



Future Justice

Published in *Future Justice* in 2010 by Future Leaders (www.futureleaders.com.au)

Escape From Gaza

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Wheezing with exertion and gripping his son's trembling hand Abdul collapsed to the ground. Letting out a wracking cough he gazed through the night, at the war-torn city, one of many ripped apart by the conflict in the Gaza Strip. Groans emitted from the other refugees as they too stopped to rest. He tore his eyes from billowing smoke and explosions and peered at his child.

'How are you feeling Hasan? Are you okay?'

His son nodded a weary reply.

'It's just a little further,' he reassured his son, and himself.

He embraced Hasan, stroking the boy's hair. Abdul glanced at the scene of despair around him before closing his eyes, desperately holding back tears. He silently scolded himself for showing such weakness in front of his son. Straining against his creeping emotions, he hugged the only thing left in his life, as two other refugees tried to start a feeble fire. It wasn't safe to light a large fire, it attracted too much attention.

'Father?'

'Yes?'

'I'm cold.'

'Come, warm yourself by the fire,' he soothed, as he found a place in the circle. Abdul nodded thanks and flexed his numb fingers as he accepted a dented canteen of water from Khalil. Having met a mere three days earlier, Khalil and his wife Imantra were the closest people Abdul had to friends. He held the canteen to Hasan's lips before quenching his own thirst.

Passing the water back around the small circle, he laid back to catch what sleep he could before it was time to move on.



Heavy boots crunched down on gravel that no amount of stealth could avoid. AK rifles raised and searching, five dark shapes moved through ruined buildings and cracked streets. Moving like wraiths they drifted through the shadows in pursuit of their prey. Glowing embers drifted toward the ground as one stepped out a cigarette. A fit of coughing followed. It was answered by four glares.

‘Be quiet Talib, you insolent dog, do you want the whole city to hear you?’

He shrugged; stealth wasn’t hard when explosions rocked the city. The soldiers continued the hunt. Enemy insurgents were their prey. They constantly made irritating revenge attacks and it was decided enough was enough. Sipping from a hip flask Talib glanced back at the man who had scolded him.

Captain Ra’id was a hard man to like but an easy one to respect. He was still bitter at being ordered to hunt down the rebels in the night-time streets, instead of taking part in the destruction of the main force. Still, he did it with ruthless efficiency.

The orders were simple. Kill any escaping enemy insurgents. He sighed audibly when he saw the fire, too small to be caused by an explosion. Ra’id fixed him with a stern stare. They crept closer.



The first thing Abdul heard was screaming and gunfire. His stomach dropped. They’d been found. Gripping his son’s trembling hand he ran blindly into the night. Bullets flew past him as he scrambled for cover. He screamed as one tore through his arm. All around refugees were being cut apart by disciplined machine-gun fire. Looking back for survivors, he threw Hasan and himself behind a slab of concrete as the

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soldiers came into view. Tears streaked Hasan's grubby face. Abdul took his son's face in his hands and looked him in the eyes.

'Hasan, those are bad men and they want to hurt us. We have to leave very quietly. Can you do that for me?'

Hasan nodded weakly.

'That's my boy,' Abdul tried to smile. He failed. A glint of light caught his eye. He bent down and retrieved the fragment of glass. He spun rapidly brandishing the makeshift weapon as a heavy shape came out of nowhere.

'They killed her!'

'Khalil?'

'They killed her!' the sobbing man repeated. Abdul dropped his improvised knife to console his friend.

He looked back over the rubble to the campsite. Bodies lay where they fell, the stink of death already in the air. Long, dark hair matted with blood identified one body as Imantra. He offered a quick prayer and turned back to Khalil.

'Come on, we need to go.'

Khalil was gone, so was his glass. Abdul swore vividly and winced as he propped himself up. The big man was creeping towards the soldiers, knife in hand.



Talib surveyed the massacre. The realisation that the 'insurgents' were innocent refugees shocked him to the core. They didn't stand a chance. The attack had barely lasted 20 seconds. This wasn't war, it was slaughter. The thought disgusted him. Of course, he wouldn't openly voice his opinion; such a thing would be seen as weakness and treason. He was a soldier and soldiers did what they were told. It didn't soften what had happened. He knelt to check the body of a young woman. Her long dark hair reminded him of his wife, he thought, as he reached out to touch it.

A berserk scream emanated from somewhere in front of him as a man charged him. Captain Ri'ad was congratulating

his men when he heard it. He spun on his heel in time to see a man charge out of the night bellowing incoherently. Talib screamed as the glass pierced the soft flesh of his neck, drenching his distraught attacker. Ri'ad was the first to react, riddling the refugee with bullets. He strode over and kicked the corpse swearing. He turned to Talib. A massive gash on his throat made it clear he, too, was dead. He closed his eyes. Two more prayers were offered that night.



Ryan Pope wrote this in 2009 when he was in Year 11 at Chancellor State College in Queensland.