

Deepening Understanding

YR6 Fictional Journal Entry

Trepidation in the City of Aleppo by Ben Mayoh



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We're terrified. We're all 'on edge'. As each second of every minute passes by, we pray that we'll make it through another day.

Without warning, coalition airstrikes pummelled our city. The very city I can no longer call 'home'. Last night - together as a family - we gazed in wonder at the stunning twilight. The second-floor windows of our home framed the picture-worthy scene in which we witnessed the marigold light glimmer down upon the buildings below. It seemed supernatural; it was sensational. Like many Syrians, it was a rare highlight and it gave us hope that there might be better days to come - days of peace, days of calm and days of slight normality.

No-one, not even a fortune teller, could predict what would happen next. From the highest of highs, came the lowest of lows: our



family's darkest day. When we first heard the distant booms of falling bombs and drone of planes, we recognised that we urgently needed cover. Many times had we rehearsed this very drill and today we were yet again implementing every part of our plan to perfection. As we always did, we all huddled together underneath the kitchen table. It was cover. It felt safe. Usually, the sounds faded or seemed to continue at the exact same volume. However, today was different. The noise of explosions only grew closer and closer, and the vibrations of the ground became stronger and stronger. We shook. We cried. We prayed. We comforted one another. My children could sense there was something peculiar. In fact, our two-year old (Layal) presented an expression we'd never seen her pull before.

As caring as my husband was, he had a heart for shielding his children from the panic, stress and terror an airstrike can cause. He had an idea. He wanted to settle them in the hope it would settle us both too. He whispered to me as he stroked my back reassuringly. "Don't worry, Qamar," he said. "I'll check the window. I'll tell the little ones that the soaring swarm of planes aren't as close as they sound". Little did I know, those would be the last words he would speak. As Adnan sauntered towards the window, everything else became a blur.

After a while, I regained consciousness. I was trapped, covered in dust and could barely breathe amongst the billowing smoke. The sound of crying brought me some joy amongst the sheer devastation: I knew Layal, Rasha and Fathi had survived although I couldn't physically see them. I called Adnan many times, hoping he'd reply. He didn't. I tried louder. He didn't still. My heart sank... My body felt weak... I fell into an uncontrollable tornado of emotions. I believed the worst was to come but until confirmed, I could only hope and pray.



After hearing our cries and screams for help, our community came to save us in the aftermath of the airstrikes. With debris surrounding my head and my body waist-deep in rubble, I longed to feel free and be reunited with my loved ones. As my saviour moved the debris of my family home aside, my world gradually lit up - that's how I knew they were nearing me. A final piece of rubble was removed and then I saw him. Looking at me, he smiled. He held his hand out and announced, "I'm here to help you. You've survived, and I've found you. Don't worry, your children are well. They've been transported to your local hospital for an examination." The man continued with a more sombre tone, "However, it is with regret that we cannot say the same about your husband, Adnan."

Inside, I was raging - I couldn't understand what we'd done to deserve our family being torn apart yet, on the other hand, I was bewildered by the sense of togetherness and the fearless attitude our community had shown in the face of adversity. I can hardly speak or make sense of what's happened here in my hometown of Aleppo... I'm now all alone with my three children, I no longer have a husband and my kids no longer have a father. I no longer feel safe here. Over 5 million Syrians have fled Syria in the hope of finding a place of peace, security and stability. In pursuit of that dream and destiny, many have put their lives on the line. Many questions circled my mind... Would we survive the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea at night on a wooden vessel, or would we avoid the barbaric violence as we sought a way to cross the border? There are so many uncertainties but the most certain thing of all is we need to leave: Aleppo is no home to raise my children.

