**Because Kids Don’t Forget**

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Remember the time before your world changed, before the war in Sarajevo, the city of your birth. The winter mornings you spent running with your friends ahead of school classes, with a foggy breath waltzing around your head as you exhaled. The time when your biggest worry was who stole your Barbie’s dress. You knew, but you couldn’t prove it.

Remember the time before your first visit to the underground bunker. The days you spent practicing choreography with your best friend. The feeling of jealousy for not being chosen for the kids’ music video you later watched on television. They were after blondes, and you were a brunette. It took you a while to forgive your BFF, but you didn’t forget because kids don’t forget.

Remember the time before you first felt Hate. The fleeting time of innocence and family reunions during holidays. Not having your family scattered across the globe. You never thought you’d miss being annoyed by your siblings, for the sheer closeness. The only thing you get annoyed about now are pings in the middle of the night, as they fail to acknowledge you live in a different time zone.

Remember the time before becoming a refugee. Before being labelled as someone Unwanted. An Outsider. Nameless. Rewind to that special day in the park when your father rescued a little emerald budgie stuck in a tree. You had never before seen a grown man so adamant about climbing a tree. You still see the wows on your friends’ faces.

Remember the time of pure joy and happiness. You call it Irrevocable Bliss. It lives in your mind as a distant memory of the past that once was, a mnemonic for how much small things mattered to you before the need for survival consumed your entire existence, like an unwanted vine suffocating air and light as it passed through the synapses in your brain until you become a submissive. It made you almost forget those small elating moments in your childhood that meant the world to you.

Remember the street you grew up on. Cold winter mornings you loved so much as a kid. The delight of skating in a frozen parking lot. Your mum’s head, in the window, watching your every move. Calling you home to the warmth of a home-cooked meal filling every inch of the apartment, nostrils flaring at the familiar scent.

Remember the last convoy leaving Sarajevo all those years ago until your father’s silhouette turned into a mere speck, indiscernible to the naked eye however you knew he was there, waving from afar. You hated crying. You perceived it as a weakness, but you had no control over your lachrymal. When you finally got reunited again, he was but a shadow of the man that climbed that tree, once upon a time.

You were only twelve. You tried to forget, to fit in, thinking it would be easier if you didn’t reminisce. In the end, you chose to remember. You chose Unwanted. An Outsider. Displaced. But no longer Nameless.

In time, you forgave, but you never forgot *because kids don’t forget*.