

the ONE when there was a National tragedy

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Silence

I've never before heard it
until now
never before felt it
[heavy as the fog that surrounds us]
until now
As I walk slowly among the mourners
friends and relatives
those who just want to stand
shoulder to shoulder with their neighbours
[known and unknown]
all I hear is silence
I'm surrounded by people
quiet whispers
the faint sound of tears
but what most hits me is the atmosphere
so heavy with words unspoken
and feelings unexpressed
A fog of silence
so dense I can feel it
hear it
touch it
Silence

Life

It goes on as normal
for many

for most
shopping again
oblivious to the pain of others
A short pause
to reflect
to respect
and then daily life continues
For some however
a small group in the nation
life
as *they* knew it
will *never* be the same again
A national tragedy
yes
but more than that
a personal tragedy
A death
that now makes life unbearable
numb
every morning waking up
to that same sick feeling
A second where all is well
then it hits again
as hard as that first shock
the painful realisation
that I must live another day
another long and slow day
without the life
that was once
in my life
that was once

my life

Guilt

of those who survived
who were there when it all happened
but escaped unharmed
[physically at least]
Those who changed plans
who *would* have been there
who *should* have been there
but by a twist of fate
Divine protection
or the alignment of the stars
missed that awful moment
some by minutes
some completely
Relief beyond words
but also guilt
such an *unbelievable* guilt
heavier than anything felt before
Guilt at the very feeling of relief
Guilt that it wasn't me
Then there are others
who blame a death
[not *all* deaths but *one* death]
on themselves
Something they did or didn't do or say
that would have changed the events
[not for *all* but for that *one*]
Forever
at least it feels like forever

they also have to live with
the guilt

God

A source of comfort and peace
for some
For others
the one to lash out at
to shout and swear at
to shake the fist at
I know God
but I won't try to speak for him
I won't try to answer the 'why' question
I just want to do what I think that God himself
would do
[if he were physically here]
It's what I plead that others who know God
would also do
Cry with those who mourn
Hold those who are scared
Listen to those who need to tell their story
[even if you have listened a thousand times before]
Be there
not with the answers
[or even *any attempt* at answers]
but just be
to those who need it
a mirror
of God

Regret

So much regret
Things felt but never said
[and which can now *never* be said]
Things said in anger
in haste
[and which can now *never* be undone]
Regret
that what seemed so big
before
seems so small
so trivial
so insignificant
now
Regret that moments not cherished
not valued
will now never be
Regret that things known
and things suspected
which could have *prevented everything*
were kept quiet
until it was too late
If that's you
then my heart-felt appeal is this:
Don't pile more regret on top
own up
face the music
and confess the part you played
[whatever the consequences]
Don't look back
on how you act now
on what you say now

[or don't say]
with *yet more*
regret

Faces

A sea of faces surrounds me
at a distance
and in every direction

Shock

fear

and grief

Then the faces *close up*
of those who have gone in and are still going in
trying desperately and so bravely to rescue others
their skin bruised and dirty from the search
their lips quivering with the shock
of what they've just witnessed
their eyes without any light
I can see in their expression
that this is not just a job

This is humanity in search of humanity
parents in search of parents
husbands in search of husbands
wives in search of wives

Then I walk among the mourners
stepping around the candles
[there by the thousands]
and all around me on every side
like still photos staring back at me
are yet more
faces

Questions

So many questions

Personal ones

Corporate ones

National ones

Questions that have *already* been asked

and others that *still need* to be asked

Some that people are afraid to ask for fear of the answers
and others that people hope will get brushed under the carpet

to be hidden for all time and never asked

Questions where an answer is needed

[and expected]

and others

where the answer will forever be a mystery

Personal questions

from deep within the soul

for which there is no answer

So many

unanswered

questions

Emotions

So many emotions

some already expressed

and others still deep under the surface

[pushed down until another time]

Two ladies stand by the roadside

hugging and crying

[I suspect they have just received bad news]

An image comes into my mind

of throwing a stone into some water

and the ripples going from the centre to the edge
I'm just a person on the *edge* of this tragedy
and yet I know how my emotions have been touched
deeply

I cannot even begin to imagine
the emotions of those in the *centre*
So from one member of humanity
[who in the past has suffered loss]
to others who now also do
my heart goes out to you
If I could carry your tears *for* you
I would

If I could carry your loss *with* you
I would

Then from one man to another
forget the myth that crying is weak
it's not

So let out the tears
Cry until you have nothing left
then do it again
and again

For you have experienced
what no-one should have to go through
so don't hold back your emotions

Express them
on your own
to another
to your god
[it doesn't matter to whom]

Just do it
because *if you don't*

then you could become
another casualty
another victim
in a tragedy that has already claimed
too many innocent lives
So
as individuals
as a nation
let's not be afraid
of our emotions

Tragedy

Yes
a national one
beyond anything we have experienced
or ever want to experience
But what is a nation if not individuals
people of all ages and languages
So when this *national* tragedy
fades into a distant memory
when the enquiries have come and gone
when those who need to be in prison
are
the *personal* tragedy will live on
It will be replayed
day after day
after day
after day
It is to you
the families of the lost
that my heart goes out

Because
first and foremost
this is
your tragedy