

‘Hope’ by Jennifer A. – Year 7

BANG! The first gunshot sounded. Mum started to look edgy. Dad swallowed loudly. BANG! The second gunshot sounded. Closer now. Bang! The third. Mum and Dad got up to leave when the door burst open and three men strode in. Smoke hid the street behind them, as if all that remained was this restaurant, and a door to an evil world had been opened and all the horrors were rushing in.

For the first time, I heard the screams and cries. Mum froze. She looked like a living statue. Her chest rose and fell as she breathed but the rest of her was perfectly still. One of the men had canisters strapped to him. I knew what they were. Dad made me watch the news so I just knew. Suicide bombers, all three armed with knives and guns. Terrorists. I took a deep breath. I felt my hands begin to shake.

Without warning, one of the men darted over to where a man and a woman were sitting. He yanked the woman up by her hair and shouted: “For Allah!” and slashed out with a knife. For a second, the world stood still. Blood spread across her white blouse and she sank to the floor. Her companion leapt up screaming at the top of his lungs.

“How could you? How dare you? You monster!” He moved towards the terrorist and the knife rose again.

We began to panic, screaming and running, pushing each over in a bid to escape. Dad picked me up and began heading towards the door. Mum followed. The terrorists were shooting and stabbing wherever they could. Bullets ricocheted off the walls. Everywhere, people were falling. As Mum tried to push past them, one grabbed her by the back of her dress. The next few moments seemed to go in slow motion, so I could see everything.

Dad began pushing his way back to rescue mum. The suicide bomber reached for his switch. His face was as white as the living dead. He was about to flick the switch. The switch that would end the world. The doors began to close.

Mum called to Dad: “Save my baby! Please!”

Dad turned back to the door. He held me up in his hands like a javelin and whispered: “I love you, Izzy.” With the last of his strength, he threw me. I curled up and saw the doors shoot past my face. My last thought before the darkness was of their faces, engulfed in flames.

“I love you too!”

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I stand, tears running down my face, leaning on my crutches, memorial flowers in my hands.

I don't remember much after the explosion. Just flashing lights and running feet. Shouting. I remember the hospital. People with blood and dirt on their faces and doctors running from person to person.

I cry out in pain and sadness. Nurse Lilah puts a comforting arm around my shoulder. I see her skin, a pale chocolate colour, against my too-pale flesh. She helps me bend down and place my flowers amidst the sea of colour outside the charred remains of the restaurant. As my tears fall, Lilah bends down and whispers words only she and I can hear. They are words of hope.

“This, my child, is not the will of Allah.”

A warm smile dances on her lips and in her dark eyes. My own eyes feel old and weary, aged by all they have witnessed, but, as her smile washes over me, I sense the tiniest glimmer of hope...