

# Flash – Forward

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***Trigger warning – This poem contains imagery of death and discussions of war. Reader discretion is advised.***

This introduction is written in the third person to create a slight emotional distance from the work. The author’s experiences and memories of gender (roles), conflict and violence remain vivid, yet it is a conscious choice to keep the introduction brief, allowing the poem to speak for itself.

In this piece, the author uses *Mama* to refer to their grandmother and *Papa* for their grandfather. These familial terms evoke the layered enactment of gender roles, the scars of war, and the unresolved internal conflicts that arise when one is too young to fully process the weight or the memory of such experiences.

It is the author’s hope that the poem conveys these intricate dynamics without further explanation, leaving space for the reader to confront its truths on their own terms.

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## Flash – Forward

Maybe I was four when it happened?

When the sound of gunshots resonated through the house and halted our high-pitched squeals of laughter.

We scurried underneath the bed –

Put our hands on our head – and pretended –

That it wasn’t happening.

I remember Papa rushing through the house with a confident flair,

Instructing Mama to take us to the village where –

We would stay.

I was three, or – was I four when it happened?

I remember events I can’t convey.

Do I remember?

I remember clear abyss then –

Flash Forward to a silent country road stretching endlessly beneath the suns harsh kiss.

Me on Mama's wary and tired back -

Her forward steps deliberate, her voice soothing, the sun's rays beating us in a relentless vicious attack.

Flash Forward

A body sprawled in the road. Still. Breathless. Mangled. Shot?

Their plight cut short.

No life - but in my little mind, that's a good thing - now away from the fight.

Flash Forward -

A vulture perched elegantly atop another body, taking peck, after peck... its wings providing a dark curtain of privacy.

Flash Forward.

We are in a village with our Grand Uncle - he is kind.

He has the biggest smile, his loving intentions aligned.

The trees bore fruit, sweet and plentiful,

Mango juice racing down our chubby little arms in sticky golden streams of happiness - everything beautiful.

The stream glistened, silver ribbons weaving through the forest,

Its fish undisturbed.

The sun sets and the sky shapeshifts into a symphony of fire.

Night after night comes as we lay on the forest floor to retire,

Looking up at other peaceful faraway galaxies,

Tracing the stars and their lives with tiny fingers, imagining worlds untouched by wars and tragedies.

We are happy?

We were happy.

And we forgot what was happening at home.

Now? We cannot forget.

They made a movie and cast Leonardo DiCaprio.

The world knows it mostly as the place that had blood diamonds.

But we know it as home.

We know it as the place where so much blood was shed the ground turned red.

Maybe I was three, or four, when it happened.

Definitely Unsure.

But I remember.

We all collectively remember.

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