst. I was not controlling them I was not the one to allow them to expose themselves or hide themselves. I was giving them the only option I had. To be buried. But they would never be because they needed to stop me talking, to take my voice away. I imagined fighting my fears down to my toes. I had to defeat them like I did when I was at the monstrous area. I sat on them and I clutched my grandmother's hands with my own showing her the strength I would get from her to defeat them. Human energy meant a lot that time. Only when I touched my grandmother was I able to run over my fears, only when I ate my mother's food was I able to strengthen my feet. But I had to face it. I was never over my fears completely but with the connection I made with them I could imagine that my fears were

gone when I became the source of strength in my life. I could also imagine how that land was the source of power and energy for my grandfather. That was to be taken away.

I poured a cup of tea from the pot that was put inside the brazier to boil with two leaves of mint and one spoon of sugar before I handed it to my grandmother. Might this sugar have been the remover of that bitter sound I heard when she started narrating the story of my voiceless brother. This was what my grandmother told me. When my brother was four years old my family, my grandfather and she were gathering here under this same tree during November, roasting some chestnuts and singing while taking turns in picking olives. She mentioned the fun time they had then. The yield that year of the olives could provide my family with olive oil for the year long. But, I wished they had never gone there under that tree because it was the day we lost our grandfather.

While I was sitting and listening to my grandmother's narration, my fears were moving below me. I was wondering, what did the death of my grandfather have to do with my voiceless brother, but I kept it to myself. I did not want to interrupt my grandmother because I wanted to give her some time while talking about the death of her other half.

I was mature and considerate. I poured another cup of tea, this time for myself trying to distract my fears. I continued sitting in silence and my ears were waiting to hear the words coming from my grandmother's mouth. Until she told me that all of a sudden and while they were sitting under that olive tree, three military jeeps entered the farm and more than twenty soldiers spread and circled the olive tree we were sitting under in less than a minute. In panic they stood before they realized the soldiers' big boots and their big rifles. Then, she looked me in the eyes and told me, they were carrying machine guns and tear gas bombs. My grandmother had seen enough guns that were making the image so vivid in her head then.

At that time I felt the need to tell her that I had a similar image in my head too. Because then, when she was narrating, the image of the monsters was everywhere in my head. I became so worried then because I was having a hard time managing the vivid scenes and talks in my head and my fears below me.

My grandmother told me they were in shock and terror at the same time because they did not know what to expect but they were terrified of what they did not expect. They were commanded to empty anything related to the family on the farm and leave before the soldiers started looking for vandals. My family then did not know why they came looking for vandals in our farm but they knew why they were loaded with Kalashnikovs, sound bombs, tear bombs, rubber bullets, with their big brown boots. As soon as their command hit their ears my grandfather held his ax and stood lofty in front of the olive trees after he responded to the commander that they were not going to leave our ancestors' land.

At this stage, my grandmother's narration became faster and I was sitting on my fears below me. I kept concentrating on my grandmother's gestures and lips and eyes and every single bit of her that moved along my feelings while narrating the story. My grandmother became older than her age. I saw her decaying. It was sadness. Sadness made her wrinkles thicker and scarier. I did not want to see my grandmother's fears. I already had mine to handle. I wanted to look away from her face but I could not. I was captured by all her senses. Instead I put myself under her left arm and hugged her from the side when I saw tears sparkling in her eyes.

When she began talking about my brother, she told me about the relationship between my brother and grandfather and how they loved each other specially that my brother was my grandfather's right hand and farmed with him all the time. But then in front of the soldiers, the



guns, and the frightening looks he turned into a small crying child. He watched the soldiers' steps in horror while my dad was yelling at him, "Do not cry. Men do not cry."

I have come to know that my father has been so masculine since long ago, but what I could never comprehend was why that masculinity was a failure in front of these soldiers. My father then, who knew how to speak Hebrew, as my grandmother told me, stepped forward and offered his knowledge to communicate, to ask the monsters why they specifically were searching for vandals in our farm. They already started digging under the olive trees looking for vandals while my grandfather was bemoaning the hardworking years of farming and watering, weeding and planting, burying the seeds and waiting, picking, washing, and pressing and cooking and eating. All those years were washed away with a bulldozer dig. Amongst that and for once in his life, when he stopped being a burden and decided to speak up using his Hebrew, my father, when he told the monsters they did not have the right to assault someone else's property, they hit him with the back of their rifles in his face until he was bleeding.

My eyes were throwing tears in despair that my fears would forever remain my companions, that my turn to become the resemblance of a stillness of a stone was inevitably soon. Everything was inevitable. There was no way of questioning things, taking or rejecting, liking or hating, it was all set, I just needed to go through the process to feel everything. I wished to become mature, to feel what they felt, but the monsters granted everything for me as early as they could. I was ten years old but I could feel my grandfather whom I never met, I could picture my father bleeding and feel him being humiliated. I was able to sense my brother crying and wanting to stop the monsters from their destruction but he was unable to. That was the last time he could express his fears but later he swallowed them and entered a state of alexithymia, he

became unable to express what he felt and I was going to be like him when my fears were moving below me while my grandmother told me the story that was never told.

When my tears were streaming down my face my fears had already gone through me and settled in my heart. At that time, when I was sitting next to my grandmother, listening to her narration under one of her arms, I could not fight more, I was losing my strength slowly but surely and my fears lost their patient below me, they finally took over and I was there sitting to weep my family's tears which never had the time, the people or the place to fall down. There was nothing that could be worse than being helpless and powerless, than being a human and then being dehumanized, than being respected then was being dishonored, than being in a family and a house then being disowned and replaced. I could do nothing but my tears could possibly remedy my shock of the untold story.

But my sadness did not stop there, it grew bigger than ever when my grandmother told me how my grandfather's frustration at the first cut of an olive tree made him get his big axe in his hands and hit one of the boots that were standing in the way stepping on the first raw seeds. Out of anger and resentment! Of frustration and rage! He gathered all his strength and hit the boots with his axe but his axe was as fragile as he was. But that hit, my grandmother told me, did not do anything but made the soldiers giggle because their boots were stronger than an old man axe's hit. They were laughing out loud at my grandfather's failure. My grandmother was there to remind him to stop, to never trust especially the nature of life that the axe might hit him back. His face was yellowish and looked anemic when he saw the soldiers sarcastically laughing at him. They pushed him to the ground and my bleeding father was crawling to reach my grandfather who was decaying in front of his eyes. My mother, who was astonished at the scene, threw the axe away (from my grandfather's hand) and felt for my grandmother. Everyone

surrounded my grandfather except my brother. As my grandmother told me my brother suddenly stopped talking and moving. He was standing away from everyone, watching in silence. This was it, the moment he entered the silence mode.

I was dumbfounded on how strong I was. It had taken me that long till I lost my voice and became silent while it took my brother a scene, a grandfather lying on the ground of his land bemoaning his loss, poor you my brother, I thought. I was stronger than him but he was greater than I was. I was slowly swallowing my fears but he took his fears all with one sip because he faced them all at once. They were not given to him in installments but he had to see all the fears of the world in front of his eyes in one place and time and in front of his family and more than 20 soldiers and the things they carried, their military jeeps, and their brown boots.

Everything was set for him to face his fears, he was shocked once in his life and not several times like I had been, he was not active about his feelings and did not want to feel the world the way I wanted to. He was not looking for fears, but fears were looking for him. There was no powers pulling him inside bubbles of fears rather fears were pushed to perform in front of him and he had to choose between fighting them or swallowing them, he was peaceful, he swallowed them and became a construction of fears that were moving along his steps in life wherever he walked. They decided the way his life should be and shut him up forever. He maybe did not know all about that, but he must have felt deep inside the control of his fears and could not do anything about it. I was impressed but I also felt sad and thought, poor him my elder brother. I took that narration event as an occasional opportunity for my tears to flow over the fears that I would not be able to cry out loud once I had been caught up in their mercy. I was imagining every scene my grandmother was describing in slow motion and that was how I saw every member of my family dramatizing their helpless life.

My grandmother also told me the soldiers' giggles continued forever and the bulldozers did not stop their mission. I thought monsters must have thought vandals were buried under the roots of the olive trees but I wished I was there to tell them more about olive trees. Those olive trees would not handle anything under them, beside them or even above them they would just stand by themselves once they were planted.

In the middle of that chaos my grandmother wanted to help my grandfather to stand on his own feet. She was not ready to lose the remnant of her family. My mother plunked herself near my father on the ground and tore a piece of her clothes to dry his blood and tie his injury. As my grandmother told me, I was too small to witness such an event. I was so small at that time that I was wrapped in a warm blanket and sleeping inside the cottage while someone from my family members would come and check if I had woken up yet. That time when I was sleeping without dreaming the most expected yet shocking thing happened outside. I was peacefully sleeping inside the cottage while a rampage was happening outside. My brother shrieked a voice that my grandmother said "reached beyond Cyprus" when the monsters ended everything outside the cottage under the olive tree. She told me that I also woke up in horror because of his voice. It was the bullet though. Under this olive tree where I was asking my grandmother about the death of my brother's voice, my grandfather was shot in his head by an armed Israeli soldier with the intentions of stopping our misery. That screaming was the last voice that my brother was able to produce since then. I finally knew that my grandfather was killed by an Israeli soldier and that was the ending line of the very close beauty I had with nature before my grandmother narrated the story. My grandmother still remembered the last words the soldier said to them, "One shot in his head will alleviate the sufferings of his death."

I wish I was my brother. Or I was my grandfather. We came to life on a trip. Our lives were going to end anyway and my grandfather shooter, my brother's voice stealer and my face distorter were the same. An Israeli soldier, a Kalashnikov holder, a green face monster, three in the morning commander, they were all the same. So it would not matter if I was my brother or my grandfather, but what really mattered to me when my grandmother finished telling the story was to stop being myself. I wanted to stop learning how to feel. I just wanted to stop feeling anything. My grandfather was killed, was shot, the muzzle was centered between his eyes. Lying on his land waiting for his shooter, my respected grandfather must have been watching the sky above him, everyone was there surrounding him but he was not. He must have been above all already transcending with the sky until that "one shot" crossed his skeleton and settled in the soil below his head. The olive trees, I thought, must have bowed for their master and their branches must have sprinkled some olive leaves on his dead body.

When my grandmother finished telling the story my fears started eating me and my scary heartbeat was outrageous. I lost all the lines between myself and nature. Fear became part of my life because I never knew when it was my turn to become like my brother or any time be killed like my grandfather. I did not know when, so I had to struggle with my fears, and my childhood, olive trees, monsters, green soldiers, who did not lose their humanity but they deactivated part of it. They were not dehumanized. It was obvious the olive trees did not have vandals hiding in them. These greenish soldiers were humans but they introduced me and my family to a new form of humanity that would not make any sense except for them. Palestinians accepted it; they swallowed it all with their fears. That was when living a miserable life became part of who they were. Dreams were gone years and years ago and everyone stopped dreaming and that became part of their lives.

I did not want to swallow my fears nor did I stop looking for dreams everywhere. I was only ten years old and I was blooming and glooming more than anyone else at my age and more than any adult around me. I wanted to stop being afraid and I wished to become voiceless like my brother, like my grandfather killed because that would have been more peaceful and less painful. But because voice, life and dreaming were worth it and pain was not my game but it was my wrestler and only one had to survive, I was there under the olive tree fighting my fears to survive over my pain. That was too much to think of. Who am I to live or to dream or to be free of fears? I wondered. I was ten years old with a distorted face, a voiceless brother, a “one shot” grandfather, a useless father, a struggling mother, and a sad grandmother. And all those, what did they have? I wondered. They had a piece of land planted with olive trees that were just trees with olives but obviously made vandals and did not have their new form of humanity, did not smile their own way, did not wear big brown boots and never owned a tiny little tank. I did not deserve any dreams or to stop fearing nor did my naked parents or my voiceless brother. The green-faced monsters and their big-mouthed dogs deserved to establish a new life after they destroyed mine. If only I had never been born I would have never been, forced, through this pain.

\*\*\*

In my childhood memory, I recorded the day I went back with my naked parents and my voiceless brother and saw the shop that was once turned into a small rented house demolished. From right to left, my naked parents, then me and my brother stood in a row watching the hideous scene that an Israeli bulldozer made. It was not only our small house. It was the whole building. Our rented house was the first floor of a small building that contained another two apartments on the second floor and another students’ apartment on the top. Our rented house was once a small grocery shop that was run by an old man who died just before my naked parents

paid the first rent for it. We were there standing alongside with all the other neighbors staring at the massive destructive silence. I looked at my naked parents and their black colored faces almost disappeared and my voiceless brother was shocked and homeless and I stepped forward and walked on the heap of wreckage looking for my ten-years-old doll, but I did not find it. People from other neighborhoods scurried to the place to stand next to my naked parents and my voiceless brother and other neighbors staring at the rubble.

My father then dropped on his knees, then wept, and that for me and many others was a scene in itself. My father was a man, he was not supposed to cry but when he did, it meant there must have been something wrong really wrong, in our life. The man of the house collapsed and was crying on the road while other men surrounded my father and consoled him, “Steel yourself! You are the man of the house and need to be in charge!” and before the kids of the neighborhood followed my steps on the heap picking up things left at the bottom, my mother looked inside the only surviving handbag, making sure she still had her cigarette pack. Then she knelt down next to my father and grabbed two cigarettes from her bag, lit her cigarette and put it in her mouth, and then she put her left hand on his lower jaw and slowly lifted his face to her side, then put the second cigarette in his mouth as if feeding a small baby. Before she inhaled the nicotine from her cigarette for the first time and while it was still in her mouth she bent her face closer to her husband’s and lit his cigarette from hers. I was there on the top of the heap in a squatting position, watching my homeless parents craving a cigarette that would replace their loss as it always had.

Actually it was not their loss it was the owner’s. Poor him, I thought then. What would happen to him when he knew his property was at the bottom, I wondered. Fifteen minutes later when the owner reached the place running on his feet I stepped off the heap and stood back next

to my family. The massive destruction struck him, shocked him, attacked his heart and eyes, his tears were uncontrollably falling on the road when he was slowly falling to the ground, but he did not let himself fall, he put his two hands on his knees and knelt on them. Again the men from the neighborhood came near him trying to mitigate his loss. He was in his fifties, I thought, but white hair covered all his head already. The building made a stable source of income for him though maybe he had a hard time getting the rent from my family and others, but at least at the end of the day he knew he had money invested somewhere. It was all gone, ruined and buried under the rubble. That was not all, what made the matter worse, it was not only this building that had been demolished but the house he was staying in had also been destroyed by an Israeli bulldozer. It was after the green faces, the monsters, the shooters, and the kickers decided the owner's son was a vandal who had been put in the Israeli administration prison for investigation. His son would not be more than 19 years old, probably a handsome tall guy with green olive eyes studying literature or politics at the University of Bir-Zeit in Ramallah. They would have asked him questions like, when he became a vandal and the reasons behind becoming a vandal. Then the following conversation would have occurred between the Israeli commander and the owner's son, the young vandal:

“We detected a sharp metal and gray color ruler in your bag when we checked you at Qalandia checkpoint while you were heading to Bir-Zeit University on Thursday, 9:30 in the morning. Am I right?” The commander would ask.

“I do not remember if I was carrying it and no one gave me a sign but it might have been somewhere in the bag. It is a necessity for a university student, you know.” The young vandal would have responded.



“Your intentions were to stab one of the Israeli Defense Force members standing on the check point. Am I right?” The commander would have said, affirming his statement.

“No. I had no intentions to stab anyone, I was worried my girlfriend did not text me that morning to tell me she reached her university without fainting from an Israeli tear gas bomb.” The vandal would have replied, sarcastically, to such a question.

“Shut up, you vandal. You filthy Arab. This is what you bring onto yourself. Are you accusing the Israeli Defense Forces mission of being invalid?” The Israeli commander would have asked that feeling less confident about the IDF mission.

“No. I am just telling the truth.” Straightforward.

“Are you admitting you had intentions to kill a member of the Israeli Defense Forces using that metal gray ruler at Qalandia checkpoint on Thursday at 9:30 in the morning?”

“No. I just want to go home.”

“Then sign on this paper that you had the intentions and you will be admitted to the administrative prison to go through investigation.”

“I will not sign something I did not do. I want to go home.”

“We will bring you your girlfriend here too, if you prefer?” said the commander threatening the vandal. “Just sign here already, you filthy vandal.” The commander would shout his lungs out.

“Touch her! and see what a vandal might do!” At this point the vandal would have stood up and shouted furiously.

“Are you stating threats to the public security!!!? I will let you rot in the prison.”

A slap on his face the commander would have given him and he would put his signature after his nose had been broken with the back of a rifle. He would bleed his nose out and would

stay at the Israeli prison for maybe four years, later, if he were lucky, without being sentenced or charged until they fabricated a story stating that a green soldier was actually stabbed by him using his metal gray ruler, and he had been in his most terrible conditions and suffering at a hospital in Tel-Aviv. While the vandal's girlfriend would have smuggled a mobile phone to the prison and stayed up late at night talking to her vandal boyfriend consoling his dreary nights.

My naked parents, my voiceless brother and my distorted face, all had become homeless. It was cold and cloudy and we did not have any place to stay except my grandparent's house in the old city. Staying in the old city was eerie because occasionally, it existed, other times it did not. We would only visit it on occasions like roasting chestnuts with my grandmother; it was so near yet so far. We drove down the town until we got into the old city and as soon as we got near our grandparents' house, we reached a place where we stopped the car and got down from it to face four gigantic concrete cubes blocking the width of the street. We crossed them carrying some clothes and anything we could find at the bottom of the rubble, and then we walked a few steps and turned to the right and walked up a road that was only allowed for Jewish Israeli cars. I always hated that area, the people, the smell, the road, the old beautiful houses, I hated everything. At night that area was haunted with monsters, dogs, Kalashnikovs of all kinds! Military jeeps, green faces, drugs of all kinds, people everywhere, but I did not see any, children's cries and laughter, fathers shouting, mothers demanding, all were hiding inside their small living boxes.

I was haunted by all this, but no one was except me. I was walking up the road faster than anyone of my family. As I always used to feel, my scary heartbeat composed a melody I was running on because all I wanted then was to reach my grandparents' house as soon as possible. I did not want to see any car passing that road because I knew it was not my family's. After we

had walked up the road we crossed it. I was already a few steps ahead of my naked parents and my voiceless brother. All of us were walking in silence while I was on my own going through my haunting experience. I did not want to cross the road alone, I did not even want to cross it at all. Though I walked faster than anyone I stopped and turned and asked them to hurry to cross the road together. I always feared crossing that road because I always thought the moment I would be crossing it a car would pass, hit me and send me to the seventh sky. I stood on my mother's side and I held her hand tightly, then I told her,

“Please let's cross it fast.”

“There are no cars, see, just cross it by yourself and do not be scared.”

“How do you know they will not come any time?”

I said any time while I meant the moment I would cross the street. I did not listen to what she said and I had been holding her hand until we crossed the road. No car appeared until then, but I could hear an engine of a car coming on the way so I walked even faster and I was much further from my naked parents and voiceless brother than before. Once we got to the house I was relieved. My grandmother was waiting for us, I saw her sitting on a chair in the patio in front of their house, and when she saw us she stood to greet and welcome us to our “home” she said. She was really happy that we came to stay with her but she also was upset about the reason we came.

My grandparents' house contained three big rooms with high ceiling and an outside kitchen and bathroom. It looked different from most of the modern houses outside the old city. The big flagstones were flat and smooth and they were used in different shapes and same shades with different colors. I had a great time walking on them barefoot. Its high big white thick walls that had vents on the top sides allowed not only the air to enter but also doves to fly over our heads near the ceiling in horizontal lines. These big white high walls, these beautiful flagstones

and the naturally air conditioned house, magnificently made anyone wants to live there. I was ten years old but I was mature, responsible, and lucky. I was lucky to stay under this beautiful roof with the closest person to me, my mother, and with the strongest in the family, my grandmother. I did not understand why my naked parents did not live there from the beginning of their married life, despite the fact that my father is a man and needed to find his own house, but it was better than paying rent every month. On Saturdays, however, when we had to stay with my grandmother, I knew why.

The house was part of a Palestinian neighborhood that was in the middle of a Jewish-Israeli settlement. My grandparents' house was very near the mosque-Jewish temple and on Saturdays I saw many Jewish Israelis crossing the patio in front of the house going for prayers. I saw them only through the window. I was not allowed to be out of the house when they passed. Whenever they came close to the house my grandmother would let us in, and then would close all doors and windows and no explanations were given. One Saturday and at the exact time when a family was passing by going for their prayers, I sneaked out of the door and stood under the mulberry tree that stood in front of the house door. I leaned on it, then I saw a small kid the same height as me but he looked a bit different from me in his appearance. He was a boy who wore black trousers with a white shirt topped with a black vest that matched the trousers. He had short hair except for two locks of curly hair dangling on both sides of his face. I did not notice his parents, I was focusing on their child. He had walked up until he was near the tree, then he noticed me. My fears did not leave me alone. I was feeling my stomach moving up and down, which gave me a feeling of nausea. I did not know what I was doing there, I just wanted to get out and see why I was not allowed to be there when they passed. When I saw him notice my presence I heard my scary heartbeat again. I leaned my back on the tree and put my hands back

on its trunk, then I became a chameleon whose color became brown. I tried to hold my breath so he would stop noticing me but I failed miserably because of my heartbeat that required me to inhale oxygen as much as I could to keep it up with my fears.

Though the boy did not seem shy he kept his head down and followed his steps in silence, while his parents similarly followed him. They passed the tree and the chameleon and nothing had happened. They were almost out of my sight until suddenly I saw from far the small kid grabbing a stone from the road and coming back towards me. I did not move, I was just watching him. There was no time to draw any conclusions or expect anything I was reflecting on what I saw. I was blooming and glooming at my age in a land of no expectations so all I had to do was to lean back and watch. The boy whose name I did not know nor his desired meal or his favorite bedtime story ran towards me before the prayer, threw a stone at me, then turned and ran back to his parents. His parents were standing and waiting for his return, then continued their walk.

The stone hit me really hard but I did not feel anything because I was stuck with my fears. I was shaking and my heartbeat deprived me from engaging in that moment. I stayed in my position until he went back to his parents. Then I stopped shaking, instead I became paralyzed. I could not move my body even an inch. My condition was going into a serious state when I started imagining more kids passing by and more stones being thrown at me. I was also worried if my grandmother found out about my absence from the house. I wanted to scream, to shout, to call my mother's name to come and pick me up. What if they heard my voice, my grandmother or even one of the kids who were soon passing by, I wondered. I decided to swallow my screams and shut my breath. That was the first time I chose to remain silent and that was the beginning stage of my voiceless journey.

I had no choice but to force myself to move inside the house. I closed my eyes and I inhaled as much oxygen as I could, not only for my heartbeat this time but also for my paralyzed body. In my head I imagined myself picking windflowers for my mother and I imagined how beautifully decorated that hill was by the red windflowers. I also imagined how happy my mother was when I gave them to her on Mother's Day. In short, I thought of my source of strength, of the closest person to me, my mother, to help the oxygen inside me refresh my body. I was always grateful to my mother even when I was eaten by the dogs at Qalandia check point and when she was not near me on the trunk to protect me, because I was able to gather my strength just by thinking of her. Why not when she was my mother the closest to me and when she saw me mature and responsible and told me that I "knew how to endure things." I left the tree and sneaked through the door and locked it like nothing had happened and actually no one ever knew it happened.

\*\*\*

We had stayed at my grandparents' house watching the doors and windows being locked on Saturdays, until one day my mother happily announced that my uncle who stayed in London managed to send an invitation for my father to work with him. When we received the "happy" news we were watching the doves fly over at the ceiling. It was my mother's youngest brother who sent us the invitation. He and my mother were very close and she used to update him about the family news as soon as it was released. Probably after he came to know that as soon as we ended up being homeless, my father stopped going to Israel for work and my mother had not gotten her salary from the Palestinian authority for several months already, he managed to find a job for him in his business.

The monsters, the green faces did not let my father enter Israel again without many documents and proof that he was not a vandal. We rented a shop that belonged to a father of a vandal; we had to pay for that too. He did not want to work there anyway, but he was left without any choices. My mother's job was a joke because she worked for the Palestinian authority but they never had money to pay her salaries. During the Intifada many official social services were destroyed including my mother's work place, schools were closed for months and we stayed indoors under continuous curfews for weeks, houses being demolished, olive farmlands being eradicated, vandals being arrested, grandfathers being shot in the head, brothers losing their voices, and uncountable numbers of bullets and never ending nights, lives and deaths, hugs and farewells, loves and hatreds, wars and pieces, all felt and neglected or felt and were rejected.

To be honest, at that time, London was way better than Palestine. At least it was more secure in many aspects. That was maybe the only reason why my parents decided to accept my uncle's invitation and move us to London. In fact, they needed a job to make money to let me and my brother live some years of a decent life. Though I was mature and responsible I did not see it the way my parents did. Well, I thought my grandmother had been living in that old beautiful house alone since my grandfather's death and never decided to leave it and go live anywhere else other than our small rented house, and probably nothing would make her, suddenly, decide to do so after all these years. The smile on my mother's face disappeared down and made a straight line instead when my grandmother quickly reminded them what would happen if we decided all to leave, including her.

“Do you want to leave it for the Jewish and go?! I will not let you, you no nobody, destroy what your father paid for with his life.” My grandmother directed her speech to her son, but her son gave no response.

With a heartbroken voice she continued,

“What I just heard is rubbish! Nonsense! You want to work to feed your family, I will sell the dear jewelry your father once gave me and buy you some seeds and you go plant them in the farm. I have not asked you to touch it since your father’s death.”

“Do you wish him to be shot! Like his father! I am done dealing with all this. I am not willing to leave it but can’t you see?! What else do we have to lose?” My mother’s loud voice burst in words dropping like the sound of heavy rain on our ears.

“We are all going to die, shot or not shot. And when we die the only thing we would have with us is our face and dignity! This is the only thing we all own, and we are responsible to save it because once we lose it we will have lost everything” My grandmother responded confidently.

“Don’t you dare talk to my mother like this ever again!!” My father found a reason finally to open his mouth.

“She was talking to me, not to you! No man talks like this! I have not raised you to talk to your wife in this manner. You want to man it up let women talk and grab the axe and go save your family’s last bit of dignity.” My grandmother furiously scolded my father in front of us.

My father’s face became so red and I saw words he wanted to say boiling inside but he kept them to himself, since that was my strongest grandmother talking. The conversation had ended then with no final words said but my grandmother made it clear she was not going to leave the old beautiful house or the farm. Some days passed before I knew my parents decided we were leaving after they informed my uncle over the phone to start managing different important documents and so on. I was convinced more by what my grandmother had to say about that but despite the fact that I was mature and responsible, my opinion was not even heard. I could not imagine that my grandmother would spend whatever was left of her life alone, locking doors and



windows on Saturdays. I saw the joy and happiness on her face since the time we stayed here, after all these years of solitude she must have finally felt a sort of family and togetherness. I also thought of the hardworking grandfather and my grandmother's concern about his painstaking work to be all taken away. I was 10 years old glooming and blooming at my age more than anyone around me and I thought that we should not leave at least because my grandmother would be alone.

Everything was set, the date of our departure, where we were going to stay, and my father's job, even my mother had started to think of applying for work with any magazine there. My uncle had also registered me and my brother for school already. It was happening for real, but I did not want to leave and I was upset and told my mother many times how terrible it would be to leave my grandmother behind. But every time I said that my mother would respond, "In London you would have a better life. You are still young and beautiful and there will be a future for you." The day we left our grandparents' house remained like a lump in my heart. My grandmother cried a river for her loss.

I still remember that day when she leaned against the main door and cried out for my parents when she was bidding us farewell, "My dear ones, this house will remain for you after my death. Come back to it." My parents cried and said they wished if she understood why they had to leave. I did not want to understand why we had to leave because I wanted to stay with my grandmother, but my parents tightly held my hand and led me outside the house. When I gave my grandmother the last hug, the last time I saw her, she looked me in the eyes, wiped my tears like I once did to her and said, "This house and land will not wait long, promise me to come back soon." And I the mature and responsible kid gave her my word that I would come back to stay with her whenever I got the chance. We left the house, the farm, my grandmother and the

memories. I left the embrace, the smile and the stories. I left the olive tree behind me but the monsters, the green faces and their big brown boots kept knocking me down. My fears remained, forever haunting me.

When I saw London for the first time I felt calm. That foggy and cloudy place suited my distorted face and Fairouz music. I imagined talking to everyone about our farmland and how my hardworking grandfather was shot and how strong my grandmother was, the weather was so suiting for that but that was only my thought. The house we moved into was bigger than our small rented house in Palestine, and its poisoning wall painting smelled new. I had my own room and there was a window, something I did not have in that small rented house. I grew up so fast in a place where everyone was busy with their own life, with their study, their jobs, their businesses and hardly anyone talked about their strong grandmother or their hardworking “one shot” grandfather. I grew up fast but the marks on my face stuck forever. My parents could make money and our economical situation improved gradually. My voiceless brother played soccer all day long and could make many friends because he accompanied our cousin, uncle’s son, who was from a British mother and a Palestinian father and had many friends.

I found everything I needed to bloom. Never ending shooting nights did not exist, no tear gas bombs, or big tanks, none of these were in London still I managed to see them every night. Monsters faces! Green faces! Big brown boots! Big muzzles and small tanks all were there waiting for me in my room every night. I was still unable to dream so I was not having nightmares I was having what could be labeled as, The Awakening Scenes Attacks. At these nights I would sit in the dark, not because I wanted to live a drama but because I did not want my parents to know I was awake, unable to sleep if I turned the lights on. I would lean my back against the wall above my bed near the only window in my room and on the sound of rain drops I

saw myself holding to big brown boots and standing in front of a big-small tank. I was not imagining nor was I hallucinating, I saw the monsters in their big brown boots.

I saw them because I felt my fears moving under my skin and inside my blood. I was trapped in my fears. I never lost my voice like my brother and I never let them win over my persistence to dream even if in some battles they were stronger than I expected them to be. In some of these nights, alone on my bed, I cried myself to sleep, other nights, alone on my bed, I longed for my grandparents' beautiful house. In London, I had everything I needed to bloom, a picnic, school friends, shopping, and games and fun, but expecting the world to understand why I longed for my grandmother was a hard task. I did not become an old boring girl, I danced, I played in the street with my friends, I was blooming at my age, but inside me I was still that mature and responsible kid who "knew how to endure things." I longed for an embrace from my grandmother, a hug or just a story told even if it was my grandfather's "one shot."

\*\*\*

I got up the next morning to realize that I spent my night sleeping on the floor while watching the snowflakes falling on me. I have passed the age of twenty-two, when I was back in Hebron, still I could not manage to stand on my own feet. But I could fulfill the promise I made to my grandmother to come back to look for the land my grandfather got a "one shot" for and for the 150-year-old most beautiful empty house. My father in London received a letter informing him about the death of his mother. I remembered when he locked himself in his office for a week, my voiceless brother and I did not see him but my mother spent a lot of the time with him. Sometimes I heard them both crying, sometimes they were quarreling and other times they were consoling each other. I also remember they smoked cigarettes like they had never done before.

I was here in the haunted city to become so far away from the closest person to me, my mother, yet I came close to the monsters, the big brown boots and the police dogs! My face distorters! They have never left my life, because they were already a big part of it. I was terrified to enter the old city because I did not want to face what my grandmother feared. She was the strongest but she feared death. Death scared her because she knew when she was dead, the house and the land will be left facing monsters alone. I was never free from fear; I was still struggling with my fears inside me. I was 22 years old but again I was blooming and glooming at another age and in another place. I still had the same fears the 10-year-old me had held in her childhood. They were more controlled this time, I thought, by the virtue of traveling and becoming older but they never let go of me nor did they root in me and steal my voice. They just kept me standing and hampering, stopping and moving then fighting and standing then falling all over again.

But today, for the sake of my great-grandparents, I decided I would go to the old city and I would not turn back. So I wore my gray jacket again and my red sophisticated shoes with some black colored shadow on my eyes and I left the small apartment I rented while I was staying. I took a taxi that knew exactly where to take me when I said, “The old city, please.” On the way I was thinking of what I did not expect. I thought of finding the old beautiful house there, in the heart of the old city, but as soon as we reached the gigantic concrete cubes I knew that what happened was what I expected. After I passed the concrete cubes, I walked up the road after I turned right and then crossed it. I always hated that road and crossing it and though I was older now I sweat a bit and my scary heartbeat had made a visit. I was very near the patio of the old beautiful house, and then I read this sign:

“Restricted area, no Palestinians are allowed to walk further. A Jewish settlement!”

It was written in Hebrew, English and Arabic. I knew the house had been incorporated into the settlement. I was not surprised but my scary heartbeat attacked me at the moment and I cried. I watched my steps heading back to my apartment while my red sophisticated shoes became moist with my tears dropping on them all the way long. The farmland was taken too. Each olive tree was eradicated from its root. Along with other nearby land a huge new settlement had been established. I cried because my grandmother died heartbroken and I came back to fulfill my promise but I found no promise to fulfill. I was walking back to my apartment like someone who just lost their lives. I heard voices and saw blurred faces. I saw everything and everyone a monster! Everything became monstrous. I actually saw more monsters than before, tanks and checkpoints, not only Qalandia but everywhere had a checkpoint. Police dogs! Naked parents! Teenagers handicapped on the wall! Young people, my age, gathering and shouting and all out in a protest together yelling, "Long Live Palestine!" There was so much smoke of teargas bombs and sound bombs and bullets were going down on people's head making rainbows everywhere and I saw one thousand big brown boots running, flying and crawling like monkeys in a forest. I saw school students out in the streets shouting slogans, "Long Live Palestine." Schools were on strikes because teachers did not receive their salaries, and students did not go to school anyway because the monsters sent them back home on checkpoints. I was in a middle of a storm. I wanted to join them to break that wall of fear that was put up between me and the green faces, the monsters, the big brown boots. But I had my own fears to struggle with that only I could accommodate and only I could handle. I was having a hard time deciding on whether I should stay and be part of the storm or leave and be part of my own. We lost our great-grandparents, the beautiful house, and the olive farmland but I still had so much in this place. I could stay but I did not want to give away all the hardworking years of my parents till I owned the British passport I

travelled with. Documents and passports did not have any meaning to me, they were helpful for transportation and that was it. But the real reason why I decided to grab my papers and pen, then leave Hebron, was because in the back of my head I knew that joining the storm would not let me pass it. It was an issue of losing or winning - and I was not aiming for any of that. I wanted to drink my fears until the last drop, live with them but always control them.