

DANCING WITH BULLETS

December 1944

I'm eight years old, I wander lost,
my mother's gone, my father's dead,
I'm hungry, thirsty and alone,
Alone in darkness and in cold.

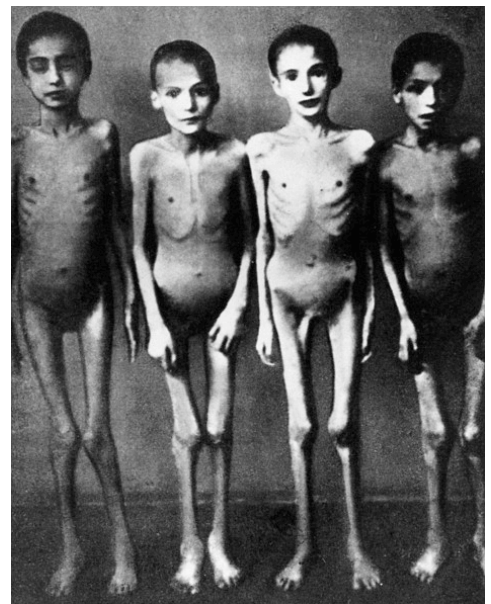
The bombs rained on us at night,
then fired the mighty tanks,
and snipers on the building roofs,
killed those of us in sight.

Next to the bodies of those who fell,
I hide, shelter seeking,
from bullets that may go astray,
from walls collapsing, ceilings falling,
like rain upon a thirsty ground.

Caught in the midst of senseless war,
in world oppressed - fading away,
in sins of death and agony
molesting what remains,
three nights I slept next to the dead,
but bad smells force me out.

From dwellings of corpses out I crawl
into the frenzy around me,
into a blight of doom and dust
and spirits of decay,
into an air of wreathing smoke
and total desolation.

There is no place to go, nowhere to hide
in shadowy land around me,
my teeth are quivering from cold,
I'm hungry, thirsty and alone,
alone in darkness and in cold,
my mother I need to find.



II

Of rifles firing sounds I hear,
the songs of bullets whistling,
tanks rolling down the street I hear,
and through the blazed buildings echoing,
sad music of humanity,
the screams of young men dying.

With perishing darkness closing in,
in grim half-light still can see,
a stream of blood rolling my way,
a neighbor's tortured body,
from iron door upside-down hangs,
from ear to ear his throat is slit,
his guts undone,
stuffed into his mouth his genitals,
his glassy eyes scare me.

In city filled with blood and shame
with heaves of corpses piling,
seeding the earth with country's blood,
outrageously wiping out,
a time-honored race of men,
dooming a generation.

Trembling I climb up the steps
where homes had stood before,
alone in darkness and in cold,
for scraps of food I search in vain,
water to drink, a place to rest.
My mother I need to find.

The countless dead around me
with glassy eyes are gazing,
asking me with perplexity,
why does it have to be this way?

Scared, I look away then I respond:
I do not know, I just don't know,
I'm only eight years old,
I had no other life,
and nothing different I've known,
except of war and hunger.



III

With darkness plowing upon the land,
from door to door I'm drifting,
struggling in flames and wreathing smoke
with bullets whirling by my head,
a gate of mercy I'm seeking.

Down in my street now I see
rising smoke from guns still hot,
and those around now dead,
forgotten victims of war gone by,
lying there in pools of blood,
warfare has so much glory.

The bodies now I push aside
to get at shells and bullets,
my pockets stuff with war's free gifts,
toys to play, to stand in rows,
imaginary soldiers in my blanket's folds,
to knock them down and down again,
with tanks and canons made of lead,
in endless wars of mine.

I grab a gun and make believe
I am also a brave soldier,
and firing at the other side pretend,
avenging those around me,
my mother's loss, my father's death,
this total desecration.

Of make-believe games finally tired,
towards sounds of cannons firing move,
on rubble, jumping, dancing,
to loud, bullet music,
everywhere I go,
faithful companion of my quest,
In search to find my mother.



IV

Through burning streetcar slowly crawl,
a coffin burning without relief,
to warm my freezing body,
but broken glass cuts into my knees
and blood is squirting down my feet,
but finally warmed, out I crawl.
I need to find if on the other side of street,
perhaps my mother waits for me.

I cross, but on the other side I hear
a drunken soldier's voice,
laughing, screaming at me,
his evil voice shouting,
famined of thought and feeling,
Where are you going boy? Are you a spy?
Are you the one who fired at us,
Far from the other side?

No, no, I did not fire at you
I was just simply playing,
collecting shells and stuff like that,
please do not kill me mister,
I'm not a spy, I yell at him,
I'm eight years old,
I'm hungry, thirsty and I'm cold
my mother I search to find.

Please mister give me bread, I beg,
three days I have not eaten,
something to eat something to drink,
a drink of water would be nice.
some bread, please mister give me.

If bread you want, water to drink,
then you must dance young boy.
Why don't you dance boy for us,
let's see how high that you can jump,
and if you can jump just high enough,
perhaps some bread we'll give you.

And so I jump and dance as told
to firing pistols at my feet,
I jump much higher, exactly as told,
as pavement fragments hit me.



But dance I do, and jump I do,
to bullets' whistling music,
as blood is streaming down my feet,
no pain I feel - just hunger.

And when the pistols' firing stops,
upon the muddy ground,
a piece of bread is thrown at me,
I grab it with my bloody hands,
the mud I wipe onto my shirt,
and quickly stuff my mouth.

A little more bread I ask again,
perhaps a cup of water
I promise I will jump again,
a little more bread please give me,
I'm hungry, thirsty and I'm cold,
My mother I need to find.
With other women she had been,
perhaps they passed you by.

Now others join in laugh, yelling at me.
Yes, they all passed looking for food,
we fucked them all, young boy,
we all took turns, but gave them bread,
perhaps we fucked your mother.
Now go boy, just run away,
because we kill all spies.

V

And running now I cross the street,
on piles of fallen walls I climb,
to catch perhaps my mother's sight,
far from the other side,
as whistling bullets spiral by,
their endless songs are singing.

With teeth quivering from cold
and feet still torn and bleeding,
on summit of ruins high I stand
looking afar around me,
a glimpse perhaps to catch,
of my lost, dear mother.



The night is opening wider
and hides me in its blackness,
as shadowy forms stay unperceived,
but voices from the deep abyss I hear,
calling me from afar,
in doom of dark dusk waiting,
far from a deeper madness.

I'm hungry, but there is no food to eat,
Nothing to drink, nowhere to sleep
And so I keep on wandering,
from door to door keep drifting,
to find perhaps some scraps of food,
water to quench my thirst,
But tired now I need to rest,
a hole to find that's warm,
and catch some sleep till dawn.

In mud and ashes crawling,
I find a hole and mercifully,
with corpses scattered around me,
among the dead again I lay,
In vain belief my mother is near me,
In hope that better life someday,
mine will become again.

VI

In stormy boundaries of sleep,
spirits of dream remove my grief,
then take me very far away,
a thousand leagues from shadows,
to lands of distant fantasies,
to shores of gentle beauty.

Near the sea I find myself,
Its salty air I'm breathing,
the smell of life within it.
And of my mother dream again,
her face so fair, so radiant.

And now in front of me she stands,
next to a running fountain,
in garden full of flowers and trees,
by deep blue sky canopied.



Upon her face there's tint of smile,
and in her eyes much love.
Her head steadfast leans toward me,
George, where have you been? She asks,
where have you been my son?

Safer now feel again,
into her arms I thrust.
Mother, for you I searched and searched,
but nowhere could I find you,
I'm hungry I shout and I'm cold,
I want some milk, perhaps some bread.

VII

But sounds of blasts awaken me
from sweet dream's safe escape,
as stones start raining by my side,
in brutal chill of night.

Quivering find myself again,
in dread of shadows vanishing,
spirits of dead surround me,
as fire and smoke my soul impregnate,
alone in darkness and in cold,
silent, death-dust breathing.

The creeping dawn is secretive
but slowly light is breaking,
revealing what remains
of tortured land and people.
My search I must now resume
my mother is not dead, I know,
my mother cannot be far away,
For me, I'm sure she is looking.

VIII

With moonlight casting shadows still
on scattered corpses I stumble,
cold fear now invades my soul,
what if my mother lies there,
among these broken, tortured souls.



Slowly approach corpses around me,
my mother I search to find,
Her dress with purple flowers,
perhaps could recognize.

With weary weight upon my heart,
from body to body I'm moving,
looking at deathly white faces,
unknown source of agonies,
by pain and violence twisted.
But I'm relieved not finding her,
my mother is not among them.

IX

With sturdier limbs and hope renewed,
my scabs of blood now firmly clogged,
as dust turns into dust again
and blasts explode around me,
in dawn's early light I see,
the sun is trying to rise,
beyond the smoke and fires,
beyond the wrecks of buildings.

Exalted now by light's return,
the promise of new day,
I rise up and dance again,
to music of bullets spiraling,
to songs of bullets whistling,
from distant guns are now firing,
no bullets will dare hit me.

As light of day approaches me
and smoke slowly subsides,
my mother is not dead I scream and yell,
my mother is alive I shout,
for me I'm sure she is waiting,
for me I'm sure she is looking,
And when the sun breaks through the smoke,

MY MOTHER I' M GOING TO FIND.

