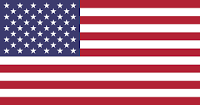
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***“...For Dear Life”***

***[America]***

Waking up to darkness Alex pulls a mask off his face

Pressurized air squeals at him before a sudden sigh and silence

Trilling his lips he wake up

A chorus of meows greets him behind a door, wiggling bodies beg beside them

***We’re all needing something.***

Moving through my routine while he gives her a kiss before she leaves for work

Coffee’s hot against ***Coloradoan*** winter winds

Into the fray of a traffic Alex cruises

Blinding lights still on at seven in the morning / he’s stargazing in the mirror

Walk through the office and say hello, talking story to see how things go

Does his time, retreats to campus for a few hours / expanding his hippocampus

Feeling hungry and wanting sleep, lofi-metal vibrates his ear bone

Tired legs pedal, hes mind wonders again to the Wars

Engaged in depressive contemplation.

Makes the call to call off his second job

He begins the migration back south

Contemplating deeper against a backdrop of melodic thrashing,the dull beating of the wind

Tired ***American*** metal

A click and the chaos erupts behind caged doors

Again the thought creeps as hungry furballs rush past him upstairs

Fleetingly, he’s happy to be home.

Reunited & Rejuvenated by presence and welcome distractions

Again the thought creeps, just beneath the haze of a mania

Cracked and fractured walls let ***inkling ideas ooze*** into the nether of his mind-palace

he knows of the suffering, he’s watched the alternative coverage

Can’t get it out of his head now.

The distractions only hold out for so long before all the cumbersome things weigh on him

He begins to fall back into a spiral, despair fills the air of his lungs and produce weak coughs

He wished he still smoked…

Tried homework for a bit longer while the mania lasts

Nearing that time of the evening he prepares for bed

Before the calming waves peak and break on our shores in Insomnia

***He had a nightmare. Again.***

Maybe it was from the informational gouging

Or just his apparent guilty conscience

His country helped fuel the fires or not enough to put them out

Is this supposed to be what ‘Peace’ is?

Just states between Life & Death



***“...For Dear Life”***

***[Ukraine]***

*Another morning alive.*

Fedir utters ***Слава Богу*** while crows squawk amongst ruined fields

*Two years* have trugged on like a grandfather clock that's been blown apart by Russian bombs

Will his tears ever stop he wonders / wiping away the grime again

It’s like a second skin

His dank dark & depressive *abode* hardly could be called that

***He has to move already.***

Lacing up boots his father wore he pulls over the coat his grandfather owned once before

The fur lining tickles hairs that stand on end up as his ears catch a familiar sound

Panic begins to set in as the whine of drones gets louder and more shrill

***He has to move now.***

He’s partially through the threshold when the explosions blast out in the distance

Rapidly growing closer he leaves the ruins of his ancestral home

Descending into Darkness / a blank slate of the mind now covered in ash

He’s hardly safe as he feels the violence ripple through the Earth

***There’s nowhere to go.***

Pulse racing while the mind simply bides it time befor-

They blast directly overhead as he crouches further under the cement keeping him

He plugs his ears and notices at his feet a furry tuff with beady eyes is cowering against his heel

***маленька мишка*** he mutters as he places a careful hand on its bony spine

Tail meets finger and the cower deepens so they can stay there for a moment, together.

The horrid whine makes its trail of devastation longer while thankfully moving further away

He feels fuzzy feet scamper over hand and into a wall without a look back

He wonders of his fellow ***Kupianskian*** neighbors…and of precious ***Ukraine***.

He grabs the precious tools and heads topside to begin another search

Despite the cloth against his face he hacks up the dust of his home

He checks his rifle and then his ammo before making cautiously for Karl’s

He hears them before he can see them and dives for cover as the unmistakable sound marches

An eternity begins as his breathe stops with pulse racing as he slowly cocks the machine

***Russia can’t remain in this country.***

***Боже помагай*** as the boots make their way past him, ***his automatic spray covers them in lead***

His defense draws the others out who give a small cheer before ducking out of sight

He thinks of America and what a hamburger would be like…

Who he is now and what he is not

He gazes at the bloody mess

***We’re running out of time.***

Patience… he wishes he had just alike supplies and glorious fleeting American Aid

*That’s enough for toda*y he thinks

**Retreating back in the den / beady eyes rest upon him in the twinkling dusk**

***He did his duty* for today as fatigue washes him**

**Sleep catches him as he falls on the hard mattress**

**He dreams of the end of this struggle**



***“...For Dear Life”***

***[Palestine]***

What did Abdel do to deserve a fate such as these?

Nothing nothing nothing!

He never hurt any Jew, he never even hurt the rat beneath the stove

It’s been the longest *two ½ months* of all with **horrors as the new normal** in ***Khan Younis***

He woke up sweating as bombs began to fall all around him

They said it was safe in the south!

***Liusaeidani Allah*** uttered from his lips as he runs

for dear life

His bare back is covered in sweat as his feet ping pain to his brain from broken glass and rubble

He hears the nightmare chorus again as more munitions reign from above

F\*ck

*Will they all pay the price for Hamas?*

His feet force a look below and it stops him cold

Nails peirce between the knuckles of his toes

Hobbling to a nearby wall, he wonders if this is it

*The end of it all*

For a moment and then longer more the explosive sounds of Hell cease

Now the chorus reaches new octaves as the lost are discovered

By the loved, *partially lost already*

He looks around and notices his heart is seeming to slow

He looks down and it races once more with waves of nausea and the spins alternating

He hits the wall as he falls dizzy

Dusk has made its fall as he gasps as back to life

A small gasp is returned by two *large brown eyes* and he sees in them his bandaged foot

***shkran lak*** he begins to say before

The familiar sound of incoming rocket appears suddenly

It’s starting again, the brown eyes are long gone, replaces by dusty footprints

He grasps the wall as he hobbles

He finds himself sobbing silently as he makes his way to the back of the place

He can feel the terrible tremors in is fatigued and famashed bones.

He missed his Uncle Raja and both his parents

He missed the time before this

To have a body not aching from slow death

His mind not stifling trauma

Oh what a day that would be…

**He dozes off and when his eyes uncrust he sees Brown Eyes**

**She changed his bloody bandages, and when he saw what was next to her he cried**

**A single water bottle by *Nestle***

**She notices his wandering eyes and gives a sheepish grin as she offers him it**

***Glug glug glug / ahhhhh***

**He feels better for now**

**Offers a prayer to *Almighty Allah***

***Alhamd lilah***

**But that haunting sound**

**Is right above him**

**Now**

***Laqad taeibt***

***min hadha,***

***khudhni***

***Ya***

***'iilahi***