

Two Battles

by Saj Kader

There were no hospitals near our village
Getting medical care meant more car mileage
Our doctors have tried to establish multiple clinics
But when they sought a license, they were met with cynics

Even when there were mass petitions
For freedom of practice for our physicians
Peaceful protests were labeled threatening sedition

After much outcry, the Israelis gave us one condition:
We can seek Israeli medical care only if we cross the partition
Enraged, the doctors persisted and built hospitals without permission
Israeli bulldozers destroyed them for law violation

For Palestinians, the hospital scene was a damn joke
Medical emergencies from heart attack to a stroke
Were unable to be treated immediately by the village folk
I saw people die regularly, and the mourning was initially hard to soak
But eventually, I lost all emotions that death was supposed to evoke

I was born into struggle
Born into a war
Living in the Zionist bubble
Striving to go far

When my mother was carrying me and her water broke
My father drove her to the hospital as he inhaled cigarette smoke
As my mother screamed in pain because of my head poke
She hoped my father would soothe her, but he never spoke

He continued playing his music and scolded her to keep it down
My mother quickly stifled her moans with a huge frown
She thought about all the times when she was around
When he woke up terrified and yelling while she was in her nightgown
Due to the PTSD from when the air force bombed his childhood town

My mother suppressed these thoughts and didn't make a sound

Soon they reached the border and begged to enter
My parents soon learned there was a major splinter
The Shin Bet asked to search their phones in order to be let in
He remembered he may have left it on the nightstand, where it had been

My father rushed to the nearest village and sought for a midwife
He finally found one but it was too late to save my mother's life
Alas, I entered this world in such a despair
My wailing cries everlasting without a mother to care

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From a young age I kept up with the pack
I was always barred because I didn't have a sack
Even amongst the rubble I kept on the right track
People falling like flies but I never looked back

The men always doubted me
They didn't allow me in protests
When I claimed it was my right to be free
I was beaten by my father until I would beg to rest

Even with bruises from my father and other men
I would sneak out of the house to protest when my father was drunk and asleep in his den
In the dark of the night, another struggle emerges
To my left would be heroin addicts satisfying their urges
And to my right I'd see cokeheads out for their nightly splurges

These people were forced to uptake drugs
Medicine was too expensive so they became thugs
Men robbed and smuggled while the women prostituted
Left with no choice because of the sanction laws instituted
Relying on narcotics to ease mental and physical pain
They didn't make enough to survive with the price inflation

Caused by the military blockade of the major lane
That freight would take to bring supplies to our nation

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I wasn't always living amongst druggies and the worst
I used to live in a village with the well-versed
I fought my father in order to go to school
He was backed by the village law which added to his fuel

He wanted me to be powerless like the other women around
Who, even if educated, were always put down
They couldn't find employment because men ran the show
And couldn't stand to see a woman's status grow
Thus employers discriminated without any pause
Because they were backed by labor laws
That would never have furthered a women's cause

I felt useless and did chores like a simple mule
Depression seeped in until the day I met Abdul

Abdul was different than any guy I'd seen
He was soft spoken and caring, a simple teen
He went to school, enjoying the high school scene
I told him about my father, and he displayed a kindness that was simply unseen

He offered to teach me all that he learned everyday
He'd make his way to my room, when my father was away
Terrified of the consequences, if my father were to find out
Abdul was very cautious, because honor killings were practiced out and about

One day while we studied, we heard of the news
We were told to evacuate the village to make space for the Jews
Abdul rushed outside to join the boys in protest
Throwing rocks at the soldiers, creating even more unrest
That would be the last time I would see him, I would've never guessed

He was taken to a detention center where he was kept in arrest
And one day he acted violently, so he was put to rest

It seemed to be a norm to take orders from IDF soldiers
Their officers giving commands, drawing random borders
On the land of my mother, they barred my human right
Which caused my motherland decades of plight
Telling my people they couldn't practice certain trades
Laying sanctions on our economy, multiple blockades

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I lived under occupation, continually trying
Seeing loved ones die, mothers and children crying
Learning things on the run that I kept on applying
There was no way in hell I was submissively complying

Injustices against Palestinians are part of my despair
But simply stating those wouldn't be fair
And my fellow women stay quiet, would not even dare
I'm rhyming about a struggle, but no one seems to care
I may be a woman, and you may think my poem is prattle
But I'm here and alive, and I'm fighting two battles