



A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

THE WAR (TWO)!

ALY ZAKER

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 Bhaiya, my elder brother, woke me up at about mid-day and asked me to crawl under the ceiling of the boat. Asked about the reason, he pointed towards the river bank. Pakistan army strolling on the bank could be seen clearly. So all of us huddled together within the narrow space under the roof of the boat. We were not even talking with each other. The boat sailed throughout the day until it became dark. It was not advisable to carry on so we were looking for a safe haven to dock for the night. We luckily found a canal sourcing out of the river and went in to it. There was a rice mill beside the canal. It had a metal yard meant for drying the boiled rice paddy. We decided to spend the night there sleeping under the open sky. The sky was full of stars. The silence of the night was only being broken by the sound of wave and current of the Meghna river flowing by. We had Gur-Muri (brown sugar and puffed rice) for dinner. A glow of fire was clearly visible at south west from the point that we were in. We knew that the army was in a rampage, looting and burning my enslaved city of Dhaka. Many thoughts came to my mind. Primary among which was the thought that we were embarking on an uncharted journey never knowing what the future held for us. We woke up very early in the morning, as it was impossible to sleep late under the open sky on a bright sunny morning, and hit the river at around ten leisurely paddling down towards our final destination at Manik Nagar. The river was

calm and we made good progress throughout the day. Soon the sun was on its way down towards the western horizon. We had initially thought that we'd be able to reach home at Ratanpur by the second evening. But it now seemed impossible. At around eight at night we reached Manik Nagar and decided to stay there overnight. This journey was hazardous. While in boat, we came close to being found and killed by the army several times. They were patrolling the river in speed boats looking for the so-called miscreants. But we were cautioned by our boatmen now and then and we hid ourselves within the hood of the boat ahead of time. Manik Nagar was comparatively safe as the army had not reached there yet. Even at Manik Nagar the distinct glow of Dhaka fire towards northwest was clearly visible. We felt miserable. Next morning, we took to the village road at around eight on our way to Ratanpur. Home was some four kilometres away from Manik Nagar, sufficient distance to tire out a few unaccustomed city dwellers. But our keenness to reach home made us forget that. Some villagers must have informed my elderly cousin about seeing us walking towards home because we saw him with his lieutenant Sunder Ali Sardar walking towards us across the rice field. He was crying. I am sure his tears had combined sadness and joy. He was sad at our affliction and happy that we finally made it home. We were also happy at long last. Frankly I was doubtful if we could finally reach home braving the travail of this journey. We walked the rest of the distance to peace.



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