

# THE LOST LIVES

AMRITA HUQ

Fleeing from their villages  
 Running for their lives  
 Leaving everything they know engulfed in flames  
 Are the tortured ones who survive.

Little children carrying babies,  
 Parents missing or dead  
 People drowning or left behind  
 In a burning purgatory, or gun to the head.

They come by a treacherous path  
 Crossing a terrible river  
 Hoping for a better chance  
 A life they pray we can deliver

Families die hand in hand,  
 Sickness and death chase them  
 All because of one stupid plan,  
 A plan designed to erase them.

Therefore we have opened our gates  
 To rescue them from the hate  
 The hands, who harm without a second thought  
 From the people who discriminate.

Who said it was okay?  
 To rape, to burn, to kill, to throw away,  
 Just because they bow their heads to pray  
 And not sit to chant and meditate

Under a leader of peace,  
 Who once saved the day,  
 Has now become wordless,  
 Tongue tied, neglecting the helpless.

These millions of refugees,  
 Who have witnessed their very extermination,  
 Running from the lives they knew,  
 To cross into a different nation.

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# AN INTERESTING OFFER

FAHRIBA TASNUVA MAHTAB

The somber sky, illuminated with its salient, dusky hues - managed to send her to an undeniable trance. Left foot, right foot - her feet planted themselves with each step on the musky, glistening cobblestone pavement. The street went downhill, but she felt no force propelling her forward - as if her feet had mind of their own. The salubrious breeze whizzed past her ears, dancing its way through every strand of her hair, allowing her to feel the melancholy joy of undisturbed loneliness.

"Why am I here?" Anya asked herself.

The coffee shop on the other side of the street had quite the bustling hubbub. Grim men in suits lined up in front of the counter and bony women in skin hugging dresses munching on tasteless greens. Amidst them, a small boy, with his lips puckered onto a patterned straw, slurped a colorful drink while his feet dangled from the high chair. His mind radiated tranquility and peace, yet it bounced off of Anya's limp, estranged body because it did not know what peace, composure meant; neither did it want to know.

"How am I walking?!" Anya shrieked, as every ounce of calm had fled from her troubled soul. The sacrosanct feeling of serenity had retired from the scene as her mind decided to besiege her soul with the grief which stole her life.

"Why am I not hurting?"

Questions deluged her mind, but her feet continued moving. Her body lacked pain which made her realise that she was floating in a surreal realm, a realm in which her body had been given a break from the fiendish reality of her life.

All these years Anya had been known to be "in control". She had never experienced a breakdown, nor had shed a tear out of grievance. She had been deprived of a normal life, as the malevolent tumor settled in her brain was consuming her, she decided never to affect nor sadden the lives of the ones around her. The past five years, she was the known as the "happy girl of the chemo section," but that positivity and liveliness made pure bait for her cancer, until she had nothing but despair ruling her soul. Soon, with a shudder, a tear rolled down her pale, sucked in cheeks, making her wail as the salt

touched her taste buds.

"What is happening? I do not want to be here! I need answers! Am I dead? Is this supposed to be heaven? How am I walking?!"

Anya fell on her knees with a thump, and her mind had finally felt the peace of letting go, not having to endure the pain of bottling up her distressing thoughts about what had seemed to have become her life.

"The pain can go away. You can stay here," a voice echoed in her mind.

Dumbstruck, she replied "Who is that? Why can I not see you? Why are you telling me this?!"

"I am He who decides. I have seen you suffer, and how well you have dealt with it. You can stay here with me, away from all the pain."

The words resonated in her emptied mind, each resonance feeling like a needle through her skull.

"What about mom and dad? Can they come too and stay with me?"

"I am afraid not."

A sense of anguish poured into Anya's mind. Her parents were her world. Exasperated, she exclaimed, "Please send me back then. Please!"

All these years, she kept convincing herself that life was a priceless gift. She stared at her freckled, uninviting face on the stained bathroom mirror and the machines beeped again. She could feel the needles under her skin, but yet she felt the woeful comfort of reality. Anya was at the hospital. She felt the mellow touch of her mom's hand on hers, and that was when peace had actually penetrated into her miserable soul.

Life was unfair and Anya had made peace with that. Her life had strayed away from a normal one, but she never wanted something normal. What was the guarantee that normal would endow her life with the contentment that she yearned?

Although the interesting offer would take away her pain, losing her parents, who went every extra mile to keep her happy, would have shattered the meaning of her existence. She knew that sometimes true happiness came from the smiles of the people who mean the world to you, rather than getting what you selfishly desire.

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