

It Was All Gone

Leen Fakih

Four loud bangs erupted, a soft whisper in my ear was the reason I woke up; perhaps the whispers were part of my dream that blended into reality. Sweaty palms, racing heart – I tried to put two and two together, trying to figure out what had happened.

Israel had bombed us again.

For a moment I was confused as to who had whispered in my ear, but I didn't have time to think about it. The sound of warplanes was close and it only got closer as the seconds ticked by. I jumped out of bed, grabbing the first item of outerwear clothing I could find, flinging it on before I yelled for my family.

I wasn't sure if my mother was safe either – in between my screaming for my grandmother and calling my mother on the phone to no avail. My mother wasn't responding, either working diligently or simply oblivious to what had happened. Eventually, my mother answered the phone telling me to quickly pack a small bag, grab the cats, and wait for her.

It was simple, really. A few steps that had to be done, firstly, tell my grandmother that we had to leave. That was the hardest step. My grandmother is a hoarder so I was aware of the struggle I was going to go through trying to persuade her to leave all her precious items behind. It was no easy feat.

"Leave the items, I beg you!" I yelled throughout the house, already searching for my cats that had hid due to the loud bombing sounds.

"But what if we need—" my grandmother would list items that we could potentially buy anywhere. Some of the things that were mentioned were pillows, blankets, beans, potatoes, an old radio, a few antique clocks and books. It was always hard living with a hoarder but arguing with one was worse.

"We do not need clocks! We need to leave!"

Sure, the clocks were beautiful and I would admit to that, but there was simply no way we could carry them. Having to break my grandmother's heart like that was not something I would wish to live through again. Now that she had given up on the quest of grabbing every possible item in the house, I had to find my cats. I walked through every room,

looking behind dressers and underneath beds. It didn't help that there were four cats I had to find, Fluffy the eldest, Bendok, the middle one and then Mavi and Bella, the youngest two. I knew some of their hiding spots, memorized even.

As I was looking through, I heard the warplanes swoosh over our building again. My entire body tensed up, almost like expecting to be bombed at any moment. Is it this time? I thought to myself as I grabbed one cat after the other placing them in their crates. They were all meowing, hating to be put in their crates while at home. They probably thought they were going to the vet and it absolutely crushed me that I had to do this to them.

My mother opened the door, rushed, tired from climbing the stairs so quickly. She was panting, yelling at us for still standing around. I was internally hoping we wouldn't have to leave our home. Where would we go to? Thoughts of living on the street were the first to cross my mind. What about my mother's work? The shops were our livelihood; it felt as though my entire life was ending.

"Come on!" my mother screamed at us as she grabbed two of the cat crates, leaving the other two with me. She rushed down the stairs while I had to help my grandmother and grab the last few things.

I helped my grandmother down two flights of stairs while holding two cat crates. My grandmother is old, taking her time to get down. I insisted that we shouldn't use the elevator; fear of being bombed inside of it won.

Once we made it down the stairs to the building's corridor, I saw my mother inside the car honking for us to walk faster. There was barely any place for the cats so I had to place one crate on my lap, the other under the seat—everything felt so cramped up. It made my cluster phobia act up, constantly having to remind myself that I was okay.

The car moved leaving the parking space it had grown accustomed to. It felt like things would never be the same again and I was right. The traffic was unlike any I had seen – it took me back to an apocalyptic game I played or some of the scenes from *The Walking Dead*. People were yelling at each other, parked in the middle of the road asking where to go for safety.

My family didn't know where to go either, it was us and a heavily packed road.

"We're going to start from zero." My mother broke the silence that was illuminating the car.

I tilted my head to look at my mother. "From zero?"

"The shops, our home, everything we know will be gone by the time we come back. It's something we should get ready for." It was the hardest sentence I could hear.

Everything will be gone.
Everything is gone.

Leen Fakih
BA Student, Television and Film, Lebanese American University (LAU)
leen.fakih@lau.edu