



THE TEARS OF HUMANITY

Chapter 1

By Katia Hadjeb

The room is dark, as dark as a night without moonlight or scattered stars in the sky. And in the dark, lie weak bodies shielding wounded souls. She opens her eyes; not knowing that she may not be able to close them again, even when she'd want to, even when she'd need to do so. She turns around, left and right, and she hopes that the very little sight she has is not betraying her and what she is seeing are indeed human beings. She holds her breath and listens attentively, but she hears no one else's breath, only that of death. Her arms feel heavy but she slides her left arm further left, and her right one further right. There is a friction when her hands and their hands touch, but the friction does not turn their hands any warmer. Their hands are cold, and the laws of physics are useless to generate energy when there is no blood running through the veins.

Now she cannot slide her arms back, she cannot take her hands off them. Now she knows she is at a place where there are no human beings but only the sad result of heinous human actions. Now, she thinks she is at a place where people ate their hearts. Now, she hopes the very little sight she *has* betrayed her, and those bodies lying next to her aren't human bodies. She sits up, she moves her hand across her body searching for her belongings, but she finds nothing; except for a tiny notebook and a pen inside of it.

"They didn't see it", she whispers as she keeps her hand on it. She tries to get up, but her body feels so heavy, that she can barely drag it across the cold, dark, and dusty room to the door. "Open the door." She says with a low voice, repeating it each time, her voice fading, while knocking and leaning on the door.

She has no force left at all, she gives up; but unexpectedly the door opens pushing her back. A woman enters. "That dose didn't kill you after all huh?" She says mockingly. The woman grabs her arm and forces her out of the room. "You're name now is 99."

99's Journal:

03/12/2019?

I know that all I want to do in this moment is to write, but I have no idea what.

The source of my words has dried. My inspiration, like everything else, has died.

If I do not write, then I know that my heart and soul are both gone.

The two bleed through my pen and infuse my pain inside the pages; inside the pages my scars forever remain.

I honestly do not know what motivated me to write now.

Maybe I just want to know that I'm still alive, and that I haven't lost myself just yet.

Words are all I've ever had, and I've been losing them.

I may not be writing poems with rhythm and rhyme, but words are the only connection I have with the world.

I cannot lose it, especially now; because if I do, I will have nothing left.

The night is deep and I am weak.

So weak, that I am ready to give up on everything; but in truth, how does an empty jar pour sand?

I am so tired, but I cannot sleep.

So I wait and wait.

I wait even as the night falls asleep and I watch over it while it dreams.

Oh night, sleep in peace, with neither fears nor worries; I will watch over you to make sure you are not awakened from your dreams.

Oh night, sleep; and I, your guardian, will dwell with you.

My upper lashes and my lower ones never touch.

Life did not allow me yet to visit the heavens of my dreams, not even for a single moment.

Oh night sleep, and I, your guardian, will dwell with you.

The idea of opening my eyes to come back to reality from the imaginary scares me.

The reality that I have been trying to escape, to taste no more of its bitterness and no longer live in sufferance of it, oh this I devoutly wish.

But whenever I tried to escape, I walk one step forwards and then two steps backwards.

And whenever I try to change it, I die and live again a thousand times to find out that it is still the same.

Oh night, sleep, and I your guardian will dwell with you.

If it is time for me to be taken from my life, and for my life to be taken from me, I would want to hug her goodbye, but I won't be able to if I am asleep.

So, night, sleep in peace with neither worries nor fears; trust me, I, your guardian, will dwell to watch over you and make sure you won't be awakened from your dreams.

I may be at the edge of life and on the verge of death.

My heart strongly beats; it virtually stops, due to the intensity and speed of its pulses, pregnant with an unfit number of explosions that I cannot carry anymore without causing enormous disasters and massive distractions.

I feel nothing but emptiness, and around me there is a world of nothingness.

I see nothing but darkness.

I hear nothing but the loud sounds of silence.

In silence, I listen to my breath.

I take each one in, rushing to catch the next; worried that I won't have enough time.

As if I am drowning in the middle of the ocean where there is no rescuer.

The pressure inside my chest feels like it's breaking the walls of my lungs.

A war starts in my mind; ideas fight each other and I do not know for how long I can resist this horror.

Memory, take me on a trip back to the past.

My mind spins around and around, in endless circles.

Questions with unknown answers, and causes with unknown reasons.

I do not know what to do.

The museum's blaring alarms gave no warning to the gas that would take all of my life except the pulses of my heart.

How did I get here?

I try to think in order to understand, but I can't.

It's as if my brain is paralyzed.

Or maybe it's just because it's turning so fast, that I cannot stop to think.

I hear someone coming. Unfortunately, I have to stop writing.

03/13/2019?

Every night when I close my eyes, and every morning when I open them, I wonder whose turn it is to die. I wonder whose life is going to come to an end, and whose soul is going to be taken. Everyday my question is whether it is going to be mine. All I can think about is death, and when she is going to come for me. Maybe I am afraid of living death, not afraid of shuffling off this mortal coil, but afraid of being dead without being alive in the first place, of not having gotten a chance to fully live my life.

Today was not my turn either. Death came, but not for me. Today was someone else's turn. It was 78's turn to leave this life. He did not willingly leave this life; he was dragged out of it. He did not die. He was *killed*.

The knife ran across his weak body, cutting him into slices like a chicken being prepared for dinner. The blade sliced through his heart, shredding it to pieces. I knew that his heart had been bleeding for far too long and the time had come for the pain to stop. However, that is not how it happened.

They tied him to a tree. They made him tell them that they were not guilty for doing what they were doing, and that they had the right to do it; because there was no difference between his absence and his presence. His creation was an error and his existence was a burden. Then, they threw stones at him until blue marks were left on every inch of his skin. With a match and a paper they tried to hide the signs of their cruel crime; they let the flames eat at his body along with that of the tree. In the end, nothing was left but black ash and dark smoke. That's not how it happened either.

Maybe they pushed him into a hole and buried him as he breathed still. Inside the core of the earth he suffocated. The oxygen faded and the pressure in his lungs was intense. There was a headache; he lost consciousness, and then his life. He closed his eyes and his soul was out.

This is also not how it happened. Does it really matter how or when they killed 78 and every other person who they held captive if the reason and result is one and the same? He could not yell nor scream. He probably knew that there'd be no point of doing so if they would not hear. Maybe they would hear, but they wouldn't listen. Like everyone before him, and surely like everyone after him, the tears did not stream down his face. The tears were too heavy to come out of his eyes and too large to pass through his eyelids; as heavy and as large as the words that could never come out of his mouth nor any of ours. The pain he was going through was still felt; no matter how hard he tried to hide it his soft yet intense moaning revealed it all. Suddenly, we *all* drowned in the smoke of silence; the heart of humanity wept, and they drank its tears glass after glass with pride.

I do not know what to call them anymore: the Normal Ones, the Perfect Ones, the Major and Superior Ones. I'm afraid I can no longer see them as humans if they never saw me as one.

I never really thought about death that much before, but I knew it as the most certain thing in life. I used to thank God every night for being alive until that day, and every morning I did the same. Now every night and every morning I ask him for one more day, hoping that I will be able to do *something* on that day.

Maybe if I had done *something*, responded to people, not letting them think of me as insignificant, today wouldn't be the same. I know I was not the only one who just smiled and let it go. I was not the only one who wouldn't criticize people for their ignorance. Maybe if we did, none of us would've ended up in this place.

When people in the metro pulled or pushed me, I should've pushed them away or tripped them with my cane so that they found themselves on the ground. If they used force to help me, when I clearly stated that I did not need any, I should have used force to make them understand that they should keep their hands *off* of me, and anyone like me. I should've used force to end their ignorance and their negligence. I should've used force to end their *arrogance*, because they felt *too* important. I should have, but I didn't. I didn't, because that's not who I was. That's not who I am. I always thought those people had good intentions, and that's all that mattered. Blindness made me trust even when I did not have to; I'm sure everyone else who experienced it agrees. Some of those people deserved that trust, but others took advantage of it. Yet, blindness does not only teach us to trust the goodness of people, but to trust even more in the powers that are greater than humans, to trust that there is a reason for everything that happens. So even if time went backwards, I would still do everything the same. I would still have trust.

Still, I can't stop thinking of all the things I could've done but didn't do. I think of all the things I could've said but didn't say. I can't stop thinking how different our world would've been if only some of our actions were different and if we didn't hesitate to speak up. It's true that blindness teaches us to trust, but it also teaches us to never excuse failure. Although it is unpreventable, it is also inexcusable. I'm sure other people excuse us when we fail. Actually, no they do not, and they never did; they don't excuse our failure, but they expect it. So while we were trying to succeed in other aspects of life, we failed on the most important and necessary aspect: defending our rights.

I believed that people had good intentions, or at least I tried to believe they had them. However, they could never hide the way they thought about and *still* think about us. When they tried to make a positive gesture or say a positive word, I always sensed that there was a negative thought behind it. Maybe they didn't realize that they thought the way they did, but it always was evident to me one way or another. Institutions use to say "we do not ask the people who come here if they have disabilities because we do not want them to be offended," to justify why their institutions were not accessible. People often tried to compliment me by saying: "You're so smart, it's a shame," or "You're so pretty, it's a shame." What they really meant was: "You're too smart or too pretty to be a blind person." Of course, I never said anything back.

Blindness was never hard, but people made it so. No matter how positive I was, I found myself surrounded by people's negativity everywhere and at all times. Maybe that is the reason why I liked to spend most of my time by myself. Although acceptance is a basic right, I think that trying to be accepted was a mistake. I did many things to meet social expectations. Maybe I should say I did many things to defy social expectations since society did not really expect much of me. Even the government did not expect much. A *normal* person is expected to handle life, to have a job and be a responsible

adult by the time they graduate high school. We are expected to make a sandwich by ourselves by the time we graduate high school. That is exactly what I've been told by someone who works for a special needs service.

People felt important when they believed that other people like me were inferior to them. They felt important when they believed that our existence depended on them. Unfortunately, I did nothing but satisfy the deep urge of people to feel important. More unfortunately, every other blind person did just the same.

We could definitely have survived without those who called themselves *normal*. If only they let us be part of society. If only they stopped telling us the things we should do and reminding us of those things we shouldn't do. If only they did not feel important enough to make the rules and make us live by those rules. If only we felt important enough to give ourselves the right to disturb the universe. We should've screamed as loud as thunder, because otherwise no one would listen. No one listened anyway, because we never screamed. We peacefully begged and pleaded. We pleased the normals so that they would give us a place in *their* world. We should never have done that. Maybe we should've created our own world where difference is legal. A world where normalcy is not normal, and imperfection is perfect. A world where impossibility does not exist. A world where fear does not rule, and where being human does not mean being weak. We should have created this world, because it would've been a world of acceptance and not of expectation. It would've been a world of meaning.

03/14/2019?

Life with no pain is not a life. It's the pain that makes us feel alive. There are two types of pain. There's pain that makes you stronger, and then there's pointless pain; that's the type of pain that makes you suffer for no reason. Honestly, I do not know which type of pain I'm

going through right now. I do not even know if what I'm feeling is pain. Maybe all I'm feeling is anger. But why would one feel angry if one weren't hurt?

Did I expect too much of society? Did I overvalue human beings? Does being human mean to be driven? Or does it mean being responsible? In the end, human beings are instinctual beings, but what differs us from animals is our ability to control those instincts. Maybe, I have overestimated the greatest mind ever created, or maybe I just underestimated the power of the natural subconscious urges that humans, including myself, have, including the need to control.

Einstein said the reason he was always happy was because he never expected anything from anyone. That makes total sense; if we do not expect, there's no chance of being disappointed. I shouldn't have expected to have my rights, I should have asked for my rights. I should have fought their need to control *me*, for control of *myself*. I should have *fought* for my *rights*.

In keeping with this reasoning, why blame the rest of society? People like me are to blame more than anyone else. The world sees us as those who consume but never provide. This is the truth that cannot be escaped; yet, truth is only the truth if we choose to make it so. I guess we already did, a long time ago when we refused to speak up for ourselves, followed the rules, and agreed to be controlled. Incapability became our defining title, and we, *all of us*, did not do anything to change it.

I'm not trying to justify their actions, because they are unjustifiable. I'm just trying to say that maybe things would be different if we did not excuse the ignorance of people. What happened, our imprisonment was a wake up call for us to finally fight for our rights, because the ignorance had turned into hatred.

I lived life feeling like I lived it all before, and that I knew what would come next because my life was a play written by society and I was an actress on the world's stage. I still found time to write my *own* play, and act it in my *own* way. I found time to feel alive. Maybe that is why I mostly felt like I did not belong anywhere but in a metaphysical world of my creation, the personal purity of my imagination.

Maybe I was only able to do so because I was still hopeful, and maybe all I hope for right now is to hope still. I wanted nothing in this life but to feel alive. To feel happy, and sometimes sad. To walk on the thorns, but sometimes on the soft sand. To be safe, but sometimes scared. To fall, then learn to walk again, step by step. To smile, to cry, to laugh, to break down, to vanish, to disappear and come back. To speak, to listen, to talk, to hear, to get hurt and then maybe to heal one day. To remember, to forget. I wanted to be alive. I wanted to be. I wanted to feel. To feel...to feel. By repeating it, maybe I can remember what it feels like to feel. I wonder why humans fear to feel.

The truth is that humans aren't afraid of emotion, but are afraid of pain. With no emotion there would be no pain. Without emotion there would be nothing. There would be no life. Unless life means only lungs full of air, there would be life with no emotions, though it would be an empty meaningless one, with no purpose. Honestly, I'm not sure if that is even possible. What keeps humans going is motivation; and I don't know how humans can be motivated if they have no emotion.

There are humans who have no personal motivation. They live by someone else's motivation, follow someone else's rules and work to achieve someone else's life. I was one of those people, at some point, or I was expected to be. The only difference is that it was the majority's motivation, the majority's rules and the majority's goals. Speaking of majority, it is ironic how politicians use to link justice to

democracy, if democracy means the ruling of the majority. Or does justice not mean equality?

My thoughts are scattered. I cannot help it; it's hard to not question everything after all I've been through. I do not know what is real and what is unreal. Is the world around us the reality, or is the world inside us the reality? Maybe it's both, maybe it's neither and we are unable to see reality. Maybe there are multiple realities, but among those are there real and false ones? Is truth really true? Or does truth only become truth when we believe it? In the end when we are told a lie and we believe it, it becomes the truth for us, right? So there is no truth, and there is no reality? Or there just isn't only one. If that is the case, what is right and what is wrong? Or is there right and wrong?

I think it is inhuman for all of these other people to be held here on a line for death, only because of a thought that we are sightless, and therefore irrelevant. But I'm judging by my own values and my own principles. I cannot say that I am right and those who would judge by their own values and principles are wrong. Shakespeare said that there is no wrong or right but thinking makes it so. It is true, only because we decide something is right or wrong, that thing would be right or wrong; but that does not mean it'll be similarly right or wrong to everyone else. Still, that does not mean there is no right and no wrong, it just means it differs from one person to another. We all have different experiences, different beliefs, different objectives and different principles. Yet, no matter how different we are, we all share one thing, and that is our humanity. Maybe there's a universal law that can diffuse right and wrong when it comes to a universal matter. Actually, maybe it is not a law, because laws are created by humans. It would be more of a fact; it just exists.

03/15/2019?

Everyone needs and looks for connection in this world. Before, I used to connect with the universe through nature, words, and the optimistic

world inside my mind and sometimes people. Here, though, I have none of these, except for words, of course; or at least that is what I thought until last night.

I was sitting on the ground, leaning on the fragile wall, which apparently someone else was also leaning on from the other side. We were not allowed to speak to each other. During the day we were under surveillance, but not at night. So our sleeping spaces were separated. I wouldn't call these spaces rooms, because they weren't. They were just big enough for someone to lie down on the floor. I guess our captors assumed that the discomfort of this space would prohibit us from communicating. No one really assumed any differently, including myself. Last night, though, I changed my mind.

She was crying. I could hear it. Her voice was shaking as each word was spoken. I knew she was trying to cry quietly, lingering alone in her misery, but she was not alone. The moment I heard her voice, I knew I was still alive. I felt it. The pain, the grief, and the sorrow. The passion, the love and the hope. I felt it all as she said this:

"I hate you. I hate you,
I really want to say I hate you, but it is not true.
It was never true, it will never be.

Dear life:

I do not know how to start my utterance, and I do not even know if you would ever understand my language.

Here I am,

To you I convey the words that occupy my heart and preoccupy my mind.

Dear life:

I am a devoted lover of yours.

I love you so much that I wish I could hate you,” she said.

I tried to remain silent, but I couldn't. I answered back.

“This is not an utterance, but a conversation.

You wonder if I understand your language, and I've been wondering the same.

I've been speaking with you since the first time you opened your eyes.

That's all most of you humans can see when you look at me.

Look at me.

What is it that you see?” I asked.

“In your eyes I can see illusion, confusion, sadness and loneliness,” she said before adding more to her description.

“In your looks I can feel cold, warmth, ice and fire.

I can understand from your regards that you do not believe in perfection and you never tend to provide total satisfaction.

I know that you are stubborn, but I'm a lot more stubborn than you are. That is why you should take my advice and never defy me.

If you ever do, then you better not be conceited as you are; because I'm not an adversary that you can defeat easily.”

“I'm not trying to defy you nor anyone else.

You humans only see what you want to see, only think what you want to think, only hear what you want to hear and only believe what you want to believe.

The love of control is your disease.

You can find the remedy, if you just try to see the real me.”

“You break my wings, sting my heart and stab my soul.

You make me cry for nights.

You watch the tears streaming down my face and laugh.

You tantalize me for days.

You try to look like the hell where my hopes and I burn into ashes.”

“I know you sometimes despise your own existence, and execrate my presence.

Put your hand on your chest.

Do you feel it?

Your heart is still beating.

You are still breathing.

Listen.

I know you're still hearing the tender rhythms that liberate your mind, lift your shoulders high up in the skies to dance with the stars.

Don't flee like everyone else when you see my face.

Struggle and strive instead.”

“You're right.

For fear there is no space.

So I will smile whenever I see your face.”

“You can never hate me, even if I asked you to.

Don't try to be something you are not.

You are a human, and I am Life.

I will be with you until the last moment and the last breath until Death defeats us both.

You should know that I can never kill you, if my biggest and only enemy is Death itself.”

I know she smiled, because I did too. The universe laughed loudly, the sky cried heavily, the mountains shivered and the waves of the oceans danced. We were and are alive, and neither of us needed eyes to see what's ingrained on the moon's walls, nor to read what's written on the sun's journal. Neither of us needed eyes to see the miracles drawn on the leaves of the trees. On the petals, flowers, and roses there were mysteries; and stories cried inside each drop of rain that washed off the sky's pain. Neither of us needed eyes to see the pain, the joy, the greetings, and the goodbyes cried by the high waves of the seas.

We may not have sight, but that does not mean we don't have insight; and it doesn't mean that people have vision because they call us blind. In our eyes we may have no light, but as bright as the sun, our souls shine. Neither of us needed eyes to see the light. Yes, I say light. A light that we can see for eternity. The kind of light that people wouldn't need eyes to see. In order to really see, eyes are supplementary but heart is necessary. One with no eyes is not blind, but one with no heart is; I guarantee.