

16th of April, 2006

I remember when we used to play hopscotch; desperately struggling to avoid the ever-growing cracks in the harsh ground we live on. I never thought that only a few months later, we would instead be attempting to elude the many bombs that were now littered under the dusty brown surface of our small village in Kabul. The Taliban began attacking us only a few short weeks ago, but the war began well before that. The thunderous boom of nearby jets had already become our lullaby, and we were used to the cries of our neighbours, that endlessly sprinkled the night in despair. Although the destructive conflict that plagues us is evident, I still don't believe it is a war. A war is where two sides fight each other, but for me, and all civilians of Afghanistan, it is just the enemies, hitting us again and again, waiting for us to fall. But we will not. Yet.

4th of May, 2006

Today we lost our house. It was bombed when Mama and I were shopping at the market. Baba and my brother, Aamir, were away working, which they seemed to be doing more and more now that money is short. Truthfully, we were never rich, but we had enough. Now, we are not only poor on money, but on happiness, on hope, on the will to keep going through this horrific time.

When we came back to the small plot where our house used to be, all that remained were a few hardy pots and pans that had somehow survived. Mama cried and cried, but I didn't. We lost our home long ago - our beautiful and peaceful Kabul. This is not our home anymore, a place of death and destruction. There is a difference between the two, and I, for one, would rather have a home.

11th of July, 2006

It's getting worse and worse. We no longer have a place to live, so we dwell in the remains of our neighbour's house. Father is upset with this; he claims that we should not be forced into being 'inconspicuous squatters' as he calls them. In this war we have not only lost our lives, but our dignity.

The house smells like corpses and I see blood splattered on the wall in front of me. It takes great strength to push the image of my laughing neighbour out of my mind. Was this her blood? It's as if I can taste it; metallic and salty. I spit and spit to rid myself of the taste, but to no avail. My dark skin now appears to be grey, and my hay-like hair is no longer decipherable as brown. The only colourful thing left are my eyes. My hopeful, vibrant eyes, that are the solitary element seen through the slit in my niqab. Yet, try as I might, I can't imagine seeing a future that is not alike this.

2nd of October, 2006

I can't take it anymore. Our country is slowly dying at the hands of our enemies. They hold all the power; we hold none. I can't sleep, and there is nothing left to eat. I somehow envy the ones who have been killed, for what is the point of being alive when you aren't even living? This is a fate worse than death.

Mama was killed; Baba was killed. They were shot in front of us. What has our world become, where children watch their parents die? My heart burns with mourning, and my hands shake furiously as I write this.

I'm not sure how long I have left. I have no water, no food, and men with guns lurk just around the corner. But does it really matter? Here, hundreds of people are murdered daily. No one will remember me.

I decide to attempt to sleep, not knowing when or if I will wake up again. Curled in Aamir's arms, I know what I will dream of. I will dream of the meadows, the sky, the lakes and the trees. Maybe my last memory will be beautiful.

By Isabella Waters

